



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS
BABEŞ-BOLYAI



THEOLOGIA ORTHODOXA

Vol. 62, No. 1, June 2017
The Holy and Great Council (2016)

**STUDIA
UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI
THEOLOGIA ORTHODOXA**

**Vol. 62, No. 1
(June 2017)**

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YEAR
MONTH
ISSUE

Volume 62 (LXII) 2017
JUNE
1

PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2017-06-15
PUBLISHED PRINT: 2017-06-30
ISSUE DOI:10.24193/subbto.2017.1

Thematic issue

The Holy and Great Council (2016)

Guest Editor: Patriciu Dorin Vlaicu

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HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF CRETE (2016)

THE PARTICIPATION OF THE LOCAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE PREPARATORY PROCESS OF THE HOLY AND GREAT SYNOD – PREREQUISITE FOR THE RECEPTION OF ITS DECISIONS

VIOREL IONIȚĂ*

ABSTRACT. In this paper the author emphasises the preparation, the proceedings and the reception process of the Holy and Great Council, that is one of the most complex radiographies of the Orthodox Church evolution out of a late Middle Ages to the present postmodern challenges. All these challenges have shown that the identity of the Orthodox Church is ensured through her faith transmitted through the Orthodox worship, which is the written expression of the Holy Tradition.

Keywords: Holy and Great Council, participation, preparation, reception, Pan-Orthodox Conferences.

I. The Preparation, the proceedings and the reception process of the Holy and Great Synod is one of the most complex radiographies of the Orthodox Church evolution out of a late Middle Ages to the present postmodern challenges. Preceded by changes in the life of the Orthodox Churches during the second half of the nineteenth century, the preparation of this Synod began in the third decade of the last century through a series of consultations between the local Orthodox Churches, then emerged formally in 1961 through the first Pan-Orthodox Conference at Rhodes and entered the practical Preparation in 1976 at the first Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference. During this period of one and a half century, the Orthodox Church went through unprecedented organizational changes in the emergence of new Autocephalous Churches and elevating some of them to the rank of Patriarchate. Another development was the spread of the

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Orthodox tradition worldwide, following the migration of millions of Orthodox believers out of their traditional area into countries outside the Orthodox canonical territory. This latter phenomenon has led to the constitution of the *Orthodox Diaspora*, which is to this day a great challenge but also a missionary chance for the local Orthodox Churches. Thus, a Church reduced to a political and cultural space, traditionally the *Church of the East*, the Orthodox Church has now become an universal Church in the geographical sense of the term. In addition to these developments, most of the local Orthodox Churches were sometimes dramatically confronted with the extremist ideologies and political systems of the twentieth century. Another development during this period of time was the increase of contacts between the Orthodox Churches with other Christian communities and other religions.

All these challenges have shown that the identity of the Orthodox Church is ensured through her faith transmitted through the Orthodox worship, which is the written expression of the Holy Tradition. As the Orthodox worship remained the same in any cultural context, this demonstrated that the Orthodox faith was not affected by the cultures in which it was adapted and affirmed during the twentieth century. But this cultural diversity has led to a diversification and development of Orthodox theological thinking especially in the Diaspora. Thus, over the past century one has noticed an enrichment of the Orthodox Theology, which was received but not uniformly in all Orthodox Mother Churches. All the challenges the Orthodox Churches were facing in this period of time have highlighted the need for the formulation of common answers of all these churches, which imposed the idea of the preparation and convocation of a Synod for the whole Orthodox Church.

II. During the preparations for a Synod of the whole Orthodox Church the attention of theologians and of the Synods of the local Orthodox Churches was mostly focused on identifying issues to be discussed at this Synod. After proposals of themes made from several Orthodox Churches, as the ones by the Primate Metropolitan Miron Cristea of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1920,¹ the Ecumenical Patriarchate held, from 8 to 23 June 1930 at the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos, an Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission which approved a list of 17 themes, including “most urgent issues”² to be discussed at a *Pro-Synod*, which was an intermediary Pan-Orthodox level for the preparation of the Synod of the whole Orthodox Church. These themes were recommended

¹ Gheorghe Soare, “De la Vatopedi la Rhodos,” *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* LXXIX, no. 9-10 (1961): 844.

² See the list at Viorel Ionita, *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009*, trans. Remus Rus, *Studia Oecumenica Friburgensia* 62 (Basel: Friedrich Reinhard Verlag, 2014), 112-113.

to be studied in each local Orthodox Church. The next step depended on the answers of the Churches which were too slow in coming, so that the continuation of the just initiated Synodical process was blocked by the outbreak of World War II. The Ecumenical Patriarchate relaunched the preparatory process of a Synod for the whole Orthodox Church by organizing the first Pan-Orthodox Conference at Rhodes, from 24 September to 1 October 1961, which adopted a catalog of themes grouped in 8 categories.³ Each of these groups included a longer or shorter list of subtopics, which in total cover the entire orthodox theology.

Realizing that the proposed list at Rhodes was too long, the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Conference, held from 8 to 16 June 1968 at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy - Geneva, Switzerland, proposed to draw up a short list with themes recommended by all local Orthodox Churches. This conference also proposed that the title of the council in preparation shall be: *The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church*.⁴ The same conference recommended to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to convene a series of Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences, name that was meant to replace the one of *Pro-Synod*. Thus, the final list of themes for the Holy and Great Synod was adopted by the First Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference held from 21 to 28 November 1976 at the Orthodox Center of Chambésy. That list included the following ten themes:

1. Orthodox Diaspora
2. Autocephaly and its manner of proclamation
3. Autonomy and its manner of proclamation
4. Dyptychs (namely the order of priority of the churches in their liturgical commemoration)
5. The issue of the new calendar
6. Impediments to marriage
7. Readapting the church dispositions concerning fasting
8. Relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world
9. Orthodoxy and Ecumenical Movement
10. The contribution of the local Orthodox Churches to the realization of the ideals of peace, freedom, brotherhood and love among peoples and the removal of racial discrimination.⁵

³ As follows: I. Faith and Dogma; II. The Divine Worship, III. Church Administration and Order; IV. The Relations of the Orthodox Churches among themselves; V. The Relations of the Orthodox Church with the other Christian World; VI. Orthodoxy in the World; VII: Theological Themes and VIII. Social Problems (see Ionita, *Towards...*, 125-130).

⁴ Liviu Stan, "A patra Conferință Panortodoxă," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* LXXXVI, no. 7-8 (1968): 873-880.

⁵ See Ionita, *Towards...*, 147.

III. The first Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference found that Orthodox Churches, which have undertaken the task to prepare drafts of texts for one of the themes chosen for the Synod, sent to the office of the Secretariat for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod texts adopted by the Holy Synods of their Churches as final decisions. Therefore, the conference recommended that the churches responsible for developing drafts for the themes shall “submit the fruits of their work purely as a scientific result and not as an official position, in order to leave free space for discussion and dialogue at the pan-orthodox level.” However, some churches have disregarded this recommendation and continued – up to the last stage of preparation of the Holy and Great Synod - to bring their proposals to the draft texts in the form of texts formally adopted by the Holy Synods of their churches. If the delegations of these churches didn’t find exactly their proposals in the texts submitted for adoption they refused to sign those texts, which constituted a major obstacle to a constructive debate at the pan-orthodox level.

The second Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference held at the Orthodox Center of Chambésy from 3 to 12 September 1982, adopted the draft texts concerning two of the ten themes from the list adopted in 1976, namely: 1. *Impediments to marriage* and 2. *The issue of the new calendar*. This conference set the agenda for the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference that would have to treat the last four themes of the 1976 list. During the conference in 1982 it became evident that there was no regulation to conduct these conferences which were guided by the “*Rules of conduct and work of the first Pan-Orthodox Conference*” in 1961,⁶ but which did no longer correspond to the new format of the meetings. Also during the conference in 1982 it was recommended to establish the official working languages at these conferences. Therefore, the 1982 Conference mandated the Inter-Orthodox preparatory Commission to draw up a draft Regulation of these conferences.

After 1982, the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod continued steadily, so that only after four years it was possible to convoke the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference held at Chambésy from 20 October to 6 November 1986. According to the mandate set by the previous conference, this meeting adopted the draft texts of the four themes appointed to it in the following order: 1. *The contribution of the local Orthodox Churches to the realization of the ideals of peace, freedom, brotherhood and love among peoples and the removal of racial discrimination* 2. *Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement*; 3. *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world* and 4. *Readapting the Church dispositions concerning fasting*. Regarding the latter

⁶ See the text of these Regulations at Anastosios Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil. Ein Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch zur orthodoxen Ekklesiologie* (Münster: Theophano Verlag, 2013), 246.

issue, in order to avoid the impression that the Orthodox Church would try to change the fasting principles, the conference changed its title as follows: *The importance of fasting and its observance today*.

The 1986 Conference adopted also the text of *The Regulation of the Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conferences*, consisting of 19 articles, which stated, inter alia, that the official working languages of these conferences are: *Greek, Russian and French*. As for the character of the decisions on each issue on the agenda of the Synod, the *Regulation* provides that they “*have a preparatory character for the Holy and Great Synod. Therefore, following the authentic Orthodox tradition on the topics discussed, they do not have the authority to engage directly the Churches before the Holy and Great Synod has ruled.*” This *Regulation* also states that every draft text of the ten themes is to be adopted only by consensus or unanimity. For if unanimity is not reached on one of these topics, the article 17th of the *Regulation* provides that: “*If no unanimity of the delegation is reached on a certain theme in the plenary session, a decision in the matter is postponed and the Secretariat for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod sends the theme for complementary study, elaboration and preparation, according to the procedure set up at the Pan-Orthodox level. The theme thus postponed is placed at the head of the list of the future Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference and is examined as such by the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission. If this time no unanimity is reached on the theme under discussion or if all delegations reject the proposals by the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission, after the first and the second examination in plenary session, the Secretariat for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod completes the file constituted at this stage and sends it once more, following the procedure mentioned above.*”⁷

Thus, the *Regulation of the Pan-orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences* did not foresee the possibility of excluding one theme from the agenda of the Holy and Great Synod even if it was not possible to achieve unanimity on the draft text on that theme, but provided that the Secretariat for the preparation of the Synod should insist until the desired unanimity is obtained. The Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences together with the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission and the Secretariat became an introverted mechanism and operated by the rules adopted by themselves. According to these principles, several church delegations insisted to continue the preparatory process until draft texts for all ten topics set for the Holy and Great Synod will be adopted.

After the 3rd Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod came to a standstill, first because it was not possible to reach unanimity on the first four topics from the list adopted in 1976. The stagnation of this process was also due to some inter-Orthodox

⁷ See Ionita, *Towards...*, 182.

tensions as well as to quite important changes in attitude of many local Orthodox Churches after the fall of communism, both in respect to ethical-social issues, and especially in their relations with the Ecumenical Movement and other Christian communities.

IV. Overcoming this impasse was possible through the decisions of the Synaxis of Primates of the Orthodox Churches in Fener/Istanbul from 10 to 12 October 2008, during the commemoration of “*St. Apostol Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles*”. The message published at the end of this meeting, where the Romanian Orthodox Church was represented by His Eminence Metropolitan Laurentiu of Transylvania, stated that “*we welcome the proposal of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to continue during 2009 ... the preparation of the Holy and Great Council.*”⁸ This decision led to the organization of the fourth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference from 6 to 13 June 2009,⁹ convened to discuss only one issue and not four as provided for by the previous conference. The 2009 conference discussed the issue of the *Orthodox Diaspora* and adopted the draft text on it. The Synaxis from October 2008 also decided that the Pan-Orthodox preparatory process for the Holy and Great Synod shall be attended exclusively by representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and not by those of the Autonomous Orthodox Churches, as had happened so far. After 2009, the Inter-Orthodox preparatory Commission has been convened on still two occasions, namely in December 2009 and February 2011, but it adopted a draft text only on the issue of *Autonomy* and nothing more. Thus, the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod has once again stalled and the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission was dissolved.

The impasse was again overcome by the decisions of the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, this time meeting from 6 to 9 March 2014, again at Fener/Istanbul. A direct result of the decisions at this meeting was the establishment of an Inter-Orthodox Special Commission for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod, which worked between October 2014 and April 2015. This Commission had the mandate *to review* the following three texts, which were already adopted almost 30 years before and needed to be revised: 1) *Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement* 2) *Relations of the Orthodox Church with other Christian Communities* and 3) *The contribution by the local Orthodox Churches to the realization of the ideals of peace, freedom, brotherhood and love among peoples and the removal of racial discrimination*. At the same time, the Special Commission had the mandate *to supervise* the other three texts

⁸ <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/14/156.aspx#1>.

⁹ See Viorel Ioniță, “A 4-a Conferință Panortodoxă Presinodală, Chambésy/Geneva, 6-12 iunie 2009,” *Studii Teologice* V, no. 2 (2009): 235 a.f.

adopted by the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences in 1982 respectively in 1986, namely: 1) *The issue of the calendar*; 2) *The importance of fasting and its observance today* and 3) *Impediments to marriage*. The Special Commission reviewed the three themes mentioned and oversaw the theme on Fasting. On the calendar issue and on the impediments to marriage, the Special Commission stated in its final communiqué that these “*texts have not been amended for the lack of consensus from the members of the Commission on the proposed changes. 2. The Themes 'Autocephaly and the modus of its proclamation' and the 'Diptychs' ... were not considered due to lack of time*”.¹⁰ The work of this Special Commission was hampered firstly by different understanding of its mandate in respect to the expressions to “review” and to “supervise” the texts because, while the chairperson allowed no change on the texts to be supervised several delegates considered that these texts must be updated as the other, so to be changed.

According to the decisions of the March 2014 Synaxis, as soon as the work of the Special Commission was done, there followed the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference, organized at the Chambésy Orthodox Centre from 10-17 October 2015. This conference adopted the draft texts to the following three themes: 1) *Autonomy and the Means by Which it is Proclaimed*, 2) *The Orthodox Church and the rest of the Christian world*,¹¹ and 3) *The importance of fasting and its observance today*. Only after this approval, the texts could be published, to be made available to all Orthodox believers and then sent directly to the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church for approval. In connection with the text entitled: “*The mission of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world*” which was adopted only by 12 of the 14 delegations present, the Conference noted that this text will be presented to the next Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, to the follow-up. The 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference made an important contribution to the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, but stressed at the same time, that there were still many issues to be settled in the preparatory process for the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. This was highlighted mainly by the fact that during this last Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference as well as during the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches in January 2016 several delegations specifically requested to continue the preparation for this Synod until draft texts will be adopted for all ten themes on the agenda of the Holy and Great Synod. This attitude clearly expressed the fact that not all Orthodox Churches were prepared for the Synod.

¹⁰ Viorel Ioniță, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe. Documente pregătitoare* (București: Basilica, 2016), 48.

¹¹ In this formulation were put together the draft texts of two topics namely: 1, *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the other Christian world* and 2. *Orthodoxy and Ecumenical Movement*.

On the other hand, the resumption of the preparation for the Holy and Great Synod in 2009, i.e. after 23 years of break, revealed a discontinuity of it especially through the fact that the 14 Autocephalous Orthodox Churches were represented now by new delegations in other ways than before the political changes in Eastern Europe. A first difficulty which confronted the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod during this period was that discussions on the draft texts often took the form of a confrontation between the delegations of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church. In such situations there emerged two groups, the first consisting of Churches of Greek tradition (the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Church of Cyprus, the Church of Greece, and often also the Orthodox Church of Albania) and the second of the Slavonic tradition (Russian Patriarchate, Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Church of Poland, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovak Republic, as well as the Orthodox Church of Georgia, although not of Slavonic tradition). The Serbian Orthodox Church, represented by bishops who knew very well both Greek and Russian, was mostly seeking to mediate between the two positions. The delegation of the Antiochian Patriarchate was often determined by its membership to the Apostolic Patriarchates and most often voted with the first group. In such cases, the delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church did not automatically join a particular group, but adopted her attitude depending on the subject matter.

Draft texts that were to be discussed and adopted by the last two Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences were first prepared by the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission, respectively between 2014 and 2015 by the Special Inter-Orthodox Commission for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod. At that time, almost all 14 Autocephalous Orthodox Churches were represented both in the Preparatory Commission as well as in the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences by the same heads of delegations accompanied almost always by the same consultants, except that at the top-level delegations were officially formed by two bishops. The presence of the same heads of delegations ensured continuity, but paradoxically the same delegates who adopted the draft texts at preparatory level attacked them only few months later at the Pan-Orthodox level. This phenomenon indicated the risk that those delegations which adopted and signed the decisions taken at the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences would then attack the respective texts at the Holy and Great Synod.

The organization of the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches from 21 to 28 January 2016 at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, was planned by the Synaxis of March 2014. The meeting of the Orthodox Primates in January 2016 was the first which took over the tasks of a Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference in the sense that it discussed and adopted draft texts

of the two following themes: 1. *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World* and 2. *The Mystery of marriage and its impediments*. This last text was not signed by the Georgian Orthodox Church delegation led by His Beatitude Catholicos and Patriarch Elias II, for this delegation did not accept the idea of applying the concept of Church *oikonomia* to Inter-Christian marriages. However, this text was considered as adopted and recommended to be presented to the Holy and Great Synod. Secondly, the Synaxis of Chambésy decided to remove the following three topics from the agenda of the Holy and Great Synod: 1. *Autocephaly*, 2. *Calendar* and 3. *Diptychs*, because they “were not approved unanimously throughout many successive meetings of the preparatory Inter-Orthodox Commissions to be finally approved by one of the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences”. And about the issue of the Calendar, the Synaxis held that “it is appropriate that every Church feels free to implement what it considers proper for the spiritual formation of their parishioners, but without changing the date of common celebration of Easter by all the Orthodox Churches.”¹²

On the agenda for the Holy and Great Synod six topics were thus kept which covered actually seven points of the list adopted in 1976, for two of them were merged into a single text. Some of the draft texts on the six topics listed on the agenda of the Holy and Great Synod were discussed during more than three decades in the Orthodox Churches. Upon the adoption of draft texts on these subjects by one of the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences, those texts were published, studied and endorsed by the Holy Synods of the local Orthodox Churches. Thus, the draft texts for the Holy and Great Synod always fully mirrored the teaching of the Orthodox Church on the respective themes.

Finally, the January 2016 Synaxis adopted the text of the *Organization and Working Procedure of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church*. This Synaxis also decided on the precise dates and venue of the Synod, namely from 18 to 26 June 2016 at the Orthodox Academy of Crete and not in the Saint Irene Church from Istanbul as proposed by the Synaxis of March 2014. The Synaxis meeting of January 2016 concluded in an atmosphere of excitement, most participants being convinced that the long awaited Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church will take place for sure.

V. However, several issues remained unresolved, including the most urgent one which was the need for the restoration of communion between the Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem, interrupted in 2013 on the ground that the latter has established a diocese in Qatar, which belongs to the canonical territory of the Patriarchate of Antioch. His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch tried unsuccessfully to solve this problem during the Synaxis at Chambésy. The

¹² Ibid., 79

Ecumenical Patriarchate then proposed to set up a joint committee of experts from both Churches, which would have to find the solution of reconciliation, but that unfortunately did not happen. Moreover, the representatives of the Patriarchate of Antioch have firmly stated that unless this issue is resolved, their Church would not attend the Synod. This was officially announced by the Patriarchate of Antioch on June 6, 2016, immediately after the Ecumenical Patriarchate announced in a press release that the resolution of the dispute between the two Apostolic Patriarchates will take place after the Synod of Crete.

A second problem on the way of preparation for the Holy and Great Synod was the fact that until January 2016 the Synodal themes were almost completely unknown among the faithful and even among the clergy in the local Orthodox Churches. The long way of the preparatory process was leading up to a general perception that this council would not take place soon and consequently to the lack of interest in its themes. Recently, a Roman Catholic theologian from Germany noted that „curiously the Pre-Conciliar 'process' enjoyed a much greater interest in the West than in the local Orthodox Churches ... in the 90s, the Synodal draft texts adopted by then were discussed and analyzed intensively in seminars”¹³ at Faculties of Theology of this country. Indeed, the issue of the Holy and Great Synod was known until the beginning of 2016 almost exclusively in the very restricted circles of those directly involved in the preparatory process.

Shortly after the publication of the January 2016 Synaxis decisions, interest in the topics and composition of the Holy and Great Synod was expressed almost exclusively in conservative circles opposed to the council. One of the main causes of this event has originated in the confrontation between two groups of Greek scholars, one around His Eminence Metropolitan Joannis of Pergamon (Zizioulas) and the other around the followers of late Prof. Ioannis Romanides (1927-2001). Metropolitan Joannis was wrongly considered the author of problematic formulations - such as the concept of the *human person* from the text on *Mission* – and especially of those from the text on relations with other Christian churches. Arguments against the themes and convocation of the Holy and Great Synod have spread through conferences and especially through the internet beyond the Greek context without studying carefully the draft texts adopted at the Pan-orthodox level.

A third problem arising on the way of preparation for the Holy and Great Synod was due to the meeting between Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis at the airport in Havana, Cuba, on February 12, 2016, where the two pontiffs

¹³ Johannes Oeldemann, “Die Heilige und Große Synode der Orthodoxen kirche. Eine erste Einordnung aus katholischer Sicht,” *Ökumenische Rudschau*, no. 1 (2017): 49.

have adopted a joint statement, which we do not question. But the matter of fact is that this meeting caused the first actions of canonical disobedience of some bishops to their primate. Canonical attitude of disobedience was quickly integrated into an amalgam and were transferred to the different canonical territories on issues related to the Holy and Great Synod. In this way was relaunched with unprecedented violence the old issue related to the relationship of the Orthodox Church to Christian communities in the world today. This issue was never clarified enough in these churches. The debate around this issue has been one of the main reasons¹⁴ that led the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to announce, on June 1, 2016, its decision not to participate in the Holy and Great Synod. The same reasons led the Orthodox Church of Georgia to announce on June 10, 2016, and then the Russian Orthodox Church on 13 June the same year that they will not participate in the Holy and Great Synod, although these churches had published on the internet the lists of their delegates designated to participate in this Synod.

Finally, a fourth problem in the preparation of this Synod was it constantly being compared with the seven Ecumenical Councils. From this comparison there were born expectations called by some Orthodox theologians “maximalist”¹⁵ in relation to the Holy and Great Synod, namely the expectation that this council will make decisions as important as those taken by the Ecumenical Councils. This vision was due to the fact that until January 2016 the profile of the Holy and Great synod had not been defined. During Chambésy Synaxis, several primates stressed that this council will be an Ecumenical Council. The most important role here, however, was that of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, by stating that this council should be considered as “*an important historic event to develop the Synodal practice at the Pan-Orthodox level.*”¹⁶ In respect to the decisions to be taken by the Holy and Great Synod, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel said already in the spring of 2016 that it “*won't formulate new dogmas or canons but it would like to reaffirm, in communion and co-responsibility, the holy and living light of the Orthodox faith, in a world in spiritual crisis of guidance and ideal.*”¹⁷

In connection with the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, as it happened also during the course of this council, the relationship between the delegations of different local Orthodox Churches has always been animated by the spirit of brotherhood and of the awareness that all of them belong to the one and the same Church. All meetings at the Pan-Orthodox level were opened and closed with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy which all

¹⁴ See Martin Illert, “Die Bulgarische Orthodoxe Kirche und die Heilige und Große Synode,” *Ökumenische Rudschau*, no. 1 (2017): 42 a.f.

¹⁵ Georgios Vlantis, “Die Angst vor dem Geist. Das Heilige und Große Konzil und die orthodoxen Anti-Ökumeniker,” *Ökumenische Rudschau*, no. 1 (2017): 39.

¹⁶ Ionita, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod...*, 75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

shared together, even if some of them had different views on some of the topics discussed. Looking more closely, the controversial views between some delegates did not relate to fundamental aspects of the Orthodox Christian faith and usually the delegates with different opinions behaved toward each other beyond the sessions as friends. I always had the impression that if Orthodox delegations had sufficient time available they would have had reached a greater consensus. In some specific cases, there was also some pride and personal ambition to be overcome. In other words, in these preparations, which were an integral part of the Synodal practice, it was obvious that the representatives of the Orthodox Churches have succeeded in developing more and more a culture of dialogue. Thus, the draft texts on the topics on the agenda of the Holy and great Council were completely along the faith always confessed by the one Orthodox Church.

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EXAMINING THE RULES OF CONSENSUS FROM THE CANONICAL PERSPECTIVE

ALEXANDER RENTEL*

ABSTRACT. The rules of consensus posed problems for the Holy and Great Council both prior to the council and during. This paper explores some of these reasons and examines the canonical witness for a clearer understanding of consensus within the canonical tradition. The paper concludes with a call for greater conciliar activity in order to foster a more robust culture of consensus within the Orthodox Church.

Keywords: canon law, consensus, eucharistic ecclesiology.

1. On the Requirement for Consensus

At their Synaxis in Chambesy, Switzerland, January 2016, the primates of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches adopted a text entitled, *Organization and Working Procedure of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church*. This text was to guide the work for the Holy and Great Council, which was eventually held in Crete in June 2016.¹ A key component of this document is the requirement for unanimity for the approval of any texts or amendments.² In fact, the document specifies that the approval of any text must be unanimous for it to have “pan-Orthodox authority.” The primates of the Churches were well within the scope of their ministry to adopt procedures for the running of the council; nothing in the canonical tradition forbids the adoption of such rules, and consensus as a rule for decision-making has a long history in the Church. While it would be anachronistic

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¹ Symeonides, N. Symeonides (ed.), *Toward the Holy and Great Council: Decisions and Texts (Greek and English)* (New York: Faith Matters Series 2a, 2016), 116-135.

² See Article 11.2, “Modifications of Texts”: “At the conclusion of deliberations, the approval of any change is expressed, according to pan-Orthodox procedures, by the consensus of the delegations of each autocephalous Orthodox Church. This means that an amendment that is not approved unanimously shall not be passed”; Symeonides, *Decisions*, 131. Article 13, “Adoption and Signing of Texts”: “The texts on the Council’s daily agenda that are approved unanimously...shall possess the following authority: ...2. Possessing pan-Orthodox authority...”; Symeonides, *Decisions*, 133.

to claim that the Council of Jerusalem described in the Book of Acts was a council like all subsequent councils, the description of this council did provide a paradigm for the Church. The particular phrasing of the Apostolic decree, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us (Acts 15.28)," expresses the two-fold requirement followed by the Church throughout the centuries that anything arrived at by the conciliar process must be consistent with the revelation, manifested in the consensus arrived at amongst those in the Church. These seemingly practical requirements emerge from the conviction that the Church is the body of Christ, where humans are united with Jesus Christ and each other by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In this image, this early definition of Church, only unity is possible.

1.1. Consensus and Disunity

The scepter of consensus being used not as a *method* of arriving at decisions and thus a sign of authenticity, but as a veto over the proceedings, however, loomed large prior to the council. And as the convening of the council drew near, the very idea of consensus posed difficulties to those Churches who did not come to the council, and also to those Churches who did come and found the insistence on consensus to be overly burdensome. So what had been rumors and thinly veiled threats in fact came to pass, and four local Churches chose not to come to the council. Calls from the different Churches for a postponement of the council, or even an adjournment, were made, because with all the local Churches not present, de facto meant that no consensus of the Orthodox Churches could be reached. Questions even arose from within the council itself about the requirement for consensus, not only in reaction to those Churches that did not come, but also in regard to the difficulties inherent in arriving at a consensus of unanimity, which is a high threshold. Of course, as we all know, the council did go on with participation of the majority of the Orthodox Churches.

1.2. Two positions

Strictly leaving aside the questions of intents, and assiduously avoiding any and all polemics and recriminations, I would like to identify and then address two presuppositions that underlie these two different approaches to the Cretan Council. Two positions in other words have emerged clearly post-council: 1. the council *did* happen even without the participation of all the Churches, consensus was reached, the council is binding even if not all the Churches were present, and the consensus of those present was not one of unanimity; and, 2. the council *did not* happen, because not all the Orthodox Churches were present. Hence, according to this line of thought, the Cretan Council is not truly a council, but another preparatory meeting along the way to a true pan-Orthodox council.

1.2.1. First Position

Obviously, most of those who attended the Cretan Council hold to this first position. It also finds its chief proponent in the bishop who presided at the council, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Already on January 22, 2016, in his opening address to the Synaxis of Primate of the Orthodox Churches, His All-Holiness distinguished between consensus and unanimity. The former, a canonical requirement, is not to be confused with the latter. Further, consensus allows for disagreement as long as the disagreement is carefully noted, but it also does not negate the original position. His All-Holiness also address the question of whether Churches can absent themselves or withdraw from the council and thus make the conciliar proceedings null. He points out,

The tradition of the Church knows numerous examples where conciliarity is applied in Councils, indeed even Ecumenical Councils, when certain Churches were absent – sometimes voluntarily, at other times involuntarily – from the sessions of the Council, without this at all preventing their operation. Many Council decisions were recognized retroactively by those who did not participate in them. So far as we know, dependence of consensus on physical attendance has no historical precedent.³

For His All-Holiness, drawing on the canonical tradition, a council can meet without full representation of all the local Orthodox Churches, agreements can be reached without full unanimity of the participants, and these decisions can be considered binding on all the Churches.

1.2.2. Consensus as a Method

His All-Holiness sees consensus in a manner consistent with the canonical tradition⁴ and the governing procedures of contemporary organizations. As my colleague Peter Bouteneff has emphasized, consensus above all is a “deep

³ “Keynote Address To the Synaxis of the Primate of the Orthodox Churches,” (Geneva, January 22, 2016), https://www.patriarchate.org/address-/-/asset_publisher/MoQ1QIghH18P6/content/keynote-address-by-his-all-holiness-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-to-the-synaxis-of-the-primates-of-the-orthodox-churches-geneva-22-01-2016-?_101_INSTANCE_MoQ1QIghH18P6_languageId=en_US, accessed April 23, 2017.

⁴ In this paper, I use the following English translations of the canons: For the Seven Ecumenical Councils: N. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, *Nicea I to Lateran V* (Georgetown, 1990). For the Council in Trullo: G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone (eds.), *The Council in Trullo Revisited*, *Kanonika 6* (Rome, 1995). For the Local Councils: P. Schaff and H. Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. XIV, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees, together with the Canons of all the Local Synods which have Received Ecumenical Acceptance*, ed. H. Percival, (Grand Rapids, MI, 1988).

and sometimes challenging process” by which decisions are reached by a group, not where will is exercised by a minority.⁵ Similarly, Peter Van Nuffelen, analyzing episcopal election in the fourth century, makes a careful argument that the very “role of canon law,” in the early fourth century, “was to safeguard the creation of a consensus, not to create it.” He further clarifies,

Canon rules did not prescribe a procedure that established the consensus; at best, they set minimum requirements for how it could be guaranteed that all parties could be duly involved in [the] process and that a true consensus could be found in the community.⁶

The canonical tradition expects and hopes for the consensus and unanimity of the participants at any council. The Church is the body of Christ, knitted and formed by men and women of every age, who, even in this privileged position, are sore tempted to sin. The canonical tradition of the Church, as we will see, has made allowances for the consensus of the majority and not only unanimity, precisely because of human weakness. Furthermore, the Church is not only a human organization, and as such consensus of participants is a sign alone of the authenticity of any part of a council’s work. The Church is a mystery, the unity of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ by the grace of the Spirit. Ultimately something is true and authentic because it seems good to the Holy Spirit.

1.2.3. The Second Position

Five years earlier, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow took an opposing view to that of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. In December 2011, he expounded his thinking, which also found further expression in those Churches who did not come to the council. Patriarch Kirill said,

We are told that the principle of consensus [*n.b.*, by which he means unanimity] was not always used in the epoch of Ecumenical Councils. At that time, the imperial power was the instrument of keeping church unity, but there is no such a mechanism at present. The Local Churches live and work in different countries and under specific conditions. If we do not take into account their opinion, it would be difficult to take decisions at the future Council by all, and this may provoke disorders.⁷

⁵ P. Bouteneff, “The Great and Holy Council and the Implications of the Consensus Method,” *Toward the Holy and Great Council: Theological Reflections*, ed. N. Symeonides, Faith Matters Series 3 (New York, 1016).

⁶ P. Van Nuffelen, “The Rhetoric of Rules and the Rule of Consensus,” *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity*, eds. J. Leemans, et al., *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 119* (Berlin, 2011), 245, 253.

⁷ “His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: Surrender of the Principle of Consensus in the Pre-Council Process can bring about Disorders in World Orthodoxy,” <https://mospat.ru/en/2011/12/23/news55276>, accessed April 23, 2017.

The convictions here certainly went into the decision of the Russian Church not to come to the Cretan Council.

1.2.4. *Sobornost*

It would be far too easy to dismiss this line of thinking as a cynical attempt to masquerade the “real” intentions of the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, if nothing else, Patriarch Kirill’s assertion, which points to the importance of the Local Churches, *all* the Local Churches, and recognizing their equality, falls squarely in line with generations of Russian Orthodox thought that has regularly emphasized the concept of conciliarity, or *sobornost*, which itself forms a fundamental cornerstone to the expressions of Eucharistic and Baptismal Ecclesiologies. Lying behind Patriarch Kirill’s statement, in other words, is a presumption that

[T]he One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church manifests itself as a plurality of churches, each one is both a part and a whole. It is a part because only in unity with all churches and in obedience to the universal truth can it be the Church; yet is also a whole because in each church, by virtue of unity with the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the whole Christ is present, the fullness of grace is given, the catholicity of new life is revealed.⁸

For Orthodoxy that has found itself in the West, both *sobornost* and Eucharistic Ecclesiology have had great resonance allowing the Church to engage in new ways with the modern world. As is well known, these ideas have inspired increased lay involvement in Church life and liturgical renewal, which are both so important to Orthodoxy in the West. Additionally, the expositions by so many Russian Orthodox theologians on *sobornost*, conciliarity, can only have contributed to the conciliar movement that culminated in Crete. The insistence on a consensus of unanimity, which is the hallmark of this second position, can be found throughout this traditions. For example, in the writings of Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, *sobornost* is defined precisely as “unanimity, a harmonious sharing of authority.”⁹ To remain consistent with its own line of profound and resonate theological reflection, the Russian Orthodox Church would have had great difficulties coming and participating in the Cretan Council once other local Orthodox Churches pulled out.

⁸ A. Schmemmann, “Ecclesiology Notes,” *St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1967): 37-38.

⁹ S. Bulgakov, “The Orthodox Church,” *A Bulgakov Anthology*, eds. J. Pain and N. Zernov (Philadelphia, 1976): 127.

2. Consensus in the Canonical Tradition

To be sure, the arguments and thought processes that make up these two positions are closer than the diametrically opposed results would suggest. Both positions place a high value on conciliarity, synodality, and both accord priority to pan-Orthodox solutions to common problems. Both would even go so far as to insist that the place to do this type of work is in the synodal structure of the Church. They differ, it would seem to me, in their conception of consensus. One sees consensus clearly as a method, the other sees it as the result, the sign of the Church being the Church. Both positions can find support in the canonical tradition, which I would like to now review. From the tradition, two types of consensus emerge. The first concerns matters of faith and canon, where consensus does serve as a sign and guarantor, and the second where the role of consensus is discussed in regard to synodal procedure.

2.1. Consensus of Faith

Trullo 1 speaks of the consensus of unanimity with regard to faith when it says, "It is the best rule, when beginning any speech or action, to begin with God and to end with God." This canon goes on to enumerate the faith defined and proclaimed by previous councils. Similar provision for such consensus can be found in canons throughout the canonical literature where a council expresses its consensus with the faith defined by previous councils (I Constantinople 1, Ephesus 7, Carthage 2, Trullo 1, II Nicea 2). Underlying these canons is the fundamental conviction of an order (τάξις) that exists in the Church that emanates from the heavenly realms and encompasses all things in the Church. As Trullo 1 says, conciliar activity best begins with God, because the Church only knows and consequently can only talk about God. And, in the end, the Church considers only these matters, because such knowledge of God concerns ultimate things. The coherence that later councils have with earlier ones, in fact their very authenticity, comes directly from their consensus with this knowledge and is found in the conciliar creeds, decrees, or definitions. The order of the Church necessitates that such consensus be the highest priority of a council. Furthermore, in the uncertainty of any present deliberation, in response to questions never faced, using what the Church has canonized and received allows for it to craft decisions and responses that are consistent with the tradition, but meet the needs of the day. In what has been mentioned so far, the canonical tradition expects a consensus of unanimity, the end product of any conciliar deliberation must be in accord with previous councils. With regard to matters of faith the consensus of unanimity is paramount as faith provides

the shape and contour of the order that extends from heaven throughout the Church. This consensus too is easy to locate and has been proclaimed, confessed, defined, by numerous councils. In the end, no council could ever overturn matters of faith or break with this unanimity of faith. To do so would indicate a break or rupture of part or of the whole council.

3. Synodal Procedures in the Canons

Diverse canons have to be examined with regard to consensus as a method for coming to decisions. Few canons from the tradition speak directly about the internal procedures for the running of a synod of any type in the Church. The canons speak directly about the need for provincial synods to take place once in the Spring and once in Fall (Apostolic 37, I Nicea 5, Antioch 20, Chalcedon 19, Trullo 8, II Nicea 6), though the exact time is up to the metropolitan (Antioch 20), at a place where the metropolitan bishop decides (Chalcedon 19, Trullo 8), and where he himself must preside in order for the gathering to accounted as a full synod (Antioch 16, 20). These canons provide for a wide range of topics that can be discussed at these meetings that can be summed up in the words of II Nicea 6. Synods, this canon says, meet in order to “discuss canonical and evangelical matters.” I Nicea 5 charges synods with making the necessary inquiries in matters under its consideration so that there might be “general consent” in their decisions. While the canons typically speak about the work of a provincial synod, they also refer the possibility of greater regional synods (Antioch 12, Constantinople 2), and a diocesan synod (I Constantinople 6). It is a reasonable inference that the procedures and activities of these synods are similar to those described for the provincial. Furthermore, the content of the canons themselves testify to the broad parameters of work that can be done by synods at any level of the Church. These parameters do no limit the work of subsequent synods, but testify to the wide expanse of work that councils of what type can undertake.

3.1. Consensus with the metropolitan

The expectation of the canonical tradition, as enumerated above all in Apostolic 34 and Antioch 9, is that there will be consensus amongst the synod, but especially between the metropolitan, he “who is first among them,” and the “bishops of every nation.” Apostolic 34 speaks of this reciprocal relationship squarely in the context of the heavenly order. Bishops can do nothing without the consent of the metropolitan, but he can do nothing without “the consent of all; for so there will be unanimity and God will be glorified.” Beyond these

particular canons, one must turn to the canons that speak about the synodal processes of electing bishops or deposing clergy as providing the paradigms for synodal procedures. These canons emphasize further the need for consensus amongst the members of a synod, but especially the synod with the metropolitan. I Nicea 4 provides both for the opportunity of bishops who are unable to travel to synod to send in their vote for episcopal election and express their consent. This canon concludes by saying that the right to confirm the election proceedings belongs alone to the metropolitan bishop. The language of I Nicea 6 on this point is even stronger, "if anyone is made bishop without the consent of the metropolitan, this great synod determines that such a one shall not be a bishop." From these canons it is clear, consensus of a synod requires the confirmation of its president.

3.2. The Decision of the Majority

While the canons on episcopal election do show preference for a consensus of unanimity, they also allow for what they call a "consensus of the majority." As mentioned, the second part of I Nicea 6 speaks about the ordination of a bishop, and says that "if however two or three by reason of personal rivalry dissent from the common vote of all, provided it is reasonable and in accordance with the church's canon, the vote of the majority shall prevail." Antioch 19, also regarding to the election of bishops, reiterates the synodal processes and strives for unanimity maintaining it as the rule, but acknowledges that it is possible "in the presence, or with the consent, of the majority." While a consensus of unanimity is hoped for, under certain circumstances a decision of the majority prevails.

3.3. Deposition of Bishops

That speak about the deposition of bishops look for consensus in this process, but make similar provision for a decision of the majority. While the canonical tradition looks for unanimity in the matter of depositions, as in any synodal action, even saying that when the decision for deposition of a bishop is unanimous, the judgment "stands firm" and is not open for an appeal to others for further consideration (Antioch 15). Antioch 14, however, allows a metropolitan to ask bishops of neighboring provinces to join his synod for the "settlement of all disputes," if that synod cannot reach consensus. The other bishops, according to the canon, "shall add their judgment and resolve the dispute, and thus, with those of the province, confirm what is determined." Notably absent here is a lack of requirement for a consensus of unanimity in the rendering of a decision. Rather the augmentation of neighbouring bishops could provide

for a decision one way or another based on a greater majority. Again, Antioch 15 describes what happens when there is unanimity amongst the bishops: “If any bishop, lying under any accusation, shall be judged by all the bishops in the province, and all shall unanimously deliver the same verdict concerning him, he shall not be again judged by others, but the unanimous sentence of the bishops of the province shall stand firm.” In other words, if the sentence is unanimous, there is no need to solicit other bishops to expand the provincial synod. But by implication, these two canons these two canons signal that a decision can be reached by a synod that is unanimous, but also by a consensus of majority. The regional council of Constantinople in AD 394 under Nektarios, decreed that the deposition of a bishop must be by “vote of a larger Council, and if possible of all the provincials..., in order that the condemnation of one deserving to be deposed may be shown by a vote of the majority, in the presence of the one being tried, with greater accuracy.”¹⁰

4. The Rule and Practice

As has been said, the rule and hope for the Church in its process of deliberation is for a consensus of unanimity among bishops gathered in synod. The canons themselves, in fact the whole canonical tradition itself, exists to protect and foster the method by which consensus is reached. And so, with the exception of matters of faith, certain provisions appear in the canons that allow under certain circumstances for a consensus of the majority. Drawing upon notable examples from Church history and conciliar practice, this allowance for the consensus of the majority can be witnessed. Two such notable examples can be drawn from the Council of Chalcedon. At the Fourth Session of the Council, after the deposition by the Council of Dioscoros, ten bishops from Egypt refused to sign the *Tome of Leo* or the conciliar *Acta*, even under great pressure from the members of the Council. They claimed that they could not sign because their archbishop had been deposed and the Alexandrian See was vacant. They did not have the authority on their own to agree to or sign anything. At the same council, at the Sixteenth Session, the Roman Legates demanded their objections to the adoption of what would become Chalcedon 28 be recorded in the official minutes. Pope Leo, whose *Tome* was famously affirmed at the Council, continued to protest the adoption of this canon long after the Council was over. Likewise at the Council in Trullo, the Penthekte, the Roman legates surely did not agree to canons that expressly condemned practices in their Church: Trullo 3, 13, 36 (maybe?), and certainly not 55. In all three examples cited here, each prominent in its own right,

¹⁰ As systematized by *The Pedalion*, this is canon 2 of this council.

the lack of agreement or the dissent are recorded by one Church in communion with other Churches, Roman and the Eastern Churches, Alexandria and the other Churches, and *remaining* in communion afterwards.

4.1. A Way Forward?

Any way forward from this seeming impasse between the two positions I have enumerated and discussed must acknowledge that there is no consensus in the discussion of consensus. Often, it would seem, different parties use this word with vastly different meanings. From this starting point – accepting that there are different meanings to this word – the different concerns can be addressed by both sides. So, the process of forming a consensus has to be looked at with careful attention to dissent and discerning whether it is mere obstruction, caused by human concerns, or a misunderstanding, and in reality a helpful contribution to the deliberation. If it is obstruction, the process of seeking consensus can move forward without full unanimity. The canonical tradition provides clear guidance on this. This progress is necessary for a successful outcome of any council. Likewise, the full resonance of a consensus of unanimity, conciliarity, synodality, sobornost has to be taken into consideration. Each Local Orthodox Church is both the One Church, and one of the many Orthodox Churches. The implications of this ecclesiological vision do not easily allow for anything less than a consensus that is marked by the unanimous assent of all the Orthodox Churches. As Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) has said, “Even if moral unanimity is an ideal of which in practice we regularly fall short, at least let us not seek to justify this state of affairs, but let us remain painfully conscious of our failure.”¹¹

4.2. Conclusion

To be sure, the way forward is more conciliar action on the part of the Church. The Church will develop a culture of consensus, with the full range of meaning of this word, only through continued and regular interaction, engagement, and dialogue.

¹¹ K. Ware, “Patterns of Episcopacy in the Early Church and Today: An Orthodox View,” *Bishops, but What Kind?* (P. Moore, ed.) (London 1982) 18-19.

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THE DOCUMENTS OF THE GREAT AND HOLY COUNCIL OF 2016 CONCERNING THE INNER LIFE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCUMENTS' CONTENT

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ABSTRACT. The present paper examines four Documents of the Great and Holy Council of 2016 concerning the Inner Life of the Orthodox Church: 1) *The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today*, 2) *Autonomy and the Means by Which it is Proclaimed*, 3) *The Orthodox Diaspora* and 4) *The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments*. The author notes the significant evolution of certain texts and assumptions that appear in the documents in the process of preparation.

Keywords: The Great and Holy Council, Importance of Fasting, Autonomy, The Orthodox Diaspora, The Sacrament of Marriage.

The Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church, which took place in 2016 on the island of Crete, accepted six documents which had been previously elaborated and confirmed by the Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conferences and later submitted to the Council as official document texts. In addition, the Council accepted two other documents which were entitled "The Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church" and "The Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church to the Orthodox people and to All People of Good Will"¹. Among the six official documents, two express the position of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church to the contemporary world: 1) *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World*, and 2) *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World. The Contribution of the Orthodox Church in realizing peace, justice, freedom, fraternity and love between nations and eliminating racial and other forms of discrimination*. However, four of the those documents make reference to issues that are related to the inner life of the Orthodox Church: 1) *The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today*, 2) *Autonomy and the Means by Which it is Proclaimed*, 3) *The Orthodox Diaspora* and 4) *The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments*.

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¹ Translations of all of the Council's documents can be found at www.holycouncil.org/documents.
French translations of the documents: *Contacts* no. 255 (2016).

The history of the preparations for the Great Council clearly bear witness to the fact that the list of topics which were intended to be prepared were significantly more rich and extensive². However, the First Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference which gathered in 1976 in Chambesy, confined the list to ten topics. Among these ten topics set by the First Conference in 1976 were found questions that express the stance of the Orthodox Church to the world and also those that concern the inner life of the Church. The topics that are related to the inner life of the Church include the following seven: 1) *The issue of the calendar*; 2) *The impediments to marriage*; 3) *The adaptation of the rules of fasting to contemporary conditions*; 4) *Autonomy and its Manner of Proclamation*; 5) *Autocephaly and its Manner of Proclamation*; 6) *The Diptychs of the Orthodox Church*; and 7) *The Orthodox Diaspora*. The remaining three issues concerned the relation of the Orthodox to the world: 1) *The relations of the Orthodox Church in the world*; 2) *The relations of the Orthodox Church to the ecumenical movement*; 3) *the contribution of the Orthodox Church to the realization of peace, justice, liberty, fraternity and love among peoples, and the elimination of racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination*³.

The next Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, which met in 1982 elaborated and accepted two of the seven documents concerning the inner life of the Church: 1) *The Impediments to marriage* and 2) *The issue of the calendar*⁴. In addition, there was also a significant discussion about the adaptation of the rules of fasting to contemporary conditions. A consensus was not reached in this matter and, as a result, the discussion and decision making process was postponed to the next meeting. The Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference met in 1986 and accepted four important texts for the future Council. Among those four topics, only one concerned the inner life of the Orthodox Church, i.e. fasting. The title of the document was changed along with certain assumptions. The document was named: *The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today*⁵.

² The list of issues and topics which was accepted by the First Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes in 1961 consisted of eight main sections divided into a series of points and sub-points. The elaboration of these topics proved to be a great task. It turned out that work on all of these topics exceeded the possibilities and potential of the particular local autocephalous Churches. As a result, the list of topics was significantly limited in subsequent years. The list of topics accepted by the First Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes in 1961 can be found in V. Ionita, *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009* (Fribourg, 2014), 123-130.

³ See *Synodica III*, Secretariat pour la preparation du Saint et Grande Concile de l'Eglise Orthodoxe, Chambésy- Genève (1979): 114.

⁴ See *Synodica VIII*, Secretariat pour la preparation du Saint et Grande Concile de l'Eglise Orthodoxe, Chambésy- Genève (1994): 198-191.

⁵ Text of the document: *Synodica X*, Secretariat pour la preparation du Saint et Grande Concile de l'Eglise Orthodoxe, Chambésy- Genève (2014): 293-296.

The remaining topics were the subject of debate at the Preparatory Commission in 1990 and 1993. Previously, the Secretary's office responsible for the preparations for the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church under the direction of Metropolitan Damascenus of Switzerland published a document in 1987 for the needs of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference indicating the common and discrepant points concerning four issues: 1) *The Orthodox Diaspora*; 2) *Autocephaly and its Manner of Proclamation*; 3) *Autonomy and its Manner of Proclamation* and 4) *Diptychs*.

The pace of the preparatory work in calling the Council after the Commission's meeting in 1993 significantly slowed down. However, the meeting of the Primate of the Local Orthodox Churches in 2008 in Constantinople gave a new impulse to prepare the Council. The decision of the Synaxis of Primates in 2008 resulted in calling the Forth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference which also took place in Chambesy in June 2009. This meeting resulted in elaborating and accepting the document on the *Orthodox Diaspora* along with the document on the *Rules of Functioning of Episcopal Assemblies in the Orthodox Diaspora*.

In subsequent years, the Preparatory Commission met with the intent of unraveling the problem of *Granting Autocephaly* and establishing one generally accepted *Diptychs*. These meetings did not produce any particular decisions, however the question of granting autocephaly was significantly worked on. The *Synaxis* of the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, which took place in 2014, was a key event in the preparations in calling the Council. At this meeting, the date of the future Council was set for Pentecost 2016. A special Commission for verifying and updating the documents already accepted at the Second and Third Pan-Orthodox Conferences in 1982 and 1986. The Commission met three times under the direction of the Metropolitan of Pergamon John (Zizioulas) between September 2014 and April 2015. The work of the Commission resulted in calling the Fifth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference between October 10-17, 2015. The Conference first worked under the direction of Metropolitan John of Pergamon and then under the direction of the Metropolitan of France Emanuel (Adamakis). The Conference corrected and unanimously accepted three documents that were prepared by the Commission. Two documents of interest were found: 1) *Autonomy and Its Manner of Proclamation*, and 2) *The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today*. In this manner, four documents concerning the inner life of the Orthodox Church became draft documents for the Great Council. When analyzing the particular stages of preparations, we can note the significant evolution of certain texts and assumptions that appear in the documents.

The Sacrament of Marriage and Its Impediments

The document entitled *The Sacrament of Marriage and Its Impediments* is one of the texts which was first to be worked on. The initial version of the topic was significantly limited and was entitled *The Impediments to Marriage*⁶. The problems resulting from the discussion that occurred during the Second Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in 1982 concerned several points, the most important of which are: 1) the possibility for the clergy to get married, 2) marriage between Orthodox Christians and non-Orthodox Christians, 3) the degree of kinship between those entering the Sacrament of Marriage.

In the opinion of certain representatives of the local Orthodox Churches that participated in the debates in 1982, there is a pastoral need that the Church in certain circumstances permit the clergy, i.e. deacons and priests to enter into marriage. As far as deacons are concerned, the proposal that was put forward and discussed at the Conference concerned the possibility to marry after ordination⁷. Moreover, a proposal for second marriage for priests who have become widowers as a result of unforeseen circumstances was also dismissed⁸. Both proposals, which would significantly change canonical tradition, were rejected.

The problem of mixed marriages was and still remains a great challenge for contemporary Orthodoxy. The discussion which was conducted during the Second Pan-Orthodox Conference on this matter explicitly pointed out that such marriage should be allowed. The representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate argued that civil marriages should also be treated as fully recognized and that the Eucharist should not be denied to those living in such relationships⁹. Marriage between a member of the Orthodox Church with another non-Orthodox Christian is allowed, however marriage between Orthodox Christians and non-Christians (agnostics, members of other religions) cannot be blessed by the Church. However, the Patriarchates of Moscow and Antioch clearly stated that already existing marriages between Orthodox Christians and non-Orthodox Christians should be regarded with pastoral responsibility and that the Eucharist should not be denied to Orthodox Christians married to non-Christians who desire to live according to their faith¹⁰. The version of the document in 1982 was quite open in its decisions and allowed for applying ecclesiastical economy (*oikonomia*) to a great extent.

⁶ *Synodica VIII*, 198-191.

⁷ See also pg. 125. Such practice would be in accordance with the statements contained in Canon 10 of the Synod of Ancyra (314). However, the recommendation of Canon 6 of the Council in Trullo clearly states that such practice is not permitted and the ordination of deacons and priests takes place after the candidate has been married.

⁸ *Synodica VIII*, 125.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 127-128.

This document proclaimed that: *Marriage between Orthodox and non-Christians is categorically forbidden in accordance with canonical akribeia. However, such marriages are possible for the sake of pastoral understanding and love provided that the children of such couples are baptized and brought up in the Orthodox Church. Local Churches may make decisions about applying economy in specific situations according to pastoral sensitivity (7a)*¹¹. It turns out that marriages between Orthodox Christians and non-Christians can be permitted: *marriages between Orthodox Christians and non-Christians or non-believers are categorically forbidden according to canonical rules (akribeia). Local Orthodox Churches can however permit such a marriage by applying pastoral economy towards Orthodox Christians while taking into consideration particular pastoral sensitivity (7b)*.

The issue of the degree of kinship by blood and kinship by affinity was mainly decided on the basis of Canon 54 of the Council in Trullo. However, it seems that the formulation in the document was more strict than the canon itself, which did not permit marriage in the context of kinship “with the daughter of one’s brother.” This would mean that a relationship to the third degree is not allowed, however a marriage to the fourth degree of kinship would be permitted¹². In the opinion of certain local Church representatives, such a solution should be applied. Textbooks of Canon Law indicate that marriages to the fourth degree of kinship are not permitted, however such relationships to the fifth degree of kinship are permitted with the bishop’s blessing¹³. In the text accepted in 1982, it was stated that marriage at the fifth degree of kinship is not permitted. The problem seems to not have been fully resolved and for this reason, the document which was accepted by the Council in Crete does not outline specific degrees of kinship, but the authors of the text make reference to Canons 53 and 54 of the Council in Trullo, calling for its application and *ecclesiastical practices as currently applied in local autocephalous Orthodox Churches (II,1)*.

The document on marriage was completed and corrected by the Special Commission, which was called into being for this purpose and gathered for its third meeting between March 29 – April 3, 2015 in Chambesy. However, a fundamental change in the document’s content was accepted at the Synaxis of Primates of the local autocephalous Orthodox Churches in January 2016. The Moscow Patriarchate proposed that a paragraph be added that would emphasise the importance of the

¹¹ See Ionita, 155.

¹² Metropolitan of Mount Lebanon Georges (Hodr) drew attention to the fact that the Antiochian Church has struggled for years with this problem and does not permit marriages to the fourth degree of kinship. However, the Greek Catholic Church allows such relationships and some Orthodox Christians leave Orthodox to join the Greek Catholic Church. Within the Patriarchate of Alexandria and Jerusalem, such marriages were permitted. See *Synodica VIII*, 126, 130.

¹³ See A. Znosko, *Prawosławne Prawo Kościelne* (Warszawa, 1975), 75; V. Cypin, *Kurs Cerkownogo Prawa*, (Moskwa, 2002), 551.

institution of marriage in contemporary times when it is neglected in favour of informal relationships and for other important reasons. In this manner, the document which was initially called: *Impediments to Marriage* became *The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments*. The changes which occurred between the initial and final versions and the discussions, which surrounded the origin of the document are quite interesting and deserve greater analysis. Due to the lack of space, I will limit myself to one aspect, which significantly differs in the initial and final versions of this document. The document, which was accepted by the Council in 2016 referred to the issue of mixed marriages in a more strict manner than the text proposed and accepted in 1982. To a great extent, the attitude of the Church in Georgia influenced this situation¹⁴. The Fathers of the Council took the Church of Georgia's attitude into consideration, and as a result, the formulation of this issue became for restrictive and at the same time ambivalent: *Marriage between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians is forbidden according to canonical akribeia (Canon 72 of the Quinisext Ecumenical Council). However, the possibility of the exercise of ecclesiastical oikonomia in relation to impediments to marriage must be considered by the Holy Synod of each autocephalous Orthodox Church*.

In this manner, the document on marriage on the one hand became significantly developed throughout its evolution, while, on the other hand, it received a more radical character in some respects.

The Significance of Fasting and Its Observance Today

The document on fasting in its initial form was accepted at the Third Pre-Council Pan-Orthodox Conference in 1986. However, the debate over this document began at the Second Conference in 1982. The title of the document which was drafted by the First Pre-Council Pan-Orthodox Conference was: *Adaptation of Rules of Fasting to Contemporary Conditions*. The preparations of this document for the needs of the Commission were delegated to the Church in Serbia. As such, the title of the document indicated and announced great changes in the Orthodox fasting tradition. The suggestions and proposals of certain local Churches called for shortening the Nativity Fast, eliminating the Apostles' Fast and a less strict approach to Great Lent¹⁵. It turned out that

¹⁴ At the Fifth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, which took place 10-17 October, 2015, the Georgian Church expressed its objection to mixed marriages on the basis of Canon 72 of the Council in Trullo. The problem was also raised at the Synaxis of Local Primates in January 2016 when the majority of local Churches accepted the document as a project for the Council. The Patriarch of Georgia refrained from signing the text due to the fact that such marriages were permitted.

¹⁵ See *Synodica VIII*, s. 164.

the document prepared for the needs of the Commission did not include such adaptations to contemporary conditions, but did make reference to the traditional periods of fasting and drew attention to the importance and need for fasting in the life of Christians. For this reason, part of the Conference's participants believed that the content of the document prepared did not reflect its title or solve the problem¹⁶. The discussion related to fasting indicated two tendencies on the part of the Conference's participants: 1) reformatory, which emphasised the need for change in the tradition and practice of fasting and 2) traditional, which demonstrated the need for maintaining the fasts as an important element of the life and spirituality of the Orthodox Church¹⁷. The traditional voices prevailed, thus the Conference decided to change the title of the document in order to reflect the actual content: *The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today*.

However, the document turned out to be a well-balanced text and more pastoral in nature than disciplinary. The authors of the text avoided expressions that would sanction people who chose not to fast (Ap. 69). It was also noted that local Churches should take their local geographical conditions into consideration when indicating the products that can be consumed during the fast.

The Special Commission, which analysed and completed the document in 2015, found that document was good enough and introduced only small changes.

Orthodox Diaspora

The text on the Orthodox diaspora was accepted at the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in Chambésy in 2009. Work on this document commenced considerably earlier. In 1987, The Secretary's office responsible for preparations for the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church under the direction of Metropolitan Damascenus (Papandreu) of Switzerland published a report prepared on the basis of analyses sent from local Churches on common ground and points of divergence concerning the understanding of four topics which remained to be elaborated as projects for the future Council¹⁸. Among those topics was found the issue of the diaspora. Six Churches send their comments on the four topics¹⁹. In the opinions sent, a common stance was reached with regards the needs for a quick solution to the problem of the diaspora. This need was a result of Orthodox ecclesiology and the canonical requirements of Canon 8

¹⁶ Ibid., 156.

¹⁷ See the ongoing discussion, *Synodica VIII*, 156-170.

¹⁸ *Dokład o sovpadienijach i raschożdzenijach po czetyrem temam powiestki dnia IV Wsepravoslavnogo Predsobornogo Soviesczanija* (Chambésy, Genève, 1987) (typescript). The topics which were outlined in the report were 1) The Orthodox Diaspora, 2) Autocephaly and its Means by Which it is Proclamation, 3) Autonomy and the Means by Which it is Proclamation, 4) Diptychs.

¹⁹ Remarks were sent by: the Patriarch of Constantinople, Patriarch of Alexandria, Patriarch of Antioch, Patriarch of Moscow, Patriarch of Romania and the Church of Greece.

of the First Ecumenical Council, which states that only one bishop can reside in a given city. However, the main discrepancy was found in the interpretation of the role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in relation to Churches that function outside the areas of autocephalous Orthodox Churches²⁰.

The discussion and work on the preparations of the documents were conducted by the Preparatory Commission in 1990 and 1993. The meetings resulted in elaborated documents which were submitted to the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in 2009 in Chambesy. The Conference supplemented and accepted the text to be submitted to the future Council. The problem of the diaspora was not definitively resolved and this was clearly stated in the document accepted in Crete in 2016: *It is affirmed that is the common will of all of most holy Orthodox Churches that the problem of the Orthodox Diaspora be resolved as quickly as possible, and that it be organized in accordance with Orthodox ecclesiology, and the canonical tradition and practice of the Orthodox Church (§ 1a)*. It also turns out that the current proposals presented in the document do not solve this issue at all: *it is affirmed that during the present phase it is not possible, for historical and pastoral reasons, an immediate transition to the strictly canonical order of the Church on this issue, that is, the existence of only one bishop in the same place. Therefore, it has been decided to keep the Episcopal Assemblies instituted by the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference until the appropriate time arrives when all the conditions exist in order to apply the canonical exactness (§1b)*. The temporary solution is establishing a so-called Episcopal Assembly in the areas of diaspora. In the opinion of the representatives of the local Orthodox Churches assembled at the Commission sessions in 1990 and 1993, there are 8 regions²¹ in which such Episcopal Assemblies should arise. However, the Fourth Conference (2009) spoke of 12 such regions²² and the Council in Crete (2016) mentioned 13. A fundamental addition to the document on the diaspora is the Rules of the Episcopal Assembly's Function in the Orthodox diaspora, which determines the competence and rights of the Episcopal Assembly.

²⁰ Greek canonists draw particular attention to the question of diaspora for the Church of Greece when interpreting Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council. See. *Uczestie Vselenskogo Patriarchata w razrabotkie tiemy „Prawosławnoje razsiejanije”*, *ibid.*, 8. In the opinion of the Patriarchs of Antioch, Moscow and Romania, such an interpretation leads to usurping the rights of jurisdictions to the so-called diaspora by Constantinople.

²¹ See. *Meżprawosławnaja Podgotowitielnaja Komisja Swiatago i Wielikogo Sobora 7-13 nojabrja 1993; Chabnesy 1994*, 218 (typescript).

²² See *Synodica XII*, Secretariat pour la preparation du Saint et Grande Concile de l'Eglise Orthodoxe, Chambesy 2015, 258.

Autonomy

The document concerning *Autonomy and the Means by Which it is Proclaimed*, as in the case of the document on the diaspora, was not subject to much change throughout its preparation process. This document was accepted at the Fifth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in 2015, however work on its preparation commenced after the Third Pan-Orthodox Conference (1986). In his report on common ground and points of divergence with reference to 4 topics (the diaspora, autocephaly, autonomy and diptychs), when speaking of autonomy, Metropolitan Damascenus (Papandreu) noted two main ways of its proclamation: 1) the first manner significantly underlines the role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as the Church, which enjoys the highest level of authority in the Orthodox Church, 2) The second manner indicates the fundamental role of the Mother-Church in the territory in which an autonomous structure is formed and under whose canonical jurisdiction this new structure will remain²³.

It seems that the second option, which emphasised the role of the Mother-Church, was adopted in the text on autonomy accepted at the Fifth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (2015) and in the text accepted by the Council in Crete (2016). Such wording was found in §1 of the document: *The institution of autonomy is a canonical expression of the relative or partial independence of a particular ecclesial region from the canonical jurisdiction of the autocephalous Church to which it canonically belongs.* Granting autonomy to a particular ecclesiastical territory depends on the Mother-Church. This means in practice that if a specific part of the autocephalous Church desires more independence and autonomy, it then submits an application to the Council or Synod of that Church. The further procedure is described in the following manner in the document: *Upon receiving the application, the autocephalous Church considers, in Synod, all of the prerequisites and reasons for the submission, and decides whether or not to grant autonomy. In the event of a favorable decision, the autocephalous Church issues a Tomos, which defines the geographical boundaries of the autonomous Church and its relationship with the autocephalous Church to which it refers, in accordance with the established criteria of ecclesial Tradition (§ 2b).* The Primate of the autocephalous Church then informs the Ecumenical Patriarch and the other autocephalous Churches about proclaiming the autonomy of the Church (§ 2c). The new Autonomous Church will then act through the autocephalous Church in its Pan-Orthodox and Inter-religious contacts. Granting autonomy can only take place within the borders of canonical geographical region of a given autocephalous Church and cannot occur in territorial diasporas with the exception of specific situations (§ 2e).

²³ See *Dokład o sovpadienijach i raschozhdienijach...*, *ibid.*, 14.

All of the documents which were prepared for the Great Council are the result of long tedious work, which was carried out by all of the local Orthodox Churches over several years. They are the result of a certain compromise, which is necessary for expressing the specific spirit of Orthodoxy which includes the vast range of opinions within particular Churches. Finding a common standpoint proves to be difficult even within Orthodoxy. Local Churches live in specific geopolitical, ecclesiastical and ecumenical conditions and it appears that these issues to a great extent shape our approach to many topics. It turns out that the Council that took place in Crete (2016) was not fully successful. The fact that four local Churches were not present had an impact on the Council's authority. All of the topics set out in the preparatory phase for the Council were not elaborated. This means that future work and co-operation of the local Orthodox Churches is necessary just as the need for expressing a common stance on the remaining topics.

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THE CANONICAL TRADITION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL BETWEEN RECEPTION AND REJECTION

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ABSTRACT. With this paper the author tries to answer questions raised by some of the detractors of the Holy and Great Council. He is analysing from the point of view of Orthodox Canon Law if the delegation of bishops and the principle of representativeness are canonical realities in accordance with the Orthodox tradition of the Church and valid manifestations of synodality, if the number of bishops participating in a Council is a true criterion of ecumenicity and if monastics and laymen were totally bypassed in the preconiliar preparatory process and in the sessions of the Holy and Great Council.

Keywords: Holy and Great Council, number of bishops, laymen participation, Canon Law, ecumenical and general council, reception

Motto: "When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete. We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens".

(Acts 27:7-8)

"Since those who for any reason, whether of an ecclesiastical or of corporeal nature, are absent from the holy Council and have remained in their own town or district, ought not to be left in ignorance of the Councils regulations regarding them, we make known to your holiness and love..."¹.

(First Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council)

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¹ D. Cummings, trans., *The Rudder (Pedalion) of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Orthodox Christians = or, All the sacred and divine canons as embodied in the original Greek text for the sake of authenticity and explained in the vernacular by way of rendering them more intelligible to the less educated.*, (Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), 226; "ἐχρῆν καὶ τοὺς ἀπολειφθέντας τῆς ἁγίας συνόδου, καὶ μείναντας κατὰ χώραν, ἢ πόλιν, διὰ τινὰ αἰτίαν, ἢ ἐκκλησιαστικὴν, ἢ σωματικὴν, μὴ ἀγνοῆσαι τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ τετυπωμένα, γνωρίζομεν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ ἀγιότητι καὶ ἀγάπῃ". For the Greek text see: Giuseppe Alberigo, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum*

The importance of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, that took place on the island of Crete from June 16th to 26th, 2016², is given by its positive and simultaneously negative reactions and by the greatness of this historical event for our modern Orthodox Church and theology. In spite of this, the positive and negative approaches, both before and after the Council, have not yet received a detailed theological analysis, the comments on the Holy and Great Council being, almost all the time, an unjustified condemnation³ of the Council with arguments and slogans of Church propaganda, lacking in academic consistency, or just an immediate approbation of all its aspects, leaving aside certain deficiencies of the pre-conciliar and final decisions. A careful analysis of these reactions can show that the actual orthodox theological debate is based, in most of the cases, exclusively on interviews, online commentaries, blogs and newspaper articles, even on Facebook commentaries, such as Cyril Hovorun's "book", entitled: "Curiosities of the Great and Awful Council"⁴, a book with more than 5000 views⁵. At the same time, the official page of the Holy and Great Council (<http://holycouncil.org>) was visited in the last five months, from January to May 2017, just twenty thousand times, with average visit duration of 04:16 minutes⁶. The reactions against the Council have more popularity than the final decisions of the Council. The texts are often rejected without being read in the framework of the whole canonical and doctrinal Tradition of

generaliumque decreta: editio critica, Corpus Christianorum 1, Istituto per le scienze religiose (Bologna) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 83; Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IIe-IXe s.)*, 1.1: *Les canons des conciles oecuméniques (IIe-IXe s.)*, Codification canonique orientale, Fonti, Série 1 (Roma: Grottaferrata, 1962), 57-65. Georgios A. Rhalles, Michael Potles, eds., *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων* vol. 2 (Athena, 1852), 192-215.

² The Council of Crete began on June 16, 2016, with the official welcome of each Church delegation and ended on Sunday June 26, 2016. All the texts were discussed during these ten days.

³ The Holy and Great Council was already condemned by some of the Orthodox Theologians and bishops even before the Council took place. An example for this is the Conference: "Αγία και Μεγάλη Σύνοδος. Μεγάλη προετοιμασία, χωρίς προσδοκίες" Αίθουσα «Μελίνα Μερκούρη» του Σταδίου Ειρήνης και Φιλίας, Πειραιώς. The papers of the Conference were translated from Greek into Romanian, and were used after the Council against the Romanian Bishops that signed the documents: Tatiana Petrache and Marius Pop, eds., "*Sfântul și Marele Sinod*" (Creta, 2016). *Între providență și eșec* (Oradea: Editura Astradrom, 2016).

⁴ Cyril Hovorun, *Кунсткамера Великого и Ужасного (Curiosities of the Great and Awful Council)* (Москва: Христианский книжный клуб, 2016). Cyril Hovorun is Professor at Yale University. His book is a compendium of Facebook commentaries on the Holy and Great Council, considered as "Great and Awful Council", illustrated by caricatured images of the Council and bishops, transforming this "book" into an awful pamphlet of the Holy and Great Council. The book is lacking in any real academic consistency. I believe that this "book" does not honour our Orthodox Theology and the theological debate, or the remarkable theologian Cyril Hovorun.

⁵ https://www.academia.edu/26715123/Кирилл_Говорун_Кунсткамера_Великого_и_Ужасного_Curiosities_of_the_Great_and_Awful_Council_Москва_Христианский_книжный_клуб_2016

⁶ <https://www.similarweb.com/website/holycouncil.org#overview>

the Orthodox Church⁷. This shows, on the one side, the seriousness with which this Council is or is not treated, and, on the other side, the level of development of our current Orthodox theological debates on the final decisions of the Holy and Great Council. We even can find more academic studies and articles about the Council in Crete in the journals and books published by catholic and protestant theologians⁸ than by the Orthodox.

⁷ A good example of an unjustified condemnation of the Council is the paper of Fr. Peter Heers (The "Council" of Crete and the New Emerging Ecclesiology: An Orthodox Examination: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/the-council-of-crete-and-the-new-emerging-ecclesiology-an-orthodox-examination>) who compares the Council of Crete with the Second Vatican Council: "Another point which unfortunately forges kinship between the two gatherings is the absence of any demonology. It is indicative as to the mindset and priorities of the drafters of the conciliar texts that nowhere, in any of the texts, does one find the following terms: Devil, demon, diabolical, or evil one; Heresy, heretic, schism or schismatic". It is quite interesting how the author considers demonology as a fundamental character of ecumenicity and orthodoxy, a text is truly orthodox when it contains demonological terminology. Unfortunately the author contradicts himself by writing in the footnotes: "[5] In the texts of the Second Vatican Council matters are slightly better. In *Lumen Gentium* the devil is referred to four times, although in *Unitatis Redintegratio* he is not mentioned. [6] The only exception to this latter case, is when the ecclesiological heresy of phyletism is mentioned in the Encyclical of the Primates, which is also quite indicative of the priorities of the meeting." If we analyse the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church we can see the following: the word "διάβολος" is used in the Canonical Tradition just 8 times (canon 2 Nicaea, 66 Carthage, 1, 2, 9, 11 Peter of Alexandria, 1 Athanasius, two times); the word "δαίμων" is used 6 times (canon 79 apostolic, 60 Trullo, 5 Peter, 87 Basil the Great, 3 Gregory of Nyssa, used two times), the word "πονηρός" is used just 4 times (canon 4 Protodeutera, 9 Peter, 1 Athanasius, 85 Basil the Great). For a comparison between Second Vatican Council and the Council of Crete, see: Alexey Yudin, "Тематика II Ватиканского собора и повестка Всеправославного собора в подготовительный период: параллели и различия (The Agenda of Vatican II Council and of Pan-Orthodox Council in the Preparatory Period: Parallels and Differences)", *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом* 1 (2016): 165–81.

⁸ See for example: Eva Maria Synek, *Das 'Heilige und Grosse Konzil' von Kreta* (Freistadt, Verlag Plöchl Freistadt, 2017); Reinhard Thöle, 'Ein hohes Ideal zahlt einen hohen Preis. Zur Heiligen und Großen Synode der Orthodoxen Kirche auf Kreta', *Ökumenische Rundschau* 1 (2017): 6–11; Martin Illert, 'Die Bulgarische Orthodoxe Kirche und die Heilige und Große Synode', *Ökumenische Rundschau* 1 (2017): 42–47; Johannes Oeldemann, 'Die Heilige und Große Synode der Orthodoxen Kirche auf Kreta. Eine erste Einordnung aus katholischer Sicht', *Ökumenische Rundschau*, 2017, 48–58; Dagmar Heller, 'Das (Heilige und Große) Konzil der Orthodoxen Kirchen 2016 auf Kreta in ökumenischer Perspektive', *Ökumenische Rundschau* 1 (2017): 59–72; Alberto Melloni, 'Le Saint et Grand Concile de Crète, juin 2016', *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (September 2016): 323–37; Frère Richard, 'L'espérance d'une dynamique conciliaire', *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 338–41; Michelina Tenace, 'Le Concile - page d'histoire d'un livre ouvert sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité', *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (September 2016): 342–47; Ivana Noble, 'Quelques remarques issues du "reste du monde chrétien"', *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 348–51; Gisa 1970- Bauer, 'Die heilige und große Synode 2016: Geschichte, Verlauf, Beschlüsse', 2016; Johannes 1964- Oeldemann, 'Konzil auf Kreta: die lang erwartete Panorthodoxe Synode tritt im Juni 2016 zusammen', 2016; Johannes Oeldemann, 'Konzil auf Kreta', *Herder Korrespondenz* 70, no. 3 (March 2016): 25–28; Norbert Zonker, 'Fragile Einheit: nach dem Konzil von Kreta bleibt die Orthodoxie zerstritten', *Herder Korrespondenz* 70, no. 8 (August 2016): 9–10; Joseph Famerée, 'Autocephaly: Questions from a Roman Catholic', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1–2 (2016): 133–47; Anne Marie Reijnen, 'Fasting--Some

The lack of a consistent theological evaluation from the Orthodox academic community of the final documents of the Holy and Great Council⁹ led to the radicalization of those who wanted to “protect” Orthodoxy against itself. Even 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 on the websites of some Autocephalous Churches, being translated into several languages. At least we can find some translations and studies, but they are just few exceptions to this rule¹⁰.

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): 269–78; Ivana Noble, ‘The Future of the Orthodox “Diaspora”--an Observer’s Point of View’, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1–2 (2016): 171–88; Barbara Hallensleben, ‘Sister Churches: Hermeneutical Principle within the Relationship among Christian Churches Ad Intra and Ad Extra’, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1–2 (2016): 219–33; Barbara Hallensleben, ‘Ein Panorthodoxes Konzil--ohne die Orthodoxen?: Bericht über ein Internationales Kolloquium in Paris’, *Catholica* 67, no. 2 (2013): 97–100; Peter de Mey, ‘The Role of the Observers during the Second Vatican Council’, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1–2 (2016): 33–51. Even the German translation of the final documents of the Council in Crete is made by a Catholic theologian: Barbara Hallensleben, ed., *Einheit in Synodalität: die offiziellen Dokumente der Orthodoxen Synode auf Kreta 18. bis 26. Juni 2016*, Epiphania (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2016).

⁹ Although some articles were published on the pre-conciliar and post-conciliar decisions, very few academic studies have considered the analysis of the proposed texts, most of the time summing up just the general content of the documents, not trying to evaluate and comment on the texts. Some exceptions for the pre-conciliar documents can be mentioned: John Chryssavgis, *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Retrieving a Culture of Conciliarity and Communion*, Faith Matters Series (New York: Department of Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 2016); published first as: John Chryssavgis, ‘Toward the Great and Holy Council: Retrieving a Culture of Conciliarity and Communion’, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2016): 317–32; Nathanael Symeonides, ed., *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Theological Reflections*, Faith Matters Series (New York: Department of Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 2016).

¹⁰ 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) (forthcoming). Ukrainian Translation: *Документи Святого і Великого Собору Православної Церкви. Крит, 2016*, trans. Юрій Вестель, Дмитро Каратеев, 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 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 orthodox academic evaluation of the document see the first issue on 2017 of the journal *Catholica*. *Vierteljahresschrift für ökumenische Theologie* dedicated to the Holy and Great Council: Vasilios N. Makrides, “Zwischen Tradition und Erneuerung. Das Panorthodoxe Konzil 2016 angesichts der modernen Welt”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 18–32; Sergii Bortnyk, “Zwischen Tradition und Erneuerung. Die Sendung der Orthodoxen Kirche in der heutigen Welt”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 33–37; Vladimir Khulap, “Die Orthodoxe Kirche

What can be observed from this lack of official reaction¹¹ is the rapid polarization of the opinions of some theologians or non-theologians, few in number but very vocal, especially on the internet and among Orthodox laymen without a solid theological education, but with an eagerness to defend Orthodoxy against the “ecumenist” bishops that signed the documents of “betrayal”. If the opinions against the documents issued after the Council are partly justified, the authors references to the final texts, the condemnation of the Council of Crete before its convocation shows nothing else than an eschatological anxiety, a hypothetical fear of the events that are “already, but not yet”, a fundamental rejection of the synodal structure of the Church on the ground that this Council could become the eighth ecumenical council, an eschatological or antichrist council, due to its symbolic number eight¹².

zwischen Universalität und Ethnizität Autokephalie, Diaspora und die Beziehungen zwischen Konstantinopel und Moskau”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 38-43, Athanasios Vletsis, “Fragmentierung oder ökumenische Öffnung der Orthodoxie? Plädoyer für eine neue Beziehung zwischen Universalität und Lokalität der Kirche”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 44-51, Rade Kistic, “Die Fundamente stärken. Ein Kommentar zum Dokument des Konzils von Kreta über die “Beziehungen der Orthodoxen Kirche zu der übrigen christlichen Welt”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 52-59, Evgeny Pilipenko, “Zum Ökumene-Dokument der Orthodoxen Synode auf Kreta. Einige Überlegungen in Reaktion auf das Referat von Rade Kistic”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 60-63, Viorel Ioniță, “Der lange Weg zur Heiligen und Großen Synode der Orthodoxen Kirche und seine Perspektiven”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 64-71; Anna Briskina-Müller, “Das Konzil von Kreta als Anfang - oder: was zu tun bleibt”, *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 72-85.

¹¹ We can mention for the pre-conciliar documents and for the debates before the *Synaxis of the Primates* held in Chambesy, January 2016, the following academic papers: George E. Matsoukas, ed., *Orthodox Christianity at the Crossroad: A Great Council of the Church – When and Why* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2009). For the evaluation of the final decisions of the Council, we can mention the following papers: Dimitrios Bathrellos, ‘Le Saint et Grand Concile: présentation et appréciation’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 352–58; Raymond Rizk, ‘Saint et Grand Concile ou Concile source de tension?’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 359–68; Serge Chapnin, ‘Le Concile de Crète a eu lieu, les problèmes restent’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 369–75; André Shishkov, ‘Sur le Concile de Crète’, *Contacts* 68, no. 255 (2016): 376–79; Dimitar Arnaudov, ‘Apport et réception du Saint et Grand Concile’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 380–84; Ioan Tulcan, ‘L’importance du Saint et Grand Concile orthodoxe de Crète’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 385–90; Noël Ruffieux, ‘Un concile inachevé’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 391–97; Kartachev Antoine, ‘Annexe 1 : Les Conciles œcuméniques et La Conciliarité’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 398–418; Peter Bouteneff, ‘Annexe 2 : Les Implications de La Méthode Du Consensus’, *Contacts* 255, no. 68 (2016): 419–22.

¹² A good example of this is represented by the statements of Professor Dimitrios Tselengidis at the Conference of Piraeus, March 23, 2016: “We will pray daily, with pain of heart, that the Triune God will not allow this Council to take place, because it is clear from its composition and subject matter that it will create more problems than it aspires to resolve.” For the Romanian translation see: Dimitrios Tselenghídis, ‘Poate un Sinod al ortodocșilor să acorde caracter de Biserică eterodocșilor și să definească diferit identitatea de până acum a Bisericii?’, in *“Sfântul și Marele Sinod” (Creta, 2016). Între providență și eșec*, ed. Tatiana Petrache (Oradea: Editura Astradrom, 2016), 107. For the Greek paper see: K. Δημήτριος Τσελεγγίδης. “Μπορεί μία Σύνοδος Ὁρθοδόξων νά προσδώσει ἐκκλησιαστικότητα στους ἑτεροδόξους καί νά ὀριοθετηθεῖ διαφορετικά τήν ἕως τώρα ταυτότητα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας;” <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/dat/storage/dat/E9DAC65B/tselengidis.pdf>

As far as the event and meeting on the island of Crete are taken into consideration, it should be emphasized that in Crete, synodality at the universal level, was reinforced in the pan-orthodox practice after a considerable absence. Even though the history of the second Christian millennium records some general councils¹³, however, the manifestation of synodality at the highest level – the universal one – appeared in the last decades more often in the voluminous handbooks of Orthodox ecclesiology, as a principle of the ideal structure of the Church, than in the real life of the Orthodox Church¹⁴. Synodality at the universal level is and remains a topic much debated in current Orthodox theology, creating various misunderstandings and disagreements, especially after the Ravenna document¹⁵. It is certain that the resumption of this synodal practice in the life of the Church and the dialog at the universal level were a considerable effort for the Orthodox Church¹⁶, being more than just an occasional sending of letters from the primate of an autocephalous Church to the others on the occasion of some Orthodox feasts that, apart from Easter, are not celebrated on the same day in the Orthodox Church¹⁷. This is one of the reasons that this

¹³ For a list of General Councils of the Orthodox Church, see: Chrysavgis, *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Retrieving a Culture of Conciliarity and Communion*, 13, note 18.

¹⁴ Johannes Oeldemann, 'Die Synodalität in der Orthodoxen Kirche', *Catholica* 70, no. 2 (April 2016): 133–48.

¹⁵ For the debate on Ravenna Document, see: Cristian Vasile Petcu, 'The Theological Premises and Canonical Consequences of Church Synodality as Reflected in the Ravenna Document', *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 5, no. 2 (2014); Joseph Famerée, "'Communion Ecclésiale, Conciliarité et Autorité': Le Document de Ravenne", *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 40, no. 2 (2009): 236–47; 'A Common Response to the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church Regarding the Ravenna Document "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity, and Authority" by the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 54, no. 1–4 (Spring-Winter 2009): 302–10. For the relation between primacy and synodality and the Holy and Great Council see: Athanasios Vletsis, "Ein orthodoxer Primat? Die Neu-Gestaltung von Primatsvorstellungen unterwegs zur Einberufung des Panorthodoxen Konzils", *Una Sancta*, 2 (2015): 93–118; Andrey Shishkov, 'Спорные экклезиологические вопросы повестки Всеправославного собора и проблема верховной власти в Православной церкви (Controversial Ecclesiological Issues of the Pan-Orthodox Council Agenda and the Question of Sovereign Power in the Orthodox Church)', *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом* 1 (2016): 210–54.

¹⁶ Cyril Hovorun highlights the importance of the very process of preparation of the Council that has benefitted the Church by the aim of revealing the internal problems of the Church: Cyril Hovorun, 'Critique of the Church through the Prism of the Panorthodox Council', *Θεολογία* 87, no. 1 (2016): 65–66.

¹⁷ Unfortunately, the problem of the common calendar, although it was one of the most important themes, had not reached a consensus and it was pulled out from the agenda of the Holy and Great Council. Franz Mali, "Julianische Berechnung des Osterdatums und Gregorianischer Kalender?", *Ostkirchliche Studien* 53 (2004): 309–327; Alkiviadis C. Calivas, "The Date of Pascha, the Need to Continue the Debate", *The Greek orthodox theological review*, 35 (1990): 333–343. D. P. Ogitsky, "Canonical norms of the Orthodox Easter computation and the problem of the dating of Pascha in our time", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 17 no 4 (1973): 274–284. Anastasios Kallis, *Auf dem*

effort has not been completely without difficulties and deficiencies. From the long period of pre-conciliar preparations¹⁸ to the refusal of participation of certain autocephalous Churches in the Holy and Great Synod¹⁹, the Council of

Weg zu einem heiligen und großen Konzil Titelzusatz: ein Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch zur orthodoxen Ekklesiologie (Münster: Theophano-Verlag, 2013), 105 -108. B. Gheorghiu, "Die Kalendarfrage", in: Hamilkas S Alivizatos, *Procès-verbaux du premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe à Athènes, 29 Novembre - 6 Décembre 1936* (Athènes: Pysos, 1939), 300-308. For a pre-conciliar analyse of this theme see: Vladimir Khulap, 'Pastoral Problems of a Reform of the Liturgical Calendar in Russia', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1-2 (2016): 65-77; Thomas Pott, 'The Problem of a Common Calendar: Do We Need to Reform Our Liturgical Calendar or Our Understanding of the Time of Salvation?', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1-2 (2016): 79-89; Pierre Sollogoub, 'Why a Reform of the Established Liturgical Calendar and of the Eastern Date Is Necessary', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1-2 (2016): 53-64.

¹⁸ For the pre-conciliar documents, see: Anastasios Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil: ein Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch zur orthodoxen Ekklesiologie* (Münster: Theophano-Verlag, 2013); Viorel Ionita, ed., *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church: The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009* (Freiburg: Basel: Reinhardt, Friedrich, 2014); Viorel Ionita, ed., *Hotărârile întrunirilor Panortodoxe Din 1923 Până în 2009: Spre Sfântul și Marele Sinod Al Bisericii Ortodoxe* (București: Basilica, 2013); 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); *Actes de la Conférence des chefs et des représentants des églises orthodoxes autocéphales: réunis à Moscou à l'occasion de la célébration solennelle des fêtes du 500ème anniversaire de l'autocéphalie de l'Église orthodoxe russe, 8-18 juillet 1948*, vol. I- II (Moscou: Éd. du patriarcat de Moscou, 1950) and the collection *Synodika* edited by the Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, Chambésy-Genève, vol. I-XIV, available online on the official webpage of the Center: <https://sites.google.com/site/centreorthodoxegr/ekdoseis/synodika>. A good overview of the preconciliar process is made by: Viorel Ioniță, "Auf dem Weg zum heiligen und Großen Konzil der orthodoxen Kirche", *Una Sancta*, 2 (2015): 82-92; Andrey Gusev, 'История подготовки Всеправославного собора (History of the Preparation of the Pan-Orthodox Council)', *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом* 1 (2016): 127-64; Viorel Ioniță, 'On the Way to the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church', in *Orthodoxie Im Dialog: Historische Und Aktuelle Perspektiven*, ed. Reinhard Flogaus and Jennifer Wasmuth, *Arbeiten Zur Kirchengeschichte* 130 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, n.d.), 413-434; Noël Ruffieux, 'The Preparation and Reception of the Council', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1-2 (2016): 11-32.

¹⁹ Four of the fourteen orthodox Autocephalous Churches decided not to participate in the Holy and Great Council two weeks before the Council. The Orthodox Church Bulgaria was the first Church refusing to participate in the Council (decision of June 1, 2016), then the Orthodox Church of Antioch (decision of June 6, 2016), the Orthodox Church of Georgia (decision of June 10), and the Russian Orthodox Church (decision of June 13). On June 1, 2016, two weeks before the Council of Crete, the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church decided, by an unexpected and surprising attitude, not to participate in the Holy and Great Council of Crete, although the approval and signatures of the Bulgarian Church delegations can be found on all Pre-conciliar Documents. The document "The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World" was signed at the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches in Chambésy, January 21-28, 2016, by the Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria; The document "Autonomy and the means by which it is proclaimed" was signed on October 15, 2015 in Chambésy by Metropolitan John of Varna and Veliki Preslav; The document "The Orthodox Diaspora" was signed at the 4th Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in Chambésy, June 6-13, 2009, by Metropolitan Neophytos of Roussis; the document "The Importance of Fasting and its observance today" was signed at the 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference in Chambésy,

Crete was a great challenge for the Orthodox Church. However, given the relatively long-term atrophy of synodal practice at the universal level of the Church, the simple organizational problems are pardonable.

Nevertheless, the Holy and Great Council of Crete led us to the need for a fundamental debate on several theological themes of Church organisation and practice, that obviously involve doctrinal and theological consolidation and clarification²⁰. The themes on the agenda of the Council – from organizational and canonical structure of the Church to its mission in society, or its social²¹ and bioethical engagement, as we can see in the Encyclical of the Council, – are of a relatively great importance for the Orthodox Church and its witness in the world. In this context, both during the preparation of the texts for the Holy and Great Council and after the publication of the final documents, there were

October 10-17, 2015, by Metropolitan John of Varna and Veliki Preslav; The document "Relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world" was signed at the 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference in Chambésy, October 10-17, 2015, by the same Metropolitan John of Varna and Veliki Preslav; The document "The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments" was signed at the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches in Chambésy, January 21-28, 2016, by the Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria; The "Organization and Working Procedure of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church" was signed at the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches in Chambésy, January 21-28, 2016, by the Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria. The reasons for the withdrawal of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church from the Holy and Great Council were: "1) The lack of an agenda for the Great Council is of particular importance for Holy Orthodoxy, to detail topics that have contemporary relevance and require timely resolution by a Great and Holy Council; 2) To date there have been declarations by the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches disagreeing on some of the texts already approved for the Great and Holy Council; 3) According to the already adopted regulations for the conduct of the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church, there will be no ability to edit texts in the course of work of the council; 4) The proposed location of the Primate of the Orthodox churches in the room provided for meetings of the council violates the principle of equality for the Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches; 5) The location of observers and guests of the Council is inappropriate; 6) The structure of the Council imposes upon the Bulgarian Orthodox Church – Bulgarian Patriarchate the need to undertake large and unjustified financial expenses to participate in the council." <http://bulgariandiocese.org/decision.html>.

²⁰ Some Churches, such as the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, argued that it will not participate in the Council because "The lack of an agenda for the Great Council is of particular importance for Holy Orthodoxy, to detail topics that have contemporary relevance and require timely resolution by a Great and Holy Council". For the decision of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria see: <http://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=205494>. For the English translation see <http://bulgariandiocese.org/decision.html>. For an overview of the problem see: Illert, 'Die Bulgarische Orthodoxe Kirche und die Heilige und Große Synode'. Dr. Smilen Markov, "Decision of the Bulgarian Church: A policy of self-imposed marginalization, June 4, 2016" <http://sobor2016.churchby.info/en/comments/decision-of-the-bulgarian-church-a-policy-of-self-imposed-marginalization/>

²¹ For the social teachings of the Holy and Great Council see: Natallia Vasilevich, 'Die Soziallehre des Heiligen und Großen Konzils: Auf dem Weg, eine Kirche für die Welt zu werden', *Ökumenische Rundschau* 1 (2017): 12–28; Radu Preda, 'Orthodoxy Confronted with Ethical Questions: A Social-Theological Perspective', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1–2 (2016): 235–47.

some reactions to support or reject certain theological assertions found in the documents. The existing reactions, both for and against the Council, are necessary in the current theological debate, being the condition for the exercise of the faith and for a real theological dialogue between those who have different opinions, but just when they are taking place inside the Church and not through schismatic attitudes, by ceasing commemoration and communion with the bishops and with the whole Church. Therefore, even attitudes that reject certain parts of the documents or some theological assertions from them should be integrated into the process of synodality, as they lead to a fundamental debate not just of the documents, but of the Orthodox ecclesiology and theology of the 20th and 21st centuries. However, some approaches instead of being fundamental, that is, returning to the foundations of Orthodoxy, are on the verge of fundamentalism and extremism, diminishing the true importance of the Church's manifestation in its unity, and accusing the Council and its participants of dogmatic innovations and betrayal of the faith of our Holy Fathers²².

Despite the fact that the attitudes against the Holy and Great Council have been considered by some theologians, perhaps too impulsive and harshly, as fundamentalist – which has led to their radicalization by threatening the cessation of communion under the pressure of this rejection of dialogue²³, subjecting the others to anathema and heresy – they have tried to bring into question, often in an impercipient manner, fundamental questions about the identity of Orthodoxy. Their approaches do not reside in the fact that they are expressions of fundamentalism and cannot be categorized under this appellation. First of all, they cannot be considered a part of the conservative Protestant movement of the 19th century that developed the concept of fundamentalism by opposing the secularizing, liberal and modernist trends in academic theology. Furthermore, they cannot be accused of a conservative vision that tries to preserve the purity of the faith by any means. The Church itself follows this purpose of living the

²² Georgios Vlantis, 'Die Angst vor dem Geist. Das Heilige und Große Konzil und die orthodoxen Anti-Ökumeniker', *Ökumenische Rundschau* 1 (2017): 32–41.

²³ In the Romanian Orthodox Church as in the Greek Orthodox Church some priests ceased communion with the bishops who signed the document by bringing as a theological and canonical argument an abusive interpretation of the 15th canon of the Protodeutera Council (861). For an overview of this problem in the Romanian Orthodox Church see: Fr. Emilian-Iustinian Roman, "Debating the Documents of the Holy and Great Synod of Crete - A Canonical and Disciplinary Approach. Case Study: the Archbishopric of Iași", published in this Journal. One of the most shocking instances, Cessation of commemoration of Bishop on account of the "teaching of Heresy" was that of Professor Theodoros Zisis, on March 3, 2017, the Sunday of Orthodoxy. For the "Letter of Protopresbyter Theodore Zisis to Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki (March 3, 2017)", entitled: "Defense and Declaration of Cessation of Commemoration of Bishop on Account of the Teaching of Heresy", see: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/defense-and-declaration-of-cessation-of-commemoration-of-bishop-on-account-of-the-teaching-of-heresy>.

faith in an unaltered form by keeping the Holy Tradition. In Orthodox theology we cannot speak of novelties as in natural science, but if we believe that Orthodoxy expresses the truth, then there are no new dogmas, just ways of expressing the eternal unchangeable truth, no new canons, because the canons are practical applications of the dogmas in the life of the Church²⁴. Which is the error of the attitudes against the Council of Crete and of those who condemn it? Although their attempts to analyse the documents were honest, they did not take into account the entire canonical and dogmatic tradition of the Orthodox Church, accusing the synodal documents of serious innovations.

If we take into consideration the entire canonical and theological Tradition of the Orthodox Church we will see that the Holy and Great Council of Crete was extremely conservative, remaining in complete fidelity with the canonical and dogmatic tradition of the Orthodox Church. One of the problems of this Council, as we will see, is the expression of theological realities in a too conservative manner. Those who were expecting too much from the Holy and Great Council and those who did not expect anything at all would be surprised that it did not bring and could not bring anything new in terms of dogma and canon. Every novelty is equated with innovation and ultimately with heresy (canons 1 and 2 Trullo)²⁵. However, this does not mean that the Synod of Crete has no importance, but on the contrary, it represents the canonical expression of the fidelity of the entire dogmatic and canonical tradition in a completely different historical context.

1. The Number of Participants in the Holy and Great Council. A Problem of Orthodox Synodality?

Regarding the number of participants in the Holy and Great Council, even before June 2016 and after the Council, there were several voices contesting the representative character of the delegations, arguing that it was against orthodox synodality²⁶, that it was uncanonical²⁷, the lack of participation of all bishops

²⁴ Nikolai Afanas'ev, 'Canons of the Church Changeable or Unchangeable', *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1967): 54–68.

²⁵ Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos), "Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece" (November 2016 Regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>).

²⁶ See for example the paper of Fr. Peter Heers, "The "Council" of Crete and the New Emerging Ecclesiology: An Orthodox Examination", Lecture delivered at the Clergy Retreat of the Eastern American Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/the-council-of-crete-and-the-new-emerging-ecclesiology-an-orthodox-examination>. The author, having in mind a quantitative synodality, thinks that synodality can be expressed only when all the bishops of the Orthodox Church are gathered in one place. According to this

from around the Orthodox world transformed, according to their opinion, the Holy and Great Council of Crete into a simple “conference of representatives”²⁸ or “a council of primates with their entourages”²⁹ and not a Council with ecumenical perspective. Some of our Orthodox theologians considered the limitation of the number of bishops as a conspiracy against the principle of synodality because the organizers of the Council were afraid of giving to the bishops that were against the Council the right to vote and to condemn the documents³⁰. According to this opinion the Orthodox principle of synodality, which claims that all bishops are equal, was altered and in the end destroyed by the wilful selection of some “ecumenist” bishops. Let us analyse this accusation. After the withdrawal of the four Autocephalous Churches, in the Holy and Great Council of Crete, 163 bishops³¹

kind of perspective, synodality is equal to statistics: “Participating Churches: 10 of the 14 Local Churches (71%); Representation of Orthodox Christians: close to 30%; Participating Orthodox Bishops: 162 participated of the 350 invited (46%); Representation of Orthodox Bishops: 162 of a total of 850 (19%); Total number of Voting Bishops: 10 of the 162 bishops present (6%), or 10 of the 850 bishops in the Orthodox Church (1.1%).”

²⁷ Serafim Metropolitan Kythirelor și Antikythirelor, “Probleme eclesiale și pastorale care decurg din neparticiparea tuturor episcopilor ortodocși la Sfântul și Marele Sinod”, in *“Sfântul și Marele Sinod” (Creta, 2016). Între providență și eșec* (Oradea: Editura Astradrom, 2016), 41–51.

²⁸ Hovorun, ‘Critique of the Church through the Prism of the Panorthodox Council’, 64–65.

²⁹ Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, “Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece (November 2016 Regarding the Cretan Council”: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>.

³⁰ “With this anti-traditional measure the possibility that some bishops may oppose the decisions that are contrary to Tradition was avoided, or that any local Church has greater power in taking decisions because of the larger number of bishops”. Serafim Metropolitan Pireului Serafim, ‘Salutul Înaltpreasfințitului Serafim, Metropolitanul Pireului’, in *“Sfântul și Marele Sinod” (Creta, 2016). Între providență și eșec*, ed. Tatiana Petrache (Oradea: Editura Astradrom, 2016), 15. Μητροπολίτης Πειραιώς κ. Σεραφεΐμ: Χαίρετισμός στην Ημερίδα “ΑΓΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΣ: Μεγάλη προετοιμασία, χωρίς προσδοκίες”: „Μέ τόν αντιπαραδοσιακό αυτό τρόπο άποφεύγεται ή πιθανότητα κάποιου έπίσκοποι να αντιδράσουν σε άποφάσεις τής Συνόδου, πού θά είναι άνατρεπτικές τής Παραδόσεως, ή κάποια Τοπική Έκκλησία να έχει μεγαλύτερη δύναμη στην λήψη τών άποφάσεων, λόγω του μεγαλύτερου αριθμού έπισκόπων”. <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/BACF6AA1.el.aspx>

³¹ The 10 Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches: 1. † Bartholomew of Constantinople, Chairman; 2. † Theodoros of Alexandria; 3. † Theophilos of Jerusalem; 4. † Irinej of Serbia; 5. † Daniel of Romania; 6. † Chrysostomos of Cyprus; 7. † Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece; 8. † Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland; 9. † Anastasios of Tirana, Durres and All Albania; 10. † Rastislav of Presov, the Czech Lands and Slovakia; *Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*: 11. † Leo of Karelia and All Finland; 12. † Stephanos of Tallinn and All Estonia; 13. † Elder Metropolitan John of Pergamon; 14. † Elder Archbishop Demetrios of America; 15. † Augustinos of Germany; 16. † Irenaios of Crete; 17. † Isaiah of Denver; 18. † Alexios of Atlanta; 19. † Iakovos of the Princes’ Islands; 20. † Joseph of Prokonnisos; 21. † Meliton of Philadelphia; 22. † Emmanuel of France; 23. † Nikitas of the Dardanelles; 24. † Nicholas of Detroit; 25. † Gerasimos of San Francisco; 26. † Amphilochios of Kisamos and Selinos; 27. † Amvrosios of Korea; 28. † Maximos of Selyvria; 29. † Amphilochios of Adrianopolis; 30. † Kallistos of Diokleia; 31. † Antony of Hierapolis, Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox in the USA; 32. † Job of Telmessos; 33. † Jean of Charioupolis, Head of the Patriarchal Exarchate for Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe; 34. † Gregory of Nyssa, Head of the

participated plus 2 bishops as consultants. If we add 25 bishops for each of the

Carpatho-Russian Orthodox in the USA (Bishop Makarios of Christopolis (Estonia) as special Consultant); *Delegation of the Patriarchate of Alexandria*: 35. † Gabriel of Leontopolis; 36. † Makarios of Nairobi; 37. † Jonah of Kampala; 38. † Seraphim of Zimbabwe and Angola; 39. † Alexandros of Nigeria; 40. † Theophylaktos of Tripoli; 41. † Sergios of Good Hope; 42. † Athanasios of Cyrene; 43. † Alexios of Carthage; 44. † Ieronymos of Mwanza; 45. † George of Guinea; 46. † Nicholas of Hermopolis; 47. † Dimitrios of Irinopolis; 48. † Damaskinos of Johannesburg and Pretoria; 49. † Narkissos of Accra; 50. † Emmanouel of Ptolemaidos; 51. † Gregorios of Cameroon; 52. † Nicodemos of Memphis; 53. † Meletios of Katanga; 54. † Panteleimon of Brazzaville and Gabon; 55. † Innokentios of Burudi and Rwanda; 56. † Crysostomos of Mozambique; 57. † Neofytos of Nyeri and Mount Kenya; *Delegation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem*: 58. † Benedict of Philadelphia; 59. † Aristarchos of Constantine; 60. † Theophylaktos of Jordan; 61. † Nektarios of Anthidon; 62. † Philoumenos of Pella; *Delegation of the Church of Serbia*: 63. † Jovan of Ohrid and Skopje; 64. † Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral; 65. † Porfirije of Zagreb and Ljubljana; 66. † Vasilije of Sirmium; 67. † Lukijan of Budim; 68. † Longin of Nova Gracanica; 69. † Irinej of Backa; 70. † Hrizostom of Zvornik and Tuzla; 71. † Justin of Zica; 72. † Pahomije of Vranje; 73. † Jovan of Sumadija; 74. † Ignatije of Branicevo; 75. † Fotije of Dalmatia; 76. † Athanasios of Bihac and Petrovac; 77. † Joanikije of Niksic and Budimlje; 78. † Grigorije of Zahumlje and Hercegovina; 79. † Milutin of Valjevo; 80. † Maksim in Western America; 81. † Irinej in Australia and New Zealand; 82. † David of Krusevac; 83. † Jovan of Slavonija; 84. † Andrej in Austria and Switzerland; 85. † Sergije of Frankfurt and in Germany; 86. † Ilarion of Timok (Bishop Jerome (Močević) of Jegar as Special Consultant); *Delegation of the Church of Romania*: 87. † Teofan of Iasi, Moldova and Bucovina; 88. † Laurentiu of Sibiu and Transylvania; 89. † Andrei of Vad, Feleac, Cluj, Alba, Crisana and Maramures; 90. † Irineu of Craiova and Oltenia; 91. † Ioan of Timisoara and Banat; 92. † Iosif in Western and Southern Europe; 93. † Serafim in Germany and Central Europe; 94. † Nifon of Targoviste; 95. † Irineu of Alba Iulia; 96. † Ioachim of Roman and Bacau; 97. † Casian of Lower Danube; 98. † Timotei of Arad; 99. † Nicolae in America; 100. † Sofronie of Oradea; 101. † Nicodim of Strehaiia and Severin; 102. † Visarion of Tulcea; 103. † Petroniu of Salaj; 104. † Siluan in Hungary; 105. † Siluan in Italy; 106. † Timotei in Spain and Portugal; 107. † Macarie in Northern Europe; 108. † Varlaam Ploiesteanul, Assistant Bishop to the Patriarch; 109. † Emilian Lovisteanul, Assistant Bishop to the Archdiocese of Ramnic; 110. † Ioan Casian of Vicina, Assistant Bishop to the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas; 111. † Georgios of Paphos; 112. † Chrysostomos of Kition; 113. † Chrysostomos of Kyrenia; 114. † Athanasios of Limassol; 115. † Neophytos of Morphou; 116. † Vasileios of Constantia and Ammochostos; 117. † Nikiphoros of Kykkos and Tillyria; 118. † Isaiaos of Tamassos and Oreini; 119. † Barnabas of Tremithousa and Lefkara; 120. † Christophoros of Karpasion; 121. † Nektarios of Arsinoe; 122. † Nikolaos of Amathus; 123. † Epiphanius of Ledra; 124. † Leontios of Chytron; 125. † Porphyrios of Neapolis; 126. † Gregory of Mesaoria; 127. † Prokopios of Philippi, Neapolis and Thassos; 128. † Chrysostomos of Peristerion; 129. † Germanos of Eleia; 130. † Alexandros of Mantinea and Kynouria; 131. † Ignatios of Arta; 132. † Damaskinos of Didymoteixon, Orestias and Soufli; 133. † Alexios of Nikaia; 134. † Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Aghios Vlasios; 135. † Eusebios of Samos and Ikaria; 136. † Seraphim of Kastoria; 137. † Ignatios of Demetrias and Almyros; 138. † Nicodemos of Kassandrea; 139. † Ephraim of Hydra, Spetses and Aegina; 140. † Theologos of Serres and Nigrita; 141. † Makarios of Sidirokastron; 142. † Anthimos of Alexandroupolis; 143. † Barnabas of Neapolis and Stavroupolis; 144. † Chrysostomos of Messenia; 145. † Athenagoras of Ilion, Acharnon and Petroupoli; 146. † Ioannis of Lagkada, Litis and Rentinis; 147. † Gabriel of New Ionia and Philadelphia; 148. † Chrysostomos of Nikopolis and Preveza; 149. † Theoklitos of Ierissos, Mount Athos and Ardameri (Bishop Clement (Kotsomytis) of Methoni, Chief Secretary of the Holy Council); 150. † Simon of Lodz and Poznan; 151. † Abel of Lublin and Chelm; 152. † Jacob of Bialystok and Gdansk; 153. † George of Siemiatycze; 154. † Paisios of Gorlice; 155. † Joan of Koritsa; 156. † Demetrios of Argyrokastron; 157. † Nikolla of Apollonia and Fier; 158. † Andon of Elbasan; 159. † Nathaniel of Amantia; 160. † Asti of Bylis; 161. † Michal of Prague; 162. † Isaiah of Sumperk; 163. † Jeremy of Switzerland, Chief of the Panorthodox Secretariat of the Holy and Great Council. <https://www.holycouncil.org/delegations>

four missing Autocephalous Churches, the total number of bishops would have been 263³². The main accusation of those who condemned the Council for the lack of participation of all Orthodox bishops was precisely the delegation of a maximum number of 24 bishops from each Autocephalous Church with their Primate, totalling 25 bishops for each Orthodox Local Church. For some Autocephalous Churches, such as the Church of Albania, of Poland or for the Church of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, whose Holy Synods do not count more than 10 bishops, the number of 24 bishops was too large. But for the Russian Orthodox Church or for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the number of 25 bishops represented a small percentage of the total number of their bishops. However, it is rather curious that since the adoption of this decision on the fixed number of bishops for each delegation at the *Synaxis* of the Primates of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, from Constantinople, on March 9th 2014 until January 2016 the delegation of bishops and their number was not a real subject of debate in Orthodox theology. This decision of the *Synaxis* in 2014 was taken over in the *Organization and Working Procedure of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church*, a document signed at the *Synaxis of Primates*, in Chambésy, on January 27, 2016³³, by all the Primates of the autocephalous Churches, with the exception of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Noteworthy is the fact that the Patriarch of Antioch did not participate in the *Synaxis of the Primates* in Constantinople in March 2014. The Antiochian delegation refused to be part of this *Synaxis* because of Antioch's dispute with Jerusalem over Qatar. If this issue is carefully analysed, it can be seen that the *Synaxis of the Primates* (March 2014)³⁴

³² The lists of participating bishops raises a delicate canonical problem that betrays the canonical claims of the Ecumenical Patriarchate over Diaspora. All the titles of the bishops from Diaspora, that are not under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were modified. For example, all the bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from Diaspora, are bishops *of* that country (Augustinos *of* Germany, Emmanuel *of* France, Elder Archbishop Demetrios of America, Amvrosios *of* Korea), but the other bishops from the same territory are bishops *in* that country (Serafim in Germany and Central Europe, Nicolae in America, Maksim in Western America, Irinej in Australia and New Zealand, Andrej in Austria and Switzerland, Timotei in Spain and Portugal). This modification of titles can be found in all four official languages, see, for example: Ecumenical Patriarchate: “ὁ Γερμανίας Αὐγουστίνος, Augustin d’Allemagne, Митрополит Германский Августин”, and Romanian Orthodox Church: ὁ ἐν Γερμανίᾳ καὶ Κεντρικῇ Εὐρώπῃ Σεραφεῖμ, Séraphin en Allemagne et Europe centrale, Митрополит в Германии и Центральной Европе Серафим, or Serbian Orthodox Church: ὁ Φραγκφούρτης καὶ ἐν Γερμανίᾳ Σέργιος, Serge à Frankfort et en Allemagne, Епископ Франкфуртский и в Германии Сергей. In the official documents of the Holy and Great council it can be seen how the Romanian Orthodox Bishops corrected their titles with a pen.

³³ In the 3rd article of the *Organization and Working Procedure of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church* is written: “Members of the Council shall be those hierarchs designated by each autocephalous Orthodox Church as its representatives: The number of members has been determined by the *Synaxis* of the Primates of all the local autocephalous Orthodox Churches (Phanar, March 2014).”

³⁴ https://www.patriarchate.org/messages/-/asset_publisher/9mdbt2FJgbY0/content/id/957805 and <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/03/09/news99338/>

established the principle of representativeness, according to which at the Holy and Great Council every delegation will be composed of 24 bishops and the Primate of the Autocephalous Church³⁵ and the decisions both during the Council and in the pre-conciliar preparation of the Council will be taken by consensus³⁶, a principle promoted in particular by the Orthodox Church of Russia³⁷ and by the Romanian Orthodox Church, in opposition to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, a promoter of the majority decision-taking principle. The Synaxis of Primates (2014) issued two documents: *Decisions of the Synaxis of the Primates* and *the Message of the Synaxis*. Unfortunately, only *the Message of the Synaxis* has been made public, its decisions remaining foreign to the *pleroma* of the Church, being an internal procedure for the Primates. In the *Message of the Synaxis*³⁸ only one small chapter is dedicated to the future Holy and Great Council without specifying the number of the delegated bishops, the number of the participating bishops being mentioned in the *Decisions of the Synaxis*.

Those who were against the delegation of some bishops and the principle of representativeness brought as an argument the definition of the ecumenical councils and the summoning of all bishops to these Councils. Therefore, the title "Holy and Great Council" used for the ecumenical councils and the ecumenical claim of the Council in Crete implied, in their opinion, the convocation and the participation of all the bishops of the Orthodox Church³⁹. The final conclusion of this thesis is that the Council of Crete cannot, for this reason, be considered or called an ecumenical one. Let us analyse these statements and see if they are according to the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church.

³⁵ Ioan Moga, 'Erwartungen Und Anfragen an Die Heilige and Große Synode Der Orthodoxen Kirche', *Catholica* 69, no. 3 (2015): 198.

³⁶ Peter Bouteneff, 'The Great and Holy Council and The Implications of the Consensus Method', in *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Theological Reflections*, ed. Nathanael Symeonides, Faith Matters Series 3 (New York: Department of Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 2016), 125–28.

³⁷ Bouteneff, 'Annexe 2 : Les Implications de La Méthode Du Consensus'. For the English translation see: Bouteneff, 'The Great and Holy Council and The Implications of the Consensus Method', in *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Theological Reflections*, ed. Nathanael Symeonides, 125–128.

³⁸ Paragraph 6: "The Synaxis agreed that the preparatory work to the Synod should be intensified. A special Inter-Orthodox Committee will work from September 2014 until Holy Easter of 2015, followed by a Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Conference to be convened in the first half of 2015. All decisions at the Synod and in the preparatory stages are made by consensus. The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church will be convened by the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople in 2016, unless something unexpected occurs. The Synod will be presided by the Ecumenical Patriarch. His brother Primates of the other Orthodox Autocephalous Churches will be seated at his right and at his left". For the English translation of the Message see: https://www.patriarchate.org/messages/-/asset_publisher/9mdbt2FjgbY0/content/id/957805

³⁹ Hovorun, 'Critique of the Church through the Prism of the Panorthodox Council', 64; Serafim, 'Probleme eclesiale și pastorale care decurg din neparticiparea tuturor episcopilor ortodocși la Sfântul și Marele Sinod', 43–44.

From the beginning it can be said that in no ecumenical or general council did all the bishops of the Orthodox Church participate, not only because they could not travel or they were sick, as some may say⁴⁰. A good example is the difference between the number of participants in the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431), which was around 200 bishops⁴¹, and in the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. The number of bishops participating in the Fourth Ecumenical Council varies between 450 and 630, the epistle of the Ecumenical Council to Pope Leon stating that there were 520 bishops⁴² present in the Council, being the highest number of participating bishops in an ecumenical council. The Fourth Ecumenical Council took place in 451, 20 years after the Third Ecumenical Council. It is incalculable to consider that 430 bishops did not participate in the Third Ecumenical Council in comparison with the Fourth Council due to illness or transport problems. Analysing the list of participants in the Fourth Ecumenical Council, after we take out the names of those who were not present, but whose names appeared on the lists because other bishops signed the documents on their behalf, it can be seen that in the Council of Chalcedon no more than 400 bishops⁴³ took part in person. The number 630 was received by the Tradition of the Church only at the end of the 7th century. Even if we consider that the number of 630 bishops was the real one, we will find that only 10 bishops were present from the Western Roman Empire: 3 papal delegates, 2 African bishops from the Saracens, one from Ethiopia and four Western refugee bishops⁴⁴. It means that half of the episcopate of the Orthodox Church did not attend the Fourth Ecumenical Council. Moreover, if 630 bishops really participated in the Council of Chalcedon, we can see from the lists that 620 bishops were exclusively from the Eastern provinces of the Empire, especially those under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. If we take the number of 400 bishops as the most possible

⁴⁰ Hovorun, 'Critique of the Church through the Prism of the Panorthodox Council', 64.

⁴¹ Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IIe-IXe s.)*, 1.1: *Les canons des conciles oecuméniques (IIe-IXe s.)*, Codification canonique orientale, Fonti, Série 1, (Roma: Grottaferrata, 1962), 55.

⁴² Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IIe-IXe s.)*, 67.

⁴³ A more accurate number can be found with Richard Price. He considered that in the Fourth Ecumenical Council 373 bishops participated. Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. 3. Sessions XI - XVI, Documents after the Council: Appendices, Glossary, Bibliography, Maps, Indices* (Liverpool: Liverpool UnivPress, 2010), 193-196; P. Th Camelot, *Éphèse et Chalcédoine* (Paris: Édde l'Orante, 1962), 120 considering that in the Council were 350 or 360 bishops.

⁴⁴ Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. 3. Sessions XI - XVI, Documents after the Council*, 196, nota 10. In the Council participated: Paschasinus of Lilybaeum, Lucensius of Picenum, Julian of Kios and the priest Bonifacius As delegates of the Church of Rome, entrusted by the pope with the presidency of the council. However, at the Emperor's order, the council was chaired by 19 commissioners without the right to vote. Giuseppe Alberigo, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta: editio critica*, Corpus Christianorum 1, Istituto per le scienze religiose (Bologna), (Brepols: Turnhout, 2006), 121; Heinz Ohme, "Sources of the Greek Canon Law to the Quinisext Council (691/2) Councils and Church Fathers", in: Kenneth Pennington, *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, coll. *History of medieval canon law* 4, (CUA Press, 2012), 59.

one, then we can see that the number of Eastern bishops present at the Fourth Ecumenical Council did not exceed half of the total number of Eastern bishops, which reached 900 bishops⁴⁵. Therefore, if we take into account solely the number of bishops as a criteria of ecumenicity, it can be said that the Fourth Ecumenical Council was just an Eastern Council, not “Pan-Orthodox”, i.e. with the participation of all orthodox bishops of the world (*oecumene*). In the fifth century the number of bishops from the Western Roman Empire was approximately 1000, 800 bishops were in Africa alone⁴⁶, which meant that in the Fourth Ecumenical Council more than one-third of the episcopate of the entire Church did not participate, a large part of the “*Oecumene*” (οἰκουμένη - inhabited world), was not even represented. If we consider the number of bishops participating in the other ecumenical Councils, we will note the following: 318 bishops participated in Nicaea, the real number being probably much smaller⁴⁷, in Constantinople just 150 bishops participated exclusively from the Eastern part of the Roman Empire⁴⁸, 200 bishops attended the Council in Ephesus, at the fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, according to the signatures, were just 166 bishops, of which only 152 were present⁴⁹, the vast majority of them being from the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, at the sixth Ecumenical Council, we have 165 bishops⁵⁰ and at the Council in Trullo we have 227 signatures on the final documents and probably the same amount of participating bishops, of which 183 were bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople⁵¹. In the

⁴⁵ Based on the documents of Roman administration from the 5th century A.H.M. Jones believes that in the Eastern Empire were in all rather over 1000 units of government, and of these less than 100 were not cities. Arnold H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: 284 - 602; a Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey. 2* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 712-713. According to this information, R. Price that the number of bishops in the 5th century was around 900. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. 3. Sessions XI - XVI, Documents after the Council*, 196, nota 10.

⁴⁶ Johan Leemans, *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 225.

⁴⁷ Eusebius of Caesarea offers the total number of 250 bishops, Eustatius of Antioch said that there were 270 bishops, Athanasius the Great considered the total number to be 300, Ghelasius of Cyzicus said that there were more than 300 bishops, and Hilary of Poitiers gives the number of 318 bishops. This number was considered as the true one due to its symbolic character: the 318 servants of Abraham. Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IIe-IXe s.)*, 21; Giuseppe Alberigo, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta: editio critica*, 5, note 9 more references.

⁴⁸ With the exception of Ascolius of Thessalonica, the bishop who baptized Emperor Theodosius and other clergy from the West, all the bishops participating in the Council were from the Eastern part of the Empire. The Emperor also summoned 36 semi-arian bishops to persuade them to return to Orthodoxy, but they left the city before the Council. Peter L'Huilier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 106-107.

⁴⁹ Giuseppe Alberigo, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta: editio critica*, 156.

⁵⁰ Giuseppe Alberigo, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta: editio critica*, 191.

⁵¹ H. Ohme, *Das Concilium Quinisextum und seine Bischofsliste*, AKG 56 (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990); Heinz Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum: Das Konzil Quinisextum*, *Fontes Christiani* 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); R. Flogaus, “Das Concilium Quinisextum (691/2). Neue Erkenntnisse über ein umstrittenes Konzil und seine Teilnehmer”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 102 (2009): 25-64;

seventh Ecumenical Council 367 bishops participated, plus 132 monks⁵², but the dogmatic Horos of the Council was only signed by 306 bishops⁵³.

Therefore, the number of bishops participating in the ecumenical councils is not a true criterion of ecumenicity⁵⁴. Some local Councils had a larger number of participating bishops than most ecumenical Councils. For example, the Council of Carthage in 419, a general Council of African bishops had a number of 217 participating bishops under the presidency of Bishop Aurelius of Carthage, with the participation of papal delegates under the representation of Bishop Faustinus of Potenza⁵⁵. This number exceeds the number of bishops present in some ecumenical councils. Moreover, some heretical Councils, which claimed ecumenicity but were rejected by the Orthodox Church, had more participating bishops than some of the ecumenical councils, for example the Council from Arminum-Seleucia, held in 359, had 560 bishops that attended the Council, and the Council of Hieria, held in 754, had a number of 338 bishops. Therefore, Kallistos Ware's remark from an article written in 1972 is very appropriate for our problem: "Truth and ecumenicity cannot be determined simply by counting heads"⁵⁶.

The erroneous understanding of the ecclesiological problem of those who consider the lack of participation of all bishops in the Holy and Great Synod as a "deviation" from synodality comes from their misunderstanding of the concept of "ecumenicity" and "synodality"⁵⁷. The Orthodox Church summoned ecumenical councils, but not Councils with ecumenical value⁵⁸. The ecumenical value of a Council was given in time after that Council was considered as normative for the dogmatic and canonical Tradition of the Church. A lot of councils call themselves ecumenical, but in the end they did not have ecumenicity or ecumenical value⁵⁹.

⁵² Spyros Troianos, "Byzantine Canon Law to 1100", in: W. Hartmann, K. Pennington (eds.), *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, 145.

⁵³ E. Lamberz, *Die Bischofslisten des VII. Ökumenischen Konzils (Nicaeum II)* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 15-17, 33-35.

⁵⁴ Kallistos Ware, "The Ecumenical Councils and the Conscience of the Church", *Kanon. Jahrbuch Der Gesellschaft Für Das Recht Der Ostkirchen* II (1974): 219.

⁵⁵ For this Council see: Παύλου Μενεβίσογλου, "Ἡ ἐν Καρθαγένῃ σύνοδος τοῦ 419", *Aksum-Thyateira, Αφιέρωμα εις τον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θυατείρων και Μεγάλης Βρεταννίας Μεθόδιον* (Λονδίνον, 1985), 249-274; G. May, "Anklage- und Zeugnisfähigkeit nach der zweiten Sitzung des Konzils zu Karthago vom Jahre 419" *Theologische Quartalschrift CXL*, (1960): 163-205.

⁵⁶ Ware, "The Ecumenical Councils and the Conscience of the Church", 119.

⁵⁷ For a detailed analysis of Councils as manifestation of the Church see: Paul Valliere, 'Соборы как выявление Церкви', *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом* 1, no. 34 (2016): 10-50.

⁵⁸ For the concept of ecumenicity see: Ware, "The Ecumenical Councils and the Conscience of the Church", 218-219.

⁵⁹ The Council of Constantinople (879-880), held in the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia, described itself in its first canon as: "holy ecumenical council (ἡ ἁγία καὶ οἰκουμένηκη σύνοδος)": Georgios A. Rhalles, Michael Potles, eds., *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, 705; Périclès-Pierre JOANNOU, *Discipline générale antique (Ile-IXe s.)*, 482. The Council of Serdica described itself as ecumenical

The Council of Constantinople (381), summoned as a general Council of the Eastern Roman Empire became the second ecumenical Council. It confirms to us that not the summoning of a council as ecumenical gives ecumenicity to that council, nor its title: "holy and great Council", but the reception in the time of the Council as ecumenical or universal. For example, despite the fact that around 338 the Council of Nicaea was considered to have ecumenical value, it was only after 381 that the full ecumenical character of the Council could be confirmed. This is shown by the fact that the Council of Nicaea did not settle the doctrinal disputes, which developed and branched into other confrontations. In this regard, because of the dogmatic and administrative conflicts, between the first ecumenical council and the Council of Constantinople in 381, 56 local or general councils were summoned in order to solve these doctrinal dissensions⁶⁰.

Is the delegation of a certain number of bishops and the principle of representativeness against the canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church, as the detractors of the Council of Crete affirm? Do we have any example or canon in the Orthodox Tradition according to which just a small number of bishops can be sent to the Council in order to represent that entire Local Church? Or can a delegation of bishops decide for the entire Local Church that sent them? In the Orthodox Tradition we can find multiple forms of putting synodality into practice. For example, the Pope of Rome did not participate in any ecumenical Council, despite the fact that at the fifth ecumenical Council the Pope was in Constantinople. The participation of the Church of Rome in the ecumenical council was made always by delegation. If we analyse carefully the universal corpus of canons of the Orthodox Church we can see not just that the delegation of a small number of bishops is canonical, but that we have canons that impose this delegation as we can find in the canons of the Council of Carthage (419), invested with ecumenical authority by the second canon of the Council in Trullo.

In the second part of the 18 canon of Carthage we can read:

council. None of these councils are regarded in the history of the Orthodox Church as Ecumenical (Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 945). For the Council of 879-880, see: Παύλου Μενεβίσογλου, "Ἡ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει σύνοδος τοῦ 879 (Ἁγίας Σοφίας)", *Ἐκκλησία καὶ Θεολογία* 6 (1985): 797-816; Spyros Troianos, "Byzantine Canon Law to 1100", in: Kenneth Pennington, *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, coll. *History of medieval canon law* 4, (CUA Press, 2012), 149-150; Johan Meijer, *A successful council of union. A theological analysis of the Photian synod of 879-880*, Thessalonike, 1975; P. Stéphanou, "Deux concils, deux ecclésiologies? Les concils de Constantinople en 869 et en 879", *Orientalia christiana periodica*, 39 (1973): 363-407; V. Peri, "C'è un concilio ecumenico ottavo?", *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 8 (1976): 53-79; Martin Jugie, "Les Actes du Synode photien de Sainte-Sophie (879-880)", *Échos d'Orient*, tome 37, n°189-190 (1938): 89-99.

⁶⁰ Lloyd G. Patterson, "Nikaia to Constantinople: the theological issues", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, no. 4 (1982): 399-400.

“Διὸ βεβαιωτέον ἐστὶν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ἀγίᾳ συνόδῳ, ὥστε κατὰ τοὺς ἐν Νίκαια ὄρους, διὰ τὰς ἐκκλησιαστικὰς αἰτίας, αἵτινες πολλάκις πρὸς ὄλεθρον τοῦ λαοῦ παλαιοῦνται, καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν σύνοδον συγκαλεῖσθαι, πρὸς ἣν πάντες οἱ τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν τὰς πρῶτας καθέδρας ἐπέχοντες, ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων συνόδων δύο, ἢ καὶ ὄσους ἐπιλέξωνται, ἐπισκόπους τοποτηρητὰς ἀποστείλωσιν ἵνα ἐν τῇ συναχθείσῃ συνελύσει πλήρης εἶναι δυναθῆῃ ἢ αὐθεντία.”⁶¹

“C’est pourquoi il faut réaffirmer dans ce saint synode que, suivant les décisions prises à Nicée, un synode doit être convoqué chaque année pour les questions ecclésiastiques, dont les solutions tirent souvent en longueur au grand dam du peuple chrétien; à ce synode *les titulaires des premiers sièges de la province doivent envoyer comme évêques délégués de leur synode provincial deux évêques de leur choix ou même plus*, afin que l’assemblée réunie puisse avoir une autorité pleine et entière”⁶².

As we can see in the canons of Carthage the principle of representativeness and the delegation of a certain number of bishops (two or more) to a general council are well attested⁶³. This practice is well attested not just in the general canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church, but in the particular canonical tradition of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches.

Let us give the example of the Russian Orthodox Church. According to the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church, chapter III, art. 1:

“The Bishops’ Council shall be the supreme body of the Russian Orthodox Church in doctrinal, canonical, liturgical, pastoral, administrative and other matters concerning both the internal and external life of the Church and in maintaining fraternal relations with other Orthodox Churches and defining the character of relations with non-Orthodox confessions and non-Christian religious communities and the state and secular society”⁶⁴.

The Orthodox Church of Russia participated in the pre-conciliar preparatory process⁶⁵, having a great influence on the drafting of texts⁶⁶. After signing all

⁶¹ Georgios A. Rhalles, Michael Potles, eds., *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, vol. 3 (Athena, 1853), 356.

⁶² Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IIe–IXe s.), 1.2: Les canons des synodes particuliers (IVe–IXe s.)*, Codification canonique orientale, Fonti, Série 1 (Roma: Grottaferrata, 1962), 233.

⁶³ For the use of the words: “τοποτηρησία (delegation)” and “τοποτηρητής (delegate)” see: Pavlos Menevisoglu, *Λεξικόν των ιερῶν κανόνων* (Katerini: Επέκταση, 2013), 310.

⁶⁴ <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/ustav/iii/>

⁶⁵ Andrei Desnitsky, ‘Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche vor dem Panorthodoxen Konzil’, *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West* 2 (2016): 7–8; Sergei Chapnin, ‘Das Panorthodoxe Konzil ohne Russische Orthodoxe Kirche’, *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West. Die Orthodoxe Kirche nach dem Konzil* 11 (2016): 11–13; Andrey Shishkov, ‘Einige Besonderheiten der Position der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche im panorthodoxen vorkonziliaren Prozess’, *Una Sancta* 2 (2015): 119–29.

⁶⁶ Nicolas Kazarian, ‘Все православный 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.

the draft documents at the Synaxis of Primates in January 2016, the Orthodox Church of Russia submitted these texts for debate to 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, 2016⁶⁷. At the Bishops' Council were invited 354 bishops 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"⁶⁸. More than 320 bishops attended the Bishops' Council. In his report read before the Bishops' Council, Patriarch Kirill highlighted the importance of the agenda⁶⁹ of the future Holy and Great Council, but also of its pan-orthodox character if all the Orthodox Churches attend the Council⁷⁰. In addition, he underlined that the future Council of Crete is not an ecumenical one, but only the reception makes the Council a ecumenical one, and showed that the Council will not take doctrinal decisions nor introduce innovations into the liturgical or canonical life of the Church. Patriarch Kirill's report analyses each document⁷¹. Regarding the document: "Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World", Patriarch Kirill said: "Certainly, no union of the Orthodox Church with the non-Orthodox is even mentioned in the document"⁷². The document "The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World"⁷³ is considered by the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church as "the key document on the

⁶⁷ Nicolas Kazarian, 'Всеpravославный 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.

⁶⁸ <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127655/>

⁶⁹ "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". <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127681/>

⁷⁰ "The reception by the whole Church of a particular Council has always been gradual and, 'as church history shows, no Council could impose its decisions on the Church if they proved to be rejected by the people of God, if there was no all-church reception of a Council's resolutions'. For this reason, no Ecumenical Council became such only by the fact of its convocation: its real significance became clear only after some, sometimes very long time." <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127677/>

⁷¹ "We do not call Ecumenical the forthcoming Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. Unlike ancient Ecumenical Councils, it is not called to make decisions on doctrinal issues because such were made long ago and are not subject to revision. It is not called either to introduce any innovation in the liturgical life of the Church and her canonical order." <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127677/>

⁷² <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127683/>

⁷³ For an overview of the document see: Alexander Agadjanian, 'Православный взгляд на современный мир. Контекст, история и смысл соборного документа о миссии Церкви (Orthodox Vision of the Modern World. Context, History and Meaning of the Synodal Document on Church Mission)', *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом* 1 (2016): 255–79.

agenda of the Holy and Great Council”⁷⁴, but the document on Marriage and its impediments was regarded with scepticism because of the lack of consensus⁷⁵. As a conclusion, Patriarch Kirill pointed out that the great majority of the proposals made by the Russian Orthodox Church in the preconiliar panorthodox process were accepted⁷⁶, thus being pleased with the documents.

At the end of the Bishops’ Council on February 3rd, 2016, more than 320 Russian bishops issued and signed the official document of the Orthodox Church of Russia regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete⁷⁷. In the second paragraph of the document we can read the following:

“2. The Bishops’ Council states with satisfaction that all the necessary amendments and additions have been made to the Pan-Orthodox Council’s draft documents in accordance with the propositions of the Russian Orthodox Church and other Local Orthodox Churches. 3. The participants of the Bishops’ Council witness that in their present form the draft documents of the Holy and Great Council do not violate the purity of the Orthodox faith and do not depart from the canonical tradition of the Church”⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ “His Holiness Patriarch Kirill believes that it is the key document on the agenda of the Holy and Great Council. As he noted, it was the Russian Orthodox Church that made her considerable contribution to drafting the document, since many of the social issues raised in it were already addressed in the “Basis of the Social Concept” and her other important documents.”

<https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127683/>

⁷⁵ “Nevertheless, the draft document did not suit all the Local Orthodox Churches, and Patriarchates of Antioch and Georgia refused to sign it. The further fate of this document will be determined in the course of inter-Orthodox consultations before the Council.”

<https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127688/>

⁷⁶ “In the course of preparations for the Pan-Orthodox Council, including those made at the Synaxis of the Primates in January in Chambesy, most of the proposals made by the Russian Orthodox Church were approved, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia stated. For instance, the Council will take place not in Istanbul but in Orthodox Greece, on Crete Island; the issue of calendar, on which there is no consent, will not be considered at all; concerning the issue of the diptychs, the long-stated idea of the Moscow Patriarchate that respect should be shown for the historically established peculiarities of Churches and each of them should have the right to use her own diptych (which is not always the practice, as His Holiness testified) is considered fair. ‘Finally, the Synaxis approved the decision we proposed long ago to get all the draft documents of the future Council published for the information of the episcopate, clergy, the religious and all the people of God’, Patriarch Kirill stressed, ‘this is what we have done immediately, as all the Council’s draft documents have already been published on the websites of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Department for External Church Relations. So, everyone can read them.’” <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/02/02/news127697/>

⁷⁷ <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4367700.html>

⁷⁸ “3. Члены Архиерейского Собора свидетельствуют, что в своем нынешнем виде проекты документов Святого и Великого Собора не нарушают чистоту православной веры и не отступают от канонического предания Церкви.” <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4367700.html>. For the English translation see: <https://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/print90510.htm>

In the same document (paragraph 4) the Bishops' Council charged the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church with the forming of a delegation of the Russian Church for its participation in the Holy and Great Council. So, despite this general decision of the Bishops' Council, the supreme body of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, "consisted of the Chairman – the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens), nine permanent members and five temporary members summoned from among the diocesan bishops" (Chapter V, art. 3 of the Statute) decided on June 13, 2016, not to participate in the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church⁷⁹. How is it possible that the decision of almost all of the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church be overturned by the decision of 15 bishops? If we consider the principle of representativeness and the delegation of a certain number of bishops for participation in a Council (here the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church) as uncanonical and against the Tradition of the Church, as the detractors of the Council of Crete said, then the decisions of the Council of Carthage and the decisions of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church should be considered as uncanonical. But if we cannot consider those decisions as uncanonical, it means that the delegation of bishops and the principle of representativeness are canonical realities in total accordance with the Orthodox tradition of the Church and valid manifestations of synodality.

The Council of Crete: a Council without laymen and monastics?

Another accusation raised by the detractors of the Council was that the Council of Crete was exclusively a Council of bishops, emphasizing the fact that clergy, monastics and laymen were totally bypassed in the preconiliar preparatory process and in the sessions of the Holy and Great Council⁸⁰. Some of the theologians even asked for a total representativeness not just of men and women, but of all social categories. The ecumenical council is an universal expression of synodality with general doctrinal, canonical and eschatological value. It is a special event in the history of the Church, but is based on synodality developed at local, regional and universal levels. In the history of the Church we can find many types of council, from mixed ones, where the laity and clergy were involved with a consultative vote, but never with a deliberative vote⁸¹, to councils of bishops (σύνοδος τῶν

⁷⁹ <https://mospat.ru/en/2016/06/13/news132897/>

⁸⁰ Athanasios Anastasiou, 'Participarea clerului și a poporului. Un Sinod Panortodox fără pliiroma ortodoxă', in *"Sfântul și Marele Sinod" (Creta, 2016). Între providență și eșec*, ed. Tatiana Petrache (Oradea: Editura Astradrom, 2016), 135–46.

⁸¹ Liviu Stan, *Mirenii in Biserică: importanța elementului mirean in Biserică și participarea lui la exercitarea puterii bisericești. Studiu canonic - istoric* (Sibiu, 1939), 117. For the German translation see: Liviu Stan, *Die Laien in der Kirche: eine historisch-kirchenrechtliche Studie zur Beteiligung der Laien an der Ausübung der Kirchengewalt* (Ergon, 2011).

ἐπισκόπων), as the 37 apostolic canons confirm and impose it as a rule in the Church⁸², where laity and clergy were represented by their bishop⁸³. According to Orthodox synodality the bishop represents in the council of bishops his entire Church, because his participation is based on synodality at the local level, where clergy and laity are present. As regarding the first ecumenical Council, Socrates said in the first book of his *Church History* that at the Council of Nicaea: “many of the laity were also present, who were practiced in the art of reasoning, and each eager to advocate the cause of his own party”⁸⁴. Over time, the participation of laity and clergy in the Councils fade away, the only laymen present in the Councils were members of Byzantine bureaucracy and aristocracy⁸⁵. Coming back to the Council of Crete, if we analyse the lists of participants in the Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conferences and in the Holy and Great Council we can observe the following. For example, in the 4th Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference held in Chambesy (June 6-13, 2009) participated 41 delegates of the Autocephalous Churches, including 22 bishops, 3 archimandrites, 8 priests, 8 laymen⁸⁶. In the 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference in Chambesy (October 10-17, 2015) participated 49 delegates of the Local Churches, including 27 bishops, 6 archimandrites, 7 priests, 1 archdeacon, 7 laymen theologians, 1 monk, all as counsellors of bishops with the right to speak, debate and vote⁸⁷. Regarding the number of members of the Holy and Great

⁸² D. Cummings, trans., *The Rudder (Pedalion) of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Orthodox Christians*, “λζ. Δεύτερον τοῦ ἔτους σύνοδος γινέσθω τῶν ἐπισκόπων, καὶ ἀνακρινέτωσαν ἀλλήλως τὰ δόγματα τῆς εὐσεβείας, καὶ τὰς ἐμπιπούσας ἐκκλησιαστικὰς ἀντιλογίας διαλυέτωσαν· ἅπαξ μὲν, τῇ τετάρτῃ ἑβδομάδι τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς· δεύτερον δέ, Ὑπερβερεταίου δωδεκάτῃ”.

⁸³ For the ministry of laity in the Church see: George Nahas, “The Pan-Orthodox Council: Suggestions for a Church on the Move”, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1–2 (2016): 299–305; John Chrystavgis, “The Status and Ministry of the Laity in the Orthodox Church”, *Sobornost* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 1995): 82–84; Anton C. Vrame, *One Calling in Christ: The Laity in the Orthodox Church* (Inter Orthodox Press, 2005); N. Karmiris, *The Status and Ministry of the Laity in the Orthodox Church* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994); Hieronymus L. Kotsonis, “Die Stellung der Laien innerhalb des kirchlichen Organismus”, in: Panagiotis Bratsiotis, *Die orthodoxe Kirche in griechischer Sicht* (Stuttgart, 1970), 298–322; Staikos Michael, “Die Stellung der Laien in der Orthodoxen Kirche”, *Theologia*, 61 (1999): 73–95; Bartholomaios Archondonis, “The Participation of the Laity in the Synod of the Greek-Byzantine Church”, *Kanon* 3 (1977): 33–38. Anapliotis Anargyros, “Die Teilnahme der Laien an der Kirchenverwaltung der Orthodoxen Kirche am Beispiel des Russischen, Rumänischen und Bulgarischen Patriarchates”, in: Wilhelm Rees, *Unverbindliche Beratung oder kollegiale Steuerung? Kirchenrechtliche Überlegungen zu synodalen Vorgängen* (Freiburg im Breisgau 2014), 231–245.

⁸⁴ “Συμπαρήσαν δὲ λαϊκοὶ πολλοὶ διαλεκτικῆς ἔμπειροι, ἐν ἑκατέρῳ μέρει συνηγορεῖν προθυμοῦμενοι.” *Patrologia graeca cursus completus*, vol. 67, 64.

⁸⁵ Bartholomaios Archondonis, “The Participation of the Laity in the Synod of the Greek-Byzantine Church”, *Kanon* 3 (1977): 33–38;

⁸⁶ Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L’Église Orthodoxe, ed., *Ive Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (6-13 juin 2009)*, Synodika, XII (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2015), 9–10.

⁸⁷ Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L’Église Orthodoxe, ed., *E’ Προσνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Ὀκτωβρίου 2015*, Synodika, XIII (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2016), 9–10.

Council, as we said, there were 163 bishops and 2 consultant bishops. Observing this pre-conciliar practice of the Pan-Orthodox Conferences, the *Organization and Working Procedure of the Council* provided the possibility that the delegations of each Autocephalous Church can be accompanied by six special consultants and three assistants, monks, clergy or laymen⁸⁸, without the right to vote or to speak during the plenary sessions of the Council. However, they were offered, according to the *Organization and Working Procedure*, the right to speak in the Special Commissions and during the sessions of the Secretariat of the Council⁸⁹. Therefore, the number of official consultants of all delegations sent to the Holy and Great Council was 60, including 20 archimandrites, 19 priests, 6 deacons, 13 laymen, i.e. 11 men and 2 women and 2 nuns⁹⁰. An impressive number of stewards and

⁸⁸ Art. 3.2 from the Procedure: “The delegations may be accompanied by special consultants—clergy, monastics or laypeople—but their number may not exceed six (6). Invitations are also extended to three (3) assistants (stewards) for each autocephalous Orthodox Church.”

⁸⁹ Art. 3.3 from the Procedure: “The special consultants may attend the Council’s plenary sessions—without the right to speak or to vote—and are expected to assist the Council’s Secretariat or the Council’s Committees, with the right to speak and exercise special functions assigned to them.

⁹⁰ As Archimandrite participated: 1. Very Reverend Archimandrite Tikhon, Abbot of Stavronikita Monastery of Mount Athos; 2. Very Reverend Archimandrite Bartholomew Samaras, Chief-Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Secretary to the Holy and Great Council’s President; 3. Archimandrite Paisios (Larentzakis); 4. Archimandrite Peter (Parginos); 5. Archimandrite Christophoros (Mousa); 6. Archimandrite Damianos (Panou); 7. Archimandrite Nikodemos (Skrettas); 8. Archimandrite Chrysostomos (Nasis); 9. Archimandrite Ieronymos (Delioglou); 10. Archimandrite Sava (Janjic), of the Visoki Dečani monastery; 11. Archimandrite Nicodemus (Kosovits), of the Krka monastery; 12. Archimandrite Ioannis (Ioannou), Igumen of Monastery of St. Barnabas; 13. Archimandrite Benedict (Ioannou), Director of St. Barnabas Seminary; 14. Archimandrite Papagrigorios (Ioannidis); 15. Archimandrite Gregory (Mousouroulis); 16. Archimandrite Augustinos (Kkaras); 17. Archimandrite Ignatius (Sotiriades), Secretary, Inter-Orthodox Relations; 18. Archimandrite Cherubim (Moustakas), Assistant, Inter-Orthodox Relations; 19. Archimandrite Seraphim (Šemjatovský); 20. Archimandrite Andreas. As priests participated: 21. Reverend Protopresbyter of the Throne Ecumenical Konstantinos Myron (Germany); 22. Protopresbyter Athenodoros Papaevropiadis; 23. Protopresbyter Joseph Kwame Labi Ayete; 24. Protopresbyter Georgios Dragas; 25. Protopresbyter-Staurophor Dr. Zoran Krstic; 26. Protopresbyter Gaja Gajic; 27. Pr. prof. dr. Viorel Ioniță; 28. Pr. Ștefan Ababei; 29. Pr. Michael Țița; 30. Pr. Patriciu Dorin Vlaicu; 31. Pr. Nicolae Dascălu; 32. Protopresbyter Adamantios Augoustidis, General Vicar of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens, Associate Professor of Theology, University of Athens; 33. Protopresbyter Basil Kalliakmanis, Professor of Theology School of Thessaloniki; 34. Archpriest Anatol Szymaniuk; 35. Archpriest Andrzej Kuźma; 36. Protopresbyter Jani Trebicka; 37. Father Anastasios Bendo; 38. Archpriest Milan Gerka, Secretary of the Holy Council; 39. Archpriest Michal Švajko; As deacons participated: 40. Deacon Emmanuel Kamanua; 41. Deacon Cyprian Kountouris; 42. Deacon Michael Nicholaou; 43. Archdeacon Paweł Tokajuk; 44. Archdeacon Maxim Durila; 45. Deacon Kiril Sarkissian. As laymen participated: 46. Mr. Panteleimon Vingas, Archon Grand Chartophylax of the Holy and Great Church of Christ (Constantinople); 47. Dr. Panagiotis Tzoumerkas, Professor, University Ecclesiastical Academy of Thessaloniki; 48. Professor Theodoros Yiangou; 49. Mr. Vladan Tatalović, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Belgrade University; 50. Dr. Ionuț Mavrichi, Patriarch Consultant; 51. Mr. Michael Spyrou, Secretary of the Holy Council; 52. Mr. George Filias, Professor of Theology, University of Athens; 53. Mr. Jarosław Charkiewicz, journalist; 54. Mr. Jerzy Betelejko, interpreter; 55. Mr. Piro Kondili; 56. Dr. Dion (Vasil) Tushi.

assistants from each delegation is added to this number. Although insufficiently represented, it is worth mentioning the participation⁹¹ of 6 women⁹² in the Holy and Great Council, four of whom were official consultants of bishops and two as assistants in the official delegations. Even the Press Officer of the Holy and Great Council was a woman: Angela Karageorgou. Although we did not have so many women participating in the Holy and Great Council, it should be noted that there were no women at any ecumenical council⁹³, except for the Seventh Ecumenical Council, summoned by Irene, Emperor of Constantinople, as she called herself⁹⁴. Having this in mind, we cannot say that clergy, monastics and laymen were bypassed in the preconciliar preparatory process and in the sessions of the Holy and Great Council. By reading the Acts of the Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conferences we can see the great role of the laymen theologians that they had in the process of preparation of the Holy and Great Council.

Conclusions

The erroneous understanding of the ecclesiological problem of those who consider the lack of participation of all bishops in the Holy and Great Synod as a "deviation" from synodality comes from their misunderstanding of the concept of "ecumenicity" and "synodality".

The number of bishops participating in the ecumenical councils is not a true criterion of ecumenicity and the delegation of bishops and the principle of representativeness are canonical realities in total accordance with the Orthodox tradition of the Church and valid manifestations of synodality.

In the Council of Crete 163 participated bishops as well as clergy, monastics and laity, the entire Church being represented in the Holy and Great Council.

⁹¹ For the participation of women in the Holy and Great Council see: Carrie Frederick Frost, S et al., 'Women and the Great and Holy Orthodox Council', in *Toward the Holy and Great Council. Theological Reflections*, ed. Nathanael Symeonides (New York: Department of Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, 2016), 133–36.

⁹² In the Holy and Great Council participated the following women: 1. Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, Professor (USA); 2. Mrs. Sonila Rëmbeci (former member of the Presidency, and of the Central Council of the CEC, 2009-2013); 3. Very Reverend Sister Theoxeni, Abbess of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of the Life-Giving Spring (Chrysopigi), Chania; 4. Nun Rakela Dervishi. 5. Ms Iveta Stacova (interpreter); 6. Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou Vice-president of the European Parliament. Natallia Vasilevich, 'Die Stille Der Frauen Am Heiligen Und Großen Konzil', *Religion Und Gesellschaft in Ost Und West. Die Orthodoxe Kirche Nach Dem Konzil* 11 (2016): 22–24 and the interview: <https://www.goarch.org/en/-/council-included-participation-by-women>.

⁹³ Carmel E. McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House: The Women of Vatican II* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 51.

⁹⁴ Dominique Barbe, *Irène de Byzance: la femme empereur* (Perrin, 1990). For the Romanian translation, see: Dominique Barbe, *Irina, împăratul Bizanțului*, trans. Ion Doru Brana (Bucharest: Nemira, 2013).

Regarding the issues that I have raised, the Council of Crete is in total accordance with the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

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THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOXY ACCORDING TO REV. PROF. LIVIU STAN

IRIMIE MARGA*

ABSTRACT. Synodality is the fundamental feature of the Orthodox Church. Reverend Prof. Liviu Stan defined the synod principle as the order of Church management through councils, both by hierarchical councils and through joint councils. The highest manifestation of Church synodality is the ecumenical council which, paradoxically, is not legally necessary and has not been institutionalized by the Church, so it has the character of charism. The special property of Ecumenical Council was established only by its so-called “reception” of the whole Church, reception which has also acquired the charism of infallibility. The meeting of a Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox is the natural expression that shows synodality in the Orthodox Church, which must operate at all times and in all places. It becomes officially recognized only by the reception process, which is spontaneous and quiet, and cannot be estimated over linear time. The opinions during the reception process cannot be hurried or stopped, compelled or ignored. The decisions of a Holy and Great Panorthodox Council can be perceived as a whole, can be perceived only in part, or may be corrected at a later meeting.

Keywords: Church, Orthodoxy, synodality, ecumenical council, charisma, infallibility, reception, general consensus.

Church Synodality

Synodality is the fundamental feature of the Orthodox Church, so almost any theologian wrote, directly or indirectly, about synodality. The Romanian Orthodox Church remarked, in this respect, the great canonist Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan¹, who wrote in his numerous studies on the synod principle, basically

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¹ Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan was born July 11, 1910, in Socet, Hunedoara County, the son of Rev. Ioan and Maria Stan. Between 1916-1928 he attended school in Hunedoara, Deva and Lugoj. Between 1928-1932 he studied at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cernăuți. Between 1930-1932, in parallel with Theology, he also attended the Lay Faculty in Cernăuți, which he did not finish. He came back to Sibiu, and Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan offered him scholarships abroad, in Athens,

defined as the order of Church management through councils, both as hierarchical councils and as joint councils². In his work he has sought to emphasize the conciliar teaching and practice of the Church as desired by Christ The Savior and as it had been instituted by The Holy Apostles.

According to Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan, the power that sustains the whole Church is and remains synodality as the most obvious expression of communion, either at the ultimate level through the *ecumenical council* or locally, integrating it in the Great Synod through different kinds of local councils, mixed or hierarchical ones.

Synodality is based on the principle of communion, which is found at all levels of existence, starting from the Triune God to the last creature that cannot live in solitude. Model and source of all communion is The Holy Trinity, namely, that perfect communion of Trinitarian Persons found in infinite mutual love, self-experience and continually given to the entire creation.

The Ecumenical Council

The highest manifestation of Church synodality is the *ecumenical council*, so Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan revealed abundantly in several studies, its meaning and canonical value in Church life. Further on I just want to point out the fundamental ideas or answers to essential questions about this subject, which we find in the canonical thinking of this great canonist.

Thus, on *what the ecumenical council means*, Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan writes: "The Ecumenical Councils were one of the best forms of expression of the whole community, the Church achieved consensus on matters of faith.... These

Warsaw, Rome and München. He graduated from his theological studies with the well-known PhD thesis "*Mirenii în Biserică*" [Laymen in the Church]. In 1937 Liviu Stan was appointed professor at Andrei Șaguna's Theological Academy in Sibiu. In 1949 Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan got a transfer to the Theology Faculty in Bucharest. As acknowledgement and reward for his contribution to Canon Law, in 1968, he was awarded the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* in the Theology Faculty of Thessaloniki. Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan prematurely left this world in 1973, when he was only 63 years old, being buried in Lugoj.

² Rev. PhD Prof. Liviu Stan, "Despre principiile canonice fundamentale ale Ortodoxiei" [On the Fundamental Canonical Principles of Orthodoxy], in *Biserica și Dreptul. Studii de drept canonic ortodox* [The Church and the Law. Studies on Orthodox Canon Law], vol. III (Sibiu: Andreiana Publishing House, 2012), 19. A speech held by Rev. PhD Prof. Liviu Stan at the ceremony awarding the *Doctor Honoris Causa* title by the Thessaloniki University (Greece), the Greek text was published in the magazine *Θεολογία* 39, no. 1-2 (January-June 1968): 5-18, it was translated into Romanian in 2010 by PhD Deacon Ștefan L. Toma, revised by Rev. PhD Associate Professor Irimie Marga, and published for the first time in Romania in the vol. *Autocefalia, libertate și demnitate* [Autocephalia, Freedom and Dignity] (Bucharest: Basilica, Romanian Patriarchy Publishing House, 2010), 18-26.

councils were, for that period, the highest and most comprehensive manifestations of ecclesiastical authority. But the Church did not lack, before the era of the Ecumenical Councils, or between the Ecumenical Councils or after, their needed authority, even one with nothing less than that represented by the Ecumenical Councils...

Lack of an Ecumenical Council, or failure to meet an Ecumenical Council, does not make the Church miss her supreme authority, namely, miss its quality of owning all means which it was endowed with by The Savior. And just as the Church used various means to accomplish its unanimous consensus in order to express its infallibility, the same way it has resorted, even today, to means it has found more suitable to express its full authority to solve problems of any kind, which would require decisions and appropriate guidance”³.

Therefore, the ecumenical councils paradox consists precisely in the fact that even though they are the highest expression of exercising ecclesiastical authority, still, they have the character of necessity and have not been institutionalized by the Church.

Specifically, “the Church has not dated and institutionalized any of the forms that it used to express its general consensus on matters required by such work. This means that it has not even dated and institutionalized the Ecumenical Council, although it dated other councils, and of course, it institutionalized them, setting specific rules or, at least, sufficiently clear with regard to all aspects of their work.

It is well known that none of the ecumenical councils brought any decision that was to define the character itself of the ecumenical council, to establish rules for its institutionalization, showing, even in a more general way, but sufficient, who is entitled to summoning it, who has the right to be part of it, who has a deliberative vote and who possibly has only a consultative vote at such a council; what problems can be included on its agenda, how to make decisions in the ecumenical council, how they are approved and how are these decisions enforceably invested, how they are applied in practice and especially what happens with the decisions of those councils met as ecumenical that are not accepted by the whole Church, or, in other words, that are not enshrined with the «reception» of the whole Church.

In relation to all these matters, only the practice of the ecumenical councils, and some ways in which it has spoken in other forms that have been

³ Rev. Prof. Dr. Liviu Stan, “Importanța vechilor Sinoade Ecumenice și problema unui viitor Sinod Ecumenic” [The Importance of the Old Ecumenical Councils and the Problem of a Future Ecumenical Council], in *Biserica și Dreptul. Studii de drept canonic ortodox* [The Church and The Law. Studies on Orthodox Canon Law], vol. V (Sibiu: Andreiana Publishing House, 2014), 48-49, initially published in the magazine *Studii Teologice* [Theological Studies], no. 3-4 (1972): 190-211.

used for ordaining the Church affairs, give us some answers whose validity is based on what is called *customary law*.

However, the rules established, based on customary law regarding ecumenical councils do not mention, in any case, anything about the exclusive or even legitimate right of Kings, and even less, of any such right of popes, to call, chair or approve decisions of any kind at ecumenical councils. Similarly, they say nothing about the exclusive right of bishops to be called unanimously, and only them, to the ecumenical councils, and to be the only ones that have a deliberative vote in them"⁴.

What is the character of ecumenical councils?

Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan answers:

“Not being dated, nor institutionalized in any other way, ecumenical councils are very exceptional forms for the work of the Church, whose practice reveals the truth that they have the character of *charisms*, which by their very nature could not be subject to institutionalization. Therefore, as the charisms are not means of current work and available to ecclesiastical authorities, but only exceptional gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is understood that any such attempt of ecclesiastical authorities to gather a new Ecumenical Council, will not be possible unless the desire and effort of the ecclesiastical authority will be blessed by doubling it by the Holy Spirit in the form of charisma, so there can be said, as was said in the Apostle Synod and The Ecumenical Councils: «for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us», and not vice versa: «for it seemed to us and to the Holy Spirit»⁵.

Another important question concerns *the relation between the Ecumenical Council and the charism of infallibility*, relation that Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan conclusively explains:

“The church was infallible and expressed the infallibility ahead of any ecumenical council meeting, and between ecumenical councils and the time after the last ecumenical council, and that characteristic, to be and to remain infallible, is not conditioned by the meeting or not meeting of any ecumenical council.

Infallibility is the nature of the Church, while an ecumenical council is only one of the forms that Church infallibility is brought to expression by. It is not the only form adopted for this purpose and does not have the character of necessity, in the sense that without it, The Church would reshape or Church infallibility would diminish.

⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

⁵ Ibid., 47-48.

The continuous means through which the Church has always manifested infallibility is the whole Church consensus, namely setting the entire body of the Church, the mystic body of Christ, to agreement on any matter concerning the preservation, protection and definition of revealed truth (...).

It is not only surprising but also incomprehensible that the Ecumenical Council manifests just as one of the means by which the Church has achieved consensus. However, this is real, and nothing founded can be objected to this meaning that the Ecumenical Council must be given⁶.

From here arises another fundamental problem, *namely the problem of the ecumenical councils reception*, by which they acquire the character of infallibility. Here Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan wrote an exceptional study⁷, which clearly explains that ecumenical councils are not ecumenical and infallible a priori, that is at their gathering, but only a posteriori, after they occurred and were perceived through the unanimous consent of the Church. Therefore reception is a fundamental process in the manifestation of Church synodality without which any council may be questioned. Thus, Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan writes:

“In the past of the Church, and more specifically, all the while the Church was not divided by the Great Schism of 1054, 12-15 synods took place, that their organizers would have wanted ecumenical, but out of which the Church has retained only seven, in other words “reception” has established only 7 of them as ecumenical.

It is clear, therefore, that the “reception” is a fact that cannot be erased from the annals of Church history. Being a fact that can neither be challenged nor despised, it has to be explained, be clear, because it is not any fact, but one of paramount importance for the Christian conscience, for its main component, faith, for appreciating the value of such a fact of faith and for Christian conscience guiding over a problem which arises even today ...”⁸.

How did synod reception occur?

“Church life history has shown that all the mentioned “receptions” occurred spontaneously in a longer or shorter time, but not in organized forms or legal ordinances, and in any case into a common plebiscite, but in another a plebiscite, which has its roots in the work of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in the

⁶ Ibid., 44-45.

⁷ Rev. Ph.D. Prof. Liviu Stan, “Despre ‘recepția’ de către Biserică a hotărârilor Sinoadelor Ecumenice” [On the Church Reception of Ecumenical Council Decisions], in *Biserica și Dreptul. Studii de drept canonic ortodox* [The Church and The Law. Studies on Orthodox Canon Law], vol. II, (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2014), 65-77, initially published in *Studii Teologice* XVII, no. 7-8 (September-October, 1965): 395-401.

⁸ Ibid., 67.

Church and permanently assists, giving powers to preserve the true faith and keeping it away from any mistake in this matter”⁹.

Following the outlined above facts regarding the Ecumenical Council, one can draw *six conclusions*, namely:

1) First, the very ecumenical councils, from the ecumenical unity era of the Church, accepted as such by almost all Christendom, *do not define themselves*.

2) Secondly, none of the councils *has prescribed or established rules for the institutionalization of the ecumenical council*.

3) Third, they *do not have a necessity character* in the ontological sense, and that is derived from their *charismatic* nature.

4) Fourth, ecumenical councils *were only expressions of the general consensus of the Church*, and not the first means or the main manifestation of this consensus, following it as a secondary form, or as a second form successively, the so-called “*consensus ecclesiae dispersae*”.

5) Fifth, the main characteristic of an ecumenical council given to some of the Church councils convened and met under this name, has been established *only by their so-called “reception” from the part of the whole Church*.

6) Finally, although they were not and are not indispensable for the Church in the ontological sense, however, in the sense of charisms, *they are possible any time*.

The Holy and Great Panorthodox Council

Based on this clear vision of the ecumenical council, Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan writes about the Holy and Great Panorthodox Council, the long awaited one since his time. Central ideas in this respect are formulated as answers to the following questions:

Who are the rightful members of the Panorthodox Council?

Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan answers that, based on the doctrine of faith of our Church and on its ecumenical practice, rightful members of a Panorthodox Council are only the Orthodox Bishops, namely, those who profess the true faith as it is contained in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition and as defined by the seven Ecumenical Councils which expressed the true faith of the whole Church... Therefore, those Bishops, who, although they have the apostolic succession, however do not profess the true faith, or are in a schismatic position to the Church, are not rightful members of a Panorthodox Council¹⁰.

⁹ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰ Rev. PhD Prof. Liviu Stan, “Cu privire la un viitor Sinod Ecumenic” [On a Future Ecumenical Council], in *Biserica și Dreptul. Studii de drept canonic ortodox* [The Church and The Law. Studies on Orthodox Canon Law], vol. VII (Sibiu: Andreiana and ASTRA Museum, 2016), 419-420, initially published in *Orthodoxia* [Orthodoxy], no. 3-4 (1952): 583-603.

Who can convene a Panorthodox Council?

Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan writes that all invitations to the Ecumenical Councils were made in the past by the Roman Byzantine emperors at the request or with the consent of the main hierarchical Seats of the Church. Today there can be no question of convening a panorthodox synod by any political chief. Thus, the task to convene a Panorthodox Council, from the Byzantine Empire extinction, remained entirely on the shoulders of the college and council chiefs in the most important Seats in the church hierarchy, the Apostolic Seats, led by the patriarchal throne of Constantinople¹¹. However, as in relation to judicial review there is no primacy of this Seat, it goes without saying that the task and the right to convene a pan-Orthodox synod does not only belong to college chiefs of the four Eastern Patriarchies (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), but to the college or council composed of heads of all Autocephalous Orthodox Churches today¹². Only by the mandate of this college can either of the Heads of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches receive, specifically to a given case, the task and justification to convene an ecumenical council, but not in his own name but on behalf of all other Primates of the particular Churches.

If it is to confer this honor and this important task to any of the Apostolic Seats or to any of the Primates of historical Patriarchates, then, of course, these would have honorific priority as compared to the other Primates of the Autocephalous Churches and among them, first, the Patriarch of Constantinople. But as the old honorific hierarchy – not the judicial one – of the hierarchical Seats in the Church, was made on political considerations, which today cannot be considered, based on what no longer exists, we consider that this matter might proceed by reversing tradition founded on a certain system of relations between the Church and the State that existed in the Byzantine empire, and even replace it by a judgment based on that reality, which is, that in terms of importance, dignity and even sacrifice and suffering, the highest veneration or honor belongs to the Jerusalem Seat, the Holy City Patriarchal Chair where the Son of God¹³ taught, sacrificed Himself and saved mankind. One cannot question, based on the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Church and in the spirit of its canonical institutions, whether any privilege, much less by any canon law, might belong to a single Primate of the Orthodox Church to call a pan-Orthodox synod or take other decisions by his own power, in connection with such a council. He who would be tempted to accept such a sentence, that one learns, together with the Roman Catholics, about a jurisdictional primacy in the Church, which is a heresy¹⁴.

¹¹ Ibid., 420.

¹² Ibid., 420-421.

¹³ Ibid., 421-422.

¹⁴ Ibid., 422.

Who can participate in a Panorthodox Synod?

Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan has the opinion that in all ecumenical councils there participated, besides bishops, as rightful members, also *a large number of guests*, clergy of other ranks, officials, scholars of the time, believers and monks.

Moreover, signing the decisions of the ecumenical councils was not only performed by the bishops, but also by other priests, some being the representatives of absent bishops, among those invited, and some signing in their own personal name, and sometimes even by some monks.

That some ecumenical councils are given their name according to the number of bishops who took part in the works or have signed their decisions, only shows that they were the principal members of the ecumenical councils and through them the hierarchical principle was given expression, to decisions taken by the *universal vote* of the entire body of participants in those councils¹⁵.

To define truths of faith and determine decisions of the ecumenical councils, belonging to superior hierarchical ranks was not decisive but the education and wisdom of the ecumenical council members was. It is enough to quote the case of deacon Athanasius (later St. Athanasius the Great), present in the First Ecumenical Council¹⁶.

Is there any difference between a Panorthodox Synod and the Ecumenical Council?

The answer given by Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan is that by the Panorthodox Synod one must understand only a limited hierarchical council or board, of chiefs or representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and by the ecumenical council one must understand the general council of the Orthodox Church, composed of all its rightful members, namely, of all Orthodox Bishops in apostolic succession¹⁷.

What value judgments may have a Panorthodox Synod?

As the councils old practice shows, they took two kinds of decisions, namely, dogmatic decisions and canonical decisions¹⁸.

¹⁵ Rev. PhD Prof. Liviu Stan, "Importanța vechilor Sinoade Ecumenice și problema unui viitor Sinod Ecumenic" [The Importance of the Old Ecumenical Councils and the Problem of a Future Ecumenical Council], in *Biserica și Dreptul. Studii de drept canonic ortodox* [The Church and The Law. Studies on Orthodox Canon Law], vol. V (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2014), 76.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Liviu Stan, "Cu privire la un viitor Sinod Ecumenic" [On a Future Ecumenical Council], in *Biserica și Dreptul. Studii de drept canonic ortodox* [The Church and The Law. Studies on Orthodox Canon Law], vol. VII (Sibiu: Andreiana and ASTRA Museum, 2016), 422.

¹⁸ Ibid., 423.

Canonical decisions of an ecumenical council are valid in themselves, namely by their actual making. "However, dogmatic decisions of an ecumenical council are not valid in themselves, but they generally become valid only after the entire Church - *without any plebiscite, but tacitly and spontaneously* - accepts them, the Church having, on its whole, the quality of infallibly preserving the teaching of faith, for the Church, only in its entirety, as a mysterious body of Christ, enjoys the full and truthful assistance of the Holy Spirit, being able, likewise, tacitly or spontaneously, not only to reject, but also not accept, namely refute dogmatic decisions of any council"¹⁹. In other words, the ratification of dogmatic decisions is to be made by «*consensus ecclesiae dispersae*», namely, by particular councils and by the whole Church consensus, for it is clear that the authority of the Panorthodox Council is derived from "consensus ecclesiae" and that, by this consensus, it is generally meant that the infallibility of its decisions might be checked.

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As a conclusion, the canonical concept of Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan on the Holy and Great Panorthodox Council can be summarized in the following ideas:

1) The meeting of a Holy and Great Panorthodox Council is the natural expression of synodality in the Orthodox Church, which is to act at all times and in all places.

2) A Panorthodox Holy and Great Council shall be convened by consensus of all local Orthodox Churches.

3) In a Holy and Great Panorthodox Council not only orthodox bishops are entitled to participate but also theologians invited from among the clergy (priests and deacons), monks or laymen.

4) A Holy and Great Panorthodox Council is entitled to make both dogmatic and canonical decisions by universal unanimous vote, and not of a majority, of all council participants, rightful members or guests.

5) Canonical decisions of the Holy and Great Panorthodox Council must be received by local Church councils. Dogmatic decisions of a Holy and Great Panorthodox Council must be received by local Church councils and, through them, by the whole Church through that "consensus ecclesiae dispersae". Reception by the general consensus of a Pan-Orthodox Synod loads him with the charism of infallibility.

6) Sincere praise or fair criticism against a Panorthodox Synod belong, naturally, to the reception process.

7) Local churches missing from a Holy and Great Panorthodox Council might affect or not this council reception by the whole Church. No Ecumenical Council had representatives from all local churches. The last word is held only

¹⁹ Ibid.

by “consensus ecclesiae dispersae”, belonging even to absent churches, that the council can be accepted or rejected.

8) The process of reception has a spontaneous and tacit character, that time cannot estimate, therefore the rush of *for* or *against* decisions may distort the value of those decisions. Similarly, opinions issued within the reception process can be neither ignored, nor imposed or constrained.

9) Decisions of a Holy and Great Panorthodox Council may be perceived as a whole, they may be perceived only in part, or may be corrected at a later meeting.

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THE SETTLEMENT OF CANONIC TRADITION IN THE DOCUMENT “THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING AND ITS OBSERVANCE TODAY”

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ABSTRACT. In this paper we will try to showcase, during the first part, the challenges of the contemporary world and the importance of fasting, and during the second part, we will see how the canonical tradition about fasting was established in the document *The Importance of fasting and its observance today* approved by the Holy and Great Council that took place in Crete.

Keywords: fasting, Holy and Great Council, Tradition of the Orthodox Church, Canon Law, canons.

Preliminaries

The preaching of the Gospel “to all the people” (Matthew 28,19) was assigned to the Apostles, and they set out Christian communities, for which they ordained bishops and priests¹.

Due to elementary and natural reasons, these communities, organized at the beginning in local and territorial ecclesiastical communities, that were performing their cultic activity on the one hand under the Hebrew influence, following a series of the prescriptions of the old Laws, and on the other hand, following their own convictions, appeared from the customs and practices specific to every nation. Sometimes these local practices appeared due to the culturalization of the Gospel to generate conflicts between the faithful of different communities, a fact that was mentioned in the apostolic era, when the Holy Apostles, gathered at the synod in Jerusalem, set valid principles for all the Christians (Facts 15).

These norms stand for the totality of principles and norms that the Messiah gave to the Holy Apostles, and they were at the basis of the administrative and territorial organization of the ecclesiastical units, of the cultic life and of the

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¹ N. Dură, *Biserica în primele patru secole. Organizarea și bazele ei canonice, Ortodoxia XXXIV*, no. 3 (1982): 462.

Church management, ensuring its durability and independence² compared to the secular laws, because the one who set it is present and works through it till the end of centuries (Matthew 28,20), and its purpose is not an earthly, passing one but one soteriological.³

However, the local churches “established in an ethnic and geographic framework”⁴ and their own customs by law played a key role in setting out their conviction, in the completion of the cultic life and the administrative organization, as intrinsic parties of the Universal Church.

One of the practices related to the cultic life, that required clarifications on the part of the Church, is the one related to the institution of fasting that we are going to talk about in this presentation.

This institution on the one hand, developed in relation to the Christian holidays for which a certain spiritual preparation was required through prayers, through different forms of abstinence and fasting⁵, within a complete liturgic cycle (the ecclesiastic year), also within the one restricted liturgic (fasting days during the week and on certain holidays), and on the other hand, by canons the Church described the way in which people must fast, the period and the type of fasting.

Fasting was defined by theologians as “total or partial abstinence from good and abundant food, in particular animal food. This is a bodily sacrifice that should be unified with benefaction, with incense gifts, candles etc., brought to the sanctuary, as well as with prayers, bows... Fasting is the best way to conquer ourselves and based on this victory, we will conquer also the world put in the service of sin and of the conspiracies of devil”⁶.

Below, we will not stop on the clarifications of fasting, but we will try to showcase, during the first part, the challenges of the contemporary world and the importance of fasting, and during the second part, we will see how the canonical tradition about fasting was established in the document *The Importance of fasting and its observance nowadays* approved by the Holy and Great Synod.

² I. S. Berednicov, *Curs de drept Bisericesc*, trans. Silvestru Bălănescu, bishop of Huși (Bucharest: Typography „Cărților Bisericești”, 1892), 3.

³ Veaceslav Goreanu, “Postul în tradiția canonică a Bisericii Răsăritului”, *Luminătorul* 86, no. 5 (2006): 10 - 22.

⁴ Nicolae Dură, *Biserica în primele patru secole*, p. 453.

⁵ Ioan N. Floca, *Drept canonic ortodox, legislație și administrație bisericească*, vol. II (Bucharest: E.I.B.M.B.O.R., 1990), 159.

⁶ Nicodim Sachelarie, *Pravila bisericească*, third edition (Bucharest, Publishing House Parish Valea Plopului, 1999), 382-383; Ioan Zăgărean, *Morala creștină, manual pentru seminariile teologice* (Bucharest, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., 1990), 211-212.

The Challenges of the Contemporary World and the Importance of Fasting

Contemporary society is marked by a profound crisis existing at all levels: religious, social, cultural, economic, political etc. This is due to the fact that the man of our days struggles in his aspiration toward absolute freedom, putting his trust in the richness and the possibilities of his rationale, breaking in this way the metaphysical and religious connections with the Creator and Center of the world, him becoming this center: „the ego of the modern man who pretends himself to be autonomous, because he does not admit any other power beyond the boundaries of mankind... The man of the XXIst century no longer believes in God, because this God can no longer exist together with his autonomous ego, because this man is his own God”⁷. In order to overcome this crisis, it is necessary that man come back and respect the Truth revealed, as well as the order of the Church, including the precepts related to fasting.

Set for good by the ecclesiastical authority, fasts stood for a living reality in the spiritual life of Christians. This practice became mandatory for any good Christian, as can be seen in the second ecclesiastical commandment: “Let us keep all the fasts during the year”, fasting being considered as a means of moral and salvation perfection. Nevertheless, with the passage of time, some Christians in the west, the Roman Catholics reduced fasting, easing the exigences related to method and duration (allowing dairy products to be consumed during all the fasts), and the protestants nearly abolished it, unlike the Orthodox Church, that remained faithful to its traditional practice.

These realities, that marked the eastern and western worlds, determined this during the latter decades of the last century, under the influence of ideologies and of the life philosophy of more and more Christians, to analyse once again the issue of observing the canons, considering them *outdated* and inadequate to ecclesiastical life. Very few, faithful to the tradition, having a conservatory vision, understood to apply the canons, and not in their spirit⁸. Starting from this vision we can talk about *two trends* related to the matter of fasting: *a liberal one*, that tends to reduce the rigour of fasting and adapt it to the social life that has become more and more secularized. A second trend is the *conservatory one*, that imposes the observance of fasts as they were commanded by the Church in the first millenium.

Based on these preoccupations, it was noticed that not only the Church recommends fasting, but also doctors sometimes prescribe the dietetic regime

⁷ Nicolae Balcă, *Criza spirituală modernă și cauzele ei* (Suceava Typography of the Monastery „Sfântul Ioan cel Nou”, 2005), 13-14.

⁸ Nicolai N. Afanasiev, *Canoane și conștiință canonică* (Galați: Egumenița, 2005), 5-33.

to the sick. Even nutritionists and aestheticians recommend the consumption of certain foods in order to regain the health and beauty of the body⁹.

Many people understood the need for an alimentary regime for physical health, some of them becoming *vegetarians or vegans*, focusing on the hygienic or medical role. Now, Christian fasting does not refer only to this, but has a much more profound significance, the vegetal food having a deeper understanding and a special use for the one who is keeping the fast according to the order of the Church. The religious fast means much more than being vegetarian or vegan, and abstinence from the animal products does not equate by itself to fasting. Vegetal foods predispose the body to prayer and vigil, while animal products, that are related to blood and fat, effeminate a man's body and waken in him selfish desires. As a matter of fact, nowadays, due to medical reasons, and not necessarily from religious reasons, being a vegetarian became a fashion, that in restaurants and other places, people respect more and more the wish of those who are vegetarians, namely they never eat meat. The faithful have at hand the ecclesiastical Calendar and can be informed in terms of the fasting days during the year, finding detailed rules in the cult books, that, at the end of every liturgic day, mention the specific dispensations for the respective day¹⁰.

Some people *invoke as an impediment to observing fasts age and disease* (children, youngsters, old people), others *the high costs* of the bio products or of the substitutes or soya products (milk, cheese, proteins etc. – are more expensive and more difficult to prepare), as well as *the pace of life and jobs* that do not allow them to prepare their food at home. We must remember that in Romania, and also in many countries of eastern Europe, appeared fast foods or supermarkets where you can find ready-made food, or restaurants, a fact that drives some people not to keep the fasts.

Fasting is not the same in all countries, because not all people have the same way of living nor the same conditions of living. In some orthodox countries, due to the fact that during fasting you cannot eat meat, some canteens specialized and created such delicious dishes, that they are infinitely preferred to food that includes meat, eggs and dairy products.

Taking into account these changes, of influences from the outside world, of weakening conviction and practicing religious life, we reached a point where more Christians fast only when they want to take Communion or in the big fasts in the first and the last week. To this mindset contributed, the atheist regime in eastern Europe, but also secularization in the west. Thus, people want to modify the

⁹ Constantin Pavel, "Posturile rânduite de Biserica Ortodoxă în condițiile de viață actuale ale credincioșilor", *Studii Teologice*, no. 5-8 (1977): 433; V. Predeanu, *Știința, credința și postul* (Bucharest: Typography Grivița, 1903), 26-30.

¹⁰ See Mineiele, Octoiuhul, Penticostarul, Triodul etc.

order of fasting, and some priests to absolve undue fasting, considering it a reminder of the monarchical influence from the Byzantine period, forgetting about the canonic doctrine of the Church.

Another issue is related to the *order of the Holy Apostles fasting* that can have a longer or shorter period, according to the calendar that the faithful have in different countries (the Patriarchies of Jerusalem, Russia, Yugoslavia, Georgia and Mount Athos did not modify the calendar), where this fasting can be longer than the Great Fasting. Although this issue has been much debated, this was debated and solved at the panorthodox level once with the issue of the calendar.

We notice that *in some countries the faithful impart without fasting, without confessing and without necessary preparation (Greece, Serbia etc.)*, and in others they get to confess and impart quite rarely (Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Georgia etc.), only when they get married or in the Great Fasting. We must say that they do this not because of the Church, but because they are called and {defrocked ???} by the clerks from parishes or through different methods of modern pastoral care (radio, television, magazines, ecclesiastical newspapers, Facebook pages, orthodox websites (personal, parochial and diocesan), but due to their separation from Church. *The conscience of belonging to a community disappeared together with the need for active participation in the life of the Church*, in particular in the big cities where there are parishes with a large number of faithful, and the priests do not get to know them and take care of their catechization. Very often, in particular in cities, the faithful come to church, pray and fast only when they have events in the family (baptism, wedding or funeral) or when they are constrained by suffering, having few preoccupations for a spiritual life.

There are some faithful who from their own initiative and without the blessing of their confessor keep a very serious fasting, even more serious than that in monasteries, a fact that can have negative consequences for their spiritual life.

Preoccupied to increase the correct understanding of the role of fasts in the life of the faithful, the autocephalous Churches, based on the right to make some specifications related to the fasting, to set up fasting days for certain situations or to make waivers for certain categories of faithful, they occasionally gave synodal precepts related to how to keep a fast, showing all the time tolerance in terms of fasting that children, old people and women after giving birth must keep.

To this end, in the Encyclic of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1907, it was stated that “the Holy Synod, taking care of the salvation of the souls of the faithful entrusted to his parish and wanting to keep his sons in a good state of health, believes that P.S. Chiriarhi, thinking about the circumstances of the social life in the life of the Romanian people, can give a dispensation for those sick and weak, for women that have given birth and children, for old and helpless people, for schools and canteens, for boarding houses and asylums, for army and for the rural peasantry, for those who come regularly to the divine service, or who

build and contribute to building and maintenance of churches, schools, institutions and almshouses, as well as those who help girls to get married, youngsters to learn, arts and crafts and every person who shows mercy and has a right judgement with the widow and the orphan, with the poor and the bad man"¹¹.

Also, upon the proposal of His Beatitude Father Patriarch Justinian and „taking into account the principle of accommodation of the disciplinary and moral norms to the needs of reality”, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, by its resolution on February 27, 1956, decreed the following:

„A) Children up to the age of 7 receive absolution from fasting, being able to eat during the year any type of foods;

B) For children between 7 and 12 years of age and for the faithful of any age overwhelmed with bodily weaknesses and suffering, fasting should be mandatory only in the following days: a) all Wednesdays and Fridays, except for the days when fish is allowed; b) the first and the last week of the Holy and Great Fast of Pascha and also the Fast of the Nativity; c) from June 24 to 29 (5 days from the fasting of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul); d) from August 1 to 15; e) the Nativity eve, the Epiphany eve, August 29, September 14;

C) For the other days and weeks during the big ecclesiastical fastings, children from 7 to 12 years old and the faithful of any age who are suffering should be allowed to eat fish, spawn, eggs, milk and cheese"¹².

This reality caused the topic of fasting to be debated at the inter-orthodox level and even to suggest a review of the fasts during the year and their adaptation to the new conditions of life.

The Topic of Fasting During the Panorthodox Meetings in the XXth Century

During the XXth century an ample process of dialogue was initiated between the representatives of all the Orthodox Churches, intended to provide answers to the issues of contemporary Christian life and to prepare the meeting of a Holy and Great Synod of Orthodoxy. Right from the start, among the topics approached by the representatives of the churches was also the topic of fasting, since in the local Churches had appeared different practices related to fasting, that affected the canonical unity of the Orthodox Church.

¹¹ *Două hotărâri ale Sfântului Sinod cu privire la sărbători și posturi* (Bucharest: Typography Cărților Bisericești, 1907), 28-29.

¹² Ms. dactilografiat, Arhiva Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, year 1956 *apud* Constantin Pavel, *Posturile rânduite de Biserica Ortodoxă...*, 430; see Nicodim Sachelarie, *Pravila bisericească*, 386-387.

Right from the first panorthodox meeting - the¹³ panorthodox Congress of Constantinople¹⁴ on May 10 – June 8, 1923 – together with other stringent issues of Orthodoxy, such as the issue of calendar, the topic of fasting was also tackled.

The topic of fasting was tackled during the fifth topic, the last point (the eighth). Thus, the representatives of the Churches decided on June 5, 1923: In terms of fasting, every ecclesiastical authority can take its lead from apostolic Canon 69, that stipulates: „If a bishop, or priest, or deacon, or subdeacon, or lecturer, or musician, does not fast on Wednesday and on Friday during the Holy Fasting of 40 days before Pascha, he is to be defrocked, except for the cases when he is hindered from these due to bodily weaknesses; if he is lay, to be excommunicated”. Yet for emergency situations the “dispensation” will be respected, where the comment of Balsamon to this canon should be kept as a guide: „In terms of this canon, we must note that there is only one period of fasting that lasts for forty days, because if other such periods existed, the canon would remind us of these ones. Still we are not ashamed to fast on other fasting days, respectively before the Holy Apostles, before the Dormition of the Mother of God and before the Birth of our Lord”¹⁵.

On May 1, 1926, the Ecumenic Patriarch Basil the IIIrd (1925-1929) addressed an encyclic to all the Hierarchs of the Orthodox Churches, by which their opinion was required in relation to the perspective of organizing some preparatory conferences and of a ProSynod, made up of the representatives of all the local Churches, that should be preliminary to the future Panorthodox Synod¹⁶, and among the topics mentioned by some local Churches is also the one of fasting.

A step forward in analyzing the topic of fasting occurred on the occasion of the meeting of the preparatory Interorthodox Commission at Vatoped Monastery, during the period June 8-23, 1930. This Commission, that was called by the ecumenic Patriarch Fotie the IInd (1929-1935), had as its purpose the setting of the list of topics that were to be analyzed during a Pro-Synod, that was to be gathered in the near future, as well as the establishment of the number of representatives of the Autocephalous Churches that would participate in the Pro-Synod. All the Orthodox Churches participated in the Commission in Vatoped, except for the Churches of

¹³ For the denomination of this meeting, the Archimandrite Iuliu Scriban used the expression of „interorthodox conference” or „religious conference” in Constantinople; see Iuliu Scriban, “Conferința interortodoxă din Constantinopol”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 9, (1922-1923): 662-663.

¹⁴ The precepts of the Panorthodox Congress in Constantinople in 1923 have been taken over from the work of Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009 – spre Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Annex I, (Bucharest: Basilica, 2013), 137-145.

¹⁵ According to Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009...*, Annex I, p. 143.

¹⁶ The Romanian Orthodox Church transmitted to the Ecumenic Patriarchy, by a letter, a list of 9 topics (among which the topic of fasting) that should be previously discussed by all the Orthodox Churches: *Examinarea din nou a posturilor, în legătură cu clima, cu igiena organismului omenesc și cu influența lor morală asupra sufletului*. Priest Gheorghe Soare, “De la Vatopedi la Rhodos”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 9-10 (1961): 845.

Russia, Bulgaria and Albania (the last two were not invited, due to the difficult relations with the Ecumenic Patriarchy). The Interorthodox Commission in Vatoped adopted a list of general topics, in 17 points, that had to be discussed at that esteemed Pro-Synod.

A very important role in the preparation, from a theological point of view, of the topics that were to be discussed at the future Ecumenic Synod, was undertaken at the first Congress of the Faculties of Orthodox Theology, held in Athens, between November 29 – December 6, 1936, that tackled two big topics: *The place of the science of theology in the Orthodox Church* and *Theological contributions on some ecclesiological principles*. Within each topic, more sub-topics were tackled, the issue of fasting being tackled in the second topic¹⁷.

The first Congress of the Faculties of Orthodox Theology provided a very important theological basis for the continuation of debates in relation to the idea of calling an Ecumenic Synod, as well as the one by which the Orthodox Church could solve some urgent matters, that could not be put off until convening such a Synod. Although this Congress *did not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Orthodox Church, it contributed decisively to the theological awareness of the issues with which the Orthodox Churches were grappling during that time*¹⁸.

If in 1948, at the Orthodox Conference in Moscow, the topic of fasting was not debated by the representatives of the Orthodox Churches¹⁹, this topic was tackled again at the first Panorthodox Conference held on the island of Rhodos, between September 24 – October 1, 1961.

The Panorthodox Conference on Rhodos adopted a catalogue of synthesized topics organized in 8 groups, each topic having in its turn, more sub-topics. At group 3, point 5 reference is made to fasting: *The rematching of provisions related to the ecclesiastical fasts to the needs of the contemporary era*.²⁰

The first Panorthodox Conference stood for a great success for the cooperation between the Orthodox Churches, especially due to the fact that their representatives succeeded in understanding very well²¹ and, in particular, in finding

¹⁷ Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009*, 38.

¹⁸ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹ The following four topics have been tackled at this Conference: the Vatican and the Orthodox Church, the Validity of Anglican ordinations, the Ecclesiastic Calendar and Orthodoxy and the Ecumenic Movement; see † Nicolae, Bishop of Vadului, Feleacului and Clujului, "Conferința de la Moscova", *Ortodoxia*, no. 1 (1949): 19-27.

²⁰ Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe...*, Annex IV, 162-163.

²¹ Testimonials we find to this end from the articles: Liviu Stan, "Soborul panortodox de la Rhodos", *Mitropolia Olteniei*, no. 10-12 (1961): 732-733; Nicolae Chițescu, "Note și impresii de la Conferința Panortodoxă de la Rhodos", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 9-10 (1961): 887; Gr. M., "Expunerea Prea Sfințitului Episcop Dr. Nicolae Corneanu al Aradului despre Conferința de la Rhodos", *Mitropolia Ardealului*, no. 11-12 (1961): 841.

solutions to the difficulties that they faced, even if that catalogue of topics proved to be too complex and inappropriate for a further Pro-Synod.

The fact that the topic of fasting was also tackled during the fourth Panorthodox Conference in 1968 shows that this topic represented a constant preoccupation of the representatives of the Orthodox Churches during the interorthodox meetings. The fourth Conference was called in order to simplify the vast theme that was set in 1961. To this end, the Greek professor Panayotis Trembelas showcased that “in former times, each synod was in charge with only one topic, nowadays there are dozens. We don’t have enough theologians and the tasks seem to exceed the human powers; even if we were just like Origen, we couldn’t solve them”²².

The works of the fourth Panorthodox Conference were held between June 8-16, 1968 at the Orthodox Center in Chambésy near Geneva, Switzerland. All the Orthodox Churches participated, except for those from Georgia, Albania and Czechoslovakia.²³

During the Conference it was decided to give up on the plan of a Pro-Synod, and instead to organize a series of Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conferences, that were to adopt the texts related to the topics suggested starting with 1961, texts that were to be presented directly to the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. The choice of some topics adopted on Rhodos in 1961 was also decided and their distribution for study to the local Churches, as follows:

1. The origins of divine revelation (the Ecumenic Patriarchy);
2. The participation of laymen in the life of the Church (the Bulgarian Church);
3. The rematching of ecclesiastical precepts related to fasting (the Yugoslav Church);
4. Obstacles in marriage (the Russian Church and the Greek Church);
5. The topic of calendar and of celebration in common of the Holy Pascha (the Russian Church and the Greek Church);
6. The ecclesiastical dispensation (the Romanian Orthodox Church).²⁴

These topics were to be drawn up by the respective Churches in six months, and then they had to be handed in to the Secretariat for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod. Once received, the Secretariat drew up syntheses of the answers received, that were published in Greek, Russian, French, English, Italian and German.²⁵

²² Anne Jansen, *Die Zukunft der Orthodoxie. Konzilspläne und Kirchenstrukturen* (Benziger Verlag, 1986), 33 *apud* Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe...*, 75.

²³ Liviu Stan, “A patra Conferință Panortodoxă”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 7-8 (1968): 870-871.

²⁴ Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe...*, 77, 181-182.

²⁵ This stands for the largest publication of some texts delivered in the preparation process of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church.

Therefore, during 1971-1976, more Orthodox Churches studied the matter of reducing the catalogue of topics in 1961, some of the churches making concrete proposals for new topics or of shorter lists of topics.²⁶

Indeed, the first of the four points on the agenda of the first Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference, held in Chambésy between November 21-28, 1976, was the review of the list of topics for the Holy and Great Synod. The Committee suggested ten topics, in order, to be put on the agenda of the Holy and Great Synod.²⁷

These ten topics, that have a theological aspect (but not a dogmatic character) and that include “the most important issues for which are necessary panorthodox decisions of authority” have been divided in more groups²⁸.

The topic of fasting was taken up during the second Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference, that was held between September 3-12, 1982, at the Orthodox Center in Chambésy, bearing the title: *the Adaptation of the ecclesiastical order related to fasting, according to the requirements of the current era*, being the third item on the agenda.²⁹

The four working commissions presented to the plenary assembly the prepared projects, and the assembly adopted precepts for all the four topics on the agenda. Still, while for the first and last topic (the obstacles for marriage and the topic of calendar) final precepts have been adopted, that were to be presented to the Holy and Great Orthodox Synod, the texts related to the topic of the fasting and of ordaining the bishops had only a temporary character, to be discussed during the following Pre-Synodal panorthodox conference: taking into account the “diversity of opinions on the topic of fasting and wishing to avoid a quick decision in this regard, the second Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference, in order to provide the Churches with the possibility of a better knowledge of the needs of the large masses of faithful, decided that this topic was to be reconsidered at a future Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference”³⁰. We state that at this meeting, the

²⁶ The difficulty faced in setting the topics that had to be approached by the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, caused the bishop Antonie Ploieșteanul to speak about “a long adventure of topics”, in †Antonie Ploieșteanul, “O privire asupra pregătirii Sfântului și Marelui Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe”, *Ortodoxia*, no. 2 (1977), 248.

²⁷ 1. Orthodox Diaspora; 2. Autocephaly and how it should be proclaimed; 3. Autonomy and how it should be proclaimed; 4. The Parchements (which is the order of Churches in the liturgical memorial); 5. The issue of the new calendar; 6. Obstacles in marriage; 7. The rematching of the ecclesiastical precepts related to fasting; 8. The relations of the Orthodox Churches with the rest of the Christian world; 9. Orthodoxy and the Ecumenic Movement; 10. The contribution of the local Orthodox churches in setting the Christian ideals of peace, freedom, brotherhood and love between nations and the removal of racial discrimination.

²⁸ Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe...*, 96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

³⁰ Dan-Ilie Ciobotea, “Spre Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Ortodoxiei”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 11-12 (1982): 943; Nicolae Necula, “Învățătura despre post în Biserica Ortodoxă”, *Studii Teologice*, no. 7-8 (1984), 517-518.

Romanian Orthodox Church supported to keep unchanged the prescriptions related to fasting³¹.

Furthermore, in terms of the topic *The adaptation of the ecclesiastical orders related to fasting, according to the requirements of the current era*, the second Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference decided the following:

- deliberating on this topic with all attention and care;
- considering, still, that the preparation made up to the present as being insufficient and not allowing Orthodoxy to express unanimously on this point;
- in order to avoid a fast resolution and in order to provide the autocephalous Orthodox Churches the opportunity of preparation compared to the continuation of the tradition of the people of God, the IInd Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference:

1. Invited the local Orthodox Churches to send to the Secretariat, for the preparation of the Holy and Great Synod, their observations on this topic, based on the file already prepared;

2. Put off the issue in order to be reconsidered at a further Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference, following the previous study by the preparatory interorthodox Commission;

3. Pronounced that the old practice remain in force until the Holy and Great Synod shall examine the issue based on the proposals of a Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference in charge of study³².

All the Orthodox Churches except for that in Albania³³ participated at the third Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference, held between October 28 – November 6, 1986, at the Orthodox Center in Chambésy,.

As regards fasting, we note that the Metropolitan Antonie of Ardeal, as leader of the Romanian delegation, suggested that the title of this topic not speak about “the rematching of the rules of Fasting”, since this would “scandalize our faithful, and it could be considered that we are changing the canonic rules in terms of Fasting”, but to speak about the importance of Fasting “and about its practice nowadays”³⁴. Following preliminary discussions on the four topics, four working commissions were settled, one for each topic, in charge with drawing up

³¹ Teodor Damșa, “Tradiție și ‘readaptare’ în aplicarea prescripțiilor bisericești cu privire la post”, *Mitropolia Banatului*, no. 1 (1987): 27.

³² Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe...*, 199-200.

³³ The delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church was made up of the metropolitan Antonie al Ardealului, the metropolitan Nicolae al Banatului, the patriarchal vicar bishop Nifon Ploieșteanul, priest Ph.D. Ion Bria, and as advisors, priest professor Ștefan Alexe and priest professor Dumitru Popescu.

³⁴ † Antonie Plămădeală, “A treia Conferință Panortodoxă Preconciliară”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 9-10 (1986), 40.

the final texts, in order to be adopted during the conference. The representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church who were part of the commission that analyzed the importance of fasting was patriarchal vicar bishop Nifon Ploieșteanul and priest professor Dumitru Popescu, as advisor. Following the preparation of the four texts related to each topic put on the agenda, the members of the Conference adopted them unanimously, following their being presented to the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. We state that the text, according to the recommendation of Antonie Metropolitan, was not adopted with the title *Rematching of ecclesiastic provisions related to fasting*, but with the title *The Importance of fasting and its keeping nowadays*³⁵.

Subsequently, the document that was drawn up and completed at the third Panorthodox Pre-Synodal Conference, in 1986, from the Orthodox Center in Chambésy, was approved by the representatives of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches (January 21-28, 2016), being stated on the agenda of the Holy and Great Synod.

The Settlement of Canonic Tradition in the Document *The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Nowadays*

This resolution represents, currently, the result of all the efforts and debates related to the issue of fasting of the Orthodox Churches representatives, during the panorthodox meetings in the XXth century.

The document did not suffer major changes compared to the one approved in 1986, during the third Pre-Synodal Panorthodox Conference, as Tihon archimandrite, the abbot of Stavronichita Monastery³⁶, present during the works of this Synod, was saying contrary to the affirmations of some people that fasting would have been abolished.

Right from the beginning we remind our readers that His Beatitude Father Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, during the discussions, showcased the fact that *rediscovery in today's world of the value of bodily and spiritual fasting, accompanied by prayer, highlight the balanced character of the text*.³⁷

However, Tihon Archimandrite, in the *Epistle of Stavronichita Monastery to the Holy Chinotită of the Holy Mountain about the Holy and Great Synod*, showed that during the discussions „two bishops mainly, one from the Church of Greece and one from the Church of Cyprus, that, expressing their own opinions, *supported with warmth and rhetorical skill the release of the world from exaggerated fasting and*

³⁵ Translation by Ștefan Alexe in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 9-10 (1986): 70-73.

³⁶ <https://doxologia.ro/documentar/epistola-intaistatatorului-manastirii-stavronichita-catre-sfanta-chinotita-sfantului>, accessed on May 9, 2017.

³⁷ See the “Precept of the Holy Synod”, no. 10.112 (November 2016).

*the agreement on some optional and assumed fasting, making efforts, hoping that due to unawareness and kindness, to attract the Holy Synod toward the theological impurity of compromise and adaptation of the Church to the world and not of promotion and guidance of the world by the Church toward the evangelic thoroughness in agreement with the characteristic teaching of our Holy Tradition on this. Finally, upon the cry of many bishops to keep the status quo, no other intervention has been made to the text*³⁸, keeping the canonical and patristic tradition in terms of fasting.

Taking into account the importance of this document³⁹, I shall present the main ideas stipulated in the 9 points, following to underline the need to implement them.

We are being told, in the first article, about fasting and the fact that this is set up by God right from the beginning of the world: “1. *Fasting is a divine commandment* (Gen 2:16-17). According to Basil the Great, fasting “*is as old as humanity itself, because it was prescribed in paradise*” (On Fasting. 1, 3. PG 31, 168 A). Fasting is a great spiritual endeavour and the foremost expression of the Orthodox ascetic ideal. *The Orthodox Church, in strict compliance with the apostolic precepts, synodal canons and the patristic tradition as a whole, has always proclaimed the great significance of fasting for our spiritual life and salvation. During the entire liturgical year, the Church promotes the tradition and the patristic teaching on fasting, on constant and unceasing watchfulness of man and his devotion to spiritual endeavour*”. In the final part of the first point we can see the connection between fasting and the liturgical iconography during the period of Triodion that shows us the fact that fasting is “*an imitation of the angelic life, the “mother” of all good things and virtues*”.

In the first part of the second point biblical reasoning is presented, invoking a large number of quotes, that are related to a large extent to the person of Christ the Messiah and by the personal example of the Lord (Luke 4, 1-2). Fasting is generally prescribed as “a means of abstinence, of penitence and of spiritual edification”. Since the apostolic times, the Church has proclaimed the profound importance of fasting and established Wednesday and Friday as days of fasting, in addition to the fast before Pascha, as cited in the Church History of Eusebius of Caesarea (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, in Eusebius, Church History 5, 24, PG 20, 497 B-508 AB). In ecclesiastical practice that has existed for centuries, there has always been diversity with regard to the length of the fasting, having as grounds liturgical and monastic factors. These new periods of fasting, appeared following “an adequate preparation before the big holidays”. The connection

³⁸ <https://doxologia.ro/documentar/epistola-intaistatatorului-manastirii-stavronichita-catre-sfanta-chinotita-sfantului> in May 9, 2017.

³⁹ The text of the document was taken from www.basilica.ro (accessed on April 24, 2017).

between fasting and cult highlights its spiritual character, which involves the fact that “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”.

Point III highlights the ways in which the Christians must fast, stipulating that “real fasting is related to unceasing prayer and genuine penitence”, to which we should also add good deeds, since fasting means nothing without them. Consequently fasting is not a simple formal abstinence from certain food, but “*Real fasting means alienation from evil, evil-speaking, abstinence from anger, alienation from lust, gossip, lies, and false oaths. The lack of all of them means a good fast*” (Saint Basil the Great, *On Fasting*, 2, 7, PG 31, 196 D). Moderation is another important variable discussed in this article, and this is not related only to the type of food, but also to the quantity consumed of these foods. *Abstinence during fasting from certain meals, as well as moderation – not only related to the type, but also to the quantity of foods – stand for visible elements of the spiritual struggle*, that is fasting. Therefore, the true fast affects the entire life in “Christ of the faithful and is crowned by their participation in divine worship and, in particular in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist”.

Point IV shows that Orthodoxy is a Christocentric religion and for this reason the fasting of forty days for the Lord becomes a model to follow for Christians. Fasting helps us “*to recover by its observance that which we have lost by not observing it*” (Gregory the Theologian, *Homily 45 On Holy Pascha*, 28, PG 36, 661 A), following Christ in his trip towards death and resurrection in Him, “As, in Adam all die, the same in Christ all will resurrect” (1 Corinthians 15,22). We can see from the argumentation presented the *spiritual character of fasting, in particular of the Great Fasting, as well as the fact that fasting has a Christocentric understanding in the entire patristic tradition*.

Point V speaks about spiritual perfection, showing that: *Ascesis and spiritual struggle are endless in this life, like the refinement of the perfect. Everyone is called to strive, to the best of his or her abilities, to reach the lofty Orthodox standard, which is the goal of deification by grace*. Indeed, while they should do all things that they were commanded, they should nonetheless never vaunt themselves, but confess that “*they are unprofitable servants and have only done that which was their duty to do*” (Luke 17, 10). According to the Orthodox understanding of the spiritual life, *all people are obligated to maintain the good struggle of the fasting, however, in a spirit of self-reproach and humble recognition of their condition, they must rely upon God’s mercy for their shortcomings, inasmuch as the Orthodox spiritual life is unattainable without the spiritual struggle of the fasting*.

Point VI reminds us of the fact that: *Like a nurturing mother, the Orthodox Church has defined what is beneficial for people’s salvation and established the holy periods of fasting “as God-given protection” in the believers’*

new life in Christ against every snare of the enemy. Following the example of the Holy Fathers, the Church preserves today, as she did in the past, the holy apostolic precepts, synodal canons, and sacred traditions, always advancing the holy fasts as the perfect ascetic path for the faithful leading to spiritual perfection and salvation.

We can see in the document what are the fasts set by the Church proclaiming the *necessity to observe all the fasts throughout the year*, namely: the Fasting of Pascha, Wednesdays and Fridays, testified in the sacred canons, as well as the fasts of the Nativity, the Holy Apostles, the Dormition of the Mother of God, the single-day fasting on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on the eve of the Epiphany and on the day commemorating the Beheading of John the Baptist, in addition to the fasts established for pastoral reasons or observed at the desire of the faithful.

In point VII the participant hierarchs at the Holy Great Synod, established, with pastoral discernment in terms of dispensation, showing that: *The Church put limits to the fasting regime, the people loving dispensations. As a consequence, the Church has considered spiritual dispensation in case of physical sickness, of extreme necessity or difficult times, through the responsible discernment and pastoral care of the body of bishops in the local Churches.*

We can see in this context that *the responsibility of the application of dispensation was confided to the Synod of the bishops in the autocephalous Churches, but also to the bishops*, setting the rules of its application, respectively regarding *bodily sickness, extreme necessity or in case of hard times.*

Point VIII regulates the issue of application of dispensation, without diminishing the value of fasting, showing that *it is a reality that today, be it due to carelessness, be it due to the conditions of life, whichever is the case, many faithful today do not observe all the prescriptions of fasting. However, all these instances where the sacred prescriptions of fasting are loosened, either in general or in particular instances, should be treated by the Church with pastoral care, "for God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33, 11), without, however, ignoring the value of the fast. Therefore, with regard to those who find it difficult to observe the prevailing guidelines for fasting, whether for personal reasons (illness, military service, conditions of work, etc.) or general reasons (particular existing conditions in certain regions with regard to climate, as well as socioeconomic circumstances, i.e., inability to find lenten foods), it is left to the discretion of the local Orthodox Churches to determine how to exercise philanthropic oikonomia and empathy, relieving in these special cases the "burden" of the holy fasting.*

The Church should extend her philanthropic dispensation with prudence, undoubtedly to a greater extent when it comes to those fasts, on which the ecclesiastical tradition and practice have not always been uniform "(...) *It is good to*

fast every day, but may the one who fasts not blame the one who does not fast. In such matters you must neither legislate, nor use force, nor compel the flock entrusted to you; instead, you must use persuasion, gentleness and a word seasoned with salt” (John of Damascus, *On the Holy Fasts*, 3, PG 95, 68 B).

Point IX brings to the discussion table the topic of fasting prior to Holy Communion, setting the *obligation of fasting for three or more days before Holy Communion to be left to the discretion of the piety of the faithful, according to the words of Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite: “Fasting before partaking of Communion is not decreed by the divine Canons. Nevertheless, those who are able to fast even a whole week before it, are doing the right thing”* (Commentary of the 13th canon of Sixth Ecumenical Council, Pedalion, 191).

Midnight is recommended in this document as a starting point for fasting, underlining the fact that: *all the Church’s faithful must observe the holy fasts and abstain from food from midnight for frequent participation in Holy Communion, which is the most profound expression of the essence of the Church.*

Another important issue tackled in this document is related to *fasting before receiving the sacraments, for special occasions, during the periods of penitence* or in other circumstances: *The faithful should become accustomed to fasting as an expression of repentance, as the fulfilment of a spiritual pledge, to achieve a particular spiritual end, in times of temptation, in conjunction with supplications to God, for adults approaching the sacrament of baptism, prior to ordination, in cases where penance is imposed, as well as during pilgrimages and other similar instances.*

The general conclusion was that Church must affirm keeping the fasting with preciseness, the application of dispensation being left up to every Autocephalous Church or of every bishop, based on a pastoral and missionary analysis.

We can see very clearly from the document approved by the Holy and Great Synod that the teaching of the Orthodox Church related to the “holy institution” of fasting, its origin and importance for the spiritual life of the faithful, the way in which dispensation must be applied in case the faithful are faced with different situations that make impossible the compliance of the fasting periods due to objective reasons⁴⁰. For that purpose, Saint Basil the Great recommends moderation and abstinence as means in the therapy of spiritual diseases⁴¹.

As already mentioned in this chapter, over the course of the past century, together with other stringent topics of Orthodoxy, the fasting topic was constantly in the focus of attention of the hierarchy and of the orthodox faithful. This preoccupation can be explained only by the importance that fasting has

⁴⁰ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Scrieri*, part II, *Asceticile, Regulile mari* (Bucharest: E.I.B.M.B.O.R., 1989), 252.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 247-248.

in the faithful's life, as a means of increasing in virtue, of personal perfection and of acquiring the celestial Kingdom. To the extent in which this resolution of the Holy and Great Synod will be picked up by all the local Churches, it will have a normative character for all the faithful. However, taking into account the precise conditions, each local Church can set the limits and conditions of fasting for its own faithful.

In order to regulate fasting nowadays in the canonical doctrine we must take into account the role and meaning of Church in the social and spiritual life, that has to relate to the eschatological finality of this one. "The Church, as one of the Romanian theologians over the past century stated, is the completion of salvation by the Incarnation of Christ, is the unification of everything there is, or is destined to include everything there is. The Church is Christ extended with His Body deified in humanity"⁴².

Taking into account the fact of this finality of the Church we must state that in order to meet these goals, principles have been set from the very first days of its existence that should keep the unity and harmony of the spiritual life between its members and between the different communities in symphonic harmony with canonical doctrine but also customs by law, parts of the ecclesiastic tradition, all having their source in the doctrine of the Orthodox Church.⁴³

Starting from this reality, we consider that the Church can administer the necessary remedies and therapies according to the diseases that society faces. In the light of the afore-mentioned we consider necessary the application with exactness of fasting in the life of the faithful familiar more and more with dispensation on the part of the priests. This formalization has negative effects, on the one hand for the spiritual life of the faithful, on the other hand, leads to excessive absolutions and to breaches of canonical doctrine.

Medical science of today has noted that fasting, far from being against the nature of man, on the contrary, is always useful, being in some cases even recommended as a means of healing, for the recovery of the body tired and intoxicated by too much food. It goes without saying that when it is practised due to a need or to purely hygienic and sanitary reasons, fasting is deprived of the religious value that it has when it is practiced willingly and simply for spiritual reasons, as an act of virtue and cult prescribed and regulated by the Church.

Furthermore, we must admit nowadays that given the circumstances of life and activity in the big urban agglomerations, the observance of fasting has become very difficult. Under the influence of city people, villagers, in particular youngsters, no longer observe the church fasts, that the older members still continue

⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, (Bucharest: E.I.B.M.B.O.R., 1997), 129, 137, 138.

⁴³ Ioan N. Floca, *Drept canonic ortodox...*, vol. I, 56.

to keep. The confessors, noticing this sad reality, have been forced to become more indulgent, the majority conditioning only a few days of fasting to receiving the Eucharist. They apply the ecclesiastic principle of administration, for the purpose of keeping the faithful close to the Church.

Still, fasting must be considered also from the spiritual point of view. If stopping or the abstention from certain foods can be justified in order to strengthen the body, as is stipulated by the 69th apostolic canon, and also this document of the Holy and Great Synod in Crete, we should keep in sight the purpose of fasting, that of curbing the body for a better spiritual growth. For that purpose, we consider that the confessors must be cautious to the effects of this type of fasting in spiritual life. We must emphasize the importance of completing spiritual fasting.

Therefore, real love is recommended, keeping the conscience according to canonical doctrine and to church tradition in the patristic era. The confessor must take into account the recommendations of 102 Trullan canon when he makes a decision in terms of severity of fasting recommended to every faithful. The non-compliance of canonical doctrine, the abuses of some priests and the hypocrisy of some faithful stand at the basis of the lack of order in terms of practicing fasting in our society. The faithful must comply with canonical and church dispositions without adapting the dispositions to their personal needs, as has been noticed by contemporary liturgists as being practised nowadays.⁴⁴

Considered from the perspective of its spiritual aspects and understood as a complex of bodily and spiritual actions, fasting appears to us as a possibility of deliverance, of internal fulfilment, of finding a balance between our soul and body, of blessing. The nutritional habit of fasting is only a means, and the purpose of fasting is reaching a state of spiritual ascension. Now, these are after all the purposes that the man in western society is looking for, a society completely laicized. The post-modern and laicized man, as the western man defines himself nowadays, "is overwhelmed and totally bewildered by the aggressive and unhealthy offers of the society he lives in, so that he must choose, distinguish, and find his own way spiritually, and due to a lack of support, reaches out to consult nutritionists or psychologists"⁴⁵.

By applying these canonical provisions we are keeping the canonical conscience, the same down through the centuries. This determines, by its unity, that the different forms of church life not be considered as separate moments in history, but as part of an uninterrupted process that unifies the first step of church organization with the foundation of our ecclesial regime⁴⁶. Thus, looking into the

⁴⁴ Nicolae D. Necula, *Tradiție și înnoire în slujirea liturgică*, vol. I (Galați: Publishing House Dunării de Jos, 1996), 103.

⁴⁵ Viorel Ioniță, "Aspecte ale postului în lumea occidentală secularizată", *Ziarul Lumina* (March 29, 2014).

⁴⁶ Nicolai N. Afanasiev, *op. cit.*, 31-32.

future through the eyes of the past we can see the importance of applying the canonical doctrine and of keeping the canonical conscience, that steadies church life by a continuous update of primary church doctrine in day-to-day life.

Conclusions

The fasting topic generated numerous discussions down the centuries, thus the Holy Priests tried to respond to these needs and set rules that were to be followed in different situations in order to settle the disputes and conflicts created around an issue with implications for the cultic and individual life.

In general, they tried to state, as we have seen, the types of fasting, the need for fasting for those who want to impart in the Body and Blood of Christ, for those about to receive the Ordination sacrament, etc. They also tried to demonstrate the importance of fasting on Wednesday and Friday and its compulsoriness for all Christians. They set rules for each of the fasts during the year (the Nativity fasting, the Pascha fasting, the fasting of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the fasting of the Dormition of the Mother of God). Most of the canonical provisions refer to Pascha fasting.

Fasting always stood as a permanent preoccupation of the Church during the XXth century, in particular in the second half of the century. Through the document prepared in Chambesy in 1986, the canonical tradition has been affirmed, without bringing modifications to the ecclesial life, respectively to the canonical standards. Moreover, the spiritual implications of fasting are also showcased, as well as the the Cristocentric character of fasting.

Taking these reasons into account in the light of canonical doctrine and of patristic tradition, we must keep the fasting order without being lured away by the excessive application of church administration that leads to dissolute fasting, nor by blind attention to detail that can result in unexpected reactions towards helpless faithful, children and the sick.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING AND ITS OBSERVANCE FOR TOMORROW

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ABSTRACT. The article theologically examines the document on fasting adopted at the Crete Council in 2016. With respect to fasting, as an obligatory practice, we could notice negative consequences in Church life, more than positive ones. For example, Eucharist has been understood as a cult with less relation to the world. It became only a ritual on the periphery of the Church's life. The emphasis on food as the most important value has a negative outcome for the relationship between our theology and our clergy. In most cases, obligatory fasting practice strips our Christian identity to an identity based merely around food. For all these reasons, the article advises that the Church should advocate fasting but no longer as an obligatory practice.

Keywords: alienation, Eucharist, church, lay people, fasting, Kingdom of God

Alienation and Communion

This year is the anniversary - 100 years since the great October revolution. The Soviet Union did not last 100 years to celebrate it. We could only imagine what kind of celebration that would have been. The reasons for the collapse of the USSR are many, but here I would like to mention one which I believe is important for our story today i.e. alienation. The last years of socialism in these countries have been characterized by a discrepancy between the ideal and the real – between socialist utopia and the life of the people. When schism became greater, collapse was inevitable - Alienation happened, alienation between the proletariat and those that led them towards communism. In a society which stressed the importance of collectivism, this was a very important fact; the lost faith between members of the big collective led to disintegration. Alienation between members of a community has the potential to lead to collapse. Human beings are longing to

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belong somewhere, to be loved and embraced and not alienated. Alienation and loneliness show the disinterest of the community towards the individual.

Speaking of the Church we eagerly accentuate that the Church has been born liturgically as an icon of the Kingdom of God.¹ Besides this liturgical dimension, it would be necessary for the church to reflect the values of the Kingdom in its very structure and organization. Let us remember that the first Christians had been involved in Church government and the election of priests.² Over time, they were consulted less and less, and the Church hierarchy gradually became alienated from lay people.³ Long battles with Gnosticism structured the church more. For the early Fathers, it became very important to show the linear succession of bishops, from Christ and the Apostles.⁴ Moreover, the recognition of the Church by the Empire led the bishops to draw their identity from the Empire and theologically from Christ and the Apostles.⁵

Although the New Testament reveals the Kingdom of God as a new mode of relationship, a new quality of life really has not been mirrored in the Church structure. Even though our text books on Orthodoxy like to mention that “the unique purpose of the Liturgy is to reveal the Kingdom of God... Reminiscence, *anamnesis* of the Kingdom of God is the source of everything in Church”⁶ that does not really happen in our reality of church life. More often Liturgy preserves the patriarchal mode of the relationship, the degradation of women,⁷ the disregard of lay people, and inaccessibility for the sick and the elderly.

What we do need today are deeds as authentic expressions of our words, bringing together theology and reality. To accomplish these goals we cannot forget the essential and constitutive role of the members of our churches, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1Peter 2:9). This Epistle of Peter expresses the necessity of respect, the necessity of a personal approach and not collectivism.

¹ This is represented in the main stream theological works stemming from *Eucharistic ecclesiology*.

² *Didache* XV, 1-2.

³ Dejan Mackovic, “Socijalni kontekst bogoslovlja Sv. Ignjatija Antiohijskog”, *Srpska teologija danas 2012*, ed. Bogoljub Šijaković (Beograd: PBF/ITI, 2013), 288-302. On the subject of structures and alienation: Cyril Hovorun, *Scaffolds of the Church: Towards Poststructural Ecclesiology* (Eugene: Cascade books, 2017).

⁴ Irineos, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria.

⁵ Apostolic Constitutions.

⁶ Aleksandar Smeman, *Evharistijsko bogoslovlje* (Belgrade: Otacnik, 2011), 172.

⁷ At several conferences (Agapia 1976, Crete 1989, Rhodes 1988, Damascus 1996, Constantinople 1997, Durres, 2010), orthodox women theologians pointed out the fatal liturgical practice of our Church, however nothing has improved up to the present day: Karidoyanes Kyriaki FitzGerald, *Orthodox Women Speak: Discerning the ‘Sign of the Times’* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999).

Such an ideal is necessary even more if we, within the church, alienate church leaders and other members of the royal priesthood. I believe that the issue of fasting and the document from Crete: "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today" itself fosters this kind of alienation which I will try to consider here.

The Document: The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today

The document adopted on Crete in 2016 does not differ much from the document on the same subject from 1986 pre-conciliar document.⁸ The first chapters try to explain the true meaning of fasting, accentuating social activism and good deeds.

- A. **Chapter 1:** Unfortunately, a problem arises immediately where in chapter 1 the document states that "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)." Carefully reading biblical text, God in paradise commands "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16-17). These words in Paradise are not in accord with "not eating anything" which true fasting implies.⁹ If fasting was self-evident in the divine commandment, Jews would probably fast. On the contrary, for Jews fasting was never obligatory for the whole community but rather a reaction of individuals,¹⁰ a reaction on some of the troubles or problems in their lives.¹¹ After return from exile from Babylonian captivity, a one day fast was introduced on Yom Kippur, i.e. the Day of Atonement.¹² So, even the first chapter of the document is more than problematic in its definition that fasting has been a divine commandment. We should be reminded that in all three Gospels, the accusation against Apostles has been that they do not fast. (Mt. 9:14, Mk. 2:18, Lk. 5:33). Christ is fasting for 40 days, but only once in His life,

⁸ Viorel Ioniță, *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church: The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009* (Basel: Institute for Ecumenical Studies University of Fribourg, 2014), 176-179.

⁹ Dejan Mackovic, "Post u savremeno doba", *Srpska teologija danas 2011*, ed. Bogoljub Šijaković (Beograd: PBF/ITI, 2012), 188-197, 189.

¹⁰ Patrijarh Pavle, *Da nam budu jasnija neka pitanja nase vere I* (Beograd: Izdavacki fond Arhiepiskopije beogradsko-karlovacke, 1998), 319.

¹¹ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol 6, (Thomson Gale, 2007), 722.

¹² Lev. 23: 27- 32

similarly like many other fathers and prophets from the Old Testament.¹³ In other words, the argument that fasting is a divine commandment is more doubtful than convincing.

- B. **Chapter 6:** In chapter 6, the document on fasting recognizes fasting periods that have been developed throughout the centuries, and explains whether they exist in the canonical tradition. The Document says, "Following the example of the Holy Fathers, the Church preserves today, as she did in the past, the holy apostolic precepts, synodal canons, and sacred traditions, always advancing the holy fasts as the perfect ascetic path for the faithful leading to spiritual perfection and salvation...." Although in previous chapters, the document accentuates the social implications of fasting, in this chapter, fasting becomes solely seen as an ascetic path towards perfection. Are we lacking in substantial arguments about how fasting could be understood as a path to salvation? It is not unnecessary to remember that in early Christianity, the way to salvation was celebrated through the feast of eating and drinking and not fasting. Even the remembrance of Christ's death and the Second Coming were always connected with food, eating and drinking.¹⁴
- C. **Chapter 8:** *"It is a fact that many faithful today do not observe all the prescriptions of fasting, whether due to faint-heartedness or their living conditions, whatever these may be.* However, all these instances where the sacred prescriptions of fasting are loosened, either in general or in particular instances, should be treated by the Church with pastoral care, "for God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek 33:11), without, however, ignoring the value of the fast."
- D. As we notice immediately, the beginning of chapter 8 recognizes that *"many faithful today do not observe all the prescriptions of fasting."*¹⁵ It is interesting that this passage is almost identical as it is in the document from 1986 which makes things more grotesque.¹⁶ Thirty years passed, from 1986-2016, when the Church identified the problem where "many

¹³ Dejan Mackovic, "Post u savremeno doba", *Srpska teologija danas 2011*, ed. Bogoljub Šijaković (Beograd: PBF/ITI, 2012), 188-197, 189.

¹⁴ Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting To Fasting, The Evolution Of A Sin* (Routledge: London & New York, 1996), 69.

¹⁵ Almost the same as from the conference in 1986: Viorel Ioniță, *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church: The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009* (Basel: Institute for Ecumenical Studies University of Fribourg, 2014), 176-179.

¹⁶ "It is a reality today that many Christians do not observe all decisions regarding fasting, either out of indolence, or because of the existing conditions of life, whatever they are," *Pre-Conciliar Document from 1986.*: Viorel Ioniță, *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church: The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009* (Basel: Institute for Ecumenical Studies University of Fribourg, 2014), 178.

faithful do not observe fasting” and nothing was changed in the document.¹⁷ The “new document” does not offer any substantial solutions to resolve the issue – except to repeat the same conclusions.

- E. We could even say that the document from 1986 is more liberal in its approach: “All these are said, however, with the purpose of not weakening in any way the holy institution of fasting. This merciful dispensation should be exercised by the Church with all measure, in any case, with much lenience in the case of those fasts where there is not always a uniform practice and tradition.”¹⁸ In other words, the document at least recognizes that not all fasting periods have the same authority. The document from the Pan-Orthodox meeting in 1923¹⁹ shared the same points like the one from 1986,²⁰ which cannot be said for the document that has been adopted in 2016.
- F. **Chapter 9:** Pastoral care of the church and the dispensations mentioned in chapter 8 concerning fasting and those who do not follow fasting sounds obscure in the context of making fasting periods obligatory for all in the first place! That is explicitly stated throughout **chapter 9**: “However, the totality of the Church’s faithful *must observe the holy fasts*.”²¹ Making fasting obligatory, we produce as a consequence an orthodox identity that is inconceivable without a fasting practice. Unfortunately, food became our identity marker.²²

As a concluding remark we could only say that the document witnesses the church’s alienation, i.e. alienation of the bishops from the people. At the beginning, the document recognizes that many do not follow fasting but still prescribes higher ideals making the division greater to the point when probably the whole idea is going to breakdown.

¹⁷ The Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) asked papers on fasting during the 1970’s, one of those papers was a proposal of Patriarch Pavle (1914-2009), at the time bishop in the SOC. Even though he was personally ascetic, he proposed in 1976 a shrinking of fasting, but these proposals have been rejected: Patrijarh Pavle, *Da nam budu jasnija neka pitanja nase vere I* (Beograd: Izdavacki fond Arhiepiskopije beogradsko-karlovacke, 1998), 352-357.

¹⁸ Viorel Ioniță, *Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church: The Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Meetings since 1923 until 2009* (Basel: Institute for Ecumenical Studies University of Fribourg, 2014), 179.

¹⁹ Ibid, 110.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ https://www.holycouncil.org/-/fasting?_101_INSTANCE_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I_languageId=en_US, accessed 25.4.2017. In Greek: τό σύνολον τῶν πιστῶν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας **ὀφείλει** νά τηρῆ τάς ιεράς νηστείας.

²² *Letter of Youth from America towards Fasting Practice*, http://beleskesasabora.blogspot.fr/2016/06/blog-post_6.html, accessed 10.5.2017.

We may hope that by the end of chapter 8 of the document, we can find a more practical solution, but that is not the case: “it is left to the discretion of the local Orthodox Churches to determine how to exercise philanthropic *oikonomia* and empathy, relieving in these special cases the “burden” of the holy fast.” It is our hope that local orthodox churches at some point will try, even unilaterally, to change fasting periods and length changing this practice into private piety and not obligatory for all.

Tradition: Uncertainties

A brief look at our tradition will help us to draw some conclusions on the matter. For Apostle Paul, “food and eating are of social importance and may give rise to concern if they cause dissension and quarrelling in the Christian brotherhood. Hospitality is urged. Eating together, even with one’s pagan neighbour, is fine if it contributes to peace and mutual understanding; not so fine if food becomes a matter for argument, rivalry and a cause for social tension. The only warning given is that one should not eat (meaning in this context to associate) with a brother who is a fornicator.”²³

Fasting, undoubtedly came from a Jewish custom.²⁴ “As noted earlier, pagans were little inclined to self-mortification by fasting, while the Jews were known, even notorious, in the ancient world for their fasts long before Jesus (who, as the Gospel tells, went against Pharisaic custom, and did not fast).”²⁵ The Jews found many occasions for fasting such as the expiation of their sins, commemoration of the many disasters in their nation’s history, to implore God for mercy...²⁶ They may have fasted more often or more conspicuously in the Diaspora, probably in order that through the fasting they substitute for sacrifice.²⁷ Fasting, however, was not a part of the regular synagogal service.²⁸ Christian communities with little money, showed continuity with Jewish communities in terms of fasting but they changed the meaning of this practice: The community got an opportunity through fasting to show its social relevance for society – to help those in need.

Didache testifies that fasting should be on two days, Wednesday and Friday instead of Monday and Thursday (like Jews).²⁹ It was a matter of identity

²³ Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting To Fasting, The Evolution Of A Sin* (Routledge: London & New York, 1996), 57.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 82.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ VIII.1

against the Jews and others and not the matter of any theological importance. *The Epistle of Barnabas* also speaks about fasting but only in a context of social activism and not about food at all,³⁰ while the Second Epistle of Climent to the Corinthians testifies that mercy is greater than prayer and fasting put together.³¹ The Shepherd of Hermas also witnesses what the true fasting is and that is social activism.³² Apostolic Constitutions ask for fasting but only loosely. Even the fasting before Pascha is only for two days.³³

In the 5th century Sozomen observed that fasting is understood differently in the Empire in quality and quantity.³⁴ Socrates Scholasticus (5th century), *Church History* 5.22: "The fasts before Easter will be found to be differently observed among different people. Those at Rome fast three successive weeks before Easter, excepting Saturdays and Sundays. Those in Illyrica and all over Greece and Alexandria observe a fast of six weeks, which they term 'The forty days' fast.' Others commencing their fast from the seventh week before Easter, and fasting three to five days only, and that at intervals, yet call that time 'The forty days' fast.' It is indeed surprising to me that thus differing in the number of days, they should both give it one common appellation; but some assign one reason for it, and others another, according to their individual fancies. One can see also a disagreement about the manner of abstinence from food, as well as about the number of days. Some wholly abstain from things that have life: others feed on fish only of all living creatures: many together with fish, eat fowl also, saying that according to Moses, Genesis 1:20 these were likewise made out of the waters. Some abstain from eggs, and all kinds of fruits: others partake of dry bread only; still others eat not even this: while others having fasted till the ninth hour, afterwards take any sort of food without distinction. And among various nations there are other usages, for which innumerable reasons are assigned. Since however no one can produce a written command as an authority, it is evident that the apostles left each one to his own free will in the matter, to the end that each might perform what is good not by constraint or necessity. Such is the difference in the churches on the subject of fasts."³⁵

Early church sources clearly state the importance of fasting as a social practice. Even if we look at the Jewish community, the Babylonian Talmud (3rd-5th century) testifies that fasting was a replacement for sacrifice because of

³⁰ III.1-6

³¹ XVI.4.

³² *Parable* V.2

³³ *Apostolic Constitutions* 33.

³⁴ *Ecclesiastical History VII*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26027.htm>, accessed 10.5.2017.

³⁵ *Church History*, 5.22.

the absence of the Temple. At the same time, fasting has been judged as dangerous for the reason that one who is fasting could get sick and become a burden for the community. Philo, deeply inspired by Platonism, speaks about an ideal Jewish community which is vegetarian and celibate. But even Philo recommends this to the people over 50. Nowadays Jews have six fasting periods, two of them are lasting around 24 hours and four last for 12 hours (from sabbath to aksham).

Having in mind all these testimonies at the beginning of Christianity it is obvious that the social importance of fasting was accentuated in order to show the newness of Christianity in comparison with other religious customs.³⁶ Food was of secondary importance and true fasting expressed through good deeds.

In this context we should understand the true meaning of canonical punishments for those not fasting. In Apostolic canon 69 we find that, "*If any Bishop, or Priest, or Deacon, or Subdeacon, Readers, or Psalti fails to fast throughout the forty days of the Great Fast, or on Wednesday, or on Friday, let him be deposed, unless he has been prevented from doing so by reason of bodily illness. If, on the other hand, any layman fail to do so, let him be excommunicated.*"³⁷ In the Jewish food system we have a distinction between clean and unclean food which had religious significance. Food was a marker of identity which brought people into or excluded them from the community of God.³⁸ In that sense we should understand canonical provisions. They look very harsh but in a context of social solidarity. Fasting was proof of the social inclination of church members to save money for those in need. At the same time, to reject fasting was at that time understood as rejection to offer sacrifice for your needy brethren. In other words, fasting or non-fasting was understood socially and not in the context of food itself. Otherwise, the binary system clean/unclean would be just substituted with a new one: fasting/non-fasting food. That would be regression of Christian identity where food plays an extensive role in our relationship to God.

Fasting and Eucharist

In chapter 9 we have an interesting statement which is a new addition in the document from 2016, a quotation from Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite that fasting is connected again and again with the Eucharist: "... fasting before partaking of Communion is not decreed by the divine Canons. Nevertheless,

³⁶ In the Christianity preached by Paul food as such is of no religious concern: Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting To Fasting, The Evolution Of A Sin* (Routledge: London & New York, 1996), 57.

³⁷ Ralph J. Masterjohn, ed., *The Rudder* (West Brookfield: The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 2005), 214.

³⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

those who are able to fast even a whole week before it, are doing the right thing.” It is evident that here we have a schism between clerics and laymen, where clerics do not fast a whole week before the Liturgy, laymen have been invited to do so. This kind of logic would imply that partaking of Eucharist regularly would mean fasting for the whole year. It is obvious that this sentence was an addition to advance a different vision of the Church where people partake of the Eucharist only occasionally.

The connection that has been made in this chapter between fasting and Eucharist has had devastating effects on Church reality and Church life. In the majority of our churches, priests advise seven days of fasting even though they do not apply the same for themselves. At first glance we notice a *bourgeoisie mentality*, the strong difference between priests and the faithful. Far worse than this mentality has been the introduction of the market economy in the Eucharist. Even though we have evidence from the canonical tradition of selling Eucharist for money (VI, 23) it is almost the same today – not much difference. Confession has been obligatory before every communion³⁹ where people usually give money. After confession, where they admittedly confess that they had only “proper”, i.e. fasting food, they have been considered “worthy” for Eucharist. It is a twofold danger that this document should have avoided, instead of supporting wrong practice that has lasted for centuries. Fasting became new money which makes someone worthy of partaking. In other words, insistence on food almost makes food as a tool which makes successful payment for Eucharistic participation (fasting prior to communion is necessary, at least for three days).

As stated above, this only contributed to the development of the *bourgeoisie mentality* of our priesthood. We need to be reminded again and again that “the liturgical (priestly) offices should exist for the sake of the Eucharist, and their *raison d’être* should be the celebration of the Eucharist together *with* the people rather than *instead of* the people, serving as an icon of the eschatological gathering of the people of God in one place around Christ, with the bishop ‘in the type and place of Christ,’ and the presbyters as types of the apostles.”⁴⁰ In that context, it is necessary to realize the signs of the Kingdom of God in the Liturgy, in order to reflect them in Church structures and later in society itself. Instead of that we iconize economic practice that prevails in the world where almost anything can be paid for. That very spirit has been evident here too, where Eucharist is not a gift but a payment. The sense of Eucharist as a gift has been lost completely.

³⁹ Aleksandar Smeman, *Veliki post* (Vrnjacka banja: Bratstvo Svetog Simeon Mirotočivog, 1999), 149-163.

⁴⁰ Kalaitzidis, Pantelis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology* (Geneva: WCC, 2012), 103.

Eucharist should nourish us as God's gift to us, in which we "experience the need to share God's gifts with our brothers and sisters..." Instead; Eucharist has been understood as one's individual achievement and a struggle to meet certain rules. From God's gift Eucharist becomes the deserved means of salvation. In such a liturgical setting, Communion makes a new ethos of exclusion and pride with no need for others. Why would someone need or feel necessity for the other in the Eucharistic setting when he individually deserved it through confession and fasting. In other words, confined to its cultic measurements, the Lord's Supper develops an ethos of isolationism and self-pride. This ethos of payment is indirectly mentioned and perceived in chapter 3 of the Crete Council: "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."⁴¹

Alienation: Discrimination inside the Orthodox Church

The document also represents a kind of discrimination towards those churches that follow the old calendar. Representatives of local churches that follow the old calendar did not manage to raise their voice in order to achieve equality with other churches. Fasting of the Holy Apostles is always longer in churches that follow the old calendar. In the last almost 100 years that difference is bigger – more than three years. Clearly the representatives of Orthodox churches that follow the old calendar, even after recognizing that the *majority of people do not fast*, did not find it necessary to do anything in order to represent their own faithful and care for unity of the Church on this matter. The same could be said for the churches that follow the new calendar. They ignored this issue, i.e. issue of unity and life of laity in other local churches. This is also a sad fact which contributes to our theory of alienation between clergy and laity. Obviously issues for the clergy are not the same as those for the laity.

Conclusion - Process of Alienation

With respect to fasting, Eucharist has been understood as a cult with less relation to the world. It became only a ritual on the periphery of the Church's life. The emphasis on food as most the important value has a negative outcome for our theology and our clergy. The ethos that such an understanding produces in our faithful is melancholy towards the world and our fellow human beings, i.e. to become close in the eyes of God what matters is fasting.

⁴¹ "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today", Chapter 3.

Fasting stripped our Christian identity to an identity based merely around food. It is a shame that today Orthodox distinguish themselves in the world through their food consumption, and not their deeds.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (John 3:16-17)." Needless to say that the world and the relations that we make within it should be understood as a space which gives us the possibility to actively participate in our society and care for others. Our true fasting should be our *rejection to reject* the world in the context of salvation. Making fasting non-obligatory would help in this process of healing; healing of individualism and alienation.

In conclusion, we can give you some research results from Serbia that has been conducted in 2010 showing that 7.9% of the faithful take frequent communion, whereas almost 78% have communion only a few times in the year. At the same time, 28% declared that they fast regularly, while almost 63% never fast or only a few times during the year.⁴² These numbers are very high because the number of those in the survey is around 1250 people. Probably these numbers would be much less if the survey had been conducted on a larger scale. This proves that the identity of Orthodox Christians lies more in fasting than in the Liturgy; the center of our worship being of secondary importance.

It is good for the Church to prescribe fasting, but as a recommendation and not as an obligation for all. Even when we discuss fasting it is more important to pose this question: do we know and understand human beings of today? In many regions, preparing fasting food consumes more time and money. In today's world people have less time for themselves. Working time is getting longer leaving less time for cooking and these social changes should be taken into consideration. For this reason it is legitimate in the context of fasting to pose the question of whether we know the human being of today and whether we try to understand the issues and challenges that he faces in today's world?

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AUTONOMY AND ORTHODOX DIASPORA FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE DOCUMENTS ADOPTED BY THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL

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ABSTRACT. Since the beginning of the debates on the topics which could be discussed at the Orthodox Church's Synod, autocephaly, autonomy, the Orthodox diaspora and the diptychs were part of the proposed themes. Their analysis during the preparatory process highlighted the fact that Orthodox Churches cannot reach a consensus regarding two of them: autocephaly and diptychs. Under these conditions, the Synaxis of the Orthodox Church's primates, convened in Constantinople in 2014, decided to withdraw them from the agenda. Out of the four above-mentioned themes only *Autonomy and the Means by Which it is Proclaimed* and *The Orthodox Diaspora* were kept for debate and approval. In this paper I will briefly analyse these two documents, emphasising the contribution of the Synod to the clarification of the topics, highlighting some fundamental elements, and aspects that are as yet unresolved.

Keywords: autonomy, diaspora, Holy and Great Council, Canon Law, canons, synodality, diptychs.

I. Church autonomy and the clarifications brought by the Holy and Great Council's document

Observing the structure and content of this document, at a first glance we might ask ourselves about the usefulness of adopting it at a pan-Orthodox level, considering that it deals with a problem which, in principle, concerns the internal life of the autocephalous Churches. However, at an in-depth analysis, we notice that it contains certain elements which have implications for the life of the whole Church. For a more thorough understanding of the themes, I will present in the following paragraphs a few fundamental aspects about the

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institution of autonomy, after which I will highlight the way in which the Holy and Great Council puts it in a conceptual framework and which are the implications of adopting this document for the life of the Church¹.

a. Church autonomy and the issue of recognizing the ecclesial maturity of a regional canonical entity

The institution of autonomy was present in the life of Christian communities since the apostolic times. The full responsibility of local Churches, emphasized since the Acts of the Apostles, epistles and apostolic writings, was always linked with the principle of co-responsibility of the whole ecclesial body². Thus, autonomy was framed in synodality, and synodality consolidated autonomy³. Each local Church, regardless of its size, is the complete manifestation of the Church, and a regional Church's primate has the role of communion vector⁴.

In the 4th and 5th centuries, capitalizing the political organization of the Empire, the Church structured a metropolitan system to which it granted all elements of autonomy⁵. Following the evolution of stately organization, the church's institutional structures moulded on the civil model, so that by the end of the 4th century it reached a supra-metropolitan organization. This organization underlined the distinction between basic, episcopal autonomy, metropolitan autonomy and supra-metropolitan autonomy, which was consolidated between the 4th and 9th centuries in the form which later was named Pentarchy.

It is interesting to note that in this whole system of autonomies, the canonical tradition invests with extended autonomy only the metropolitan system, while the episcopal and supra-metropolitan autonomies are always correlated with the jurisdictional competencies manifested at the provincial level. An eloquent example to this end is the 8th Canon of the Third Ecumenical Synod of Ephesus. Although it is considered by some canonists as the text which proclaims the autocephaly of Cyprus⁶, in fact it only guarantees a metropolitan province

¹ See Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009* (București: Ed. Basilica, 2013), 166.

² For more details on the concept of church autonomy, see Liviu Stan, "Despre autonomia bisericească", *Studii Teologice*, no. 10 (1958): 376-393.

³ A remarkable study on this theme, which also analyses the rapport between autonomy and jurisdictional authority is: J. H. Erickson, "Common Comprehension of Christians concerning Autonomy and Central Power in the Church in View of Orthodox Theology", *Kanon*, no. 4 (1980): 100-112.

⁴ See Kallistos Ware, "L'exercice de l'autorité dans l'église orthodoxe (II)", *Irinikon*, no. 55 (1982): 25-34.

⁵ C. Vogel, "Communion et Eglise locale aux premiers siècles, Primauté et synodalité durant la période anténicéenne", *L'Année canonique*, no. 25 (1981): 170-171.

⁶ See G. Papatthomas, *L'Eglise autocephale de Cypre dans l'Europe Unie* (Katerini: Ed. Pectasis, Katerini, 1998), 53-81.

the right to self-govern against innovative claims manifested by the church authority at a superior civil-administrative level⁷.

It is known that with the imperial reorganization, episcopal sees, with respectable tradition and confirmed moral authority through endurance from facing up to doctrinal dissident movements and persecutions, end up having authority over multiple dioceses. Simultaneously, even if some sees were revered by the Church for their distinguished role in resisting persecutions and keeping the faith, the metropolitan province's authority continued to be consolidated. Canon 7 of the First Ecumenical Synod honours the bishop of Jerusalem, which would be soon put in the Pentarchy. Nevertheless, from an administrative point of view, this does not affect the metropolitan canonical order.

Regional authority imposed itself in the Church also because each province capital offered communication and transport facilities as it was the centre of social life and, implicitly, of church life. The Protopresbyter (*Protos*) exercised in this context the function of communion vector. The canonical tradition displays him as also having concrete competencies. The other bishops referred to him for all aspects which exceeded the internal life of the diocese, and the protopresbyter did not undertake anything without everyone's consent, as it is stated in the 34th apostolic canon in which the term ὁμόνοια designates *oneness of mind, unanimity, concord*.⁸ The other competencies went to the first bishop of a region. These were: convening synods (20 Antioch), chairing elections and consecrating the elected one (4, I; 28, IV; 19 Antioch), the right of direct intervention when a bishop did not fulfil his duties of administering the patrimony (the right of devolution)(11, VII; 52, 55 Carthage), and also represented prerogatives of a real autonomy. As the metropolitan was not the holder of a direct jurisdiction in the suffragan dioceses (35 ap.; 2, II; 20, VI) he manifested himself as the example of overcoming local egoism and fitting the diocese's church life in the framework of the regional church life.

The gradual consolidation of supra-metropolitan prerogatives through highlighting the thrones of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and then Jerusalem, did not diminish provincial autonomy. The primate of the Church structured at this

⁷ Although we notice that in the context of the Third Ecumenical Synod it concerns a deliberation on this issue after the arguments of the parties, the Synod solely guarantees the prerogatives which were already in effect. Through this canon, the Church of Cyprus does not acquire a different statute from the previous one, but the existing one is confirmed and it allows the metropolitans to take a copy of this decision in order to defend their complete autonomy. See also: J. Erikson, "Autocephaly in Orthodox Canonical Literature to the Thirteenth Century", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, no. 1-2 (1971): 31.

⁸ George Lampe, *A Greek Patristic Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), 958. Cf. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1996).

level did not have direct jurisdictional competencies, but only the right of consecrating the primate of the metropolitan Church, chosen by the bishops of that diocese⁹.

Beginning with the middle of the 5th century, through the 28th canon of Chalcedon, five supra-metropolitan centres: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, are emphasized so that later the Pentarchy would be considered a gift of God, associated with the five senses which were applied to the Ecclesial body of the Empire¹⁰. Some consider that this association targeted precisely limiting the claims of acquiring patriarchal status. As long as the unitary political elements encased what today we might call the *autocephalous Church*, no major issues arose¹¹. However, when the pressure of imperial politics tried to dilute through disciplinary means the autonomy of some churches which were emancipated, it even led to pushing them towards heretical doctrines. Some see the adoption of even distinct doctrinal stances by the Persian and Armenian Churches as a form of emancipation and a wish to distance themselves from worldly power¹². In other cases, the return of church entities to Orthodox doctrine was negotiated in exchange for the recognition of their full church autonomy. The most representative case is that of the Church of Georgia¹³.

The canonical tradition also speaks of the so-called autocephalous archbishoprics which were merely dioceses taken out from the regional metropolitan system¹⁴, and which directly belonged to the Patriarchy. So, they were entitled to an extended autonomy, similar to what today we call autonomous churches.

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire full autonomy, later called autocephaly, was more clearly specified as a form of the wider *autonomy circumscribed by geo-political influences*. In the context in which the stately entities exercised political pressure over the ecclesial entities, the natural need of recognizing the ecclesial entity's autocephaly arose. This manifested in an independent state in order to do away with the suspicions of another's state interference in the internal issues

⁹ For more details see: P. L'Huillier, "Le décret du concile de Chalcédoine sur les prérogatives du siège de la très sainte église de Constantinople", *Messenger de l'Exarchat du Patriarcat russe en Europe Occidentale*, no. 27 (1979): 33–69

¹⁰ See V. Lombino, "Pentarchia", in *Nuovo Dizionario patristico e di antichità cristiane*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Genova-Milano: Casa Editrice Marietti, 2008), 4023-4028.

¹¹ For a broader approach of Constantinople's influence over church organization and of the Christian east in general, see Alain Ducellier, ed., *Byzance et le monde orthodoxe*, 2^e édition (Paris: Armand Colin, 1996).

¹² R. Janin, "Les Arméniens. L'église arménienne", *Échos d'Orient* 18, no. 110 (1916): 6.

¹³ For more details see J. Kshutashvili, "Organizarea bisericii georgiene si bazele ei canonice" (PhD Thesis, Constanța: "Ovidius" University, 2007).

¹⁴ For more details see *ibid.*

through the medium of the Church. This is how modern autocephalous Churches were born, on the ruins of great empires.

Thus we can ascertain that in the course of time, extended church autonomy developed as a form of recognizing the self-governing capacity of a regional Church, which was however limited by geo-political interests which avoided granting it the status of autocephaly. Generally, these situations created convulsions which generated schisms and jurisdictional conflicts. For this reason, addressing the theme of church autonomy exceeds the interests of the autocephalous Church and the Holy and Great Council's document on this issue is completely justified.

b. The main characteristics of church autonomy from the point of view of the document adopted by the Holy and Great Council

The conciliar document designates autonomy as expressing the statute of relative independence of a certain Church within the autocephalous Church (1). Beginning from this formulation, we need to understand that the notions of relative and absolute independence must not be regarded from a secular juridical perspective, but in the sense that autonomous Churches have their own organization within the autocephalous Church, with autocephaly as the highest form of autonomy¹⁵.

The text shows that autonomy is granted after a justified request on behalf of the local Church (2a). The autocephalous Church has the aptitude to analyse this request in a Synod and decide whether or not to grant autonomy. The Synod of the autocephalous Church has the obligation to specify through the autonomy *Tomos* the geographical limits and relations which the autonomous Church has with the autocephalous Church (2b). The canonical act of proclaiming autonomy is communicated to the sister Orthodox Churches by the primate of the autocephalous Church (2c). The statute of integration of the autonomous Church in the autocephalous Church is strengthened also by the fact that its inter-Orthodox, inter-Christian and interreligious relations are accomplished through the medium of the autocephalous Church (2d). Furthermore, the primate of the autonomous Church commemorates only the name of the primate of the autocephalous Church to which it belongs (3a), from him also receiving the Holy and Great Myron (3c).

The document does not explicitly condition awarding the statute of autonomous Church by the possibility of constituting a local synod, but allows for this to be understood through the recognition of the autonomous Church's right of electing, enthroning and judging its bishops. Only in the case in which

¹⁵ Stan, "Despre autocefalie", 388.

the autonomous Church would be incapable of assuming this responsibility, can the autocephalous Church to which it reports assist (3d).

In this document there are certain stipulations which underline the interest of the text at a pan-orthodox level. These consolidate the role of mediator for the Ecumenical Patriarchy, in case of certain jurisdictional conflicts in which the institution of autonomy is involved or in case of organizing church life in the Orthodox diaspora.

Paragraph 2f states:

In the event that two autocephalous Churches grant autonomous status within the same geographical ecclesial region, prompting contestation over the status of each autonomous Church, the parties involved appeal—together or separately—to the Ecumenical Patriarch *so that he may find a canonical solution to the matter* in accordance with prevailing pan-Orthodox practice.

This wording draws attention to the apparition of jurisdictional conflicts and tries to find a canonical solution in order to relieve the relations between autocephalous Churches and reinstatement of canonical orderliness. The mediator role is awarded in these situations to the primate. It is evident that in the synodal system of church organization, the primate function cannot be devoid of canonical value. The primate, as one amongst equals, has a canonical function of harmony and consensus vector¹⁶. Even if the wording of this paragraph seems to award the Ecumenical Patriarchy canonical capacity of identifying in a unilateral way the canonical solution with regard to the said issue, considering that its ending refers to the *prevailing pan-Orthodox practice*, it is evident that the canonical solution can only be identified consensually. The resolution of dissensions between the autocephalous Churches through consensus, being in fact the *prevailing pan-Orthodox practice* by which all bishops have to abide, as the 34th apostolic canon attests.

The primate function is valued in paragraph 2e, this time in relation to the management of church organization at the level of the Orthodox diaspora:

Autonomous Churches are not established in the region of the Orthodox Diaspora, except by pan-Orthodox consensus, upheld by the Ecumenical Patriarch in accordance with prevailing pan-Orthodox practice.

This phrasing is of particular importance because, having in mind the previous mention according to which the autocephalous Church has the exclusive competency of according autonomy to an ecclesial region, the sister Orthodox

¹⁶ For more details on the canonical function of the primate see Patriciu Vlaicu, "Autorité et coresponsabilité dans la fonction canonique du primat – les enseignements des quatre premiers siècles et les défis actuels de l'Eglise", in *La primauté et les Primats* (Paris: Cerf, 2015), 109-124.

Churches implicitly assume that no autocephalous Church has jurisdiction over the diaspora. Regardless, for the first throne in the Orthodox Church, that which also has the responsibility of cultivating communion, is recognized the competency of reception vector for the consensus of the autocephalous Churches with regard to the proclamation of autonomy for an ecclesial region of the Orthodox diaspora.

It is for the first time when a pan-Orthodox document, approved in the preparatory phase by all autocephalous Churches, expresses with one voice the possibility of organizing autonomous churches in the diaspora. It is a first step towards creating local Churches in the *Orthodox diaspora*. Simultaneously, considering that the document implicitly affirms that no autocephalous Church is entitled to a general jurisdiction in the *Orthodox diaspora*, we cannot refrain from asking ourselves how would that Church be articulated in the communion of the Orthodox Church. To which autocephalous Church would it belong, or how could an autonomous Church which is not automatically integrated in an autocephalous Church manifest itself?

As a conclusion to this first section of our analysis, we can underline the fact that the document of the Holy and Great Council clarifies the way in which Church autonomy is integrated in the institution of autocephaly and presents it as a freestanding form of organization in an ecclesial and socio-cultural context in which such a structuring supports the mission of the Church.

Church autonomy has to be organized by respecting canonical tradition, and the disagreements between autocephalous Churches with regard to this institution's mode of manifestation in a certain region must be resolved through consensus. The Ecumenical Patriarchy only has a role of mediation and communion vector. For the first time the possibility of organizing local autonomous churches in the Diaspora is evoked, under the conditions of receiving consensus with the support of the Ecumenical Patriarchy.

II. The issue of the Orthodox diaspora from the point of view of the Holy and Great Council's document

With the population movements of the beginning of the 20th century, the Orthodox Church consolidated its presence outside of traditional canonical territories. Thus, a new canonical entity emerged, the *Orthodox diaspora*, which was perceived from the beginning as an atypical form of ecclesial manifestation, for which the Church must find appropriate solutions both from a canonical and pastoral-missionary point of view. Even since the 1960's the presence of Orthodox communities outside of the traditional canonical territories of the autocephalous Churches attracted the attention of canonists

and ecclesiologists, and the subject was considered particularly sensitive, and in need of anchoring in the canonical tradition and of communal understanding in the Orthodox Church.

In addressing this issue, after a few terminological clarifications, I will underline the challenges and opportunities brought by what we define as the Orthodox diaspora, and I will highlight the application of organizational economy to the pastoral-missionary reality of the diaspora. Finally I will underline a few perspectives opened by the conciliar document.

a. Terminological clarifications

The notion of diaspora originates from the Hebrew term *galout*, which is linked in its classical sense to the notion by which the Jewish people outside of Palestine were designated (Jacob 1,1; 1 Peter 1,1). Besides this etymology, throughout time, some population movement analysts considered that at the origin of the term¹⁷ employed in modern languages stands the Greek verb *speiro* with the prefix *dia*, which means dispersal. Through this word we understand a people dispersed beyond its traditional territory, which is characterised by maintaining an identity separate from the socio-cultural context to which it emigrated¹⁸.

Sociologists also use the term in its plural form, speaking of *diasporas*, incorporating in this notion not only the ethnic diaspora, but also other forms of manifestation of identity groups beyond their traditional display environment¹⁹. So, we can speak of an ethnic, confessional or ethno-confessional diaspora²⁰.

Amongst these forms of diaspora one can integrate the Orthodox *diaspora*, defined as the “community of Orthodox Christians which live outside of the originating territorial Churches and in any case, outside all territorial Orthodox Churches”²¹.

It is evident that the diaspora was constituted in time, beginning with ethnic migrations, but an *Orthodox diaspora* emerged which consists of persons

¹⁷ Lisa Anteby-Yemini et William Berthomière, “Les diasporas: retour sur un concept”, *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, no. 16 (2005): 139.

¹⁸ M. Eliade, *La nostalgie des origines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 85-89.

¹⁹ For more details on the “various diasporas” see Alain Medam, “Diaspora / Diasporas. Archétype et typologie”, *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 9, no. 1 (1993), 63-64.

²⁰ The Unitarians emigrated because of religious persecutions. For more details on the Unitarians see Michel Baron, *Les unitariens* (Paris: Harmattan, 2004).

²¹ See: G.D. Papathomas, *Le Corpus Canonum de l'Eglise Orthodoxe, (1er-9e siècles) Le texte des Saints Canons ecclésiastiques* (Editions Pektasis, 2015), 1073.

who do not consider themselves as members of the ethnic diaspora²², a scattering of the Orthodox faith amongst the persons originating from those respective countries.

If the confessional element is that which grants the Orthodox diaspora's identity, the ethno-cultural element cannot be neglected. It underlines the language and tradition peculiarities. However, in the Orthodox diaspora, two types of referring to the confessional and ethnic elements are identified. For the first generation of emigrants, the ethno-cultural element is prevalent, the faithful calling themselves *Romanian, Greek, Serbian-Orthodox*. Beginning with the second generation a large part call themselves *Orthodox-Russians, Serbians, Greeks, Romanians*. This dynamic is common in the context of integrating the immigrants in the host-societies, and marks the passing from belonging to an ethno-confessional diaspora to a confessional presence marked by ethno-cultural values.

b. The Orthodox diaspora, challenge and opportunity

Some considered that the *Orthodox diaspora* reveals the incapacity of our Church to live a coherent relationship to canonicity²³. In support of this position the anomaly of situating multiple bishops in one city is highlighted. It is taken as a sign of a chronic canonical disorder.

Others consider that organizing the Church's mission while considering cultural particularities is nothing else than endowing the Church with the necessary means for a complex mission in a complex pastoral environment²⁴.

Even if the opinions contradict with regard to the nature of the diaspora issue, it is certain that the *Orthodox diaspora* offered and offers a framework in which Orthodoxy is lived in a context of pan-Orthodox interaction.

In the *Orthodox diaspora*, faithful of various origins can understand the different traditions of their young coreligionists who are settling down in their host countries, make friendships and appreciate Orthodox youths of other origins.

²² In Western Europe there are more than 100 parishes which are primarily constituted of Orthodox faithful originating from the said countries or from a third-fourth generation of immigrants. See Pnevmatikakis, "La territorialité de l'Église orthodoxe en France, entre exclusivisme juridictionnel et catholicité locale", *Carnets de géographes* [En ligne], 6 (2013), <http://cdg.revues.org/918>, accessed Mai 18, 2017, doi: 10.4000/cdg.918.

²³ G.D. Papathomas, "La relation d'opposition entre Eglise établie localement et Diaspora ecclésiale – L'unité ecclésiologique face à la co-territorialité et à la multi-juridiction", *L'Année canonique* 46 (2004): 85.

²⁴ An analysis of the link between territorial and personal mission is done by: Lewis J. Patsavos, "Territoriality and Personality in Canon Law and Ecclesiastical Law: Canon Law Faces the Third Millennium", in Peter Erdo, *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of the Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches* (Budapest: Pazmany Peter Catholic Univ., 2002).

The elderly steadfast in the culture and traditions of their originating countries end up cherishing different traditions.

Certainly, the diaspora is a complex reality and sometimes difficult to manage, but it offers an auspicious framework for ample debates. In this diaspora, personalities of the Orthodox Church confessed the values of Orthodoxy in front of other Christians. This way, the particularities of Orthodoxy were better understood by the others, and Orthodoxy itself was confronted with other ways of living the Gospel.

Considering all of the above, we can say the Orthodox diaspora is not only a medium which evokes complex issues, but also a providential aspect which, if assumed coherently, can be capitalized²⁵ upon.

If during the preparatory period of the Holy and Great Council there was the wish that the provisory organisation would not exceed the moment of its convening, in the fourth pre-conciliar conference it was decided that the structures created for manifesting unity in the Orthodox diaspora must be organized on a long-term basis, advancing towards a greater canonical coherency.

c. The Orthodox diaspora's organization, application of canonical economy at an organizational level

The document adopted by the Holy and Great Council underlines the determination of all autocephalous Orthodox Churches of organizing the *diaspora* according to the ecclesiology, tradition and practice of the Orthodox Church²⁶. This wish is displayed as a long-term project originating from the discovery formulated in paragraph 1 b which states that in the current phase organizational economy is applied, creating, in a first stage²⁷, 13 regions of the *Orthodox diaspora*, enumerated in paragraph 3: Canada; the United States of America; Latin America; Australia; New Zealand and Oceania; the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; France; Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg; Austria; Italy and Malta; Switzerland and Lichtenstein; Germany; the Scandinavian Countries (excluding Finland).

Paragraph 1b points out that the *Orthodox diaspora* is constituted as a form of organizational economy while according to strict canonical order there would be “only one bishop in a city”. This specification directly refers canon 8

²⁵ See Chronique, “A propos de la diaspora orthodoxe”, in *Contacts* 20, no. 61 (1968): 77.

²⁶ N. Lossky, “La présence orthodoxe dans la diaspora et ses implications ecclésiologiques, de même que celles des Églises orientales catholiques”, *Irénikon* 65, no. 3 (1992): 358.

²⁷ We notice that amongst these regions the Far East is not included, and for this reason the text refers, in a first stage, to the organization of the diaspora.

of the First Ecumenical Synod, which points out that in order not to have two bishops in a city, the Cathar bishops received to Orthodoxy need to be placed as chorbishops or priests, if in the said city there was already an Orthodox bishop.

Starting from this affirmation, we ask ourselves if the *monobishopric*, through itself, has the capacity of solving in a strict canonical manner the issue of the Orthodox diaspora. It is obvious that overlapping ethnic jurisdiction in the diaspora raises serious canonical issues²⁸. But is this issue understood in all of its complexity? We can speak of canonical normality only evocating the mono-episcopate, without speaking of the relationship with the canonical reality of the local Church? Is it not also an issue of canonical disorder when we do have a mono-episcopate but it is not framed in the canonical reality of the *local Church*? If in Latin America there would be only one bishop, member of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and Orthodox faithful of various origins, in order to be integrated into the Orthodox Church they would need to be integrated into the Church of Serbia. Would this be canonical normality? Certainly not. Canonical normality is when the people of a region are organized in a local Church and consider themselves first and foremost as being Orthodox²⁹, and the local bishop fully embraces canonical responsibility, without being integrated into a jurisdiction situated thousands of kilometres away, marked by ethnic and cultural-linguistic specifics, which is entirely different from that in which he serves.

We notice that the document regarding the *Orthodox diaspora* avoids using the notion of *local Church*, and leaves the impression that the problem can be solved through an underlining of the role played by the Ecumenical Patriarchy in the issue of the diaspora.

In this phase of manifesting synodality at a pan-Orthodox level, the issue of the diaspora was not resolved. The Church was satisfied to affirm the need of common testimony in order that the diaspora is not a place of dissension, but a medium of complementary manifestation of all charisms which nations can highlight. Although regarding the organization of the diaspora some consider that the situation is in fact a major disorder, others underline that current organization of the diaspora is the only one which can offer reasonable pastoral solutions.

Respect towards the specificity of pastoral care in distinct ethno-cultural contexts is not singular in the history of the Church. Ever since the first centuries, valuing the ethnic component was a means for mission. The presence of some

²⁸ P. L'Huillier P., "L'Unité de l'Église au plan local dans la diaspora", *Contacts* 30, no. 104 (1978): 403.

²⁹ G.D. Papathomas, (2004) "La relation d'opposition entre Église établie localement et Diaspora ecclésiale - L'unité ecclésiologique face à la co-territorialité et à la multi-jurisdiction", *L'Année canonique* 46 (2004): 83.

bishops with a jurisdiction based on the ethnic element is confirmed in the synodal acts. At the Synod of Nicaea of 325, Teophilus, the bishop of the Goths participated³⁰. In Spain the synods of the Visigoths are mentioned³¹. The same type of organization was found with the Gauls³². The Blessed Augustine speaks of general, national and provincial synods. This way he affirms that national synods reunited the bishops of a kingdom or of a people and that they are presided by primates or patriarchs, the notion of *patriarch* itself being linked with that of nation³³. The conversion of the Franks and Visigoths to the Christian faith and the conversion of their leaders gave birth to an organization which took into consideration the ethno-cultural element. In this sense, the Spanish Visigoths' regime is representative. They had synods which regulated in an autonomous manner, without Roman interference, in the life of these communities.

In the Orient we also have atypical situations which structure mission amongst migratory people, doubling the territorial principle with the pastoral availability for peoples. In the dioceses of Asia, Pontus and Thracia, in order to ensure missions among the barbaric peoples, the Church decided to grant them a distinct pastoral solicitude, as canons 2 from the Second Ecumenical Synod and 29 from the Fourth Ecumenical Synod testify.

Canon 2 of the Second Ecumenical Council indicates that God's Churches which are among the barbaric nations must be led after the "custom established by our fathers". Ortiz of Urbina, speaking of this canon and about the barbaric churches situated outside of the Empire underlines that they were linked to the mother Churches which evangelized them³⁴. The Ethiopian Church was linked to that of Alexandria, the Persian Church to that of Antioch.

Canon 28 Chalcedon underlines the way in which barbaric communities were retreated from metropolitan territorial jurisdictions, finding themselves under the direct authority of the patriarch who consecrated their bishops. In canon 39 Trullo we have another example which speaks of the canonical solution identified with the occasion of Cypriot's dislocation to another territory. The people thus moved gains the character of distinct Church from that of the territory in which it was moved and does not request for the immigrants to be integrated in the local Church where they ended up. Rather, it grants to the Church of the emigrant people, which had a richer tradition, the right to consecrate the bishop of the territory to which they emigrated.

³⁰ See Charles Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles* (Paris, 1869), 261.

³¹ See "Spanish Abbots and the Visigothic Councils of Toledo", in *Spanish and Portuguese Monastic History 600-1300*, Variorum Reprints, V, (London, 1987), 142.

³² Prof. Brigitte Basdevant-Gaudemet, "Les Evêques, les papes et les princes dans la vie conciliaire de France du IVe au XIIe siècle", *R.H.D.*, 69 (1991).

³³ See Abbé D. Bouix, *Du Concile Provincial* (Paris: Jacques Lecoffre et Cie, Editeurs, 1850), 10.

³⁴ Ortiz de Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople* (Paris, 1963), 214-215.

Through these examples, I do not wish to justify the canonical normality of extraterritorial jurisdiction. But I only find that the Church has always found organizational solutions in order to sustain pastoral care in exceptional circumstances and did not subordinate pastoral care to an absolute territorial principle³⁵. Thus, the Church knew how to integrate exceptions and qualified them in relation to canonical normality, so long as the exception did not infringe upon doctrine and proved itself necessary from a pastoral or missionary point of view.

In continuity with the previously mentioned canons, in full canonicity, the Holy and Great Council took the organization of the 13 regions of the Orthodox diaspora upon itself and decided to constitute the gathering of bishops who carry out their mission in these distinct pastoral contexts. Hence, the Church takes into consideration the need for unitary manifestation in the diaspora and assigns to the gathering of the bishops the mission of manifesting the unity of Orthodoxy and developing communal actions for all Orthodox living in each region, in order to answer the pastoral needs and to represent Orthodoxy before other confessions and to the whole society of the said regions.

The last paragraph of the document regarding the diaspora underlines the fact that autocephalous Churches commit not to laden the regulatory process in a canonical manner of the issue of the diaspora and that they will do everything in their power to facilitate the work of the bishop's gathering and to establish the normality of canonical order in the diaspora. The text exemplifies to this end the commitment which the autocephalous Orthodox Churches make in order not to give hierarchs already existing canonical titles. This affirmation, canonically and deontologically correct, has a very complex charge. It is the conclusion of ample debates on the titles of diaspora bishops, which materialized in meaningful formal gestures. If we consult the list of current bishops, we notice that the bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchy, who are active in the diaspora, are named after the country where they reside, and the bishops of other jurisdictions are qualified as being *in the said countries*. From reading these lists from the official page of the Council we could understand that the autocephalous Churches agreed upon this position expressed by the ecumenical Patriarchy. If we however consult the signed documents, we notice that some bishops from the Orthodox diaspora noted the modification of their title when they signed the documents and found the "material error" correcting the title by hand. Even if this aspect could be considered by some as a small detail, it is meaningful and would deserve its own analysis

³⁵ For more details on the link between canonical principles and pastoral realities, see Patriciu Vlaicu, "Les principes d'organisation ecclésiale face aux réalités contemporaines - Territorialité et responsabilité pastorale", *Année Canonique* 49 (2007): 181-190.

in an exclusive study dedicated to bishops' titles in direct relationship to those from the Orthodox diaspora. At this level of our analysis we only underline a few incoherencies which still need to be clarified.

If the Orthodox bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchy is the Metropolitan of France, would it not mean that he is the bishop of a local Church, with complete jurisdiction? If it is so, how does this title reconcile with the affirmations of the documents regarding autonomy, which indicate that in the diaspora there is no exclusive and direct jurisdiction of a local Church (2e) and with the document regarding the Orthodox diaspora which shows that bishops named with the said title are in the jurisdiction of the Patriarchy of Constantinople (2b)? This statute of the Orthodox diaspora, as being in the pastoral care of the whole Church, without a specific jurisdictional competence recognized to any Church is highlighted also by article 13 of the document regarding the regulation of episcopal gatherings, which gives to the *Synaxis of the Primates* the competency of deciding regarding modifying territorial circumscriptions of the Orthodox diaspora³⁶.

We notice that the document regarding the Orthodox diaspora uses very often the expressions "canonical normality", "in a canonical manner", "established pan-Orthodox practice". Resolving in a canonical manner an issue with which the Church is confronted does not only mean to refer to certain canons, but to resolve the problems in accordance with the canonical conscience of the Church, considering the context and means which the Church has at its disposal.

Who has the competency of synthetizing the canonical conscience of the Church? If each Church identifies in a unilateral way "canonical" solutions, there is the risk of those solutions being marked by subjectivism. For this reason, the canonical tradition highlights the Synod as competent court in order to resolve all problems with which the Church is confronted, as the 37th apostolic canon indicates. In synodality all difficulties can be overcome and precisely the degradation of conciliar conscience leads to loss of sensibility towards canonicity. The 19th canon of Chalcedon shows that disorders in the Church are not eliminated precisely because the rhythmicity of conciliar reunions was lost. Therefore, the best method of rediscovering canonical normality is exactly organizing synodality in the necessary rhythm in order to solve the problems with which the Church is being confronted. For local or regional problems, the answer must be given by local or regional synods. For problems which pertain to the whole Church, answers must be given by the general synods to which the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church belongs.

³⁶ Article 13. "The formation of a new Episcopal Assembly, the partition or abolition of an existing Episcopal Assembly, or the merger of two or more of these Assemblies, occurs following the decision of the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, at the request of a particular Church, or the request of the Chairman of a particular Episcopal Assembly to the Ecumenical Patriarch."

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A CANONICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL PHRASE OF THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL: “THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ACCEPTS THE HISTORICAL NAME OF OTHER NON-ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND CONFESSIONS THAT ARE NOT IN COMMUNION WITH HER”

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I will try to emphasise the genesis and the development of the phrase: “*the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions*”, by finding how this highly controversial formulation emerged and who were its promoters. Surprisingly, the direct promoter of this formulation of the final document of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference is none other than *Theodoros Zisis*, at that time a consultant member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The main question that we have addressed is the following: is there in the patristic, synodal and canonical Tradition of the Church any example where certain heterodox communities were called “Churches” without recognizing their ecclesiality or an ecclesial status? I have emphasised the diachronic development of the use of the word “church/ἐκκλησία” applied to other Christian communities in some synodal decisions and works of the Holy Fathers in order to designate certain communities that ceased the communion with the Orthodox Church and departed from it, but by the use of the word “Church” they did not give an ontological ecclesial status to other Christian communities.

Keywords: historical name, Church, confessions, reception, contestation, Theodoros Zisis, Hierotheos Vlachos, Holy and Great Council.

The most controversial phrase from all the decisions of the Holy and Great Council is found in the sixth chapter of the document: “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World”, where it is stated that: “*the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian*

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Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her"¹. This statement is considered by the detractors of the Holy and Great Council as an innovation, a betrayal of the Orthodoxy and Ecclesiology of the Holy Fathers of the Church, by granting ecclesial status to other Christian communities, recognizing the existence of other Churches, or of several bodies or brides of Christ outside the Orthodox Church². Even the Orthodox Church of Georgia stated in its decision on May 25, 2016 that "the Holy Synod found that this document contains ecclesiological and terminological errors and requires important changes". If those changes are not made in the document, the Georgian Church will not sign it³. Unfortunately the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Georgia said nothing more about those errors that they have found in this document⁴.

¹ The French translation is "l'Église orthodoxe accepte l'appellation historique des autres Églises et Confessions chrétiennes hétérodoxes qui ne se trouvent pas en communion avec elle", the Russian translation is: "Тем не менее Православная Церковь признает историческое наименование других не находящихся в общении с ней инославных христианских церквей и конфессий," the Greek translation is: "Ἡ Ὀρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἀποδέχεται τὴν ἱστορικὴν ὀνομασίαν τῶν μὴ εὐρισκομένων ἐν κοινῶνίᾳ μετ' αὐτῆς ἄλλων ἑτεροδόξων χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καὶ Ὁμολογιῶν". As we can see, there is a difference between the English word: "non-orthodox" and the word used in the other official translations: "инославных", "hétérodoxes" and "ἑτεροδόξων". For a brief overview of the document, see: Rade Kisić, 'Die Fundamente stärken. Ein Kommentar zum Dokument des Konzils von Kreta über die "Beziehungen der Orthodoxen Kirche zu der übrigen christlichen Welt', *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 52–59; Evgeny Pilipenko, 'Zum Ökumene-Dokument der Orthodoxen Synode auf Kreta. Einige Überlegungen in Reaktion auf das Referat von Rade Kisić', *Catholica* 71, no. 1 (2017): 60–63; Eva Maria Synek, *Das 'Heilige und Grosse Konzil' von Kreta* (Freistadt, Verlag Plöchl Freistadt, 2017), 75–80.

² Τσελεγγίδης, Κ. Δημήτριος. "Μπορεῖ μία Σύνοδος Ὀρθοδόξων νά προσδώσει ἐκκλησιαστικότητα στοὺς ἑτεροδόξους καὶ νά ὀριοθετήσῃ διαφορετικά τὴν ἔως τώρα ταυτότητα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας;" <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/dat/storage/dat/E9DAC65B/tselegidis.pdf>. For the Romanian translation see: Dimitrios Tselenghídis, 'Poate un Sinod al ortodocșilor să acorde caracter de Biserică eterodocșilor și să definească diferit identitatea de până acum a Bisericii?', in *"Sfântul și Marele Sinod" (Creta, 2016). Între providență și eșec*, ed. Tatiana Petrache (Oradea: Editura Astradrom, 2016), 99–100. Hierotheos, Vlachos. "Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece" (November 2016 Regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>; Metropolitan Hierotheos, "The term 'Churches' as a 'technical term'" <http://www.parembasis.gr/index.php/holy-great-council-menu/4887-ni-the-term-churches-as-a-technical-term>

³ On 25 May 2016, the regular plenary session of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Georgia said about this document: "It was noted that the document had been from its inception unacceptable for the representatives of the Church of Georgia and that it had only been signed at the preliminary meeting because the following sentence was written in the text: "The Orthodox Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria left the World Council of Churches; the first of them left it in 1997 and the latter – in 1998, since they have their own opinions on the activity of the World Council of Churches which is why they do not participate in the events of the mentioned Council and other activities of the inter-Christian organisations". <http://basilica.ro/en/georgian-orthodox-church-communicate-on-the-holy-and-great-council/>

⁴ Mirian Gamrekelashvili, 'Warum die Georgische Kirche der Synode auf Kreta fernblieb', *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West. Die Orthodoxe Kirche nach dem Konzil* 11 (2016): 20–21.

The ecclesiological basis of the document and its statements are very clear and just a tendentious interpretation might change its claims. The first article of the document clearly states that the Orthodox Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, and no other Christian community can possess these four attributes⁵. The Orthodox Church is the only one that has the apostolic succession and the whole truth, its dialogue with the other Christian communities relying precisely on the necessity of expressing this truth, which gives to the Orthodox Church its catholic character, as we can read in the second article of the document⁶. The third article of the document emphasises the indissoluble bond between true faith and sacramental communion and the sixth article states that: "In accordance with the ontological nature of the Church, her unity can never be perturbed". Even the most conservative Orthodox theologians, such as Anastasios Gotsopoulos, agree with these positive aspects of the document that are expressing the authentic faith of the Church⁷. The Orthodox Church does not recognize the ecclesial status of other Christian communities, just the name they have given to their communities over time and only under certain conditions. The recognition of the historical name of "churches and confessions" is totally different from the recognition of the ecclesiality of a community. If the Council of Crete had accepted the ecclesial status of other Christian communities, the first canonical manifestation of this recognition would have been the *Communicatio in sacris*, or the common receiving of the sacraments, a fact absolutely and unequivocally condemned by the document, by Orthodox theology and by the participating bishops. These Christian communities are considered heterodox, or not in accordance with the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, being different from Orthodoxy in terms of doctrine⁸. The Orthodox Church is not in Eucharistic communion with them. However, some theologians, such as Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, are militating against this formulation by dedicating some papers to this problem⁹, trying to contest any use of the word "church" for other Christian communities.

⁵ "The Orthodox Church, as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, in her profound ecclesiastical self-consciousness, believes unflinchingly that she occupies a central place in the matter of the promotion of Christian unity in the world today." <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/rest-of-christian-world>

⁶ "The Orthodox Church finds the unity of the Church on the fact of her establishment by our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the communion in the Holy Trinity and in the sacraments. This unity is expressed through the apostolic succession and the patristic tradition and is lived out in the Church up to the present day. The Orthodox Church has the mission and duty to transmit and preach all the truth contained in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, which also bestows upon the Church her catholic character." <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/rest-of-christian-world>.

⁷ Αναστάσιος Γκοτσόπουλος, *Σχολιασμός στο κείμενο της Ε΄ Πανορθόδοξου Προσυνοδικής Διασκέψεως (Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης 11-17.10.2015)* «Σχέσεις της Ορθόδοξου Εκκλησίας προς τον λοιπόν Χριστιανικόν Κόσμον», (Πάτρα, Φεβρουάριος 2016), 8-9.

⁸ For the meanings of the word *ετερόδοξος* in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, see: Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 552.

⁹ Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καί Ἁγίου Βλασίου Ἱεροθέου "Παρέμβαση καί κείμενο στήν Ἱεραρχία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος (Νοέμβριος 2016)", <http://parembasis.gr/images/anakoinoseis/>

First of all let us see the genesis and the development of the phrase: “*the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions*”, by finding how this highly controversial formulation emerged and who were its promoters. The pre-conciliar document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World” was drafted at the 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference on October 15, 2015, and was signed by representatives of all 14 Autocephalous Orthodox Churches¹⁰. It is composed of the two documents of the Third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference held in Chambésy (1986): “The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement” and “Relationships of the Orthodox Church with the Christian World”¹¹. The Pre-conciliar draft text from 2015¹² and even the final document of the Holy and Great Council are nothing else than a restructuring of these two documents with some clarification and the modification of certain articles¹³. Of the 24 final articles

2016/NAYPAKTOY_IERARXIA-NOE-2016.pdf. The English translation: Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and St. Vlassios, *Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece (November 2016) regarding the Cretan Council*, <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>

¹⁰ Metropolitan John of Pergamon, (Ecumenical Patriarchate); Archbishop Sergios of Good Hope (Patriarchate of Alexandria); Metropolitan Damaskinos (Patriarchate of Antioch); Metropolitan Isychios of Capotolias (Patriarchate of Jerusalem); Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk (Church of Russia); Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral (Church of Serbia); Honorable Metropolitan Nifon of Targoviște (Church of Romania); Metropolitan John of Varna and Veliki Preslav (Church of Bulgaria); Metropolitan Gerasimos of Zoukdidi and Tsaissi (Church of Georgia); Metropolitan George of Paphos (Church of Cyprus); Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Peristeri (Church of Greece); Bishop George of Siemiatycze (Church of Poland); Metropolitan John of Korçë (Church of Albania); Archbishop George of Michalovce and Košice (Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia). For a full list of the members of all delegations, see: Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, ed., *E' Προσνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Ὀκτωβρίου 2015*, Synodika, XIII (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2016), 9–10.

¹¹ For the two decisions of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, see: Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009: spre Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe* (București: Basilica, 2013), 215–226; Anastasios Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil: ein Quellen- und Arbeitsbuch zur orthodoxen Ekklesiologie* (Münster: Theophano-Verlag, 2013), 534–538.

¹² A description of the document is made by: Viorel Ioniță, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe: documente pregătitoare* (București: Basilica, 2016); Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, *E' Προσνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Ὀκτωβρίου 2015*, 383–388.

¹³ If we compare the final document of the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016) with the two documents of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference (1986), the following similarities can be found: the first article of the final document is the same as the first article of the Document: “The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement (OCEM 1986) adopted in 1986; the second article is equivalent to the first part of the second article from OCEM 1986. The third article is equivalent to the second part of the second article from OCEM 1986. The fourth article is a development of the third

of the document, only 5 articles are totally different from the document drafted at the Third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference from Chambésy in 1986. The sixth article of the final document of the Holy and Great Council, where it is stated that: *“the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her, is almost the same as the second article of the document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Christian World” from the Third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference held in Chambésy in 1986, with small changes, as we will see. The accusations brought against this document, that it was secretly composed in certain Pre-conciliar Conferences with the aim of betraying Orthodoxy, or that it was written without the knowledge of the Church’s *pleroma* or bishops, are totally unfounded¹⁴. The Orthodox Church had 30 years for the doctrinal analysis of a document published in 1986 in the official journals of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and in other journals¹⁵. Although at the second pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox*

article of OCEM 1986, retaining the same wording. The fifth article is a development of the last sentence of the second article of OCEM 1986, being drafted at the 5th Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference. The sixth article is equivalent to the second article of the document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Christian World (ROCWCW 1986), with some changes. The seventh article almost the same as the fourth article of OCEM 1986. Article 8 is taken from article 3 of ROCWCW 1986; Article 9 is taken directly from the fifth article of ROCWCW 1986. The first part of the tenth article is taken from the fifth article of ROCWCW 1986, and the second part is added afterwards. Article 11 is taken from the sixth article of ROCWCW 1986; Article 12 is taken from seventh article of ROCWCW 1986; Article 13 is taken from article 8 of ROCWCW 1986; article 14 is taken from article 9 of ROCWCW 1986; Article 15 is equivalent to article 10 of ROCWCW 1986; Article 16 is a development of the fifth article of OCEM 1986, to which are added the withdrawals of the Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria from the World Council of Churches. Article 16 is a development of the last part of the fifth article of OCEM 1986, plus the addition of some historical development; Article 18 is taken from article 6 of OCEM 1986. Article 16 is a development of the fifth article of OCEM 1986. Article 19 is a takeover of article 7 of OCEM 1986, article 20 is a new article; article 21 is a development of article 8 of OCEM 1986; articles 22-24 are new articles added to the draft texts of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference (1986).

¹⁴ See for example the paper of Fr. Peter Heers: “However, not only was the body of the Church kept in the dark but even much of the hierarchy itself. The majority of the bishops and even synods of the Local Churches were uninvolved in the preparation of the “Council,” including the drafting of its texts. In this regard, we recall the painful cry of protest issued by Met. Hierotheos of Nafpaktou months before the “Council” that the pre-conciliar texts “were unknown to most hierarchs and to myself, remain held-up in committee and we don’t know their contents.”

<https://orthodoxethos.com/post/the-council-of-crete-and-the-new-emerging-ecclesiology-an-orthodox-examination>

¹⁵ The document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World” was published in the official journal of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the same year: *“Biserica Ortodoxă Română, CIV nr. 9-10, (1986): 65-70*, translated by Fr. Prof. Dr. Ștefan Alexe, a member of the Romanian delegation at the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference in 1986 and the document “The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement” was published in the same Journal: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română, CIV, nr. 9-10 (1986): 62-75*, translated by Constantin Coman.

Conference it was decided that no pre-conciliar document has validity and canonical applicability until after its approval by the Holy and Great Council, this 3rd pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference established that the document should be immediately applied due to its importance and necessity. If the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions was a heresy, why did Orthodox theology need 30 years to see this doctrinal error and why was no Orthodox theologian able to expose this “error” of the Holy and Great Council – and here we can mention great theologians who participated in these Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences – until Hierotheos Vlahos, Theodoros Zisis, Dimitrios Tselengidis, Gheorgheos Metallinos or others? However, an overview of this formulation can show us that there is no heresy in the final document of the Council of Crete regarding this phrase, the accusations being, in most of the cases, without any theological foundation.

Let us see the genesis and development of this phrase in the draft documents of the Holy and Great Council. This formulation appears for the first time in the draft text of the First Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission organised at the Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy from July 16 to 28, 1971, in the paper about ecclesiastical economy in the Orthodox Church, a theme prepared by the Romanian Orthodox Church. At the end of this document it is written that: “the Orthodox Church recognizes the ontological existence of all these Christian Churches and Confessions”.¹⁶ In this Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission participated some of the great theologians of the 20th century¹⁷. Fifteen years later, as we can see from the acts of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, held in Chambésy 1986, naming and defining other Christian Communities was one of the most important tasks of the debates. Taking the floor, metropolitan Parthénios of Carthage said:

“Quand je dialogue avec les Catholiques romains - c’est là le point critique - est-ce que je reconnais qu’ils constituent une Église ou non? Il s’agit d’un problème important. Il s’agit de dire ce que sont ces hommes. L’Église orthodoxe est-elle la seule Église et tous les autres sont-ils en dehors de l’Église? Ou détiennent-ils eux

¹⁶ “Unsere heilige orthodoxe Kirche ist sich daher der Bedeutung und des Gewichts der Struktur des heutigen Christentums bewusst und erkennt die ontologische Existenz all dieser christlichen Kirchen und Konfessionen an, obwohl sie die eine, heilige, katholische und apostolische Kirche ist. Ebenso glaubt sie positiv, dass ihre Beziehungen zu all diesen Kirchen auf der möglichst schnellen und objektiven Klärung der ekklesiologischen Frage und der bei diesen Kirchen vorhandenen dogmatischen Lehre insgesamt beruhen”. Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 398. For the Romanian translation see: “Iconomia bisericească”, *Orthodoxia*, XXIV, no. 2 (1972): 294.

¹⁷ For example: Chrysostomos of Myra, Panteleimon Rodopoulos, professor of Canon Law, Prof. Gerasimos Konidaris, Justinian of Moldavia, Antonie of Ploiesti, the future Metropolitan of Transylvania, Prof. Grigorij Skobej, Prof. Nikolaj Sivarov, Prof. Ioannis Karmiris and others. For all the members of the delegations see: Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 359.

aussi quelque chose de l'Église? Que sont les Catholiques romains et qu'est-ce que les anciennes Églises orientales? Si j'admets qu'il s'agit d'Églises, je commencerai au moins à dialoguer avec elles de manière plus fraternelle. Voilà le sujet de mon embarras et j'aimerais qu'on y trouve une solution. Pas immédiatement. Mais que nous nous attachions à la question au cours de nos dialogues¹⁸”.

In the final document of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference attended by all delegations of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, the formulation was that the Orthodox Church “recognises the actual existence of all Churches and Christian confessions” (Fr: “reconnait l'existence de fait de toutes les Églises et Confessions chrétiennes”; Gr.: “Αναγνωρίζει την πραγματική ύπαρξιν όλων τῶν χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καί Ὁμολογιῶν”)¹⁹. The phrase from the document of the Inter-Orthodox Commission held in Chambésy in 1971 was changed. The direct promoter of this formulation of the final document of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference is none other than *Theodoros Zisis*, at that time a consultant member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate²⁰. The working committee for the elaboration of the text “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Christian World”, whose chairman was Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală and its secretary Vlasios Phidas, presented on November 4, 1986, a draft text in order to become the subject of debate in the plenum of the Conference. In this text it was stated that the Orthodox Church “recognizes the ontological existence of all Christian Churches and Confessions²¹”, taking the text from the

¹⁸ 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), 102; For the Greek translation see: Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, ed., *Γ' Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 28 Ὀκτωβρίου-9 Νοεμβρίου 1986*, Synodika, IX (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2014), 105.

¹⁹ 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), 297; Ionita, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009: spre Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe*, 219; Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 534; Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, ed., *Γ' Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 28 Ὀκτωβρίου-9 Νοεμβρίου 1986*, Synodika, IX (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2014), 305.

²⁰ Theodoros Zisis participated in other Pre-conciliar Conferences and in the Preparatory Inter-Orthodox Commission held in Chambésy, between February 15-23, 1986, a Commission that analysed the draft documents for the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Chambésy, between October 28 – November 6, 1986. Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 463.

²¹ “Notre sainte Église orthodoxe, pleinement consciente de sa responsabilité dans la voie vers l'unité du monde chrétien, ne se contente pas de reconnaître l'existence ontologique de toutes ces Églises et Confessions chrétiennes, bien que représentant elle-même l'Église une, sainte, catholique et apostolique; elle est fermement convaincue, également, que toutes les relations qu'elle entretient avec ces dernières

document of the first Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission drafted in 1971. The next day, on November 5, 1986, during the debates on the document, Theodoros Zisis took the floor and states: “A little further is the question of “ontological recognition” of other Christian churches. Here is a contradiction. We can recognize the “existence” of other Christian churches, but not the “ontological existence”²². The text proposed by Theodoros Zisis, according to which the Orthodox Church “recognizes the existence of all Christian Churches and Confessions” was endorsed by Bishop Jeremiah of Wroclaw²³, the delegate of the Church of Poland and accepted by the Commission and placed in the final text of the document “Relation of the Orthodox Church with the Christian Word” drafted and signed by all the members of the delegations of the Third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference from Chambésy (1986).

How is it possible that Theodoros Zisis, the herald of Orthodoxy and the defender of orthodox faith against the heresy of ecumenism, the “pan-heresy” of heresies, who, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy 2017, ceased communion with his own bishop considering him fallen from the orthodox faith²⁴, not only say thirty years ago that the Orthodox Church can recognize the existence of all Christian Churches

doivent se fonder sur la clarification, le plus rapidement possible et le plus objectivement possible, de toute la question de l'ecclésiologie et de l'enseignement général...” Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 210. “ἀναγνωρίζει, καίπερ αὐτή οὐσα ἡ Μία, Ἁγία, Καθολικὴ καὶ Ἀποστολικὴ Ἐκκλησία, τὴν ὄντολογικὴν ὑπαρξιν ὅλων αὐτῶν τῶν χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καὶ Ὁμολογιῶν” Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, *I^{re} Προσυνοδικὴ Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 28 Ὀκτωβρίου-9 Νοεμβρίου 1986*, 217.

²² “Un peu plus bas, il est question de reconnaissance de «l'existence ontologique» des autres Églises chrétiennes. Il y a là contradiction. Nous pouvons reconnaître «l'existence», mais non «l'existence ontologique» des autres Églises chrétiennes. Plus bas, nous parlons de: «clarification... de la question ecclésiologique». Je propose de compléter, «la clarification de leur part...» pour éviter toute mauvaise interprétation et tout malentendu.” Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 231. “Ὀλίγον περαιτέρω γίνεται λόγος περί τῆς ἀναγνωρίσεως τῆς «ὄντολογικῆς ὑπάρξεως» τῶν ἄλλων χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν. Πρόκειται περί ἀντιφάσεως. Δυνάμεθα ἀναγνωρίσωμεν τὴν «ὑπαρξιν», ἀλλ' ὄχι τὴν «ὄντολογικὴν ὑπαρξιν» τῶν ἄλλων χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν”. Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, *I^{re} Προσυνοδικὴ Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 28 Ὀκτωβρίου-9 Νοεμβρίου 1986*, 238.

²³ “Émin. Président, une courte proposition. Hier, en petit groupe, nous avons discuté et sommes tombés d'accord sur le fait qu'il suffit de remplacer le mot «ontologique» par le mot «réelle». Ceci au moins rendra clair le texte russe. Réellement, dans son existence terrestre, nous la reconnaissons. Mais pas «ontologique».” Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L'Église Orthodoxe, *IIIe Conférence panorthodoxe préconciliaire. Actes (28 octobre – 9 novembre 1986)*, 231.

²⁴ For the “Letter of Protopresbyter Theodore Zisis to Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki (March 3, 2017)”, entitled: “Defense and Declaration of Cessation of Commemoration of Bishop on Account of the Teaching of Heresy”, see: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/defense-and-declaration-of-cessation-of-commemoration-of-bishop-on-account-of-the-teaching-of-heresy>

and confessions, but also through his proposals at the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference held in Chambesy (1986) can be the direct promoter of this phrase?

At the fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference the formulation proposed by Theodoros Zisis is taken into the document with small changes. Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain proposed in the plenum of the Conference not to use the word "Church" for other Christian communities²⁵. The solution is rejected by Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka, who in 2016, at the Holy and Great Council refused to sign the documents for various reasons²⁶. Taking the floor, Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka said: „Well, we can not talk to other people with "brackets", and we need to recognize them as a historical entity, but not a doctrinal one (Λοιπόν, καί ἡμεῖς δέν δυνάμεθα νά ὀμιλῶμεν πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους μέ εἰσαγωγικά καί πρέπει νά τοὺς ἀναγνωρίζωμεν κάποια ἱστορικήν ὄντοτητα, ἀλλ' ὄχι δογματικήν)... So we should not be afraid, because we have a careful formulation. We recognize the historical existence, not the ontological existence. These are two different things. (Ἐπομένως, δέν πρέπει νά φοβῶμεθα, διότι ἐδῶ ἔχομεν μίαν προσεκτικήν διατύπωσιν. Ἀναγνωρίζομεν τήν ἱστορικήν ὑπαρξιν, ὄχι ὄντολογικήν ὑπαρξιν. Ἐτερον ἐκάτερον.)”²⁷ So, the proposed

²⁵ "Σεβασμιώτατε, θέλομεν νά παρακαλέσωμεν εἰς τήν § 6 νά ἀλλάξῃ ἡ λέξις: «χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν» καί νά εἴπωμεν «Κοινοτήτων» – ὅπως λέγεται – «Ὄμολογιῶν». Ἡ λέξις «Ἐκκλησία» ἀναφέρεται μόνον εἰς τήν μίαν καί ἐνιαίαν Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν. Ἐδῶ νὰ ἀφεῖται εἰς τόν πληθυντικόν ριθμόν, πρᾶγμα, τό ὁποῖον λλοιῶνει τήν ἔννοιαν τήν Ἐκκλησίας.” *Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L’Église Orthodoxe, ed., E’ Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Ὀκτωβρίου 2015, Synodika, XIII (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 2016), 125.*

²⁶ For the reasons see his letter: Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka, "Why I did not sign the document of the Council of Crete about the relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world" <http://www.romfea.gr/images/article-images/2016/07/romfea2/ba.pdf>.

²⁷ "Ὁ Σεβ. Ἐπίσκοπος Μπάτσκας κ. Εἰρηναῖος. Εὐχαριστῶ, ἅγιε Πρόεδρε. Ἐχῶ πλήρη κατανόησιν διά τοὺς λόγους, διά τοὺς ὁποῖους ὁ ἀδελφός Μᾶρκος προβαίνει εἰς τήν πρότασιν αὐτήν, ἀλλά πρέπει νά εἴμεθα νομίζω προσεκτικοί, ἀφ’ ἐνός μὲν πρέπει νά ἀκριβολογῶμεν εἰς αὐτό τό κείμενον, ἀλλά τό κείμενον τοῦτο δέν εἶναι ἀκριβῶς τό προηγούμενον δογματικόν καθαρῶς ἐκκλησιολογικόν κείμενον, τό ὁποῖον, κατά τήν ἄποψιν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Σερβίας, ἀπουσιάζει καί πρέπει νά προστεθῇ εἰς τό ὅλον ὕλικόν διά τήν μέλλουσαν Σύνοδον. Τό κείμενον τοῦτο ἀναφέρεται εἰς τόν ὑπόλοιπον χριστιανικόν κόσμον. Δηλαδή τό θέμα τοῦ ὑπό ἐξέτασιν κειμένου τήν στιγμὴν ταύτην, εἶναι αἱ σχέσεις ἡμῶν τῶν τέκνων τῆς Ὁρθόδοξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τό πᾶν ὄνομα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας εἶναι Καθολική, ὄχι μόνον Ὁρθόδοξος. Λοιπόν, καί ἡμεῖς δέν δυνάμεθα νά ὀμιλῶμεν πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους μέ εἰσαγωγικά καί πρέπει νά τοὺς ἀναγνωρίζωμεν κάποια ἱστορικήν ὄντοτητα, ἀλλ' ὄχι δογματικήν. Καί οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ποιοῦνται διάκρισιν μεταξὺ λόγου δογματικοῦ, λόγου ἀγωνιστικοῦ ἢ ἀντιφρονητικοῦ, καθώς ἔλεγον, δηλαδή λόγου πολεμικοῦ καί λόγου ἐπίσης ἀβροφροσύνης. Ὁ ἅγιος Μᾶρκος Ἐφέσου ὁ Εὐγενικός εἰς τόν χαριετισμόν καί τήν προσφώνησίν του πρὸς τόν πάπαν Εὐγένιον κατά τήν ἔναρξιν τῆς ἐνωτικῆς Συνόδου τῆς Φλωρεντίας ὠμίλησε τοιοῦτοτρόπως, ὥστε σήμερον οἱ παρ’ ἡμῖν «φανατικοί» ὅπωςδὴποτε θά τόν ἐποποθετοῦσαν εἰς πυρκαϊάν διά νά καῖ ζωντανός. Ἐλεγε λοιπόν

formulation of Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka was „historical existence” and „other heterodox or non-Orthodox Christian Churches”. Archbishop Konstantinos Aristarchos, delegate of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, said in the plenum of the Conference that it should be added the phrase „that are not in communion with her (μή εὐρισκομένων ἐν κοινωνίᾳ μετ’ αὐτῆς)”²⁸.

The final draft document of the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference asserts that the Orthodox Church: “acknowledges the historical existence of other Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her”²⁹. After this Conference the text is sent directly to the Holy and Great Council.

How can the bishops of the Greek Orthodox Church be against this phrase, if the final text of the document of the Holy and Great Council: “*the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her*” was a proposal submitted to the plenum of the Council by the Greek Orthodox Church³⁰? Furthermore it can be seen that the final document of the Council of Crete is more conservative than the previous documents regarding the name of other Christian communities and confessions.

«ἀγιώτατε πάτερ, δέξου εἰς τὰς σὰς πατρικὰς ἀγκάλας τὰ μακρόθεν ἐξ Ἀνατολῶν ἦκοντα τέκνα σου. Ἄρον πᾶν σκάνδαλον ἐκ μέσου. Δύνασαι γάρ...», καὶ οὕτω καθ’ ἐξῆς. Ἐπομένως, δέν πρέπει νά φοβώμεθα, διότι ἐδῶ ἔχομεν μίαν προσεκτικήν διατύπωσιν. Ἀναγνωρίζομεν τήν ιστορικήν ὑπαρξίν, ὅχι ὄντολογικήν ὑπαρξίν. Ἐτερον ἐκάτερον. Λοιπόν, ἡ πρότασίς μου θά ἦτο, διά νά ἐμίεθα ὅλοι ικανοποιημένοι, νά διατυπωθῆ ἡ πρότασις αὕτη κατά τόν ἐξῆς τρόπον: «Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἀναγνωρίζει τήν ιστορικήν ὑπαρξίν ἄλλων ἑτεροδόξων, ἢ μή Ὁρθοδόξων», μίαν ἐκ τῶν δύο ἐκφράσεων, «χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καί Ὁμολογιῶν». Οὕτω, μέ τήν διατύπωσιν, «μή ὀρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία» ἢ «ἑτεροδόξος Ἐκκλησία», ὅρος ὅχι ἄγνωστος εἰς τήν πατερικήν γραμματείαν, δέν προσβάλλομεν εὐθέως τοὺς ἄλλους, ἀλλά ἐμμέσως καί πλαγίως θέτομεν ἐρωτηματικόν περὶ τῆς ὄντολογικῆς ἐκείνων ὑποστάσεως καί τονίζομεν ὅτι εἰς τήν ὄντολογικήν αὐτῆς ὑπόστασιν μόνον ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Καθολική Ἐκκλησία εἶναι: «Ἡ Ἐκκλησία, ἢ κατ’ ἐξοχήν Ἐκκλησία». Διότι, ἐάν συνεχίσωμεν αὐτήν τήν λογικήν ἔξει, ὅπως εἶπον, ἐν τινι βαθμῶν δίκαιον ὅπωςδήποτε ὁ ἀδελφός Μᾶρκος, τότε καί τὰς σχισματικές παραφυάδας, δέν πρέπει νά ὀνομάζωμεν Ἐκκλησίας, μέ τὰς ὁποίας διεξάγωμεν Διάλογον. Δηλαδή, ἐξ ἐπόψεως ἐκκλησιολογικῆς, παῦσις τῆς κοινωνίας, εἴτε ἐν εἶδει αἰρέσεως, εἴτε ἐν εἶδει σχίσματος, εἶναι ἐν καί τό αὐτό ὡς πρός τό ἀποτέλεσμα. Ἐπομένως, ἂν δέν εἶναι Ἐκκλησία, καί δέν εἶναι μέ τήν ἴδιαν ἔννοιαν, ὅπως ἡμεῖς αἱ ἄλλαι, δέν εἶναι οὔτε αἱ σχισματικά ἐκκλησία πραγματικά ἐκκλησία, ἢ τῶν Σκοπίων, ἢ τῆς Οὐκρανίας, ἢ οἰασδήποτε ἄλλης, παλασημερολογίται κλπ. Διά τοῦτο προτείνω μίαν μέσιν λύσιν, νά προστεθῆ ἀντί τῶν ἄλλων Ἐκκλησιῶν ἡ ἔκφρασις «ἑτεροδόξων» ἢ «μή ὀρθοδόξων χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν» καί οὕτω, νομίζω ὅτι τρόπον τινά ικανοποιεῖται ἡ ἀνάγκη αὐτή”. Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L’Église Orthodoxe, ed., *Ε’ Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Οκτωβρίου 2015*, 127-128.

²⁸ Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L’Église Orthodoxe, ed., *Ε’ Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψις, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Οκτωβρίου 2015*, 129.

²⁹ <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/preconciliar-relations>

³⁰ <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>

| First Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission (1971) | Third Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (1986) Text proposed by Theodoros Zisis | 5th Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (2015) | Final document of the Holy and Great Council (2016) |
|--|---|--|---|
| <i>"the Orthodox Church recognizes the ontological existence of all these Christian Churches and Confessions"</i> | <i>"The Orthodox Church recognises the actual existence of all Churches and Christian confessions"</i> | <i>"The Orthodox Church acknowledges the historical existence of other Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her"</i> | <i>"The Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her"</i> |

The main question that we have to address is the following: is there in the patristic, synodal and canonical Tradition of the Church any example where certain heterodox communities have been called "Churches" without recognizing their ecclesiality or an ecclesial status?

Let us see the diachronic development of the use of the name applied to other Christian communities. If we analyse the Tradition of the Church we can see that the word "church/ἐκκλησία" has also been used in other synodal decisions and works of the Holy Fathers to designate certain communities that ceased communion with the Orthodox Church and departed from it, but by the use of the word "Church" they did not give an ontological ecclesial status to other Christian communities³¹.

Clement of Alexandria used the word "ἐκκλησία" for other communities than the Orthodox ones in *Stromata VII.16.98.2*, by saying: "rather than be removed from the honours of the heresy and the boasted first seat in their churches"³² (τὰς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν πρωτοκαθεδρίας) and by saying about the

³¹ Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 432.

³² "αὐτίκα οὐκ ἀναγκαίως ἀρχὰς πραγμάτων καταβαλλόμενοι δόξαις τε ἀνθρωπίναις κεινημένοι, ἔπειτα ἀναγκαίως τέλος ἀκολουθοῦν αὐτοῖς ἐκποριζόμενοι, διαπληκτίζονται διὰ τοὺς ἐλέγχους πρὸς τοὺς τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν μεταχειριζομένους, καὶ πάντα μᾶλλον ὑπομένουσι καὶ πάντα, φασί, κάλον κινουσι, κἂν ἀσεβῆν διὰ τὸ ἀπιστεῖν ταῖς γραφαῖς μέλλωσιν, ἥπερ μετατίθενται, ὑπὸ φιλοτιμίας τῆς αἰρέσεως καὶ τῆς πολυθρυλήτου **κατὰ τὰς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν πρωτοκαθεδρίας**, δι' ἣν κάκεινην τὴν συμποτικὴν [διὰ] τῆς ψευδωνύμου ἀγάπης πρωτοκλισίαν ἀσπάζονται". (PG. 9, 536B) "Not laying as foundations the necessary first principles of things; and influenced by human opinions, then making the end to suit them, by compulsion; on account of being confuted, they spar with those who are engaged in the prosecution of the true philosophy, and undergo everything, and, as they say, ply every oar, even going the length of impiety, by disbelieving the Scriptures, rather than be removed from the honours of the heresy and the boasted first seat in their churches; on account of which also they eagerly embrace that convivial couch of honour in the Agape, falsely so called." *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria: Vol. 2* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), 479–480. For the Romanian translation see: Clement Alexandrinul, *Scrieri, partea a II-a, Stromatele*, col. PSB 5, trad., cuvânt înainte, note și indici de Pr. Dumitru Fecioru, (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii

heretical communities in Stromata VII.16.99.2 “so do these shut out the prophecies from their Church”³³.

In *Expositio in Psalmum LXVII.16.*, a work attributed to St. Athanasius the Great³⁴, we can find this phrase: “the churches of the heretics (τὰς τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἐκκλησίας)”³⁵. Theodoret of Cyrus uses the expressions “the churches of the heretics (τὰς τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἐκκλησίας)”³⁶ in several places, and he used the word “church” even for the communities of some heretics³⁷.

Basil the Great, speaking about schismatics in his first canon³⁸, accepted their baptism because he considered them as “still belonging to the Church (τὸ δὲ τῶν ἀποσχισάντων, ὡς ἔτι ἐκ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὄντων, παραδέξασθαι)”³⁹. In

Ortodoxe Române, 1982), 538. For the context of this text and more details see: Paul Fike Stutzman, *Recovering the Love Feast: Broadening Our Eucharistic Celebrations* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 81–82.

³³ “καὶ καθάπερ τὰ πονηρὰ παιδία τὸν παιδαγωγὸν ἀποκλείει, οὕτως οὗτοι τὰς προφητείας εἴργουσιν ἑαυτῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ὑφορώμενοι δι’ ἔλεγχον καὶ νουθεσίαν (PG. 9, 537A)”. “And just as knavish boys bar out the teacher, so do these shut out the prophecies from their Church, regarding them with suspicion by reason of rebuke and admonition”. Alexander Roberts, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A. D. 325 Volume II - Fathers of the Second Century - Hermas, Tatian, Theophilus, Athenago*, (New York: Cosimo, Inc.) 2007, 552

³⁴ For the authenticity of this work see: Craig A. Blaising and Carmen S. Hardin, *Psalms 1-50, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 7* (InterVarsity Press, 2008), xx.

³⁵ “Ὁρος τοῦ Θεοῦ ὄρος πῖον. Ὁρος μὲν τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν ὀνομάζει, πῖον δὲ, ὅτι εὐτραφεῖς καὶ λιπαρὰς τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπεργάζεται. Ὁρος τετυρωμένον; ὄρος πῖον· ἵνα τί ὑπολαμβάνετε ὄρη τετυρωμένα; Καὶ μὴν καὶ τετυρωμένον, τουτέστι γάλακτος μεστὸν, ἀπλουστέρου δηλαδὴ λόγου, κατὰ τὸ· Γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα. Ἐπιτιμᾶ οὖν τοῖς τὰς τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἐκκλησίας ὑπολαμβάνουσιν εἶναι τετυρωμένας. Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐν αὐταῖς τὸ δυνάμενον τρέφειν εἰς ἕξιν πνευματικὴν. Ἴνα τί τοῖνυν ὑπολαμβάνετε, ὡς οὗτοι, ἕτερα ὄρη εἶναι ἔξω τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τετυρωμένα, καὶ μὴ μᾶλλον τοῦτο μόνον τὸ ὄρος, ἐν ᾧ ὁ Θεὸς ἠδύοκησεν κατοικῆσαι ἐν αὐτῷ; Ὅτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ κατοικεῖ, δηλοῦν ἐξ ὧν αὐτὸς ἔφη· Ἴδτε κατοικήσω, ὅτι ἡρετισάμην αὐτήν” PG, 27, 297.

³⁶ Theodoretus, *Explanatio in Canticum canticorum 2.2*: “Καὶ ἔοικεν ἐνταῦθα τὰς τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἐκκλησίας θυγατέρας καλεῖν, διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ κλησιν, καὶ οὐ διὰ τὴν ἐκείνων προαίρεσιν”. PG, 81, 88.

³⁷ Theodoretus, *Interpretatio in Psalmos. LXVII. 17*: “Πρὸς Ἰουδαίους ὁ προφητικὸς ἀποτείνεται λόγος, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς παρανόμους τῶν αἰρετῶν συλλόγους· οἱ Ἐκκλησίας σφᾶς ἑαυτοὺς ὀνομάζουσι· καὶ φησι, Τί ποτε ἐρίζειν καὶ παρισουῖσθαι ἀλαζονεύεσθε τῷ ὄρει, ὃ οἰκητήριον ἀπέφηνεν ὁ Θεός” PG 81, 1385: “The inspired word is addressed against Jews and against the lawless assemblies of heretics, who class themselves as churches, it says, Why do you contend and claim to rival the mountain, which God has made his dwelling?” Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms, Psalms 1-72* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 386.

³⁸ For a review of the first canon of Basil the Great, see: André de Halleux, “Oikonomia” in the first canon of Saint Basil, in: *The Patristic and Byzantine review* vol. 6 (1987): 53-64; Constantin Rus, “Canoanele 1 și 47 ale Sfântului Vasile cel Mare și problema iconomieii”, *Review of Ecumenical Studies*, 2 (2011): 255-270.

³⁹ For the Greek text of the canons of Basil the Great, see: Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique / 2. Les canons des pères grecs*, Codification canonique orientale, Fonti, Série 1, (Roma: Grottaferrata, 1963), 85-86; ARCHIM. GRIGORIOS D. PAPATHOMAS, *Le Corpus Canonum de l’Église (1^{er}-9^e siècle). Le texte des Saints Canons ecclésiastiques*, (Epectasis, 2015), 403-405; GEORGIOS A. RHALLIS, MICHAEL POTLES, EDS., *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων* vol. 4 (Athena, 1854), 88-89; Y. COURTONNE, *Saint*

his letter 114, written in 372, he said: “I think then that the one great end of all who are really and truly serving the Lord ought to be to bring back to union the Churches now divided from one another (οἶμαι προσήκειν μίαν ταύτην εἶναι σπουδὴν τοῖς γνησίως καὶ ἀληθινῶς δουλεύουσι τῷ Κυρίῳ τὸ ἐπαναγαγεῖν καὶ πολυτρόπως ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων διατμηθείσας)”⁴⁰. This text is used by the Russian Orthodox Church in the chapter: “2. The quest for the restoration of the unity” of the document “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions”, adopted by the Jubilee Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church August 14, 2000.

In the 5th century, the Church historian Socrates Scholasticus uses the phrase “the bishop of the Arian Church” (ὁ τῆς Ἀρειανῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπίσκοπος), for the Arian bishop Eudoxios, who occupied the throne of Constantinople for 19 years⁴¹.

These are just some of the texts from the documents of the first centuries in which the word “church” is used for other Christian community than the Orthodox Church. We can find more evidences of the use of the word “church” in the writings of the second millennium, after the Great Schism.

Germanus II, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1223 until his death in June 1240, used in his work the word Church in the following phrases: “Latin Church (τῆ λατινικῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ)”⁴², “Meletian Church” (τῆς τῶν Μελιτινιωτῶν ἐκκλησίας)”⁴³ or “the Church of Rome (ἡ Ῥώμης ἐκκλησία)”⁴⁴.

Basile, Lettres II, (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1961), 120. For other translations of the Canons of Basil the Great, see: Henry R. PERCIVAL, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church: Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees, together with the Canons of all the Local Synods which have Received Ecumenical Acceptance*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 14, (New York, Oxford, 1900), 604-611; D. Cummings, trans., *The Rudder (Pedalion) of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Orthodox Christians*, (Chicago, 1957), 771-773; R. J. DEFERRARI, *St. Basil: The Letters, with an English Translation*, vol. I-IV, (London: William Heinemann, 1926-1934); W.-D. Hauschild, *Basilus von Caesarea*, Briefe, 3, col. *Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur* 32, Vol. 3, (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1973), 100-101.

⁴⁰ Y. COURTONNE, *Saint Basile, Lettres II*, (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1961), 18.

⁴¹ “Εὐδόξιος {οὗτος} ὁ τῆς Ἀρειανῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπίσκοπος εὐθὺς μετὰ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ἔξοδον τέλει τοῦ βίου ἐχρήσατο ἐν ὑπατείᾳ Οὐάλεντινιανοῦ τὸ τρίτον καὶ Οὐάλεντος τὸ τρίτον, δέκα καὶ ἕνα ἐνιαυτοὺς τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἐκκλησίας τὸν θρόνον κατεσχηκῶς”. P. Maraval, P. Périchon, *Socrate de Constantinople, Histoire ecclésiastique (Livre IV. 14, 4)*, Sources chrétiennes, vol. 505, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2006; PG 67, 497. “Eudoxius the bishop of the Arian church who has been in possession of the seat of the Constantinopolitan church for nineteen years, died soon after the emperor’s departure from that city, in the third consulate of Valentinian and Valens”. Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series Volume II Socrates, Sozomenus* (Cosimo, Inc, 2007), 103.

⁴² “Καὶ οἱ ὑπ’ αὐτοὺς κληρικοί, ὅσοι τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀσπάζονται ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ τῆς πατροπαραδότου πίστεως ἀντέχεσθαι βούλονται, οὐχ ὑποκείσονται τοῖς τὴν ὑποταγὴν ποιησαμένοις ἀρχιερεῦσιν αὐτῶν, οὐδὲ ἀφορίζοντων αὐτῶν ἕνεκα τοῦ πείθεσθαι τῇ λατινικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, μικρὸν τι ἐπιστραφήσονται, ὁ γὰρ τοιοῦτος ἀφορισμὸς ἄκρως ἐστὶ, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀφορίζοντας μᾶλλον ἐπαναστρέφει, ὅτι καὶ σκανδάλων γεγόνασι πρόξενοι τῷ λαῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καταπατήσαντες τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν κανόνων ἀκρίβειαν,

Theodor Agallianos⁴⁵, one of the theologians who opposed the unionist Council of Ferrara-Florence, a follower of Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus, who wrote two treatises against the Latins, in one of them “Dialogue cum monacho contra Latinos” written in 1442, he condemned the dogmatic deviations of the Latins, but he used the phrase “the Latin Church (ἡ λατινικὴ ἐκκλησία)⁴⁶” to designate the Catholic Church, showing that it created new customs and dogmas and thereby a third Testament⁴⁷.

καὶ τοὺς ἐπιβήτορας καὶ ἄλλοτριεπισκόπους δεξάμενοι, καὶ χεῖρας δόντες αὐτοῖς, σημεῖον εὐπειθείας καὶ δουλώσεως, κἂν διίσχυρίζωνται λέγοντες, ὡς οὐ καταπροεδώκαμεν τὰ πάτρια ἡμῶν ἔθνη, οὐδέ τι τῶν ἱερῶν κανόνων ἔξωπεπράχαμεν”. Germanus II, *Epistulae duae ad Cyprios*, K.N. Sathas, Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη, Vol. 2, (Venice, 1873), 18.

⁴³ S.N. Lagorates, *Γερμανὸς ὁ Β Πατριάρχης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως—Νικαίας (1222-1240) Βίος συγγράμματα καὶ διδασκαλία αὐτοῦ*, (Athens, 1913), 353: “αὐτῇ καὶ μακρόστιχα στρώματα καὶ μητροπολίτην ὑψηλόθρονον τῆς τῶν Μελιτινιωτῶν ἐκκλησίας ἀπέστειλε, πιστεύσασα τῇ τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου πατριάρχου Ἀντιοχείας γραφῇ τοῦ ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγαπητοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τῆς ἡμῶν μετριότητος καὶ τοῖς λόγοις τοῦ ὁσίου καθηγουμένου τῆς ἐν τῷ Σκοπέλῳ μονῆς τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς μεγαλομάρτυρος Θεοδοσίου, τοῦ κυροῦ Θεοδωρήτου”.

⁴⁴ “Οὐκ ἀγνοοῦμεν, ὦ θεϊότατε δέσποτα, ὅτι καθάπερ ἡμεῖς οἱ Γραικοὶ διίσχυρίζομεθα κατὰ πάντα ὀρθοδοξεῖν τε καὶ εὐσεβεῖν, καὶ εἰς μηδὲν παρασφάλλῃσθαι τῶν ἀποστολικῶν δογμάτων καὶ πατερικῶν, τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ τρόπον καὶ ἡ τῆς πρεσβυτέρας Ῥώμης ἐκκλησία περὶ ἑαυτῆς, διανίσταται, καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ οἶσθαι κατὰ τι σφάλλῃν, οὐδὲ θεραπείας χρῆζειν λέγειν καὶ διορθώσεως· τοῦτο καὶ παρὰ τῆς τῶν Γραικῶν ἐκκλησίας καὶ παρὰ τῆς τῶν Λατίνων λεγόμενον οἶδαμεν.” Germanus II, *Epistula ad Gregorium papam*, K.N. Sathas, Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη, vol. 2, (Venice, 1873), 45.

⁴⁵ For papers on the writings and life of Theodor Agallianos, see: Marie-Hélène Blanchet, ‘Bilan des études sur Théodore Agallianos: 1966-2011’, *Ο Ερανιστής* 28 (2011): 25–48.

⁴⁶ “Ἴνα τί γοῦν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, αὐτὰ τε τὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ῥήματα παριδῶν καὶ τῶν αὐτοῦ μαθητῶν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ ῥήσεις πατέρων καὶ πρὸ τούτων τοὺς ἱεροὺς καὶ θεῖους κανόνας τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας, σαυτὸν τε παρέδωκας τῇ πλάνῃ καὶ ἡμᾶς συνέπεσθαι βιάζῃ; Οὐκ ἔσται τοῦτο. Ἀδυνάτων ἐπιχειρεῖς· φρενῶν ἂν ἐκσταίημεν πρότερον ἢ τῆς εὐσεβείας καὶ τοῦ ζήλου τούτου. Τρίτης διαθήκης ὑφηγητῆς καθέστηκεν ἡ λατινικὴ ἐκκλησία, βασιλεῦ· πᾶσαν τὴν παλαιὰν καὶ τὴν καινὴν ἀνασκεύασσας, ξένα δόγματα καὶ ἔθνη τοῖς ὑπ’ αὐτὴν ἐνομοθέτησε.” For this work we use the edition: M.-H. Blanchet, Théodore Agallianos, *Dialogue avec un moine contre les Latins (1442)*, Textes et Documents d’Histoire Médiévale 9, Byzantina Sorbonensia 27, (Paris: Sorbonne, 2013): 31-97.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*: “Ἡ γὰρ λέξις συνάθροισιν ἐρμηνεύει, ἔνθεν τοι καὶ ἡ τῶν ἑτεροδόξων αἰρετικῶν καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις τῆς δόξης καὶ τῆς γνώμης **ἐκκλησία** καλεῖται, ὡς τὸ ἐμίσησα ἐκκλησίαν πονηρευομένων καὶ μετὰ ἀσεβῶν οὐ μὴ καθίσω.” “Πολλῶν γὰρ ὄντων τεκμηρίων ὅσα πληροφορεῖ σαφέστατα ὡς τὴν μὲν ὀρθοδοξίαν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐκκλησίας προσίεται Θεός, **τὴν δὲ λατινικὴν ἐκκλησίαν** οὐκ ἔχει τῆς ἰδίας αὐλῆς, οἷον τοῦ περι τοῦ ἀγιάσματος λόγου, τοῦ περι τοῦ ἀφορισμοῦ· οὐδὲ γὰρ εὐρίσκειται παρ’ ἐκείνοις δεδεμένος τις ἐπιτιμία μετὰ θάνατον, ὅπερ θαυματουργῶν ὁ Κύριος δείκνυσιν ἐν τῇ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀπειθεῖς αὐτῆς φανέντας κατὰ τι, καίτοι τοῦ πάπα πολλοὺς ὀσημέραι καὶ κοινῇ καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἀφορίζοντος”. “Τὸν γοῦν τῶν τοιούτων λόγων οὐ δοκεῖ σοι πρὸς παράστασιν εἶναι ἀξιόχρεων τοῦ ὅτι Θεὸς πρόσκειται μὲν τῇ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐκκλησίᾳ, καὶ τὸθεῖον αὐτοῦ Πνεῦμα ἐπαναπέπνυται τοῖς ὑπ’ αὐτὴν τελοῦσιν ἀγίοις, καὶ τὴν αὐτῶν πίστιν καὶ τὰ ἔργα προσδέχεται καὶ ἀντιμετρεῖ τὰς ἀμοιβὰς πλουσιῶς, τὴν δὲ **λατινικὴν ἐκκλησίαν** ἀποδιοπομπεῖται καὶ ἀποστρέφεται, καὶ ξένην ἡγεῖται καὶ ἄλλοτριόφρονα καὶ τοὺς ὑπ’ αὐτὴν τελοῦντας ἄλλοτριας αὐλῆς πρόβατα καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτῷ τελεῖν ποιμῆνι μὴ καταδεχόμενα, ἀνοδίαις δὲ μᾶλλον καὶ

There is even a passage from the work of Saint Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus, who rejected the unionist Council of Ferrara-Florence, where he is quoting the 15th question of bishop Mark to Theodoros Balsamon (1195) speaking about the “Western Church of Rome (τῆς δυτικῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ῥώμης)” that had separated itself from the Orthodox Church through different dogmatic teachings.

”Ἐπει οὖν πρὸ χρόνων πολλῶν ἀπεσχίσθη τῆς δυτικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τῆς Ῥώμης φαμέν, τὸ περιώνυμον ἄθροισμα ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἐτέρων τεσσάρων ἀγιωτάτων πατριαρχῶν κοινωνίας, ἀποσχοινοσθὲν εἰς ἕθνη καὶ δόγματα τῆς καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἀλλότρια (διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε ἐν ταῖς θεαῖς ἱεροτελεστίαις κοινῆς τῶν πατριαρχικῶν ὀνομάτων ἀναφορᾶς ὁ πάπας ἠξίωται), οὐκ ὀφείλει γένος λατινικὸν ἐκ χειρὸς ἱερατικῆς διὰ τῶν θείων καὶ ἀχράντων μυστηρίων ἀγιάζεσθαι, εἰ μὴ κατάθῃται πρότερον ἀποσχέσθαι τῶν λατινικῶν κατάθῃται πρότερον ἀποσχέσθαι τῶν λατινικῶν δογμάτων τε καὶ συνηθειῶν καὶ κατὰ κανόνας κατηχηθῆ καὶ τοῖς ὀρθοδόξοις ἐξισωθῆ”⁴⁸.

The title refers to the Church of Rome fallen into heresy, because this Church is considered as „being separated by foreign customs and dogmas from the Catholic Church and the orthodox people (ἀποσχοινοσθὲν εἰς ἕθνη καὶ δόγματα τῆς καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἀλλότρια)”. If the phrase „τῆς δυτικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τῆς Ῥώμης” had referred to the Church of Rome that guarded the true faith then Saint Mark of Ephesus would not have called her a Church fallen into heresy.

Another indirect evidence of the use of the word “Church” for the Roman Catholic Church by Saint Mark of Ephesus can be found in the memories of Silvestros Syropoulos from his participation in the council of Florence: “Ἐῖπεν οὖν ὁ Ἐφέσου, πρῶτον μὲν ὅπως ἐστὶν ἀναγκαιωτάτη ἡ εἰρήνη, ἣν κατέλιπεν ἡμῖν ὁ δεσπότης ἡμῶν ὁ Χριστός, καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη. Δεύτερον, ὅτι παρέβλεψεν ἡ Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἐκκλησία τὴν τότε καταλειφθεῖσαν ἀγάπην, ἐσπούδασεν ἵν’ ἐλθωμεν ἐνταῦθα καὶ ἐξετάσωμεν τὰς μεταξὺ ἡμῶν διαφορὰς”⁴⁹. If Saint Mark of Ephesus had considered the Catholic Church from the beginning as fallen into heresy, even before the Council of

ἀβάτοις κρημοῖς φερόμενα, ἐσκορπισμένα καὶ ἀποίμαντα καὶ λύκοις εὐάλωτα, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ὄσωραι ὑπ’ αὐτῶν διαφθειρόμενα, ὅθεν καὶ τὴν οἰανδήτινα παρ’ ἐνιωντούτων διῆθεν ἐνεργουμένην ἀρετὴν οὐ προσδέχεται καὶ οὐδὲ ἀντιδιδωσινάμοιβὰς διὰ τὸ τὰ ἔργα εἶναι δίχα πίστεως εὐσεβοῦς νεκρά;”.

⁴⁸ L. Petit, *Marci Eugenici Metropolitae Ephesi opera anti-unionistica*, 10/2 [*Concilium Florentinum documenta et scriptores*], (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1977), 145; Sf. Marcu Evghenicul, *Opere*, I, Paters, 2009, p. 252.

⁴⁹ Silvestros Syropoulos, *Les mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l’Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438-1439)*, ed. Vitalien Laurent (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1971), 326.

Ferrara-Florence, how is it possible to address the Pope of Rome, a community that ceased the communion with the Orthodox Church by „foreign customs and dogmas”, with these words: „ ἀγιώτατε πάτερ, ὑπόδεξαι τὰ σὰ τέκνα μακρόθεν ἐξάνατολῶν ἤκοντα περίπτουσαι τοὺς ἐκ μακροῦ διεστῶτας τοῦ χρόνου, πρὸς τὰς σὰς καταφυγόντας ἀγκάλας”⁵⁰ and not calling him a heretic?

Gennadius Scholarius, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (the first under Turkish rule) from 1454 to 1464, the one who accompanied his Emperor to the Council of Ferrara-Florence, but abandoned the Council early on and never signed its decree of union (horos), under the influence of Mark Eugenikos, he developed an anti-Latin theology. Despite this fact, he was speaking about “the Latin Church (τὴν λατινικὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ δόξαν)” or the “Roman Church (καὶ ἡ Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἐκκλησία)”⁵¹.

The Synod of Constantinople (1484), attended by representatives of the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, being the first Synod to condemn the Council of Ferrara-Florence and its heresies, uses in the service (Acolouthy) for the reception of the Latins into the Orthodox Church the word “church” for the Western Church of Rome:

⁵⁰ „ἀγιώτατε πάτερ” is the official address of bishop Mark of Ephesus to the pope of Rome, 400 years after the Great Schism. Marcus Eugenicus, “Oratio ad Eugenium papam quartum”, in L. Petit, *Marci Eugenici Metropolitae Ephesi opera anti-unionistica, 10/2. Concilium Florentinum documenta et scriptores* (Rome, 1977): 28-33.

⁵¹ “Ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ περὶ οἰκονομίας γέγονε λόγος, ἀναφέρομεν καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὸ οἰκονομεῖν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐστὶ, συμφώνων τε οὔσης καὶ ἀστασιάστου πρὸς ἑαυτὴν καὶ ἐχούσης τὸ κράτος καὶ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν αὐτῆς, οὐχ ἑνὸς ἢ δύο τινῶν ἢ τεσσάρων, οὐδὲ τῶν τυχόντων προσώπων, ἀλλὰ ἀρχιερέων, ὡς ὁ ἱερός τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας εἶπεν Εὐλόγιος· ἐὰν γάρ τινες ἀφ’ ἡμῶν οἰκονομίαν καταδέξωνται ἄνευ τοῦ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν εἰς τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἐλευθερίαν ἐπανελθεῖν, οἱ τοιοῦτοι οὐκ οἰκονομίαν ποιήσουσιν, ἀλλὰ μετατεθῆσονται πρὸς τὴν λατινικὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ δόξαν· τότε γὰρ τὰς οἰκονομίας ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος μεταχειρίζεται, ὅτε τὸ δόγμα τῆς εὐσεβείας οὐδὲν παραβλάπτεται, ὁ προειρημένος εἶπεν Εὐλόγιος”. Gennadius Scholarius, *Renuntiatio antiunionitum ad imperatorem contra concilium Florentinum*, M. Jugie, L. Petit, and X.A. Siderides, *Oeuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadius) Scholarios*, vol. 3, (Paris: Maison de la bonne presse, 1930), 192: “Εἰ δὲ καὶ δοκοῦμέν τισι προσίστασθαι τῷ τῆς εἰρήνης καλῷ, ἀλλὰ τούναντίον μᾶλλον ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθινῆς εἰρήνης ἡμῖν ἢ ἔνστασις ἐστὶ πᾶσα, ἐπὶ τῷ τῆς εἰρήνης πρυτάνει σαλεύουσι τὰς ἐλπίδας, ὅτι οὐ περιόψεται τὴν ἐκκλησίαν αὐτοῦ ξαινομένην οὕτω δεινῶς καὶ σπαραττομένην, ἀλλ’ εἰς ἕν φρόνημα συναΐξει πάντας ἀληθινόν· καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιαύτην εἰρήνην γενέσθαι, φεύγομεν ἀπὸ τῆς εἰρήνης εἰς ἣν νῦν προσκαλούμεθα.” *Ibidem*, 190. “Οὗτος ὁ Θωμᾶς, Λατῖνος μὲν τῷ γένει καὶ τῇ δόξῃ καὶ διαφερόμενος πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐν οἷς καὶ ἡ Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἐκκλησία πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαφέρεται ἐξ ὀλίγων χρόνων νεωτερίασα, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα σοφὸς καὶ τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν ὠφέλιμος· καὶ πολλὰ μὲν βιβλία συνεγράψατο εἰς τὴν παλαιὰν καὶ νέαν Γραφὴν ἐξηγητικά, πολλὰ δὲ εἰς ὅλην τὴν φιλοσοφίαν καὶ ἐξηγήσεις καὶ κείμενα, ὧν πολλὰ καὶ ἡμεῖς μὲν μετεγλωττίσαμεν· ὧν ἕν καί τοῦτο ἐστίν, πᾶν χρησιμεῖον εἰς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν, καὶ μάλιστα τὴν θείαν”. Gennadius Scholarius, *Commentarium Thomae Aquinæ De Ente et Essentia*, M. Jugie, L. Petit, and X.A. Siderides, *Oeuvres complètes de Georges (Gennadius) Scholarios*, vol. 6, (Paris: Maison de la bonne presse, 1933): 177.

“Do you want, o man, to become Orthodox, and do you renounce all the shameful and alienated dogmas of the Latins, i.e. concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit, namely that they think and declare erroneously that he also proceeds from the Son; and besides, concerning the azymes which they use in the liturgy, and the rest of the customs *of their Church* (καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐθῶν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐκείνων), which are not in agreement with the Catholic and Orthodox Church of the East?”⁵².

Not only can we find the word “church” used for the Latin Church in a document adopted by a General Council of the Orthodox Church, but it appears in a liturgical text, used in the Church for centuries, that was the service for reception of the Latins into the Orthodox Church. Unfortunately in his paper Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos refused to mention the use of the word „Church” in this question addressed by the priest to the Latins, who were coming to the Orthodox Church⁵³. In light of this, Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos fails in his own accusation: “I consider it unscientific and ultimately misleading to claim as some do that even at the Council of 1484 which condemned the Council of Ferrara-Florence, there is reference to Western Churches.”⁵⁴

Anastasios Gordios (1654 - 1729), another Orthodox Theologian with writings against the Latins, used the word “Church” for several times to describe the “Roman Church”⁵⁵ „Western Church”⁵⁶ of „Latin Church”⁵⁷.

⁵² I. KARMIRIS, *Τα Δογματικά και Συμβολικά Μνημεία της Ορθοδόξου καθολικής Εκκλησίας*, τόμ. II, (εν Αθήναις, 1953), 988”. For the English translation of the service, see: George D. Dragas, ‘The Manner of Reception of Roman Catholic Converts into the Orthodox Church with Special Reference to the Decisions of the Synods of 1484 (Constantinople), 1755 (Constantinople) and 1667 (Moscow)’, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 44, no. 1–4 (1999): 235–71 (239).

⁵³ The only example that Metropolitan Hierotheos is giving in his paper is the following: „In another question the Latin is prompted to turn away “completely from the gatherings of Latins in their churches, or of those who are Latin-minded”. Here the phrase “the gatherings of Latins in their churches” obviously means the gatherings in church buildings, without attaching an ecclesiological meaning. The Latins are heretics and the gatherings in churches are the gatherings in church buildings, and it does not mean the Church of the Latins, as advocated by some.” Hierotheos, Vlachos. “Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece” (November 2016 Regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>;

⁵⁴ Hierotheos, Vlachos. “Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece” (November 2016 Regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete: <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>;

⁵⁵ “Τὰ ὅμοια ἔπαθε καὶ ἡ δυτικὴ Ἐκκλησία διὰ τὴν μεγάλην τῆς ὑπερφήανειαν καὶ ἀνταρσίαν, καὶ διὰ τὴν βλασφημίαν τῆς προσθήκης. Καὶ μὲ τὸ νὰ ἡρνήθη τὸν Χριστὸν νὰ τὸν ἔχη κεφαλὴν καὶ ἀνδρατῆς καὶ ἐπρόκρινε τὸν πᾶπαν ὑπὲρ τὸν Χριστὸν, διὰ τοῦτο ὑστερήθη παντελῶς τῆς θείας χάριτος καὶ ἐνεργείας. Καὶ ἂν δὲν τὸ πιστεύης, ἄκουσον καὶ ἄλλα φανερά.” Anastasius Gordius, *Περὶ Μωάμεθ καὶ κατὰ Λατίνων*, A. Argyriou, *Sur Mahomet et contre les Latins*, Association scientifique d’études sur la Grèce centrale: Textes et études 3, (Athens, 1983): 29-120.

The Patriarch Jeremias II (Tranos) of Constantinople, in his correspondence with Lutheran theologians of the University of Tübingen, used the word “Church” not just for the Catholics⁵⁸ but for the Lutherans as well. In the end of his first letter sent on May 15, 1576 he wrote to the Lutheran theologians: “In this way the two

⁵⁶ „Καὶ πῶς δι’ αὐτὴν τὴν προσθήκην τὸν ὠργίσθη ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τὸν ὑστέρησεν ἀπὸ τὴν χάριν τοῦ παντελῶς καὶ ἀπόμεινεν ἔρημος ἡ Ἐκκλησία τῆς Δύσεως πάσης πνευματικῆς ἐνεργείας. Καὶ τοῦτο εἶναι πρῶτον πτῶμα, ὅπου ἔγινεν ἐχθρὸς θανάσιμος τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Δεύτερον εἶναι ὅτι δὲν τὸν ἔσωσε νὰ εἶναι πάπας καὶ πατριάρχης ὅλης τῆς Δύσεως, ἀμὴ ἠθέλησε νὰ ἐξουσιάσῃ ὅλην τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, Ἀνατολῆς καὶ Δύσεως, καὶ νὰ εἶναι μόνος ἄκρος ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ κεφαλὴ καθολικὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καθὼς ἦτον καὶ ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός. Καὶ νὰ μὴν ἔχη ὁ Χριστὸς καμμίαν ἐξουσίαν εἰς τὴν ἐπίγειον Ἐκκλησίαν, μόνον ὁ πάπας. Αὐτὸς νὰ λύῃ καὶ νὰ δένη εἰς ὅλας τὰς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ κόσμου”. *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷ “πζ”) Ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία τῶν λατίνων, ἀφόντις ἐχωρίσθη ἀπὸ τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνατολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, ὑστερήθη παντελῶς τῆς θείας χάριτος καὶ ἀγιαστικῆς ἐνεργείας Ἐλα τώρα νὰ ἰδοῦμεν καὶ τὴν δυτικὴν, παπιστικὴν ἢ λατινικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν-νὰ ἰδοῦμεν ποῖα ἔχει καὶ ποῖα τῆς λείπονται ἀπὸ τὰ ἐνεργήματα ὅπου φανερώνουν τὴν ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν τῶν χριστιανῶν. (89) πθ) *Σχελιαστικὸν πρὸς τὴν τῶν λατίνων ἢ δυτικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. Ἀλλ’ οὐαί σοι ἀθλία Ἐκκλησία λατινικὴ ἢ ῥωμαϊκὴ, ἢ μᾶλλον δυτικὴ!* Τί τὸ περὶ σὲ μέγα καὶ φοβερὸν πτῶμα καὶ δυστύχημα; ... Καὶ σχεδὸν ἔστησε καινούργιαν πίστιν καὶ Ἐκκλησίαν δυσικὴν, ἀντίθετον κατὰπάντα τῆς ἀνατολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ δικαίως λέγεται ἀποστάτης καὶ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ θηρίον καὶ δράκων, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Μωάμεθ... Καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦτο εἶναι ἕνα βέβαιον πρᾶγμα νὰ γνωρίσῃ τινὰς τὴν χάριν τῆς ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τὴν ἐγκατάλειψιντῆς θείας χάριτος καὶ στερῆσιν παντελῶς τοῦ θείου φωτὸς ἀπὸ τὴν δυσικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν.” “Ἐλα τώρα νὰ ἰδοῦμεν καὶ τὴν δυτικὴν, παπιστικὴν ἢ λατινικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν-νὰ ἰδοῦμεν ποῖα ἔχει καὶ ποῖα τῆς λείπονται ἀπὸ τὰ ἐνεργήματα ὅπου φανερώνουν τὴν ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν τῶν χριστιανῶν”. “Καὶ ἐπερίλαβεν ὅλον τὸ σῶμα τῆς δυσικῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἔγινεν ἀνεπιχείρητος παντελῶς ἕως τοῦ νῦν”. “Αὐτὸς εἶναι λοιπὸν ὁ διώκτης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὅπου τὴν ἐδίωξε καὶ θέλει τὴν διώξῃ ἕως τῆς συντελείας”. „Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι αὐτὸς. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὁ προδότης καὶ τῆς βασιλείας τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας”.

⁵⁸ “Ὅρατε πόσα ἄτοπα ἔπεται πανταχόθεν τοῖς λέγουσι τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς Υἱοῦ τε ἐκπορεύεσθαι; Μὴ διὰ τὸν Κύριον κακῶς φρονεῖν θέλετε. Εἰ γὰρ καὶ Λατίνοι, ἢ τῆς Ῥώμης Ἐκκλησία καὶ ἄλλοι, εὐπαράδεκτους δῆθεν παράγουσι μάρτυρας, Αὐγουστίνον, Ἀμβρόσιον, Ἰερώνυμον καὶ ἄλλους τινὰς, ἀλλ’ ἔχομεν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀναπαραγαεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας πολλῶ πλείονας καὶ ἀξιοπιστοτέρους. ποίους τούτους;” Ἰωαννῆς Ν. Karmirēs, *Τα δογματικὰ καὶ συμβολικὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Ekdosis deuteria epeuthemene, vol. 2 (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1968), 442. “See how many absurd conclusions from every side trail those who say that the Spirit proceeds both from the Father and the Son! Do not desire to think incorrectly concerning the Lord. For if the Latins, that is, *the Church of Rome*, and others can produce witnesses who are acceptable such as Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and some others, we also can produce many more and even more trustworthy Fathers to speak up for the truth. Who are they?” George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982), 162. Patriarhul Ieremia face diferența între Vechea Biserică apostolică a Romei și Biserica Romei de după Schismă: “Ο αὐτὸς δὲ Λέων καὶ τὸ θησαυροφυλάκιον τῆς ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ῥωμαίων ἀνοίξας, ἀσπίδας δύο, τοῖς ἱεροῖς κειμηλίοις συναποτεθησαοισμένας”. Karmirēs, *Τα δογματικὰ καὶ συμβολικὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, 2:449. “Moreover, this same [Pope] Leo opened the treasury of the apostolic church of the Romans and drew forth two plaques which were stored in the treasury together with the sacred “treasures.” Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 172.

churches will become one by the grace of God, we shall live together hereafter and we will exist together in a God-pleasing way until we attain the heavenly kingdom”⁵⁹.

Likewise, in the Encyclical Letter of the Eastern Patriarchs written in 1848 in reply to Pope Pius IX’s *Epistle to the Easterns* the Western Catholic Church fallen into heresy after the Great Schism is called: “The Roman Church (Ῥωμάνα Ἐκκλησίᾳ)”⁶⁰, “The Church of Rome”, “The Western Church”⁶¹. Moreover, this Encyclical letter states: “we have a right to expect from the prudent forethought of his Holiness, a work so worthy the true successor of St. Peter, of Leo I, and also of Leo III, who for security of the orthodox faith engraved the divine Creed unaltered upon imperishable plates—a work which will unite the churches of the West to the holy Catholic Church, in which the canonical chief seat of his Holiness, and the seats of all the Bishops of the West remain empty and ready to be occupied. For the Catholic Church, awaiting the conversion of the shepherds who have fallen off from her with their flocks, does not separate in name only, those who have been

⁵⁹ “Καὶ ὑμῶν, οὖν, ὧ ἄνδρες Γερμανοὶ σοφώτατοι καὶ τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ τῆς ἡμῶν μετριότητος, βουλομένων, ὡς νουνεχῶν, ὀλοψύχως τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ προσελθεῖν ἀγιωτῆ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἡμεῖς, ὡς πατέρες φιλόστοργοι, προθύμως τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀγάπην καὶ φιλοφροσύνην ἀποδεξόμεθα, ἐὰν θελήσητε τοῖς ἀποστολικοῖς καὶ συνοδικοῖς συμφώνως ἡμῖν ἀκολουθήσειν καὶ τούτοις ὑπέξειν. Τηνικαῦτα γὰρ τῷ ὄντι συγκοινοὶ ἡμῖν ἔσεσθε, καὶ ὡς παρρησίᾳ ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, παρὰ πάντων τῶν νουνεχῶν ἐπαινεθήσεσθε καὶ οὕτω ταῖν δυοῖν ἐκκλησίαιν μᾶς σὺν Θεῷ γενομένης, τοῦ λοιποῦ συζήσομεν καὶ συμβιοτεύσομεν ἐν Χριστῷ θεαρέστως, ἕως οὗ καὶ τῆς ἐπουρανίου τύχοιμεν βασιλείας”. Karmiris, 1960, Vol.1, p. 503. “O most wise German men and beloved children of our humble self, since, as sensible men, you wish with your whole heart to enter our most Holy Church, we, as affectionate fathers, willingly accept your love and friendliness, if you will follow the Apostolic and Synodal decrees in harmony with us and will submit to them. For then you will indeed be in communion with us, and having openly submitted to our holy and catholic church of Christ, you will be praised by all prudent men. In this way the two churches will become one by the grace of God, we shall live together hereafter and we will exist together in a God-pleasing way until we attain the heavenly kingdom”. Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 103.

⁶⁰ Article 13: “Father, Sr. Irenaeus, were alive again, seeing it was fallen from the ancient and primitive teaching in so many most essential and catholic articles of Christianity, he would not be himself the first to oppose the novelties and self-sufficient constitutions of that Church which was lauded by him as guided purely by the doctrines of the Fathers?” Article 16: „From these things we estimate into what an unspeakable labyrinth of wrong and incorrigible sin of revolution the papacy has thrown even the wiser and more godly Bishops of the Roman Church, so that, in order to preserve the innocent, and therefore valued vicarial dignity, as well as the despotic primacy and the things depending upon it, they know no other means shall to insult the most divine and sacred things, daring everything for that one end”; „He will find, also, flow many modern papistical doctrines and mysteries must be rejected as “commandments of men” in order that the Church of the West, which has introduced all sorts of novelties, may be changed back again to the immutable Catholic Orthodox faith of our common fathers.” Article 17: „How becoming and holy would be the mending of the innovations, the time of whose entrance in the Church of Rome we know in each case; for our illustrious fathers have testified from time to time against each novelty”.

http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1848.aspx

⁶¹ I. KARMIRIS, *Τα Δογματικά*, II, p. 915, 918, 920.

privily introduced to the rulership by the action of others, thus making little of the Priesthood.⁶² The Encyclical also uses the expression “the apostate churches”: “But until there be this desired returning of the apostate Churches to the body of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of which Christ is the Head”.

These are only a few patristic texts and synodal documents recognized in the Orthodox Church that have used the name “church” for other Christian communities, but they have in no way given any ecclesial status or recognised their ecclesiality. Therefore, the Holy and Great Council of Crete, by accepting “*the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her*” follows the patristic and synodal Tradition of the Orthodox Church. If we reject the use and the acceptance of the historical name of other heterodox Churches and confessions, we have to reject all the documents and texts that we have quoted.

Even Hierotheos Vlahos in his recent book, “Old and New Rome”, after analysing the Encyclical Letter of the Eastern Patriarch (1848), the text that condemned the wrong teachings of Catholicism, he himself uses the term “Church” to designate the other Christian confessions, by saying:

“This Encyclical - the Pan-Orthodox decision - shows that the Church is the Body of Christ, that it remains united and preserves the dogmas and sacraments given to it, while the churches that have departed from the true faith are apostate Churches”.⁶³

What does the phrase “apostate Churches” used by Hierotheos Vlahos mean? Why did Hieroteos Vlachos, the protector of the orthodox faith, name other Christian communities with the word “Church”, and after that he condemns the Holy and Great Council because the Council used the term “Church” for other Christian communities and that it is illegitimate to use the term “Church” for them, even though he himself used it? Moreover, does it offer some ecclesiality to these Christian communities when they call them “apostate Churches” using for them the word “Churches”, despite the fact that they are apostate? Is Hieroteos Vlahos falling into the same “ecclesiological nominalism” that he is accusing others of⁶⁴? If he refers only to the historical name of “Church” without attributing the character of

⁶² I. KARMIRIS, *Τα Δογματικά*, II, p. 918. For the English translation see: http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1848.aspx

⁶³ Ierótheos Vlachos, *Vechea și Noua Romă. De La Tradiția Ortodoxă La Tradițiile Apusului*, trans. Teofan Munteanu (Iasi, 2016), 410 Romanian translation of: Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καί Αγίου Βλασίου Ἱεροθέου, *Παλαιά καί Νέα Ρώμη. Ορθόδοξη καί Δυτική Παράδοση*, (Πελαγίας, Ἱερά Μονή Γενεθλίου τῆς Θεοτόκου) 2009.

⁶⁴ “The phrase “the historical existence” was replaced by the phrase “the historical name”. There is no name without existence, because otherwise an ecclesiological nominalism is expressed”. <https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council>

ecclesiality to these communities, as can be seen from its entire exposure, then Ierotheos Vlahos also is in full agreement with the decision of the Holy and Great Council. Furthermore, the words of Hierotheos Vlahos are more “ecumenist” and more permissive than the document of the Holy and Great Council. If the Council states that it “*accepts the historical name*”, Hierotheos Vlahos said that “they are”, and if the Synodal document identifies two realities: “non-orthodox Churches and Confessions”, Hierotheos Vlahos calls all of them “apostate Churches”, but still “Churches”. Likewise, even the other supporters of the writings of Hierotheos Vlahos and detractors of the formulation of the Holy and Great Council, such as Gheorghios Metallinos, Kotsopoulos, or Theodoros Zisis⁶⁵, the promoter of the final phrase of the pre-conciliar document, used in their writings both before and after the Council of Crete the term “Church” for the Catholic Church, in the expressions: “The Latin Church⁶⁶”, “The Papal Church⁶⁷”. Even Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka said in his letter: “Why I did not sign the document of the Council of Crete about the relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world” that: „personally, I consider that ... the word „Church” should remain just for the Roman Catholicism (Προσωπικῶς φρονῶ, ὅτι τὸ ἐνδεδειγμένον ἐν προκειμένῳ ἦτο νὰ μείνῃ ὁ ὅρος Ἐκκλησία μόνον διὰ τὸν ρωμαιοκαθολικισμόν)”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Theodoros Yangou gives more quotes from the works of Theodoros Zisis where he used the word “Church” for the Roman Catholic Church. For example: “Τὴν υποτίμηση τοῦ λαοῦ ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησία τῆς Ρώμης ἐνισχύει ἐπίσης ὁ ἀποκλεισμός τῶν λαϊκῶν ἀπὸ τὴν κοινωνία τοῦ ποτηρίου ...” (Ἡθικά Κεφάλαια, Θεσσαλονίκη 2002, σ. 133). “Ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ μέτρα, κατὰλοιπα τῆς ἀπολυταρχίας καὶ φεουδαρχίας μέσα στὴν Δυτικὴ Ἐκκλησία” (ὄ.π.π., σ. 134). “Σύμφωνα με τὴν ἐκκλησιολογία τῶν προτεσταντῶν δὲν ὑπάρχει ἱερατικὴ δομὴ στὴν ἐκκλησία καὶ ἰδιαίτερα ἱερατεῖο ... Ἡ διδασκαλία αὐτὴ ἦταν ἀπαραίτητη στὴ μεταρρύθμιση γιὰ νὰ μπορέσει νὰ ἀπαλλαγεῖ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐκκλησία τῆς Ρώμης” (ὄ.π.π., σ. 135). The book “Ἡθικά Κεφάλαια” served as a handbook for Orthodox Theology for many years. Θεοδώρου Ξ. Γιάγκου, “Πτυχές ποῦ ἀποσιωπήθηκαν στὸν δημόσιο διάλογο περὶ τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Μεγάλῃς Συνόδου (Α΄ ΜΕΡΟΣ)” <http://www.amen.gr/article/ptyxes-pou-aposiopathikan-ston-dimosio-dialogo-peri-tis-agias-kai-megalis-synodou-a-meros>

⁶⁶ Gheorghios Metallinos, “Ἐνωτικές προσπάθειες μετὰ τὸ σχίσμα καὶ ὁ σημερινὸς διάλογος τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας μετὰ τὴν Λατινικὴ Ἐκκλησία, ἴν: *Πρακτικά Θεολογικῆς Ἡμερίδος, Πρωτεῖον, Συνοδικότης καὶ Ἐνότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, (Ρίγερν, 2011), 73-106.

⁶⁷ In his article: Γεώργιος Μεταλλινός, ‘Μόνος κερδισμένος ὁ Πάπας ἀπὸ τοὺς θεολογικοὺς διαλόγους’, *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος Ἑβδομαδιαία ἔκδοσις τῆς Πανελληνίου Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐνώσεως* 2159, no. 31 Μαρτίου (2017): 1, 7. Metallinos uses the expression “Λατινικὴ «Ἐκκλησία»”. The word “Church” is used three times with brackets and one time without brackets: “Ἡ Λατινικὴ Ἐκκλησία, χάριν τῆς ὑποταγῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, θὰ ἦταν πρόθυμη νὰ υποχωρήσει σὲ θεολογικὰ ζητήματα, ὅπως λ.χ. τὸ Filioque, ποτέ ὅμως στα περὶ πάντα δόγματα (πρωτεῖο καὶ ἀλάθητο). Καὶ ὅμως κατὰ τοὺς συντιζόντες Ὁρθοδόξους ὁ Παπισμός εἶναι ἡ Ἐκκλησία!” (p. 7). He is using the phrase “τὴν Παπικὴ «Ἐκκλησία»”: “Ὁ σημερινὸς Διάλογος μετὰ τὴν Παπικὴ «Ἐκκλησία» στηρίζεται σὲ ἕνα ψευδοεπιχείρημα, ποῦ ἀναπαράγεται συνεχῶς ἀπὸ τὴν ἐνωτικὴν παράταξη”.

⁶⁸ “Προσωπικῶς φρονῶ, ὅτι τὸ ἐνδεδειγμένον ἐν προκειμένῳ ἦτο νὰ μείνῃ ὁ ὅρος Ἐκκλησία μόνον διὰ τὸν ρωμαιοκαθολικισμόν (ὁ ὁποῖος, περιέργως, οὔτε μνημονεύεται μεμονωμένως εἰς τὸ κείμενον, ἐνῶ γίνεται κατὰ κόρον ἢ πρὸς τὸ Παγκόσμιον Συμβούλιον Ἐκκλησιῶν ἀναφορὰ), διότι ἢ ὑπερχλιετῆς δογματικὴ διαμάχη μετὰξὺ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν δὲν ἐκρίθη εἰστέτιπὶ τοῦ ἐπιπέδου Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου, εἰ μὴ μόνον εἰς τὰς ψευδοικουμενικὰς συνόδους Λυῶνος καὶ Φερράρας-Φλωρεντίας.” <http://www.romfea.gr/images/article-images/2016/07/romfea2/ba.pdf>.

Those who condemn the sixth article of the document unfortunately do not realise that they have to condemn as well the document “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions, adopted by the Jubilee Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 14, 2000, in which the text of the document of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference (1986) is cited. In the Russian Document we can read in the chapter: “The Orthodox Church has always sought to draw the different Christian Churches and confessions into a joint search for the lost unity of Christians, so that all might reach the unity of faith.”⁶⁹ The detractors of the Council of Crete have to ask themselves why is the Jubilee Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church using the word “Church” for other Christian communities. The answer can be found in the same document of the Russian Orthodox Church:

“1.15. The Orthodox Church, through the mouths of the holy fathers, affirms that salvation can be attained only in the Church of Christ. At the same time however, communities which have fallen away from Orthodoxy have never been viewed as fully deprived of the grace of God. Any break from communion with the Church inevitably leads to an erosion of her grace-filled life, but not always to its complete loss in these separated communities⁷⁰”. “2.4. The Orthodox Church cannot accept the assumption that despite the historical divisions, the fundamental and profound unity of Christians has not been broken and that the Church should be understood as coextensive with the entire “Christian world”, that Christian unity exists across denominational barriers and that the disunity of the churches belongs exclusively to the imperfect level of human relations. According to this conception, the Church remains one, but this oneness is not, as it were, sufficiently manifest in visible form. In this model of unity, the task of Christians is understood not as the restoration of a lost unity but as the manifestation of an existing unity. This model repeats the teaching on “the invisible Church” which appeared during the Reformation”⁷¹.

In the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia signed in Havana on February 12, 2016, the term “Church” is used not only for the Orthodox Church but also for the Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics. We can even find the expression “Christian Churches”⁷². Does this mean that the Russian Orthodox Church recognizes by signing this statement the ecclesial character of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Church? An affirmative answer would be totally meaningless, since Eucharistic communion was not restored

⁶⁹ <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-orthodox/iii/>

⁷⁰ <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-orthodox/i/>

⁷¹ <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-orthodox/ii/>

⁷² Art. 1 “to discuss the mutual relations between the Churches”, Art. 11: “so that fraternal co-existence among the various populations, Churches and religions may be strengthened”, art. 12: “these martyrs of our times, who belong to various Churches”, Art. 18: “The Christian churches”; Art. 24: “to pass from one Church to another”; Art. 26: “our Churches in Ukraine”

between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Those who reject the document of the Holy and Great Council unfortunately do not comment on this Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill.

After the Holy and Great Council all the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, with the exception of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria signed the document „Synodality and Primacy during the first Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding on Service to the Unity of the Church” of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, held in Chieti, September 21, 2016⁷³. If the Orthodox Church had refused to call other Christian communities „Churches”, all the 13 Orthodox Autocephalous Churches should have refused to take part in a Commission with a Christian Community that considers itself a „Church” and to sign the Chieti Document.

Conclusions

In this paper I have emphasised the genesis and the development of the phrase: “*the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions*”, by finding that this highly controversial formulation emerged in the pre-conciliar debates and that the direct promoter of this formulation of the final document of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference was none other than *Theodoros Zisis*, at that time a consultant member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In the paper we gave a lot of quotes from the patristic, synodal and canonical Tradition of the Church where certain heterodox communities were called “Churches” without recognizing their ecclesiality or an ecclesial status. By emphasising the diachronic development of the use of the word “church/ἐκκλησία”, we saw that the word “Church” was applied to other Christian communities in some synodal decisions and works of the Holy Fathers in order to designate certain communities that ceased the communion with the Orthodox Church and departed from it, but by the use of the word “Church” they did not give an ontological ecclesial status to other Christian communities.

In conclusion we can affirm that the phrase: “*the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions*” is not in contradiction with the doctrinal Tradition of the Orthodox Church, but it can be extended and improved.

⁷³ For the Chieti Document see:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20160921_synodality-primacy_en.html

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DEBATING THE DOCUMENTS OF THE HOLY AND GREAT SYNOD OF CRETE – A CANONICAL AND DISCIPLINARY APPROACH. CASE STUDY: THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF IAȘI

EMILIAN-IUSTINIAN ROMAN*

ABSTRACT. The discussion of the documents of the Holy and Great Synod of Crete has resulted in numerous clashes in the dioceses of the Romanian Patriarchate. In this context, our study seeks to analyse various forms of canonical disobedience and highlight the principle of synodality, one of the fundamental canonical principles of organizing the Orthodox Church, according to which the leadership of the Church is exercised collectively, not individually. Furthermore, canonical obedience, as an expression of the hierarchical principle, means the subordination of the inferior ranks to the higher ones, of the faithful to the hierarchy, of the hierarchs to the synods, etc.

Keywords: Church discipline, canons, Synod, synodality, regulations.

The debate of the documents of the Holy and Great Synod of Crete¹ has resulted in numerous disturbances in the dioceses of the Romanian Patriarchate. The Archbishopric of Iași was no exception. These disturbances meant the rebellion of some restricted groups, either of monks or priests, together with some parishioners, which were also reflected in the local media and not only, often with a touch of sensationalism. The rebellion has taken various forms, ranging from the

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¹ Dr. Damaskinos Papandreou, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Ortodoxiei: Tematică și lucrări pregătitoare* [The Holy and Great Synod of Orthodoxy], trans. Fr. Nicolae Dascălu (Iași: Trinitas, 1998); Viorel Ioniță, *Hotărârile întrunirilor panortodoxe din 1923 până în 2009. Spre Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe* [The Decisions of the Pan - Orthodox Meetings from 1923 to 2009. Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church], (Bucharest: Basilica Publishing House, 2013); Viorel Ioniță, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe. Documente pregătitoare* [The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. Preparatory Documents] (Bucharest: Basilica Publishing House, 2016); *Enciclica Sfântului și Marelui Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe (The Encyclical of the Holy and the Great Synod of the Orthodox Church)*, trans. Aurelian-Nicolae Eftimiu (Bucharest: Basilica Publishing House, 2017).

disrespect of the hierarchy of the place to the refusal to commemorate Him, the public contradiction of the official position of the Church, disobedience to church authority, etc., all being serious violations of canonical discipline.

Given the sustained actions meant to manage the conflicts and re-establish peace and order, worthy of emphasis is the effort of His Eminence Teofan, who held talks with the monks, priests, and the faithful, so as to bring the rebels back into communion, despite their attitude of separation and vehemence regarding the leaving of the ecclesial communion. Thus, His Eminence Teofan has clarified, on various occasions, those aspects considered by some attacks on the true faith. Moreover, he created a special section on doxologia.ro, dedicated to articles and papers on the documents of the Synod in Crete, written by monks, theologians, professors, etc.

Paradoxically, although academic theology paid no special attention to these documents, both in the framework of the pre-synodal proceedings and during the debates of the synodal documents, as well as in the activities dedicated to the event in the ecclesial area, however, after the meeting of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, held in Crete (June 18-26, 2016), these documents became vividly disputed. Thus, the reactions in the theological medium, and beyond, in both academic and non-academic environments “were extremely critical and they brought to the fore a series of insufficiently cultivated theological voices, incapable of lecturing and refining the theological documents, lacking the motivation to grasp the major significance of this event. These were, in general, the reactions of people «with zeal, but without knowledge». And in these cases, the theologians’ reactions / responses have been rather timid².

In the context of the disturbances in the eparchies, the Romanian Patriarchate issued an appeal entitled “Let us Preserve the Peace and Unity of the Church” (September 7, 2016)³, which describes, as Fr. professor G. Gârdan asserts, “the behaviour of the ecumenically untrained people: the fanatic, the arrogant, the aggressive, people incapable of dialogue repeating unfounded ideas and accusations, judging and slandering. On the other hand, the ideal for the contemporary Orthodox Christian is also defined: lucid, realistic, capable of remaining loyal to Orthodoxy when in dialogue and co-operation with other Christians as well”⁴.

² Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, “Dimensiunea ecumenică a educației teologice contemporane” [The Ecumenical Dimension of Contemporary Theological Education], in *Teologia în Universitate* (Sibiu: Astra Museum Publishing House, 2016), 308.

³ Iulian Dumitrașcu, “Să păstrăm pacea și unitatea Bisericii” [Let us Preserve the Peace and Unity of the Church], <http://basilica.ro/sa-pastram-pacea-si-unitatea-bisericii/>, accessed 15.04.2017.

⁴ Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, „Dimensiunea ecumenică a educației teologice contemporane” [The Ecumenical Dimension of Contemporary Theological Education], 309.

The consequences of “the lack of involvement of the theologians in the dissemination and interpretation of the results of inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian dialogues; the lack of a culture of dialogue even among clergy, graduates of theological schools”⁵ highlight the dysfunctionality between academic theology and church life, between *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy*.

All these have had repercussions on church discipline, which is a guide to salvation. According to art. 11 of the Statute (2011) “The Holy Synod is the highest authority of the Romanian Orthodox Church in all its fields of activity”. Therefore, in the working session of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the 29th October 2016, the members of the Holy Synod assessed and concluded on the proceedings and decisions of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church of Crete (16-26 June 2016), highlighting in the press release the following three aspects:

“1. It was noted with appreciation the participation and substantial involvement of the Patriarch of Romania and other members of the delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the works of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church.

2. It was noted the content of the documents as approved in the works of the Holy and Great Synod of Crete, the mission of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world; the Orthodox Diaspora; the autonomy and its proclamation; The Holy Sacrament of the Wedding and its impediments; the importance of fasting and its observance today; the relations of the Orthodox Church with the whole Christian world, as well as the Encyclical Letter and the Message of the Synod, respectively. The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church did not issue new dogmas, new canons or liturgical changes, but confessed that the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.

3. It was also noted that the texts can be *explained, nuanced or developed* by a future Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. Their explanation and the drafting of other synodal documents on various themes should not be carried out under the pressure of time, but in case there is no Pan-Orthodox consensus, they must be postponed and refined until a consensus is reached”⁶.

⁵ Ibid., 308-309.

⁶ Andrei Pau, „Concluziile Sfântului Sinod cu privire la desfășurarea și hotărârile Sfântului și Marelui Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe din Creta” [The conclusions of the Holy Synod on the proceedings and decisions of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church in Crete, (16-26 June 2016)], <http://basilica.ro/concluziile-sfantului-sinod-cu-privire-la-desfasurarea-si-hotararile-sfantului-si-marelui-sinod-al-bisericii-ortodoxe-din-creta-16-26-iunie-2016>, accessed 15.04.2017.

Church discipline – guide to salvation

One of the consequences of the above-mentioned rebellions was the failure to acknowledge the authority of the church and of the hierarch of the place, invoking in this regard canon 15 of the First and Second Synod of Constantinople, 861. From the beginning, we must mention that the First and Second Synod of Constantinople in 861 preserves with holiness what had previously been established by the Church in regard to church discipline. This synod regulated, among other canonical and church issues, the relationship between the clergy and the lay people and the bishop (canon 13), the relationship between a bishop and his metropolitan (canon 14) and, last but not least, the relationship between a metropolitan, bishop, priest, deacon and the patriarch (canon 15). The canonical tradition includes numerous canons that regulate these canonical obedience relationships, for example: 31, 55 ap.; 6 sin. II ec.; 3 sin. III ec.; 18 sin. IV ec.; 31, 34 Trul.; 6 Gang.; 14 Sard.; 5 Antioh.; 10, 11, 62 Cartag.; 13, 14, 15 sin. I-II C-pol 861.

Therefore, the instances of indiscipline were frequent in the past, as were the unjust charges brought against bishops. Often, some priests and those around them (including the laity) would unjustly accuse their bishops of departing from the right faith and not instilling justice, seeking to break the communion with their bishop and to cease to commemorate his name as regulated in the ordinances of church worship. All these eventually would lead to schism and the division of the Church of Christ. The apostolic Canon 31 punishes the schism with deposition of the clergy and admonition in the case of the laity, but, as the canon reads, “Let this, however, be done after a first, second, and third admonition from the bishop”⁷.

Others, on the contrary, seeing that they cannot accuse them of heresy, with cunningness, accused them of committing sins, without waiting for their proof, immediately breaking their communion with them, and ceasing to name them in church services. In this regard, canon 13 I-II C-pol 861 reads: “henceforth if any Presbyter or Deacon, on the alleged ground that his own bishop has been condemned for certain crimes, before a synodal hearing and investigation has been made, should dare to secede from his communion, and fail to mention his name in the sacred prayers of the liturgical services in accordance with the custom handed down in the Church, he shall be subject to deposition from

⁷ Nicodim Milaş, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, însoțite de comentarii. I, 1. Introducere, Nomocanonul în XIV Titluri și Canoanele Apostolice* [The Canons of the Orthodox Church, together with Comments. I, 1. Introduction, Nomocanon in XIV Titles and the Apostolic Canons], trans. Uroş Kovincici and Nicolae Popovici (Arad: Tipografia Diecezană, 1930), 231.

office and shall be stripped of every prelatiic honour”⁸. Therefore, this canon punishes with deposition and loss of clerical dignity the priests and deacons who dare break communion and not commemorate the name of the hierarch in the holy ministries prior to judgment and publication of the final sentence of church judges. Such person, as highlighted in the canon, “is not even worthy of the honour or name of Presbyter”⁹. The canon concludes that those “who go along with him, in case any of them should be among those in holy orders, they too shall forfeit their own rights to honour, or, in case they should be monks or laymen, let them be utterly excommunicated from the Church until such time as they spew upon and openly renounce all connection with the schismatics and decide to return to their own Bishop.”¹⁰.

Canon 14 refers to the relationship between the bishop and his Metropolitan, the former being punished with defrocking if, under the pretext of an accusation against the Metropolitan before investigation, trial and publication of the final sentence by the church judges, he breaks communion with his bishop and ceases to commemorate His name according to the decreed ordinances of divine services¹¹.

Canon 15 completes the previous canons, 13 and 14, with the obedience relationship between metropolitans, bishops, priests and other clergy and their patriarch. Thus, canon 15 of the First and Second Synod of Constantinople of 861 must be interpreted in the wider context of the canonical obedience report. It stipulates that all the three canons (13-15) “have been sealed and ordained as respecting those persons who under the pretext of charges against their own

⁸ Nicodim Miłaș, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, însoțite de comentarii. II, 1. Canoanele sinoadelor locale*, [The Canons of the Orthodox Church, together with Comments. II, 1. Introduction, Nomocanon in XIV Titles and the Apostolic Canons], trans. Uroș Kovincici and Nicolae Popovici (Arad: Tipografia Diecezană, 1934), 320.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 320.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 320.

¹¹ Canon 14, I-II C-pol, 861: “If any Bishop, on the allegation that charges of crime lie against his own Metropolitan, shall secede or apostatize from him before a synodal verdict has been issued against him, and shall abstain from communion with him, and fail to mention his name, in accordance with consuetude, in the course of the divine mystagogy (i.e., liturgical celebration of the Eucharistic mystery), the holy Council has decreed that he shall be deposed from office, if merely by seceding from his own Metropolitan he shall create a schism. For everyone ought to know his own bounds, and neither ought a presbyter treat his own bishop scornfully or contemptuously, nor ought a bishop to treat his own Metropolitan so”. Nicodim Miłaș, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, însoțite de comentarii. II, 1. Canoanele sinoadelor locale* [The Canons of the Orthodox Church, together with Comments. II, 1. The Canons of the Local Synods], 321. See also Nicolae V. Dură, “Le jugement synodal”, in Constantin Rus, ed., *The Place of Canonical Principles in the Organization and Working of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches*, The Canon Law International Symposium, Arad, 10-12 September 2008 (Arad: Aurel Vlaicu University Publishing House, 2008), 105-111.

presidents stand aloof, and create a schism, and disrupt the union of the Church”¹² for certain unproven allegations.

However, Canon 15 also regulates the situation in which communion and commemoration of church services can be broken, but in an *expressis verbis* presentation. Thus, the canon stipulates that “for those persons, on the other hand, who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Councils, or Fathers, withdraw themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly, and teaching it bareheaded in church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a Bishop before any synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honour which befits them among Orthodox Christians”¹³. In his comment, in order to validate his interpretation, canonist Nicodim Milaş also brings an example from the Russian Church by quoting Archim. John, taking into account the historical context of his Church, with condescension and strict observance of the canonical doctrine, pointing out that, in interpreting this canon, a priest would not fall under the incidence of the canons when breaking communion with the bishop of the place; this occurs only under strict conditions, namely when that bishop teaches something different from the teaching of the Orthodox Church, something that was solemnly condemned by the Orthodox Church and if he preaches it in public in the church, with the clear intent of destroying the teaching of the Orthodox Church and of supporting that heresy¹⁴.

It is worth mentioning that one of the fundamental canonical principles of organizing the Orthodox Church is the principle of synodality, according to which the leadership of the Church is exercised collectively and not individually, therefore, the superior governing body is the synod. This principle has effectively contributed to the affirmation and maintenance of unity in the diversity of Orthodoxy¹⁵.

¹² Nicodim Milaş, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, însoțite de comentarii. II, 1. Canoanele sinoadelor locale* [The Canons of the Orthodox Church, together with Comments. II, 1. The Canons of the Local Synods], 322.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁴ *Cf. ibid.*, 323.

¹⁵ According to art. 3 of the *Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, “(1) The Romanian Orthodox Church has a hierarchical synodal leadership, according to the teaching and canons of the Orthodox Church and its historical tradition. (2) The Romanian Orthodox Church is administered autonomously through its own representative bodies, made up of clergy and laypersons, according to the Holy Canons, the provisions of this statute and other provisions of the competent church authority”. See also Patriciu Vlaicu, *Lege și comuniune. Organizarea statutară a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (2007-2012)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2013), 32-33; Patriciu Vlaicu, *Canon și libertate. Împărțășirea continuă din experiența Bisericii* (Cluj-Napoca:

In the Orthodox Church, synodality is expressly stipulated in the apostolic canon 34: "The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do those things only which concern his own parish, and the parts of the country which belong to it. But neither let him (who is the first) do anything without the consent of all; for so there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit"¹⁶. This canon confirms the hierarchical-synodal organization on the local level, even if it does not use the phrase "synod", also stipulating the way in which synodality is manifested, i.e. through good understanding, and implicitly, its purpose, a true doxology, namely God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit.

Another fundamental principle is the hierarchical principle, according to which the leadership of the Church is carried out according to the order that the church hierarchy of divine institution (deacon, priest, bishop) imparts to church life. This principle applies to the relations between the divine founders, the relations between the governing bodies of the Church and the relations between church units.

The canonical obedience is the expression of the hierarchical principle. This implies the subordination of the inferior ranks to the superior ones, the obedience of the faithful to the hierarchy, of the hierarchs to the synods, etc. On the one hand, obedience is accomplished by fulfilling the duties arising from the grace, the provisions of the higher bodies with diligence and responsibility. On the other hand, practically, the deacon and the priest show their obedience to the bishop by commemorating his name in the divine service, praying for him. So does the bishop towards the metropolitan and so on. Everyone therefore commemorates the name of the hierarch.

Consequently, not commemorating the name is evidence of canonical disobedience, of breaking the communion and schism.

Ius vigens

According to the vigente legislation of the Romanian Orthodox Church, as designated by the church authority - the Bishop and the Synod of Bishops -, the

Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2013), 57-63; Patriciu Vlaicu, „Raportul dintre principiile canonice și misiunea Bisericii”, in Constantin Rus, ed., *The Place of Canonical Principles in the Organization and Working of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches* [The Canon Law International Symposium, Arad, 10-12 Septembrie 2008] (Arad: Aurel Vlaicu University Publishing House, 2008), 203-219.

¹⁶ Nicodim Milaş, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, însoțite de comentarii. I, 1. Introducere, Nomocanonul în XIV Titluri și Canoanele Apostolice* [The Canons of the Orthodox Church, together with Comments. I, 1. Introduction, Nomocanon in XIV Titles and the Apostolic Canons], 236.

exercise of the judiciary office lies within the responsibility of the *Consistories*¹⁷. They act on church causes and propose resolutions for the approval of that disciplinary canonical authority. Their deviations and sanctions, the procedure for the functioning of the church courts (the Consistories), and the procedure of disciplinary investigation and church judgement are regulated by *The Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church* (2015).

Article 2 of *The Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church* stipulates that: “This Regulation applies to all clergy, monks and laymen from church units and church administration in Romania and abroad, from pre-university and university theological education, teachers of Religion, as well as to the clergy from public or private institutions, clergy and retired monks, students of Orthodox theology faculties and theologians, as well as to other persons who work at the request and with the blessing / written approval of the bodies of ecclesial authority”.

On the one hand, by the disapproving attitude and the disturbances created by some clergy, monks and laypersons, two of the fundamental principles underlying this *Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, namely the defense of the unity of the faith and the teaching of the Church, as well as the observance of the canonical, statutory and regulatory provisions, of the decisions of the competent authority bodies, reflected in art. 34 – “(1) The following are considered disobedience by the ecclesiastical authorities and shall be sanctioned with hierarchical reproof, dismissal from clerical ministry or defrocking, according to the seriousness of the deed, the following: ... b) rebellion and harmful attitude to church life shown by words or writings, public or private actions, directed against the decisions of the higher hierarchical authorities”, and in art. 39 of *The Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church*: “The public contradiction, in writing or by visual or audio means, of the official position of the Church regarding events or aspects of its life and activity, is considered disobedience to authorities and is sanctioned with hierarchical reproof or deposition from clerical ministry, according to the seriousness of the deed”.

Even more serious is the schism, a dogmatic (doctrinal) deviation, defined in *The Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church* as “separation from the Church, through actions or particular public interpretations of some norms of discipline, morality and worship of the teaching and Tradition of the Church, or the disobedience and refusal to obey church authority, after written reproof. The schism shall be sanctioned as follows:

¹⁷ Stipulated by art. 148-161 (chapter IV: The Discipline of the Clergy) from *The Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church* (2011).

a) in the case of the clergy, with deposition from the clerical ministry or defrocking;

b) in the case of laymen, with the dismissal for church chanters, with the withdrawal of the blessing / written approval for the teaching staff in pre-university and university education or for carrying out any activity with the blessing of the Church;

c) in the case of the monks, with exclusion from monasticism and forbidding them to wear the monk vestments¹⁸.

On the other hand, "insult, calumny, defamation, and mischief are acts that interfere with the good name of a person or being unfairly accused of committing evil deeds"¹⁹ are sanctioned as follows:

a) in the case of clergy, with hierarchical reproof, forbidding divine worship, disciplinary removal, dismissal from clerical ministry or deposition, according to the seriousness of the act;

b) in the case of the laity, with hierarchical reproof or withdrawal of the distinctions granted by the Hierarchy, with the fulfilment of a canon of fasting and repentance in a monastery or a hermitage, with the disciplinary removal or dismissal for church chanters, with the withdrawal of the blessing (written approval) for the teaching staff in pre-university and university education or for the laymen carrying out other activities with the blessing of the Church or with losing the possibility of being ordained for the graduates of theology, according to the seriousness of the deed;

¹⁸ Art. 11, 1 from *The Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church*. See also Nicolae-Coriolan Dura, „Schisma”, in *Exercitarea puterii judecătorești în Biserică. Abaterile și delictele bisericești* [The Exercise of Judicial Office in the Church. Church Deviations and Offenses] (Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea Publishing House, 2014), 118-120.

¹⁹ Art. 25, 1 in *The Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church*. Art. 26 stipulates other deeds than those already provisioned, namely deeds that infringe Christian morality, public order and common sense, these being thus punished: "a) in the case of clergy, with hierarchical reproof, with the fulfilment of a canon of fasting and repentance in a monastery or a hermitage, forbidding divine worship, disciplinary removal, dismissal from clerical ministry or deposition, according to the seriousness of the act, and in case of failure to mend one's ways, with deposition; b) in the case of the laity, with hierarchical reproof or withdrawal of the distinctions granted by the Hierarchy, with the fulfilment of a canon of fasting and repentance in a monastery or a hermitage, with the disciplinary removal or dismissal for church chanters, with the withdrawal of the blessing (written approval) for the teaching staff in pre-university and university education or for the laymen carrying out other activities with the blessing of the Church or with losing the possibility of being ordained for the graduates of theology, according to the seriousness of the deed; c) in the case of the monks, with the fulfilment of a canon of fasting and repentance in a monastery or a hermitage, with lower rank obedience for 30 days; in case of failure to mend one's ways, with disciplinary removal to another monastery or hermitage".

c) in the case of the monks, with the fulfilment of a canon of fasting and repentance in a monastery or a hermitage, with lower rank obedience for 30 days; in case of failure to mend their ways, with disciplinary removal to another monastery or hermitage, and, in case they should persist in misconduct, with exclusion from monasticism and forbidding them to wear the monk vestments”²⁰.

Orthodoxy includes all the necessary means for the faithful to become partakers of salvation, and “the Church must make them fully available, as prescribed by the old canonical ordinances, which make the Church a sacred deposit, usable with the help of its servants and only in the proportions settled by the tradition and experience of the earlier ages, not at anyone’s whim”²¹.

The fidelity to canons is reflected in the level of church life; consequently, on the one hand, we must reiterate the fact that our canonical treasure is an integral part of the Tradition, which confers safety of its preservation and, on the other hand, it is necessary to emphasize that each of the statutes and regulations of the Orthodox Churches has as *fontes iuris* canonical norms, and the faithful, as members of the Church, must comply with its laws, this being an assumed and not imposed obligation²².

The attempt to reform the canons, proposed by some clergy, theologians or jurists, is in line with the thesis of canonist Patsavos, according to whom today the transformation of the Church according to the world and not the reverse, that is, the change of the world by the Church, is sought²³. Indeed, “the priest, who was trained by the spirit of our tradition, whose integral part the Holy Canons are, feels with the help of the Holy Spirit how to apply them correctly. The difficulty does not lie so much in the fact that the Holy Canons are something anachronistic, but in that we are unable to live according to their spirit, which is the spirit of the Orthodox tradition”²⁴.

²⁰ Art. 25, 1 in *The Regulation of the Canonical Disciplinary Authorities and the Courts of the Romanian Orthodox Church*. See also Nicolae-Coriolan Dura, “Calomnierea și acuzarea neîntemeiată de fapte necinstite față de orice cleric, față de căpeteniile și superiorii Bisericii, precum și față de corporațiile, instituțiile și organele bisericești”, in *Exercitarea puterii judecătorești în Biserică. Abaterile și delictele bisericești* [The Exercise of Judicial Office in the Church. Church Deviations and Offenses] (Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea Publishing House, 2014), 91-96.

²¹ Constantin Dron, *Valoarea actuală a canoanelor* [The Current Value of the Canons] (Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1928), 178.

²² Cf. Emilian Iustinian Roman, “«Κανών» – chintesența legislației bisericești actuale” [«Κανών» - Quintessence of the Current Church Legislation], in Constantin Dron, *Valoarea actuală a canoanelor* [The Current Value of the Canons] (Iași: Doxologia Publishing House, 2016), 44.

²³ Cf. Lewis J. Patsavos, *Spiritual Dimensions of the Holy Canons* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003). Translated by Emanuel P. Tăvală as *Valențele duhovnicești ale Sfințelor Canoane* (Sibiu: Editura Andreiana, 2012), 59.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

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**THE SOUL'S POWERS AND THE PROCESS OF
KNOWLEDGE IN THE WRITINGS OF SIMON TAIBUTEH:
BETWEEN ANATOMY AND SPIRITUALITY**

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ABSTRACT. In the line of the ascetical tradition, the knowledge of God is the very aim of spiritual life. Divine knowledge is possible, on the one hand, because of God's revelation and, on the other hand, due to human's anatomical and spiritual structure. Thus, one may find specific cognitive powers of the body and, in correspondence, of the soul, that stand at the very basis of the process of knowledge, worldly or spiritual. Simon Taibuteh is one of the mystical writers of the East Syriac Church who, having also a medical education, describes spiritual life and, in consequence, divine knowledge, using an anatomic terminology next to the anthropological-theological language, specific to his religious community. His special merits focus on the endeavour of creating bridges between these two domains and, eventually, of describing the soteriological itinerary as a process of healing both physically and spiritually. He is an example of the medical preoccupation in the monastic communities. This paper is divided into three sections, following a general short introduction, dealing firstly with the process of knowledge as described by the author himself, then a synthesis of the way of using the concept "powers of the soul" by some representative Syriac authors, and, finally, the use of the same concept in Simon's writings and the way he involves them in the very process of knowledge.

Keywords: knowledge, soul's powers, cognitive faculties, Simon Taibuteh, East Syriac Church.

According to the Patristic tradition, the process of divine knowledge is the very aim of the spiritual life. It is based on two aspects – the divine revelation, that is a free gift from above, on the one hand, and the anthropologic structure, in the image of God, which pertains to participating to God's life, on the other hand.

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And next to the two elements one finds it necessary to underline the ascetic participation of human, as an affirmative answer to God's initiative.

Regarding the concept of knowledge, the ascetical tradition deals quite differently from the manner in which it is interpreted in the Post-Cartesian thought. Serafim Sepälä, using an Aristotelian division, argues that the modern understanding of the concept is quantitative and needs criteria for verification, that the process of knowledge deals with the content of knowing and questions its basis and premises, while in the mystics' case, knowledge is experiential/empirical and spiritual by its nature, it goes beyond ordinary contents and the way of knowing is qualitative¹. Knowledge is considered experiential, for it is connected to experiences that occur suddenly, and spiritual (mystical), since these are interpreted as being of divine origin. To briefly explain this difference, we may refer to a short fragment where Isaac of Niniveh deals with this process. Ascetic exercises are able to generate a state over passions, physical mortification or silence of thoughts, but they are not able to produce mystical knowledge. He emphasizes that knowledge is not the result of investigation: "By zealous efforts and human thoughts no one can imagine that he has found knowledge; this happens by spiritual power² so that he to whom the revelation is imparted, at that time is not aware of any thoughts of his soul, nor of those things which present themselves to his senses; neither does he use them nor he is acquainted with them"³.

The second observation refers to the cognitive finality. The process of divine knowledge aims to the Ultimate Truth, ultimate realities, beyond the ordinary level. In particular, we refer to God's works in creation, his revelations, and not his essence. This knowledge is simple, without any psychological intervention or the mind's imaginative function.

From an epistemological point of view, this implies two elements: the object and the way. While the Ultimate Truth is hardly definable, the object refers to God as revealed in creation, in Scriptures and in different spiritual forms of revelation, and the way points directly to intuitive methods, rather than discursive ones. This is why, sometimes, the concept "knowledge" is rendered with "understanding". Based on this, one can argue that, from an epistemological point of view, mystical knowledge goes beyond what is naturally called knowledge.

¹ Serafim Sepälä, "The idea of knowledge in East Syrian mysticism", *Studia Orientalia* 101 (2007): 265-277, here 266.

² ܩܘܘܪܕܐܘܬܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐܘܬܐ.

³ A.J. Wensinck, ed., *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Niniveh translated from Bedjan's Syriac text with the introduction and registers* (Wiesbaden: Nieuwe Reeks Deel XXIII.1, 1969 (abbr. I), I.19, 105; (Mar Isaacus Ninivita, *De perfectione religiosa* (Paris-Leipzig: 1909)/ (abbr. B, 155), I.6, 84 (B, 124). See also Isaac of Niniveh (Isaac the Syrian), *The Second Part. Chapters IV-XLI*, CSCO 224-225 (Lovanii: In aedibus Peeters, 1995) (abbr. II), II.18, 20.

The patristic authors admit both ways of knowing, discursive as well as intuitive, only that the latter one represents a superior level of the former and it is its very aim. Even mystical knowledge has a descriptive content, but it is part of what one may call "knowledge of philosophers". The former is more reflexive and constituted; it "handles" information, while the latter is immediate, internalized, personal and active, and "is produced" by inspiration, revelation.

The process of knowledge at Simon Taibuteh

Going one step further, we will deal in this paper with one representative author – Simon Taibuteh – in particular in reference to the gnoseological process, described at the interference between theological anthropology and medicine, the author under discussion having a profound theological education as well as deep medical knowledge.

Simon Taibuteh⁴ lived in the time of Patriarch Henanisho I and most probably died in 680. He was contemporary with Isaac of Niniveh and Dadisho Qatraya. He is one of the important spiritual and theological personalities of the East Syriac Church. A particular importance of this author comes from the fact that he was also a physician and, in consequence, he tried to scientifically explain the different powers / faculties of the soul in their relation to the body in the process of asceticism and, in particular, in the process of knowledge. He was educated in the medical science in the line of Hippocrates and Galen and the methodology professed by him referred to the knowledge of healing both the body and the soul.

The first thing to point out is that Simon divides knowledge into six parts. The first one he calls "first natural knowledge", acquired by means of scientific investigation in good or evil things. It is interesting to observe that he calls knowledge both the positive process and the negative one, in reference to the content. He makes a terminological differentiation between the former– the natural knowledge and the latter– unnatural knowledge (the Greek "defective knowledge", or "ignorance"), which is considered to have deviated from the right path – inclination towards evil, entangled with passions. The second stage is called "the second natural knowledge", characterised by a moral life, and it occurs within the moral and ethical sphere. The third rank refers to the "intelligible knowledge" or "theory". This latter one envisages the spiritual content of the corporeal natures, physical beings. The spiritual function of creation is the very content of this type

⁴ For his works see: *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibuteh*, Woodbrooke Studies VII (Cambridge, 1934); Simone di Taibuteh, *Violenza e grazia: la coltura del cuore*, Collana di testi patristici 102 (Roma: Città Nuova, 1992).

of knowledge. The “spiritual theory” is the fourth type of knowledge and pertains to the spiritual contemplation of the un-bodily beings, that are angels and the spiritual beings. The fifth rank pertains to the knowledge of the next world. Lastly, the sixth stage is called “un-knowledge” and implies a kind of super-knowledge that describes the unification in grace with God. The excerpt below indicates the place where Simon deals at large with these six gnoseological ranks⁵:

The natural knowledge which is implanted in the nature of our creation is the one which grows and is illuminated by good things and it is also the one which, inclining towards evil things, becomes entangled, through the works which are outside nature, in the passions of the material world... This knowledge is called “the knowledge that is outside nature”. The same is also one which is conscious of the rational character that it possesses, and by its will makes use of the affairs of the world in the measure of its need; and when it flees from idolatry and does with understanding the good things that are inscribed in its heart... it is then called by the Fathers “the second natural knowledge”. It is also the one which becomes clear, illuminated and spiritual and contemplates in an intelligible way the spiritual powers who accompany the lower corporeal natures and work in them and in the hidden actor that acts in them. It is then called “the intelligible knowledge found in the lower corporeal natures”. When it becomes pure and shining, it contemplates, by means of theory, the spiritual and un-corporeal natures and the performance of their service. It is then called “the spiritual theory concerning the spiritual beings who are above”. When it has attained a high degree of penetration and been raised by grace, and mercy has been poured upon it, its theory becomes conscious of the hidden power of the adorable Essence of the Holy Trinity. It is then called “the knowledge of the truth of the next world”. The same kind of knowledge is sometimes swallowed up in grace in a way that is above nature and it becomes no-knowledge, because it is higher than knowledge⁶.

⁵ See also the division of knowledge at Isaac of Niniveh: knowledge against nature – subject to passions, according to nature – virtuous life, secondary natural contemplation – contemplation of God in creation, primary natural contemplation – contemplation of the spiritual powers, supernatural knowledge (true knowledge; Spiritual knowledge) – theoria (divine vision), un-knowledge (faith) – no movement, drunkenness, spiritual prayer, stupor, divine love.

⁶ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, 47-48. One can also synthesize the stages into three: knowledge outside nature, natural knowledge and knowledge above nature. Isaac of Niniveh, when speaking about un-knowledge, refers to a stage beyond the nature of knowledge. This can be observed in the 52nd discourse of the First collection, where the unique process of knowledge is ranked into three ascetic states: knowledge of things when instruction is acquired through senses – natural knowledge (كلمة طبيعية); spiritual (كلمة روحانية) knowledge, beyond the visible things, generated by the intelligible things in non-bodily natures; both take their information from without; knowledge beyond knowledge, excellent knowledge (كلمة عذبة), supernatural (كلمة لاهوتية) or agnostic (كلمة لا علمية) because it is elevated beyond knowledge (I.52, 253/ B, 378).

One may also find a gnoseological itinerary expressed in three stages. The corporeal stage refers to a passionate state, while the physical and mental conduct reflect the psychical order, having its correspondence in what he calls “natural knowledge”. The last stage points to perfection, spirituality, and is characterised by spiritual contemplation of the corporals, of providence, of the incorporeals and the life to come, aiming at what he calls un-knowledge⁷.

Eventually, in the Neo-Platonist line, Simon divides the process of knowledge into two categories or stages – practice and theory. To the first one pertains the love of the neighbour, manifested in different ways in the ascetic life, while the second is actualised by experiencing the love of God. The highest point of the two stages is the knowledge and the communion with God.

The cognitive powers in the Syriac monastic literature

The process of knowledge is possible, as we have already highlighted above, due also to an anthropological structure able to communicate with divinity. This factor is located in what the philosophical terminology calls “noetic part” of the soul. Specifically, in the Syriac tradition, one speaks about “powers” (ܩܘܘܘܬܐ), “parts” (ܩܘܘܘܬܐ), or energies (ἐνέργεια), described as cognitive (γνωστικαί), the last two terms borrowed from Greek terminology. If we are to give a definition of what “power” means, we will refer to Pseudo-Michael the Interpreter, who identifies an ontological connection between power and nature. He argues that this term becomes a technical concept to express the generative condition of the acts⁸ and properties⁹, intrinsic and connatural: “La puissance est ce qui est dit de la nature et avec la nature, et par rapport à l’individu de la nature, et c’est comme la chaleur pour le feu et la rationalité pour l’ange”¹⁰. On the evolution of the term in the Syriac theological thinking, Vittorio Berti published an important study dedicated at large to the East Syriac anthropology regarding the problem of death¹¹.

⁷ *Medico-Mystical Work*, by Simon of Taibutheh , 2-3; *Violenza e grazia*, 86-87; for details see Robert Beulay, *La lumière sans forme, La lumière sans forme. Introduction à l’étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orientale* (Chevtogne, 1987), 118.

⁸ ܩܘܘܘܬܐ.

⁹ ܩܘܘܘܬܐ/ܩܘܘܘܬܐ.

¹⁰ Ps.-Michaël l’Interprète, Cf. G. Furlani, “Il libro delle definizioni e divisioni’ di Michele l’Interprete”, *Memorie delle Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche* 6 (1926), 1-194, here 64, 118.

¹¹ *L’au-delà de l’âme et l’en-deçà du corps. Morceaux d’anthropologie chrétienne de la mort dans l’église syro-orientale*, Paradosis 57 (Paris, 2014).

To contextualize the discussion around the cognitive powers, we will synthetically dwell on the evolution of the anthropological terminology and, in particular, on the taxonomies developed by some important writers, and their philosophical sources. While using an intellectual terminology, Ephraim the Syrian speaks about four powers, described as the noetic part of the soul: ܠܘܘܝܐ – thinking¹², ܠܘܘܐ – mind¹³, ܠܘܘܘܘܐ – thought, and ܠܘܘܐ – intellect¹⁴. Pseudo-Macarius, whose traces go back to the Syriac tradition, interprets Ezekiel’s vision in an anthropological key. The four appearances in the first chapter of his book, symbolize the noblest λογισμοί¹⁵ of the soul: will (Θέλημα), conscience (συνείδησις), intellect (νοῦς) and charity (ἰγαπητικὴ δύναμις)¹⁶. Instead of energy, he uses the term “dynamis”. John the Solitary, the first synthesizer of the Syriac ascetic theology, mostly involves the term “passion” (ܠܘܘܐ) that, as Berti argues¹⁷, presumes a connection between the soul’s impulses and the corporal actions. In his work, “Dialogue on the Soul”¹⁸, he lists three passions: discernment¹⁹, lust²⁰, irascibility²¹, reflecting Plato’s three parts of the soul and, consequently, analysing their negative development, he identifies the sources in human’s nature, in the evil that is mixed with the nature, in the works of the devils and even in the soul²². Jacob of Saroug, a representative theologian of the School of Edessa in northern Syria, speaks about five senses (knowledge²³, intellection²⁴, discernment²⁵, intellect²⁶, mind²⁷)²⁸, in the line of Ephraim the Syrian, and eight beauties (ܠܘܘܘܘܐ)

¹² V. Berti – “entendement” (*L’au-delà de l’âme*, 76).

¹³ V. Berti – “connaissance”.

¹⁴ See the index of Syriac words E. Beck (ed.), *Ephrām des Syrers Psychologie und Erkenntnislehre*, CSCO 419/ 58, 1980, 183-184.

¹⁵ Translated with: characteristics, affections or passions.

¹⁶ Ps.-Macaire, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (Berlin, 1964), 2-3; *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (Manwah N.J.: Paulist Press, 1992) 36.

¹⁷ *L’au-delà de l’âme*, 78.

¹⁸ *Dialogue sur l’âme e les passions des hommes* 13-4, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Roma, 1939), 26-27 (48-49).

¹⁹ ܠܘܘܘܘܐܝܐ.

²⁰ ܠܘܘܘܘܝܐ.

²¹ ܠܘܘܘܘܝܐ; He adds also the “intellective power” (ܠܘܘܘܘܝܐ ܠܘܘܘܐ).

²² *Dialogue sur l’âme*, 39-40 (60); Vittorio Berti argues that John the Solitary lists here the opinions spread in his time on the source of passions, synthetized in four general lines: anthropological vision, dualistic vision, demonological vision and psychological vision (*L’au-delà de l’âme*, 80).

²³ ܠܘܘܘܘܝܐ.

²⁴ ܠܘܘܘܘܝܐ.

²⁵ ܠܘܘܘܘܝܐ.

²⁶ ܠܘܘܘܝܐ.

²⁷ ܠܘܘܘܝܐ.

²⁸ Jacob of Sarug, *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. I-II, IV (Paris, Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1905, 1906, 1908), II. 35, 77.

of the soul (intellect²⁹, wisdom³⁰, illumination³¹, sublime mind³², impulses full of discernment³³, speeches³⁴, voice³⁵ and spiritual thoughts³⁶)³⁷. The variability of the terminology in his thinking demonstrates that there was no stable anthropological-psychological pattern during the fifth-sixth century.

Using a Platonist pattern and following Evagrius³⁸, some other authors speak about the three parts of the soul: rationality, will and irascibility. Contemporary with the last author mentioned above, Philoxenus of Mabboug evokes the three divisions of the soul and the way they manifest: rationality³⁹ of the intellect has its very aim to achieve knowledge in creation and of God Himself, desire⁴⁰ longs for the unification with spiritual things and irascibility⁴¹ struggles against passions⁴². Dadisho Qatraya changes the Evagrian terminology of “parts” with the Aristotelian term cognitive⁴³ “powers” and lists the same three energies: desire⁴⁴, irascibility⁴⁵ and mind⁴⁶ and their active aim, in the same manner as Philoxenus. Berti shows in his study that Jacob of Edessa⁴⁷ is the first Syriac author who seems to make a clear synthesis between the Aristotelian tradition and the Platonist legacy, when he mentions the existence of “powers” of animation (nutritive and augmentative⁴⁸, sensitive and impulsive⁴⁹,

²⁹ ܩܘܡܐ.

³⁰ ܩܘܡܡܘܫܘܬܐ.

³¹ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

³² ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

³³ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

³⁴ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

³⁵ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

³⁶ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

³⁷ *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, I.30, 687-688.

³⁸ *Praktikos*, SC 171, 683-684.

³⁹ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴⁰ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴¹ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴² *La lettre à Patricius de Philoxène de Mabboug*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 30.5 (Paris, 1963), 782-783 (62-63); see the same division at Ahudemme, bishop of Nisibis cf. G. Furlani, “La psicologia di Ahudhemme”, *Atti della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino: Classe delle Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche* 61 (1926), 844.

⁴³ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴⁴ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴⁵ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴⁶ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴⁷ *Jacobi Edesseni Hexameron seu in Opus creationis libri septem Hexaméron*, CSCO 92/44; 97/48, 1928/1932, 323-324 (275-276).

⁴⁸ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

⁴⁹ ܩܘܡܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܫܘܬܐ.

rational and of decision⁵⁰) and “powers” of the soul⁵¹ (irascibility⁵², desire⁵³ and rational thought⁵⁴), as the first category represents the former philosophical thinking, while the second, the latter philosophical tradition⁵⁵.

It is not difficult to identify the presence of this synthesis at some well-known Syriac authors. The great translator Sergius of Resh’aina mentions the three vital powers, but instead of desire he speaks of will⁵⁶. Barhadbshaba, professor of Nisibis, also mentions the cognitive powers (intellect⁵⁷, intelligence⁵⁸ and thinking⁵⁹)⁶⁰ besides the appetitive powers. What is new and interesting refers to the fact that, in addition to the three appetitive powers, he lists the mind⁶¹ as the one that dominates the others.

Another interesting author is Theodore Bar Koni (8th century). He develops an entire system kin to that of Simon’s in matter of connecting it with anatomy. Firstly, he attributes four primary powers to the body, formed out of the mixture of four natural elements: warmth, cold, humidity and dryness. Next to these powers, he adds four characteristics that support the function of the organism – attraction, repulsion, conjunction and disjunction, mentioning also the desire and the vitality. These generate five operations: irascibility⁶², desire⁶³, discernment⁶⁴, sensitiveness⁶⁵ and concupiscence⁶⁶. He also identifies the anatomic places where these five operations take place: surprisingly,

⁵⁰ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ.

⁵¹ Appetitive.

⁵² ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ/ θυμός.

⁵³ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ i/ ἐπιθυμία.

⁵⁴ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ/ βούλησις.

⁵⁵ Vittorio Berti evokes a pattern that tries to synthetize the two mentioned philosophers identified at some different Geek authors as Ammonius (*In Aristotelis Librum de Interpretatione*, 4), David (*Prolegomena*, 79.6), Olympiodorus (*In Platonis Gorgiam*, 12.3), Meletius (*De Natura Hominis*, 23.18; 149.27): five cognitive powers (intellect/ νοῦς; thinking/ δίανοια; opinion/ δόξα; imagination/ φαντασία; perception/ αἴσθησις) and three vital powers (irascibility/ θυμός; desire/ ἐπιθυμία; will/ βούλησις), sometimes also added the free choice (προαίρεσις). (For details see V. Berti, *L’au-delà de l’âme*, 88-90)

⁵⁶ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ / Cf. G. Fiori, “L’épitome syriaque du traité *Sur les causes du tout d’Alexandre d’Aphrodise* attribué à Serge d’Reš’ayna”, *Le Muséon*, 123 (2010): 1-2, 127-158, here 130.

⁵⁷ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ.

⁵⁸ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ.

⁵⁹ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ.

⁶⁰ Cf. Mar Barhadbšabba ‘Arbaya, évêque de Halwan (VII^e siècle). *Cause de la fondation des écoles*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 4.4 (Paris, 1908), 341 (27).

⁶¹ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ.

⁶² ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ i.

⁶³ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ i.

⁶⁴ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ i.

⁶⁵ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ i.

⁶⁶ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ ܩܘܕܫܘܬܐ.

sensitiveness in the brain, discernment in the heart, desire in the stomach, irascibility in the liver and concupiscence in the kidneys. Finally, he divides the souls' powers in two, and he associates vitality with irascibility and desire, while rationality is associated with will and free choice. The latter works under four operations: intellect (ܠܘܡܢܐ), mind (ܠܘܡܢܐ), thinking (ܠܘܡܢܐ) and intelligence (ܠܘܡܢܐ). By juxtaposing the medical science of his time (connected to the body) with philosophical preoccupation, Theodore speaks about powers and operations of both body and soul⁶⁷.

Isaac of Niniveh lists five cognitive powers and the way they work in the cognitive process: natural desire (ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ), irascible power (ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ), vitality (ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ), simple rationality (ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ), composed rationality (ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ)⁶⁸. The vitality is destined to a continuous work. Isaac divides the rational power in two parts – simple and composed rationality with different duration. The first one continues its existence even after the death of the body, while the second ceases its existence in the moment the soul migrates from the body. This occurs as the latter one pertains to the knowledge of the created beings and becomes superfluous after death. The desire, considered as natural for the soul, goes beyond death, but irascibility, as after death there is no contradiction, is no longer necessary. In the same framework, Isaac speaks about five gifts that the human was given in order to be able to attend to the divine knowledge. In the Second collection, 18th discourse, he lists them: life⁶⁹, sense perception⁷⁰, reason⁷¹, free will⁷² and authority⁷³, so that the human is able to enjoy “the delight of intelligence”⁷⁴ and “the pleasure of the gifts of insight”⁷⁵⁷⁶.

Before going to Simon Taibuteh's vision, we will point to a last author, Patriarch Timothy I. In his psychological-cognitive analysis, he argues the existence of four, occasionally, five, powers of the soul: rationality⁷⁷, irascibility⁷⁸,

⁶⁷ *Liber Scholiorum*, CSCO 55/ 19, 1910; transl. *Livre de Scolies (Recension de Séert). I mimrè I-V*, CSCO 432/ 188, 1982, 22 (67).

⁶⁸ II.3.3, 76-77.

⁶⁹ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷⁰ ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷¹ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷² ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷³ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷⁴ ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷⁵ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷⁶ II, 18,18.

⁷⁷ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

⁷⁸ ܠܘܡܢܐ.

concupiscence⁷⁹, will⁸⁰. One pair pertains to the nature of the soul (rationality and will), while the second pair (irascibility and concupiscence) is assigned to the soul by its union with the body. Those which belong to the very soul are permanent, but the second pair ceases to exist the moment the body dies. All faculties have a double dimension – power and act. Therefore, the first couple (pair) persists as power after the death of the body, while the second disappears entirely (power and act). At this point, the fifth power is called vitality⁸¹ or movement, which maintains its existence in both forms even after the migration of the soul⁸².

The powers of the soul and the process of knowledge at Simon Taibuteh

Now, according to Simon Taibuteh, knowledge is acquired by the combination of the senses of the body with the powers of the soul. One can identify here an association of anatomy and theological anthropology. He starts from the powers of the natural soul and their location: feeling in the brain, discernment in the heart, passion in the stomach, desire in the kidneys and wrath in the liver. Successively he lists the natural powers divided into two categories – four which serve and three which are served: the attractive power, which is cold; the astringent power, which is dry; the laxative power, which is hot; the repulsive power, which is damp (powers to serve); and generating power, the growing power and the feeding power (to be served). The vital workings of the natural soul are: the power of imagery (located in the forepart of the brain), the memory (in the middle part of the brain) and the understanding (in back part of the brain). In consequence, when the forepart of the brain is affected by injuries, human may see false representations and images of all kinds. In the same manner, when the middle part is injured, one cannot distinguish the things that are useful and necessary and when the back part of the brain is affected one does not remember anything said or done. Surprisingly, he associates the lack of memory and understanding and the thickness of the intelligence not only to physical injuries but also to the bad quality of the food as well as indigestion⁸³.

⁷⁹ رذائل.

⁸⁰ قوى.

⁸¹ رذائل.

⁸² *Timothei Patriarchae. Epistulae I* (Paris, Leipzig: 1914-1915), CSCO 74/30; 75/31, 50-52 (31-32).

⁸³ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibuteh*, 63-64.

In the same context, the senses (in the stage of “animal spirit”⁸⁴) are attributed two powers: the motor power and the sensory power, both of them generated by the good function of the nerves – in case of obstructions, the feeling is atrophied, while the movement functions and, in case of rigidity, the power of movement is atrophied, while feeling remains; when there is excessive dampness, both powers are atrophied.

It is also necessary to mention the role of the heart and its manifestations. Firstly he describes it from an anatomical perspective – it is the source of the natural heat. It has two ventricles – the right ventricle receives the blood from the liver, purifies it and sends it out to the brain and the body, while the left one is the seat of the animal spirit and it subtilizes that spirit and sends it to the lobes of the brain where rationality is created with memory and understanding. Simon calls it “the sense of senses”. Then, he insists on the physical place where it is located and the position, which shows it is not independently located – it inclines to the left so that its heat may mix with the cold of the lungs, the loins and the black bile. It is the seat of mind and discernment, while the brain of the rationality and understanding. The good functioning of those is also conditioned by the alimentation and the process of digestion as well as of an ascetic life. In this way it radiates light, peace and life⁸⁵.

Regarding the powers of the soul, Simon speaks about the existence of two active powers – rationality⁸⁶ and vitality⁸⁷. The first one is specific to the rational beings and becomes manifested by the means of mind⁸⁸, intellect⁸⁹, thinking (judgment)⁹⁰, thoughts⁹¹ and discernment⁹², while the second power corresponds to both the rational and the non-rational beings and is actualized in desire and irascibility/ anger (animal faculty)⁹³. Desire is stirred up by the

⁸⁴ In Galens’s medical perspective “the animal spirit” was a higher form of the “natural spirit” or “vital spirit”. “The natural spirit” consisted of subtle vapors, coming with the blood from the liver to the heart, and there, mixing with the air of the respiratory organs, was changed into vital spirits. From there they were carried to the brain and changed into “animal spirits” and distributed to the body by the means of nerves (cf. *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, Footnote 1, 64).

⁸⁵ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, 65-66.

⁸⁶ رذاللة.

⁸⁷ رذاللة.

⁸⁸ رذاللة.

⁸⁹ رذاللة.

⁹⁰ رذاللة.

⁹¹ رذاللة.

⁹² رذاللة.

⁹³ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, 49 (308); He changes “will” with “desire”, then introduces “mind” among the rational actions. He also changes “intelligence” (رذاللة) with “understanding” (رذاللة).

senses and the senses by the union of an outer stimulus with the inner faculties. Irascibility is stirred by desire⁹⁴.

In another place he lists the faculties of the inner man: mind, intelligence, imagination, thoughts, rationality, knowledge, discernment, judgment, understanding and memory. All of them function together as an organism, each one with its specific role.

As a physician, in the line of Galen's medical system, he describes the process of knowledge using an anatomic terminology. The knowledge in his vision is generated by the means of the combination of the body's senses with the powers of the soul, in particular imagery, memory and intelligence/ understanding. We remember that the seat of the power of imagery is localised in the fore-part of the brain, intelligence in the middle part and memory in the back part. The senses have their seat in the nerves which come out from the brain. They also contain ioned by the alimentation and the process of digestion as well as of an ascetic a refinement, by the brain, of the „vital spirit“ formed in the heart. The last one is also a refinement of the „natural spirit“, which has its seat in the liver. This spirit is curiously described as a fluid or a vapour, carried through the venous blood to the ventricles of the heart, where it receives a process of subtlety or refinement and is then sent in this state to the brain. The brain has the same function of further subtilizing this vapour and of sending it through the nerves to all parts of the body.

Simon describes here the natural function of the soul and, in consequence, the process of the natural human knowledge. He lists three important moments in this process: the first image of the object is formed in the brain, then the brain submits the formed image to its natural function of understanding and grasping its characteristics and, finally, the faculty of memory causes the image impressed on the brain and understood by it. The thickness and dullness of the natural and vital spirit might generate injuries to the performance of the brain in its triple function – imagining, understanding and memorising, as a result of indigestion, concussion and tumour.

There are other important anatomical seats of the soul's powers evoked by Simon: the organs of the will are the nerves and muscles; the centre of the nerves is the brain, the center of the arteries being the heart and that of the veins is the liver, again in the line of Galen. The seat of feeling is the brain, that of discernment is the heart, passion is located in the stomach, the place of desire is in the kidneys and that of the wrath in the liver. A great importance is given to the heart, considered to be the seat of the mind and of discernment, credited with receiving the good and evil information from outside. It passes them further to mind and thoughts, as the natural mind is the spring of the

⁹⁴ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh, 45.*

heart. In this frame, the heart stamps the thoughts and passions that come to it with its comprehension. One may identify in this idea a very important ascetical work – „the guard of the heart/ spirit”, according to Matthew 15:19⁹⁵.

In addition to this apparently physical description of the process of knowledge mixed with a language that pertains to the inner cognitive process that takes place in the soul, Simon gives a very clear ascetical orientation. Symbolically making appeal to Moses' itinerary into the desert with the people to the Promised Land, he speaks about three ascetic stages that the human steps on: the first one is determined by the “impetuosity of human nature, followed by the fight against passions, full of suffering and affliction, and, finally, the stillness of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual consolation⁹⁶. To put it differently, the first stage is that of the beginner, who fled away from Egypt, unconscious of the snares and pitfalls that he has to go through. The second moment is of those in the middle of the stream and griefs. And thirdly, one reaches the state of stillness and security. One may describe this as an ascent of the exercise, sustained by our will as well as by divine grace. The will is the first generator of penitence described as “day-to-day growth” from the depth of passions to the height of virtues. Then, the divine grace, which “comes after the freedom of the will”, brings help to our weakness in the time of our zeal, while it withdraws from us in the time of negligence.

An important place in this process is occupied by prayer that comes as a gift after human's purification, when the heart is engulfed with love and good mental labours. It is, in fact, described as inner vision, generated by the Spirit, a state in which the human can contemplate inwardly the good implanted in the heart as well as in the world. The next step is the theory of the mysteries of the new world, when one's mind is enraptured, being united with Christ “in hope and confidence”, able to contemplate the nature of the Godhead. Finally, one reaches the un-knowledge, the state of the grace, the true perfection.

Simon also argues a tripartite division of spiritual life as “three intelligible altars”⁹⁷ of mystical knowledge pertaining to the mysteries of Friday, Saturday

⁹⁵ For details see *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, Prefatory note, 2-5.

⁹⁶ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, 54.

⁹⁷ See also Evagrius, *Kepalaia Gnostica* (KG II.57-58; V.84). There, the three stages of contemplation: the third altar is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity, the other two are the first natural and second natural contemplation. The wisdom which concerns the second altar makes known the wisdom of the third, and that which concerns the first altar is anterior to that which is in the second (II.57-58). The wisdom of the contemplation of the angels (second altar) leads to the contemplation of the Holy Trinity (third altar), whereas the contemplation of the reasons (*logoi*) of created things (first altar) leads to the contemplation of the angelic powers (second altar). Of the three altars of gnosis, two have circle and the third appears without a circle (IV.88). The altar without a circle is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity and the other two altars represent the first and second natural contemplation.

and Sunday (corresponding to Christ's passion, descent to Sheol and Resurrection). The first altar refers to the knowledge out of works, in correspondence with Friday, that is observing the commandments; the second altar, that of Saturday, names the knowledge out of contemplation, illuminative, pictured as the key to the divine mysteries hidden in creation; the third one, the living altar of Christ, corresponding to the mystery of Sunday, is the mystical knowledge of hope, when the mind of the hermit is united with Christ just as Christ is united with the Father⁹⁸. The highest level of mystical knowledge is the experience of "shapeless eternal light" that transcends all intelligence. Using a language that comes very close to that of Timothy I and the other East Syriac contemporary mystics (as well as to that of Gregory Palamas, later on), Simon shows that this mystical knowledge occurs: "when the grace will dwell in that impassibility and the mind will be conscious of the sublime and endless mysteries which are poured out by the Father and Source of all lights, which shine mercifully on us in the secret likeness of His hidden Goodness; and the mind be impressed by them with the likeness of the glory of goodness, as much as it can bear, according to its expectations, its eager longing and the measure of his growth in spiritual exercise"⁹⁹.

Consequently, at a practical level, he proposes a way of the ascetic consisting of seven phases: the noviciate (complete obedience); change of habits and way of conduct; struggle against passions by observing the commandments; labours of discernment; contemplation of the incorporeal beings; contemplation and wonder at the secrets of the Godhead; mysterious works of grace, submersion in divine love¹⁰⁰.

Conclusion

Finally, one can draw one important conclusion. There is a transformative and progressive evolution in the process of knowing. This means it is a mystical experience, due to the external and inner purification and, especially, to God's intervention, which creates spiritual eyes, spiritual faculties, capable, in consequence, to spiritually see God's rationality in creation and finally to spiritually see God Himself. Simon proclaims a gnoseology in perfect symmetry with the moral life. As one evolves in the ascetic spiritual life, he proportionally makes progress in the divine knowledge as well. Virtues are not just creative powers of knowledge, but also principles of knowledge, through which one reaches "knowledge out of knowledge".

⁹⁸ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, 41-42 (303).

⁹⁹ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, 15 (286).

¹⁰⁰ *Medico-Mystical Work, by Simon of Taibutheh*, 17 (287); *Violenza e grazia*, 34-35.

The method implied in his discourses is theanthropic, comprising both human's ascetical participation – bodily and noetic (ontological structure as well as ascetical work) – and the direct divine intervention.

In addition to the idea expressed above, one finds necessary to highlight that Simon's ascetical vision gets a plus of importance because of its combination with his worldly profession, medicine, thus creating a bridge between theology and anatomy. Asceticism is described from both perspectives, theological-anthropological as well as medical, in the line of Galen's system, well-known in that time, even among ascetics. We did not really want to analyse the correctness of his discourse from a medical point of view (this would be a very difficult work, taking into consideration the very context of Simon's time as well as the changes that occurred since then in medicine), but more to show that there was preoccupation among monastics with explaining the ascetic labours also from an anatomical point of view and, in consequence, with describing the work of penitence, seen as process of healing, by using also the medical knowledge of the time.

Finally, the specificity of this mystical author also comes out from the way he describes the process of divine knowledge itself using also an anatomical terminology. The cognitive powers of the soul are also conditioned by the function of the body. More than that, Simon identifies physical seats for the cognitive psychological faculties, thus creating a strong connection between the human's body and soul. Out of his vision reverberates the biblical connection between the healing of both the soul and the body, integrated in the soteriological process ruled within the ecclesiastical community. In this way, probably voluntarily, he avoids an excessive spiritualisation of the Christian life in a time when this very direction was continuously suspicioned and interrogated by the defenders of the "orthodoxy" of the East Syriac Faith.

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“SHINING FACE” AS HIDDEN AND REVEALED CHRISTOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. The “shining face” theology as luminous metamorphosis of a visionary has experienced three great challenges: the anthropomorphic controversy, iconoclastic debate and the hesychast dispute. This study attempts to make a mystagogical connection between those three theological developments which are standing all together in God’s holy fire with the ‘unveiled face’. I have imposed myself a line of research into the contemplative spirituality field, which in fact represents a hermeneutical trajectory: Glory in the NT (hidden-revealed or being-energies) – Glory in the NT (theosis as Christification) – pre-nicene Christology (*eikonic* and apophatic Light / glory) – Desert Fathers (“shining face” christology) – Efreem the Syrian (clothing metaphore) – Dionysius the Areopagite (veils of theurgic rays and Christ’s Presence as immanent transcendence or as tension between transcendent hiddenness and revelation) – Palamas hesychasm (christology of the uncreated light). I am the first who calls the light from the “Shining Faces” of the Desert Fathers as an uncreated light and a discovery of a Hidden pre-Nicene (apophatic) Christology. I have to emphasize that because these two aspects of my ‘disclosure’ (meaning ‘uncreated’¹ light and ‘hidden christology’ of the Desert Fathers) were inspired to me by the readings in the field of palamite theology which consider that this light of the

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¹ No one has so far called the shining light on the faces of the desert fathers to be uncreated (this being, actually, a palamite hesychast concept appeared and used only in the fourteenth century) and also bodily experienced since this earthly life (the second emphasis into the hesychastic theology). See in this regard my studies: N. Tănase, “The Shining Face’ and the revealing Paradox - Man is theopathic. The light of the Face of Christ, despite its uncreated and incomprehensible nature, is perceptible by human senses (purity-illumination-vision or κάθαρσις-φωτισμὸς-θέωσις),” *Studii Teologice* 3 (2015); N. Tănase, “The Aesthetics of Asceticism. ‘The feeling’ (*aisthesis*) of the Apophatic as Irradiance of the Inner Presence of Christ (Prolegomena for a Dialogue between Ascetic and Phenomenology),” *Mitropolia Olteniei* 5-8 (2016): 149-163; N. Tănase, “Shining Light shedding from earthen vessels - Christology of the Desert Fathers. Christ’s ascetic interiorization, somatic experience and outward luminosity,” in *23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies*. Belgrade 2016 (*forthcoming volume*); N. Tănase, “Aesthetics of Apophaticism. The Christophany as the enipostatic Light of Godhead shining of the face of the ascetic,” *Studii teologice* 2 (2015); N. Tănase, “Body (*epsoma*) and Glory / Light (*peooy*). Apa Aphou and the Hesychastic-Eucharistic turn of the Anthropomorphite controversy,” in *Dumnezeu - izvorul înțelepciunii: Teologie și educație ascetică la Sfinții Părinți*, ed. Daniel Lemeni (Astra Museum, Sibiu: 2016).

ascet's glowing face to be an uncreated light experienced by the body (*aesthetically*), an inner presence of Christ who identifies himself with His light (*apophatic*), He Himself being the deifying light as uncreated divine gift. All studies in the Late Antiquity ignore this visionary experience, reducing it to the level of a simple metaphor of light (completing the ascetic quest for "real self"), a metaphor in which the saint's life is hagiographically (*mystifying!*) described. A second reason for this 'blindness' was a restraint coming from the Evagrian theology that draws attention to the danger of seeking visionary experiences, because in that light there is the risk of an illusory or deceitful demonic appearance. Another reason represents the fact that the hesychast controversy and the theology of the uncreated light as divine energy of the Saint Gregory Palamas' theology (which in Western media has long been discredited as heretical) have played a negative role in accepting the nature of uncreated light into the "shining face" Christology of the Desert Fathers.

Keywords: *Shining face*, Desert Fathers, Gregory Palamas, iconoclasm, apophaticism, hesychasm, divine light, deification, theology of the icon.

Introduction: God's shining face – Christ will radiate within us like to the Desert Fathers: Pambo, Sisoe, Silvanus

Firstly, this study is about the Desert Fathers' contemplative experience of *an outward luminosity, a physical radiance*, similar to that of the Athonite hesychasts of the 14th century in late Byzantium. So, there is a convergence of desert wisdom with the Palamite hesychast theology. On these *unveiled shining faces, the divine energy of the 'Christ the Image and Glory of God'* is being revealed. *Christ will radiate within us like to the desert Fathers: Pambo, Sisoe, Silvanus.* Christology of the Desert Fathers overlaps with pre-Nicene Christology. In anthropological terms of the theosis, man is *the mirror of divine glory (δόξα)*. So, just as the *light of the transfiguration the light-bearing robe* of the unfallen Adam has an equally theological importance for *theosis*. Deification at the Desert Fathers acquires a specific anthropological content as Christification, that finds its fulfillment in a *face-to-face encounter* who, is both a theological theme and a spiritual teaching, both the goal of the divine economy and the process by which the economy is worked out in the believer. For Palamas, deification is, also, a supernatural gift that transforms both mind and body, making divinity visible (Triad 3.1. 33). Likeness also means a radiation of the presence of God within man, a „reciprocal interiority“. In the saints this communion is expressed in the way God's glory is reflected in their faces, in anticipation of the age to come. Therefore, this study is about the Desert Fathers' contemplative experience of *an outward luminosity, a physical radiance*, similar to that of the hesychasts

Athonite of the 14th century in late Byzantium. So, there is a convergence of desert wisdom with the Palamite hesychast theology, because this putting on of the *clothing of holiness* of the Desert Fathers is another component of the Glory likeness, is the visible glory of Transfiguration. On these *unveiled shining faces*², the *divine energy of 'Christ the Image and Glory of God'* is being revealed. This is the Christology of the Desert Fathers.

Secondly, speaking about the hesychast method of prayer and transformation of the body, *Gregory Palamas* also uses this Pauline theology of 2 Corinthians in *Triad* 1.2.2: „Paul says: ‘God, who has ordered light to shine from darkness, has made His light to shine in our hearts, in order that we may be enlightened by the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ’ (2 Cor. 4:6); but he adds, ‘We carry this treasure in earthen vessels’ (2 Cor. 4:7). So we carry the Father’s light in the face (*prosōpon*) of Jesus Christ in earthen vessels, that is, in our bodies, in order to know the glory of the Holy Spirit.” We could grasp the convergence between the desert ascetic spirituality and the hesychast spirituality in the work of Gregory Palamas. For him, Moses the lawgiver, Stephen the protomartyr, and Arsenius the desert ascetic are examples from the Bible and the Fathers are men who were visibly transformed by divine light (*Triad* 2.3.9). God transcends the senses yet the knowledge of God is experiential. The monks know this. They see the hypostatic light spiritually – in reality, not in a symbolic fashion. During the hesychast controversy, St Gregory Palamas defends the reality of the encounter with God of those monks who reported seeing a vision of light at the culmination of intense period of prayer.

² In Ps 67:1–2, 80:3, and 80:7 *God’s shining face*² or *presence* (פנים) *procures salvation* (ישועה). David D. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel. Divine presence and God’s people in the First Gospel* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1996); Frederica Mathewes-Green, *The Jesus Prayer: The Ancient Desert Prayer that Tunes the Heart to God* (Orleans: Paraclete Press, 2009); Christopher Barina Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord’s Glory. Kyriocentric Visions and the Dilemma of Early Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); N.T. Wright, “Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18” in *Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Carey C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); David A. Renwick, *Paul, the Temple, and the Presence of God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory. Paul’s Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18* (New York: T&T Clark 1991); Paul B. Duff, *Moses in Corinth: the apologetic context of 2 Corinthians 3* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); M. David Litwa, “2 Corinthians 3:18 and Its Implications for Theosis,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation (JTI)* 2 (2008); Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Philippe Paul-Luc Viguier, *A Biblical Theology of the Glory of God* (Sun Valley, California: Lexham Press, 2012); Meredith G. Kline, *Glory in our Midst. A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions* (Eugen, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001).

For the light is nothing less than the *uncreated radiance of God – a divine energy accesible to the senses*. This manifestation of Christ is *not something external to ourselves*. *It is only by having Christ radiant within us that we can enter into the truth which even in the Gospels is veiled from ordinary eyes*. Abba Pambo, Sisoës, Silvanus, St Seraphim of Sarov, were man whose radiance was the product of inward openness. *Transfiguration* becomes an interior experience to St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) and Archimandrite Sophrony (1896-1991).

Thirdly, in this study we will try to present the iconographic tradition as a form of visual theology, though it is difficult to conceptualize what it used to be like in the immediate presence of God. The Transfiguration is one of the keys that can unlock the mystery of our eschatological fate, glorified body and the participation in the energies of God. All the ascets who had the experience of the uncreated light or were transfigured themselves describe it in very similar way and connect it with the Transfiguration of Christ. It is only in later hesychasm that we are assured theologically that these experiences were in the body. Within this context, liturgical art and aesthetics differ from secular aesthetics, as being beyond the five senses and beyond the art itself. The Fathers, from Origen to John of Damascus, refer to Christ as the visible image and consubstantial icon of the Father. Icons were something more than vessels of the grace of God and suggest the real presence of the *grace* of the depicted person. The Transfiguration enjoyed a renewed interest in fourteenth-century theology, and, at the same time, a mysterious complex, mandorla, made its appearance, the so-called “hesychastic” mandorla (first it appears in the churches of Mistras and in manuscripts of the ex-emperor and hesychastic monk, John Cantacuzenos). Therefore, in our study we analyze how the icon of the Transfiguration encapsulates the ascetic ascent to deification.

1. Image of Light - “If you will, you can become all flame” (Joseph of Panephysis). The Luminous Metamorphosis of a Visionary

What Plotinos is trying to put across in his treatise is that: “*No eye ever saw the sun without becoming sun-like, nor can a soul see beauty without becoming beautiful. You must become first all godlike and all beautiful if you intend to see God and beauty*”.³ Archimandrite Patapios says that this insight can profitably

³ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, translated by Stephen MacKenna (Burdett, New York: Paul Brunton Philosophic Foundation) 69-70: “Οὐ γὰρ ἂν πώποτε εἶδεν ὀφθαλμὸς ἥλιον ἡλιοειδῆς μὴ γεγενημένος, οὐδὲ τὸ καλὸν ἂν ἴδοι ψυχὴ μὴ καλῆ γενομένη. Γενέσθω δὲ πρῶτον θεοειδῆς πᾶς καὶ καλὸς πᾶς, εἰ μέλλει θεάσασθαι θεὸν τε καὶ καλόν” (1.6.9.30-34).

be applied to the sacred art of iconography because, for Plotinos, "light is the incorporeal *energeia* of the luminous body" (Plotinus, 1:241).⁴ But, how does all this relate to Byzantine iconography? Gary Gurtler after he provides an excellent summary of Plotinos' ideas in *Ennead V.8.4-6*, he sees a similar suppression of spatial and temporal dimensions in Byzantine art, in which "Bodies are shown elongated and thus spiritualized. The heads of the saints are slightly enlarged to convey the purity and insight of their minds."⁵ The aim of this art is to effect a transformation of the viewer's own interior character. According to D. N. Koutras, Plotinos uses the image of light to describe the relation between the source of light (ιδέα) and the lighted body (εἰκὼν).⁶ Thus, the work of art, as an eikon depending on form approaches it more or less, according to its capacity of receiving the light of form.

Ps.-Dionysios view of the univers as a structure essentially infused by the divine light reflects also a metaphysics of the light, whilst Jesus is the deifying light and hierarchies communicate light and love, and "this light, which proceeds from and returns to its source, the Father, is none other than Jesus".⁷ Jesus appears to Paul as a blinding light from heaven, "his pseudonymous identity" in Acts 9, 3 and 22, 6: "suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) a light from heaven flashed about [Paul]".⁸

Image of light is a strong metaphor for Godhead. The increased interest in the divine light that took place after the tenth century is a significant factor for the return of the oval mandorla with rays, which expresses better the contemplative ascent toward deification and divine light. The desert ascetics, also, based

⁴ Archimandrite Patapios, "Images of the Invisible Beauty: Plotinian Aesthetics and Byzantine Iconography," in *The Sculptor and His Stone Selected Readings on Hellenistic and Christian Learning and Thought in the Early Greek Fathers*, ed. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, Wipf and Stock, 2016), 119-130.

⁵ Gary M. Gurtler, "Plotinus and Byzantine Aesthetics," *The Modern Schoolman* 66 (1988-1989): 275-284, here 281.

⁶ D. N. Koutras, "The Essence of the Work of Art according to Plotinus" *Diotima* 14 (1988): 147-153, here 149.

⁷ Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite "No Longer I"* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94. Dionysian Christology can be read as a response to Paul's rhetorical question from 2 Cor 6:14: "What fellowship is there between light and darkness?" (Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 97).

⁸ Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 95-96. Several passages from Paul's letters support Dionysius' understanding of Jesus as light: 2 Cor 4:6 ("For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"); Eph 5:8 ("For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light"); Col 1:12 ("the Father has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light").

their knowledge of divine light upon experience, not theory.⁹ The luminous metamorphosis of a visionary becomes possible as the consequence of the beatific vision of the glorious 'form' of the Deity. "*Similarly, as many lamps are lighted from the one, same fire, so also it is necessary that the bodies of the saints, which are members of Christ, become the same as Christ himself is* (Ps.-Macarius 15, 38)."¹⁰ In the Macarian homilies Moses' shining countenance and the luminosity of Adam's prelapsarian *tselem* serve as metaphors for major paradigms of the transformational vision. In the Macarian writings, one can also encounter a third paradigm of luminous transformation which is radically different from the previous two traditions. "*In a peculiar Macarian understanding of Christ's transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, the duality of inner and outer in visio Dei is attempted through in a new metaphor of the transformational vision – Christ's 'Body of Light'*".¹¹ Therefore, into the Macarian theology the *Kabod* internalization become possible only as a consequence of the event of Christ's transfiguration. 'Brightening Face' Christology of the Desert Fathers is an ascetic interiorization of Christ, together with a somatic experience and outward luminosity.

For Saint Gregory Palamas this hypostatic light, seen spiritually by the saints, is known by them by experience to exist/through experience of existing, as they tell us, and to exist not symbolically only, as do manifestations produced by fortuitous events; but it is an immaterial and divine illumination, an invisibly grace seen and ignorantly known. What it is, they do not pretend to know. But, this light is not the essence of God, for that is inaccessible and incommunicable. At

⁹ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers. The Alphabetical Collection*, Translated, with a foreword by Benedicta Ward, SLG, Preface by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, Cistercian Publications 59 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: The Institute of Cistercian Studies, Western Michigan University, 1975), 101: "*His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him: If you will, you can become all flame*" (Joseph of Panephris 7); "*his face shone like the sun... Once more his countenance suddenly became like the sun*" (Sisoës 14, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 215); "*coming out of the church with a shining face and white body*" (Paul the Simple 1, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 206); "*God glorified him so that one could not gaze steadfastly at him because of the glory of his countenance*" (Pambo 1, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 196); "*They said of Abba Pambo that he was like Moses, who received the image of the glory of Adam when his face shone. His face shone like lightning and he was like a king sitting on his throne*" (Pambo 12, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 197); "*The Fathers used to say that someone met Abba Silvanus one day and saw his face and body shining like an angel and he fell with his face to the ground. He said that others also had obtained this grace*" (Sivanus 12, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 224); "*A brother came to the cell of Abba Arsenius at Scetis. Waiting outside the door he saw the old man entirely like a flame*" (Arsenius, 27 (*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 13).

¹⁰ Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and The Great Letter*, Translated, Edited and with an Introduction by George A. Maloney, S.J., Preface by Kallistos Ware (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992), 88.

¹¹ Andrei Orlov, Alexander Golitzin, "Many Lamps are Lightened from the One: Paradigms of the Transformational Vision in Macarian Homilies," *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 281-298, here 295.

other times, "it transforms the body, and communicates its own splendour to it when, miraculously, the light which deifies the body becomes accessible to the bodily eyes. (7) Thus indeed did the great Arsenius appear when engaged in hesychastic combat; similarly Stephen, whilst being stoned, (9) and Moses, when he descended from the mountain. Sometimes the light 'speaks' clearly, as it were with ineffable words, to him who contemplates it. Such was the case with Paul" (Tr. II. iii. 8-9).¹² Moses the lawgiver, Stephen the protomartyr, and Arsenius the desert ascetic are examples from the Bible and the Fathers of men who were visibly transformed by divine light (Tr. 2. 3. 9). God transcends the senses yet the knowledge of God is experiential. The monks know this. They spiritually see the hypostatic light – in reality, not in a symbolic manner. The divine light is 'the pledge of the future promise, the grace of adoption, the deifying gift of the Spirit' (Tr. 3. 1. 6). To access the divine corporeality of light, veiled by Christ's visible body, Christians need to be initiated. Thus, Jesus unveils his Divine and Glorious Form on the Mount of Transfiguration.¹³

2. Likeness, Corporality and Immateriality (*asomata graphē*)

The first fundamental criterion of iconoclast theology and christology is the distance they place between icon and person, secondly their refusal to accept any kind of hypostatic pictorial representation, and thirdly their final inability to reconcile "pictorial representation" (*eikonizesthai*) with "hypostatisation" or real existence (*hyphestanai*).¹⁴

As Henry Maguire has argued, the iconoclast debate and the victory of the iconodules resulted in a new definition of the role and function of icons: "As a result of the debate over images, there was less ambiguity after iconoclasm concerning their status. Christian icons were seen as intermediaries between the

¹² Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, Edited with an Introduction by John Meyendorff Translation by Nicholas Gendle, Preface by Jaroslav Pelikan (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983, here in after: Tr.), 57.

¹³ John McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, SBEC 9 (Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 155-157.

¹⁴ Ambrosios Giakalis, *Images of the Divine. The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council*, revised edition, with a Foreword by Henry Chadwick (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 99. The body of Christ and bodies of the saints are described by the iconoclasts as 'not present' (*me paronta*). Giakalis mentions also the problem of the iconoclastic understanding of the Eucharist as an icon of Christ. He quotes B.N. Giannopoulos who argues that for the iconoclasts the bread of the Eucharist is not the body of Christ, nor an icon or type of Christ himself because the divine nature and hypostasis are undepictable. Another scholar who cites is S. Gero, who, on the other hand, asserts the consubstantiality of the divine Eucharist and the flesh of Christ. See, S. Gero, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Byzantine Iconoclasts," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 68 (1975): 4-22, here 9.

suppliant and the invisible power rather than as powers in themselves. In theory, it was no longer possible for icons of the saints to have the ability to act on their own; icons could only facilitate access to the prototypes in the hope of their intercession with the supreme Judge."¹⁵ It was made clear that veneration was due to icons because of their representations, not because of their inherent supranatural powers. According to Brown, the iconoclastic controversy was instead essentially a dilemma over the position of the holy in the Byzantine world.¹⁶ The need to define and to name that differentiates post-iconoclastic Byzantine portraiture from earlier practice appears in every medium and type of object. The post-iconoclastic concept of the functioning of images had important consequences for the design and presentation of the portraits of the saints.¹⁷ The importance of intercession in the functioning of icons is emphasized in many post-iconoclastic saints' Lives.¹⁸ From the time of the early desert fathers, monks had been compared to the bodiless angels, the *asomata*.¹⁹

After the complete victory over the paganism, there was not much need for philosophical or secular wisdom, contemplation and prayer are replacing the intellectual interest. Iconoclasm changed the situation, because, to be defenders of icons, the monks had to turn to philosophy and the study of the Fathers and to construct intellectual arguments to refute the accusation of the iconoclasts. Therefore, education and study found a new place and purpose within monastic activities. The relationship between painting and eloquence had been a familiar theme of ancient rhetoric that the fourth-century Fathers of the Greek Church applied to Christian contexts. Byzantine authors made numerous references to the connections between

¹⁵ Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 138.

¹⁶ Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989), 103-152.

¹⁷ Warren T. Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 103-132.

¹⁸ Liz James, "'Seeing's believing, but feeling's the truth': Touch and the Meaning of Byzantine Art," in *Images of the Byzantine World. Visions, Messages and Meanings. Studies Presented to Leslie Brubaker*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 1-14.

¹⁹ H. Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies*, 67. See, also: E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 81-150; E. Kitzinger, *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); H. Maguire, "Disembodiment and Corporality in Byzantine Images of the Saints," in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. B. Cassidy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 75-83; A. Cameron, "The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation," in *The Church and the Arts*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1-42; L. Brubaker, "Byzantine Art in the Ninth Century: Theory, Practice, and Culture," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 13 (1989): 23-93; "Perception and Conception: Art, Theory and Culture in Ninth-century Byzantium," *Word and Image* 5 (1989): 19-32; G. Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 23-33 .

verbal eloquence and the visual arts.²⁰ Thus the relationship between art and eloquence became an important concept in the arsenal of the defenders of images during the iconoclastic controversy. *"The usefulness of art as a means of instruction was only one of the arguments in favor of Christian images that John of Damascus derived from the relationship between writing and painting. He also exploited the multiple meanings in the term eikōn, which, like the English word 'image', could mean both a concrete representation, as in a painting, and a conceptual representation, such as might be created in writing"*.²¹

3. "Prosopological" reading of the Transfiguration and the ascetic tradition of ascent

What seems to escape the attention of the iconoclasts entirely is the experience of the prophets, apostles and saints of the Old and New Testaments, which constitutes the vision of the person of the Logos in his uncreated glory. This vision, both before and after the Incarnation, has always been the quintessence of the Orthodox tradition, the end and supreme goal of both Testaments. For this reason, says Giakalis, *"the vision of the icons, and especially of the icon of Christ, becomes indispensable"*.²² The icon as a "door" and as a "self-manifested vision" proved to be a real bridge connecting the worshipper with the uncreated energies of Christ and of his saints. The question therefore arises: What is the relationship between this "visible" character and the divine, uncreated hypostasis of God the

²⁰ John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond; A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 248-255. The Greek language itself encouraged the Byzantines to think in these terms. The word *graphē*, for example, was used for both writing and painting, *historia* could mean either a written history or a picture, whereas *schēma* was both a figure of rhetoric and a pose in painting. Leslie Brubaker, "Image, meta-text and text in Byzantium" in *Herméneutique du text d'histoire: orientation, interprétation et questions nouvelles*, ed. S. Sato (Tokyo: Nagoya University, 2009), 93-100.

²¹ Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 10. He also points out the antithesis in Byzantine art and literature (e.g., juxtaposition of the Virgin and Child with the Dormition): *"In the Byzantine church, antithesis was more than a figure of speech; it was a habit of thought. This stylistic device, common both to antique rhetoric and to the literature of the Bible, provided Christian writers with a ready-made mould in which to cast the paradoxes of their faith. The Fathers of the Greek church made liberal use of antithesis in order to express the paradoxical nature of Christ's incarnation, for it enabled them to clothe unfamiliar mysteries in a linguistic convention that pagan education had made familiar to their audiences"* (Maguire, *Art and Eloquence*, p. 53). He has moved the study of Byzantine art in new directions, revealing a vista of complexity and variation. See, also, H. Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion: Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 48-77.

²² Giakalis, *Images of the Divine*, 103-104.

Logos? The answer came from St Theodore who does not identify the visible character with the uncreated hypostasis of Christ, but with a property of this hypostasis which because of the Incarnation is present also in the icon and permits a unity between archetype and icon, avoiding any possibility of division.²³ But, according to Giakalis, “*it must be admitted that it is difficult for one to appreciate with the same realism as the iconophiles the immanence of the ‘incommunicable’ hypostasis of the prototype in the imitative icon. It is an immanence which is not proved in any way, yet it does confirm the ‘ineffability’ of the person*”.²⁴

The oval mandorla is, strictly speaking, an illumination around the body of Christ that emanates, presumably, directly from it. The oval mandorla is “*more christological than trinitarian; it refers to the nature of Christ more than to the glory of God*”. According to Andreas Andreopoulos, the oval mandorla “*refers to the luminous as opposed to the spatial understanding of the glory of God*”.²⁵ An indirect implication of this was that Christ could be depicted in His divinity. St. Gregory Palamas, as well as St. Symeon the New Theologian²⁶, indentifies the light of the mystical experience with the light of Christ. The experience of the light shows that Christ shines His light and dwells within the mystic.

In hesychastic theology the ascent is associated with the struggle for deification. There is an iconografic change in which Tabor had absorbed the mystical tradition formerly associated with Sinai (darknes of Sinai was influential in the development of apophatic theology). The visual connection presents a hierarchy of theophanies, with the Transfiguration on Tabor as the culmination of the previous theophanies on Sinai. The typological primise of Sinai was fulfilled on Tabor, but the hidden God remains undisclosed even with the Incarnation of Christ. Also, on the Tabor the radiant, glorified face of Christ was revealed to the apostle. The face of the Word that shone like the sun is the characteristic hiddenness of

²³ Strangely, says Giakalis, some contemporary Orthodox scholars maintain that the presence of a mandorla around the person of Christ in his icons expresses the identity of his uncreated hypostasis with the “visible character” of his human nature. See, J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood NY: SVS Press, 1975), 188; apud, Giakalis, *Images of the Divine*, 111.

²⁴ Giakalis, *Images of the Divine*, 113.

²⁵ Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis. The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005), 188. Andreopoulos mainly refers to the Sinai mosaic (image of Christ clothed in light), which also employs this oval mandorla and was made at a time and a place when Christology was being defined (relationship between the two natures of Christ).

²⁶ Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 226, n. 94. He says that the term φῶς (*light*) appears in 54 of the 58 ‘Hymns’ by Symeon, in 2 of the 3 *Theol.*, in the majority of *Eth.* and *Cat.* The verb ὁράω (‘to see’) is used in Symeon’s *Theol.* and *Eth.* even more frequently than the term ‘light’. Other terms connected with the vision of light (φωτίζω, φωτισμός, ἐλλάμπω, ἐλλαμψις, θέα, θεάομαι, ὁραίς, etc.) are also widely employed.

his being. The face of Christ issued radiance and revealed God and the apostles realized that God is a *person* (*prosopon* – which means both “face” and “person”). In contrast to “name” Christology, “wisdom” Christology, and “glory” Christology, Bogdan G. Bucur notes that “face” Christology, one of the early building blocks for emerging Christian doctrine, never became a major player, but was replaced by more precise vocabulary shaped by the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries.²⁷ But besides this who can make an imitation of the invisible, incorporeal, uncircumscribed, formless God? A certain tale, too, is told, when Augarus was king over the city of the Edessenes, he sent a portrait painter to paint a likeness of the Lord, and when the painter could not paint because of the brightness that shone from His countenance, the Lord Himself put a garment over His own divine and life-giving face and impressed on it an image of Himself and sent this to Augarus, to satisfy thus his desire.²⁸ The “face” Christology became a Christological controversy during the Byzantine debate over religious imagery (icons), ‘iconomachy’ in the 8th and 9th centuries. So, this “face” Christology is embodied in the theology of the Icon.

This “prosopological”²⁹ reading of the Transfiguration stands firmly within the ascetic tradition of ascent. John of Damascus describes the ascent of the Mount Thabor: “*hesychia is the mother of prayer and prayer is the revelation of the divine glory*”.³⁰ Andreopoulos highlights the relationship between Incarnation in the Western Church (the historical descent of Christ) and theology of deification in the Eastern Church (the experiential ascent of asceticism): “*The prominence of Thabor and the upward movement it represents in later Byzantine iconography, along with its symbolism of ascetic ascent, expressed the Eastern view of synergy (a combination of the upward and the downward movement that some of the later mandorla expressed magnificently) as opposed to ‘grace alone’*”.³¹

²⁷ Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Divine Face and the Angels of the face: Jewish Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christology and Pneumatology,” in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology: Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2009), 143-153. Bucur outlines the occurrence of “face” Christology in Clement of Alexandria, Aphrahat the Persian sage, and in the seven spirits of the book of revelation.

²⁸ St John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 16: “Concerning Images”, editor Paul A. Böer Sr., (Veritatis Splendor, Publications CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), 272-273.

²⁹ Andreopoulos *Metamorphosis*, 200. See, John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997).

³⁰ John of Damascus, *Homily for the Feast of the Transfiguration 10*, in *Light on the Mountain. Greek Patristic and Byzantine Homilies on the Transfiguration of the Lord*, translated by Brian E. Daley, S.J. (Yonkers, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2013), 218.

³¹ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 208.

4. The Face of Christ in a Sixth-Century Icon from Sinai. The Aesthetics of Christ's Known in Two Natures

The Palaiologan hesychasme employs a 'binary formula' closely associated with cognate patterns (visible-invisible) of Christology (two natures: divine-human), anthropology (body-soul) Triadology (essence-activities, manifestations) and Holy Sacraments (in a twofold form: visible and material – intelligible and mystical). Maximos Constas says that: *"Once again, the principle of physical and metaphysical union is a direct corollary of the Incarnation, an event in which the invisible God has visibly 'appeared among us', traversing and thereby abolishing the opposition of 'above' and 'below'. In the dual-natured person of the God-man, both the (created, visible) image and its (uncreated, invisible) archetype are woven together in a uniform coincidence of opposites rendered present in the sacramental mystery of the liturgy"*.³²

Christ is the "Icon of the Invisible God" (Col. 1, 15), but in the same time he is the bruised, defenseless man who "had no beauty" (Is. 53, 2). The Transfiguration reveals in the person of Jesus Christ, the dwelling of the light in the mirror of the flesh. The Face of Christ in the uncreated light is an icon, a theophany, a glorious manifestation of God. The pre-Iconoclasm sixth-century icon of Christ from Sinai was a powerful symbol of Justinian's empire. In this icon, which was produced in Constantinople, Christ's face is luminous, creating the impression of a single light source. Within the face the two large eyes differ in terms of shape, size and activity (one in the light and the other in relative darkness). Here, says Constas, *"we are presented with a timid, slightly sad-looking young man, who hesitantly turns to us in a gesture of prayer or petition. He seems poised to bless and perhaps even to touch us. With his hands gently raised before his heart, he appears poignantly, almost pathetically, human in his unspoken yearning for contact and love. And yet, absorbed in his prayer, his eyes are turned inward, so that he looks, not at us, but at God. His dark counterpart, on the other hand, is a ponderous Titan, aloof to all relation. Solemn and impassive, he is self-contained in the closed circle formed by the armor of his authoritative volumes, themselves suggestive of ominous secrets and threatening revelations."*³³

The use of contrasting models also occurs in the apse mosaic of Transfiguration from Sinai. The examples of this technique are the different degrees of corporality in the figure of Moses and Christ. Moses' feet are planted firmly on the ground, and his body, which is slightly turned, stands in classical *contrapposto*, giving it a high degree of physical reality. Also, his loose leg creates an effect of motion in space. In conclusion, says Constas *"These marks*

³² Maximos Constas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Los Angeles: Sebastian Press, 2014), 210.

³³ Constas, *The Art of Seeing*, 51.

of corporeality are effectively contrasted with the relative immateriality of the body of Christ, achieved through strict frontality and the suspension of the figure in space independently of any ground line."³⁴ Here the impassive face of Christ contrasts with the expressive face of Elijah. So, classical corporeality and Christian abstractionism are used to distinguish between the human and divine. The Face of Christ is devoid of emotion, a quality of the dematerialization of the body (absence of shading). This, believe Conostas, "*the artist of the Sinai icon employed two different styles in order to express two contrasting qualities within the one person of Christ*".³⁵

Looking at the icon from Sinai, we are face to face with Christ, concealed within a realm beyond perception, a visual expression of Christ's two natures: divinity and humanity, expressing in iconic language, the theological context in which it was produced: the duality in Christ (one hypostasis and a double consubstantiality). The union in no way abolished the distinction in the nature, but rather preserved the characteristic property of each. So, the defenders of Chalcedon made use of icons in their debates with the Monophysites. The "two natures" theology supports the "Chalcedonian" interpretation of the Sinai Christ – an ingenious depiction of two contrasting natures united in a single *prosopon*. According to Cyril, the mind cannot "know" the two natures of Christ in separation, but only through the experience of contemplation (*theoria*). The Sinai Christ was an attempt to portray what could not be seen by human sight: "*Theoria was a single act encompassing both hermeneutics and Christology, a movement from the visible to the invisible.*"³⁶ God is at once transcendent and immanent, hidden and revealed, known and unknown and the opposites are not absorbed into unity, but "*the duality that our icon portrays is not that of Christ's two natures, but rather a duality within God himself: the paradoxical co-existence of mercy and judgment*".³⁷ It is sad that for Conostas these two contradictory attributes offer a framework for his interpretation of the Sinai Christ. Even though he says that these divine names and attributes "received consummate expression in the doctrine of the divine

³⁴ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 52.

³⁵ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 54.

³⁶ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 66.

³⁷ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 68. The foundation of the Conostas' concept lay on Philo of Alexandria. Firstly, according to Jewish tradition, mercy and judgement are two ways, or qualities, according to which God is said to deal with the world. In the Old testament, these two ways are associated with two names of God: mercy was identified with the name of *Elohim*, whereas judgment was identified with the name *Jehovah*. Philo believes that the divine attributes are both interior and exterior to God. See, David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis, Van Gorcum/Fortress Press, 1993). Conostas don't sees, here, emphasized enough, the being-energy distinction, but he reduces his interpretation to the distinction between two attributes of God.

energies”, his original statement remains “*the movement of our eyes across the face of the icon reproduces the two-fold experiential structure of Philo’s theology*”.³⁸ But, Conostas returns to the latent duality that we saw concentrated in the face of the Sinai Christ, which is manifested in the gestures of Christ’s body (a sign of acceptance of the right hand and a gesture of rejection in Christ’s left hand). Within a mandorla, a symbol of his heavenly glory, His face and body slightly to his right. This is the distinction in which “*the Sinai Christ appears to be turning, so that what was imminent there is here fully realized*”.³⁹

5. The Ascetic Interpretation of the Sixth-Century Mosaic of the Transfiguration in St Catherine Monastery on Sinai

a) “Suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης), a beam of light descends to him (*Vita Antonii* 10)⁴⁰

Golitzin finds in the mid-sixth century, the mosaic of the Transfiguration at Saint Catherine’s, Sinai, the traditional topic associated with the theophanies of the God-man Christ in light. “*Christ is depicted clothed in brilliant white and gold. Rays shoot out from his Person to strike Elijah and Moses at his right and left, together with the stunned disciples at his feet*”.⁴¹ He links Dionysian theology to this interpretation Christ’s mosaic of Sinai. He asserts that the Divine Names for Dionysius are sacramental in their character. They carry the divine presence (divine light), because the *divine names are θεῖα ἀγάλματα*, “*divine images*” or “*icons*” of God.⁴² The immateriality of the soul is an image of the incorporeality of

³⁸ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 72.

³⁹ Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 79.

⁴⁰ Athanasius Alexandrinus, *Vita Antonii*, PG 26, 837-976, transl. J.H. Newman: St. Athanasius the Great, *Life of St. Anthony the Great*, <http://www.elpenor.org/athanasius/anthony-life.asp?pg=25> [23. 04. 2017]. “&10. *Nor was the Lord then forgetful of Anthony’s wrestling, but was at hand to help him. So looking up he saw the roof as it were opened, and a ray of light descending to him [καὶ ἀκτὴν τινα φωτὸς κατερχομένην πρὸς αὐτόν]. The demons suddenly vanished, the pain of his body straightway ceased, and the building was again whole. But Anthony feeling the help, and getting his breath again, and being freed from pain, besought the vision which had appeared to him, saying, ‘Where wert thou? Why didst thou not appear at the beginning to make my pains to cease?’ And a voice came to him, ‘Anthony, I was here, but I waited to see thy fight; wherefore since thou hast endured, and hast not been worsted, I will ever be a succour to thee, and will make thy name known everywhere.’ Having heard this, Anthony arose and prayed, and received such strength that he perceived that he had more power in his body than formerly. And he was then about thirty-five years old*”.

⁴¹ Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita: 1 Cor 3:16, John 14:21-23* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013), 57.

⁴² Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchikon Idruma Paterikōn, 1994), 70-74.

God, Holy Scripture, too, is full of symbols. Thus, God can only be known in the experience of His presence, His light. Also, the patristic meaning for "mystical" is hidden. God is hidden by the light (*Ep. I*) and His divine darkness (γνόφος) is the unapproachable light, his dwelling place (*Ep. V*).⁴³ Therefore, light is both the Presence (*shekinach*) as immanent transcendence or as tension between transcendent hiddenness and revelation.

Therefore, for Golitzin we have here a hidden Christology within the Paul-Anthony-Evagrius-Dionisius light experience. Within the face shining with the rays we might also recall the μεσημβρία ('midday') in the Christophany of Saint Paul described by the 'ray' imagery around the Person of Christ. For him "the blue denotes the color of the firmament beneath God's feet in Exodus 24:10, a text which Evagrius takes up in his portrayal of the azure light of the intellect awaiting the descent of the uncreated light of the Trinity".⁴⁴ Also, in the epistles there is a certain alternation, especially in *Ep. I* and *V*, between darkness and light. So, says Golitzin "in *Ep. III* we met the paradox of Christ's sudden manifestation: light, overpowering, coming forth from the depths of silent divinity and, still, hidden even in the manifestation. The Sinai mosaic strikes me, in short, as a portrayal of the ἐξαίφνης⁴⁵ ('suddenly')".⁴⁶ We receive the "deifying gift" mentioned in Dionisius' *Ep. II* and we are led to encounter the mystery of Christ's divinity in "transcendent outpouring of light".⁴⁷

Ps.-Dionysius' view of the univers as a structure essentially infused by the divine light reflects, also, a metaphysics of the light, whilst Jesus is the deifying light and hierarchies communicate light and love, and "this light, which proceeds

⁴³ See *Ep. V* and *DN VII.2* for the equation of the cloud of Sinai (γνόφος) with the "unapproachable light" (ἀπρόσιτον φῶς) in 1 Tm. 6:16. Cf., J.A. McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory the Theologian" *GOTR* 39 (1994): 7-31.

⁴⁴ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 58.

⁴⁵ Golitzin here is referring to the Dionisius' specific text of the *Ep. III*, 1069B (159:3-10): "Suddenly' (ἐξαίφνης) means that which comes forth from the hitherto invisible and beyond hope into manifestation. And I think that here the Scripture [lit. 'theology'] is suggesting the philanthropy of Christ. The super-essential has proceeded out of its hiddenness to become manifest to us by becoming a human being. But He is also hidden, both after the manifestation and, to speak more divinely, even within it. For this is the hidden of Jesus, and neither by rational discourse nor by intuition can His mystery [μυστήριον] be brought forth, but instead, even when spoken it remains ineffable, and when conceived with the intellect, unknowable [ἄγνωστον]".

⁴⁶ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 58.

⁴⁷ Plotinus, too, uses "sudden" (*Enneads* V.3.17 and VI.7.36) to point out the vision of the One in light. See, A. Golitzin, "'Suddenly', Christ: The Place of Negative Theology in the Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagites," in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Shepherd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 8-37; and István Perczel, "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius: The Fourth Letter in its Direct and Indirect Translation," *Le Muséon* 117/3-4 (2004): 409-446.

from and returns to its source, the Father, is none other than Jesus".⁴⁸ Jesus appears to Paul as a blinding light from heaven, "his pseudonymous identity" in Acts 9, 3 and 22, 6: "suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) a light from heaven flashed about [Paul]".⁴⁹ We enter into God through God, Christ and the Church as His body is the place of the encounter with God. Thus, "entering into" the divine presence (γένομαι, *Ep. X*) represents, according to Golitzin, a "key theophany".⁵⁰ But Christ himself is the deifying gift (θεοποιῶν δῶρον, *Ep. III*). He gives his actions (ἐνέργειαι) or powers (δυνάμεις), but not his essence (οὐσία). This is the distinction between God *in se* and *ad extra*.

A theophany of light attached to the word "sudden" intends to signify the presence of Christ, as the sudden flash of the "unapproachable light" within together with his visitation within the temple of body of the ascet. St Ephrem links the "sudden" to Christ, to light. It is Christ Who is the "star of light Who shone forth suddenly" in the Incarnation.⁵¹ Also, in *Life of Anthony* the "father of monks" says that "suddenly" the roof of the tomb where he is staying opens up and a ray or beam of light descends to surround him. The light carries the presence of Christ, who expels the demons and fills the power of this light the weakened body of the ascetic.⁵² Christ is the "Splendor" (φέγγος) of the Father and the visible appearance of the unseen Father.⁵³

b) *Shekinah* and the round mandorla

The mandorla could be mistaken with the cloud as the glory of God. But, the cloud enters the narrative after the change itself, as a separate element. The voice of the Father reveals His filial relationship with Christ, expression of "the hypostatical definition rather than unity of essence".⁵⁴ Godhead is revealed in the glory of the Christ. Origen and Anastasios the Sinaite say that Moses and Elijah

⁴⁸ Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 94. Dionysian Christology can be read as a response to Paul's rhetorical question from 2 Cor 6:14: "What fellowship is there between light and darkness?" (Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 97).

⁴⁹ Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 95-96. Several passages from Paul's letters support Dionysius' understanding of Jesus as light: 2 Cor 4:6 ("For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"); Eph 5:8 ("For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light"); Col 1:12 ("the Father . . . has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light").

⁵⁰ Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 42.

⁵¹ Ephrem Syrus, *De natura*, 6.7, *CSCO* 186, 52; ET: K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 112, apud Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 47.

⁵² *Vita Antonii* 10; PG XXVI, 860A.

⁵³ Juan Ochagavia, SJ, *Visible Patris Filius. A Study of Irenaeus's Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Romae: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), 43-81.

⁵⁴ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 98.

were also transfigured in glory. The spatial rather than the luminous nature of mandorla is more appropriate for a narrative reading, which describes "*the manifestation of the glory of God, a glimpse of the Trinity, as opposed to the continuous splendor of Christ*".⁵⁵

According to the Gospel narratives as well as several Fathers, the luminous cloud enveloped not only the prophets but also the apostles. This suggests that the round mandorla does not signify the luminous cloud; rather, it is a symbolic rendering of the glory of God as a tabernacle/*shekinah*. The Unprepared one who could not endure the divine light, remained outside the tabernacle of God. They are granted the vision by the divine grace only. The round mandorla appeared for the first time in the Rabbula Gospels Transfiguration in the sixth century and was found quite commonly in Transfiguration depictions until the eleventh century, to portray the glory of God. The round mandorla is an expression of the place where God is, and it corresponds very closely to the concept of *shekinah*.

The word *shekinah*, says Andreopoulos, expressed "*a physical manifestation of God within history, a revelation and a dwelling and a sanctification of a place*".⁵⁶ *Shekinah* corresponded to the "tabernacle of God" in the physical world and was connected with the messianic enthronement.

c) *Yeqara* and the oval mandorla with rays

The oval mandorla corresponds with the luminous characteristics of the *kabod* (glory). "*Drawn around the body of Christ in a way that represents a luminance and not a space, it is consistent with the understanding of kabod as yeqara and also with the Johannine and patristic identification of Christ as light or, specifically to the Transfiguration, as the glory of the Father*".⁵⁷ The oval mandorla that envelops the transfigured Sinaitic image of Christ – the prototype for the oval mandorla type in general – consists of three concentric oval layers, increasingly dark they approach the center. The metaphorical darkness or blindness is caused by excessive luminosity. The excessive radiance reflects the patristic strand of the theology of darkness (Philo, Gregory of Nyssa, pseudo-Dionysios). More importantly, in relation to the oval mandorla, all who expounded the theology of light in terms of the ascent of Moses ended this ascent in divine darkness. "*The Sinai Mandorla, different from the circular luminous mandorla more frequently used until the eleventh century, expresses the culmination of the ascetic ascent in the most mystical*

⁵⁵ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 96.

⁵⁶ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 88.

⁵⁷ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 90.

representation of the time – the depiction of the excessive divine light as the darkness of the incognoscibility of God, even in his revelation".⁵⁸

The layered oval mandorla with rays, which could not be confused with the luminous cloud, was a more appropriate symbol to express the mystical "non-narrative" light of Christ. The second constituent meaning of the glory of God, *yeqara*, which Hans Urs von Balthasar reads as an expression of the sensory experience of light is "*the resplendent glory which reveals and hides God at the same time, similar to the spiritual brightness*".⁵⁹ It is appropriate only to the person to whom the glory belongs and cannot be extended to cover beholders, because it does not constitute a holy space with the characteristics of a tabernacle, as was the case with *shekinah*. In conclusion, highlights Andreopoulos, in contrast to later depiction of the Transfiguration, the Sinai mosaic shows the apostle very close to Christ and the prophets, something that suggests *theosis is possible*.⁶⁰

6. Hypostatic *Enargeia* and the Theophanic Icon. Theophany becomes ontophany and anthropophany - divinization of beings is an act of ontological revelation

Exploring the ontological and aesthetic implications of Orthodox ascetic and mystical theology, Cornelia A. Tsakiridou argues that the ancient Greek concept of *enargeia* the best conveys the expression of *theophany* and *theosis* in art.⁶¹ Here grace is not used metaphorically. It exists as an aesthetic reality.

She gives an example based on the famous icon of the Sinai Pantocrator: "*Enargeia is hypostatic. We see a face in its act of existing*".⁶² *Enargic* icons present their subjects not as a collage of signifiers but as beings realizing in their acts of existence the qualities that constitute their distinctive natures. *Enargeia*, thus, according to Tsakiridou, resonates with the Christian conception of the human person: "It is not, in other words, what Marion calls an 'idol' or 'the phenomenality of the saturated phenomenon' behind and through which operates an abstract visibility, a Platonic universal of the image that haunts the intellect... It is not a façade behind which, as in a *prosopeion* or mask, we may posit *in absentia*... *Enargeia* is that movement in the work of art that constitutes its object as a living being, existing in, through and toward its own nature, presenting its face *de*

⁵⁸ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 91.

⁵⁹ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 88.

⁶⁰ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 138.

⁶¹ Cornelia A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

⁶² Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 55.

profundis, from a depth which it possesses and which it offers *for free* to the viewer. *Enlargeia* transforms the image from a flat semblance of world to an aesthetic being in its own right, a *zoon aesthetikon*. It is therefore the fulfillment of art's being, its ontological fruition".⁶³

Enlargeia describes an act of hypostatic expression that originates inside the art object. In asceticism and theophany human beings enter and taste the life of perfection. "Theophany becomes ontophany, the epiphany and restoration of being", because "the divinization of beings is an act of ontological revelation. Theological and aesthetic realities become indistinguishable. But this is not aestheticism or religious spectacle. It is, rather, an ontophany".⁶⁴

The icon is alive and brings theophany and holiness to the senses. This relationship between theophany and art demonstrates that "the *visio dei* in Orthodoxy is a discernible empirical reality" and the divine light inhabits beings. So, says Tsakiridou, "Theophany is ontophany and anthropophany".⁶⁵

Theophany sends naturally to the issue of the doctrine of the Divine Energies. St Gregory Palamas answered his critics by arguing for the hypostatic character of the divine vision and the deification of the body. God is a reality, a living actuality (as *energeia*). The divine light is his presence. Palamas insists on the immanence of the divine vision, the radiance of "an invisible (*aphanous*) glory". To see it, is to see God's active presence in the world. He *is* the Taboric light; and Theophany is the appearance or revelation of God in the world. Palamas borrows the Areopagite notion of "spiritual sensation (*pneumatiken aisthesin*)" that is, sensation infused by the Holy Spirit. He describes it in terms of "participation (*methexis*)," "reception (*lepsis*)" and "divinization (*ektheosis*)".⁶⁶ "Methexis" is dynamic. "Ektheosis" implies divinization from within, "which is the splendor (*apagausma*) of deified flesh" (*Tr.* II.iii.18).⁶⁷ Therefore, according to Tsakiridou, "the most tangible instance of theophany is in the saint",⁶⁸ because the "deified (*theourgesan*)" bodies of the saints can be seen with "bodily eyes (*somatikois ophthalmois*)" transformed (*metharmosamenon*) and filled with a "radiant light (*lamprotetos*)" (*cf.*, *Tr.* II.iii.9, 20). This ontophany represent the "aesthetic face of being".⁶⁹ That's why St. John Climacus says that "he is a hesychast who strives to

⁶³ Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 56.

⁶⁴ Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 152, 246.

⁶⁵ Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 252.

⁶⁶ *Tr.* I.iii.18, 21; *cf.* Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 255.

⁶⁷ *Tr.* I.iii.28: "that light is not sensible (*aistheton*), even though the Apostles were deemed worthy to see it with their very own eyes, but through another, not sensible (*aesthetike*) power".

⁶⁸ Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 256.

⁶⁹ Victor Bychkov, *The Aesthetic Face of Being: Art in the Theology of Pavel Florensky*, trans. by R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993).

confine the incorporeal in the corporeal (*asomaton en somati*) a true paradox (*to paradoxon*).⁷⁰

In conclusion, says Tsakiridou, “what happens to light and beings in theophany recalls the movement that gives us *enargeia*. In *enargeia* an interior (internalized) motion is present in the image that accounts for its vividness. All instances of *enargeia* are epiphanic but not all are theophanic”.⁷¹ For her this means that an image can enter the realm of theophany aesthetically without the need of representation or symbolism by simply being itself.⁷² The painting itself participates in theophany, a reality that is both tangible and visibly transcendent.

7. Icons and the Theology of Light

Hesychasm is a monastic tradition of contemplative prayer that began roughly in the early fifth century on Mount Sinai. Hesychastic contemplation was sometimes accompanied by visions of the divine light. This connected it naturally with the tradition of the theology of light from the writings of the Fathers such as Gregory of Nazianzus, Evagrius of Pontus, Ps-Makarios, Diadochos of Photiki, Mark the Ascetic, Isaac the Syrian, John of the Ladder, Maximos the Confessor and Gregory the Sinaite.⁷³ The light is the main conceptual and theological focus of all the themes synthesis: Transfiguration as a theophany and as a revelation of the inner life of God, this visual manifestation of the two nature of Christ, the usual patristic view that the body of Christ was glorified by the glory of his divinity. The icon of the Transfiguration was the best possible iconographic portrayal of the two natures of Christ.

The juxtaposition Palamites – iconoclasts, allow Gregoras to transpose the whole 9th c. ideological situation (as he understood it) into the 14th c. and make it seem up-to-date and actual. “*If Hesychasm in Gregoras’ interpretation was no more than a renovated iconoclasm in combination with other heresies of old times, if Palamas was a heretic par excellence (new Arianus, Eunomius, and Eusebius), Gregoras himself would naturally become a new confessor Theodoros Graptos, and Ioannes Kantakouzenos – a new impious tyrant Theophilos. It seems*

⁷⁰ PG 88:1097B, cf. Tr. I.ii.6. See, John Chryssavgis, *In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2008), 53-61. And his book about the *John Climacus: From the Egyptian Desert to the Sinaite Mountain* (Abingdon, NY: Routledge, 2004), 101-130.

⁷¹ Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 258.

⁷² Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 263.

⁷³ John Anthony McGuckin, *Standing in God’s Holy Fire: The Byzantine Tradition* (Mayknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 109-130.

highly probable that Gregoras did have this picture in mind".⁷⁴ Nikephoros' testimonies were employed by both parties to prove that their opponents were guilty of iconoclasm. Gregoras became the first to lay an accusation of iconoclasm (iconoclastic theology of the Tabor light). Philotheos Kokkinos after having quoted Gregoras, while citing Nikephoros begins refutation in the 11th *Oration against Nikephoros Gregoras*, where he even confessed that the teaching of Gregoras and Akindynos matches in many ways that of Arians and iconoclasts (Ioannes Italos was guilty of iconoclasm). Lukhovitskij conclusion is that the accusation of iconoclasm originated within the anti-Palamite circles and at least on the first stages of the controversy it were anti-Palamites who attacked and Palamites who were forced to defend. V. Lourié expressed an opposite view: anti-Palamites were hostile to sacred images since their teaching inevitably deprived God's energies of the ability to be actually present in the icon, thus, Palamites actually revealed their enemies' hidden iconoclasm.⁷⁵ Therefore, "*As soon as the partisans of icon veneration (Ioannes Damaskenos, Nikephoros of Constantinople, Theodoros Stoudites etc.) and their spiritual heirs (Photios of Constantinople) established an inextricable theological link between iconoclasm and earlier Christological heresies, a charge of iconoclasm became equal to an accusation of all these previous blasphemies taken together (Arianism, Nestorianism, Docetism, etc.)*".⁷⁶ Barlaam became the first to recognize the fundamental distinction between the Augustinian theology of the divine essence and the hesychasts' theology of the uncreated light. The light beheld by the hesychasts is identified by Palamas *with the light that shone around Christ at the Transfiguration. It is not a created symbol, but the "garment of their deification" and a foretaste of the light that will eternally illuminate the blessed (Triads i.3.5, 26)*.⁷⁷ As shown by David Bradshaw, it is in searching for a term suitable for referring both to the light of the Transfiguration and to the "things around God" that Palamas introduces the concept of *energeia*. "*Palamas thus draws together under the single concept*

⁷⁴ Lev Lukhovitskij, "Historical Memory of Byzantine Iconoclasm in the 14th c.: the Case of Nikephoros Gregoras and Philotheos Kokkinos," in *Aesthetics and Theurgy in Byzantium*, ed. Sergei Mariev and Wiebke-Marie Stock (Boston/Berlin, Göttingen: Walter de Gruyter Inc., 2013), 205-230, here 224. This clearly stated typological principle allows Gregoras to use antiarian, antieunomian and antiiconoclastic sources to refute what he calls "Palamite heresy". For the obsession with the 9th c. during the Hesychast controversy on the iconographic level, see D. Kotoula, "The British Museum Triumph of Orthodoxy Icon," in *Byzantine Orthodoxies*, ed. A. Louth and A. Casiday (Aldershot: Ashgate/Valorum, 2006), 121-130.

⁷⁵ Lukhovitskij, "Historical Memory of Byzantine Iconoclasm in the 14th c.", 216.

⁷⁶ Lukhovitskij, "Historical Memory of Byzantine Iconoclasm in the 14th c.", 205.

⁷⁷ The light is in fact the eternal and uncreated glory of God: "*God, while remaining entirely in Himself, dwells entirely in us by His superessential power, and communicates to us not His nature but His proper glory and splendour*" (Tr. i.3.23).

of energeia a number of themes that previously had existed more or less in isolation: the uncreated light, the 'things around God', the Cappadocian teaching on the divine names, and the Pauline and Cappadocian understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit".⁷⁸ Through the energies of God, we know the beauty and splendour of God. Anita Strezova says that Palamas instigated a 'new Christocentric humanism' founded on the hesychast concepts of theosis, synergia and theologia. "This approach to the issue of experience of God implied the basic anthropological presupposition that man was capable of transcending his own nature, as well as the main theological principle that God – even when he communicates himself – remains transcendent".⁷⁹ In terms of symbolism, important novelties were the introduction of complex mandorla, the appearance of eight rays of light, the appearance of the *ΩΩΝ* ('I am who I am') monogram on the halo of Christ, and the introduction of three-dimensional rainbows.⁸⁰

The icon of the Transfiguration was the best way to translate into imagery the hesychastic views on the uncreated light. The apostles are more than mere witnesses to the event, they dynamically perceive the glory of Christ. Moreover, the representation of the mountain is almost personalized and it has to do with the significance of the ascetic ascent. The "hesychastic" mandorla appears in the fourteenth-century churches of Mistra in an illumination from the manuscript of the emperor-monk John (Ioasaph) VI Kantakouzenos. This magnificent mandorla, with or without rays consists of two superimposed concave squares actually a square and a rhombus – inside a circle. Andreas Andreopoulos identified the Transfiguration as a revelation of the Trinity: "It is possible, though, that Orthodox iconography wanted to represent the Father alone as the circle that has no beginning or end, and the two others hypostases as rectangles, in order to express the Eastern reaction to the Western addition of the filioque to the Nicene Creed".⁸¹ Moreover, the precise positioning of Christ in the circle reminds us of Christ's

⁷⁸ David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 237-238.

⁷⁹ Anita Strezova, *Hesychasm and Art: The Appearance of New Iconographic Trends in Byzantine and Slavic Lands in the 14th and 15th Centuries* (Canberra, Australia: The Australian National University Press, 2014), 51, 62.

⁸⁰ Strezova, *Hesychasm and Art*, 73-75. The painted surfaces were illuminated with white strokes (on the face, neck and hands) representing the rays of the divine light. Also, the image of Theotokos (the Mother of God) the Life-Giving Spring appeared in the 14th century. Thus, the *Akathist Hymn* at the Trinity Church, Cosia, symbolises Palamas's concepts regarding the role of the Virgin in the history of salvation. She is endorsed with a complex mandorla that is commonly reserved for Christ (this also testifies the role of Theotokos in salvation, a representative of those who acquired true vision of light). According to the teaching of St Gregory Palamas, she has, in fact, brought the light into the world.

⁸¹ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, p. 231.

words "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me" (Jn. 14, 10). Theophanes the Greek follows and completes the Byzantine hesychastic type by some details that refer to hesychastic theology directly, such as the rays of light and the unusual illumination of Moses, Elijah and the three apostles. The two interpenetrating triangles expresses the downward movement of the Incarnation and revelation of the divinity of Christ to humanity, combined with the upward movement of the ascetic ascent, the doctrine of the divine and human synergy. This unique mandorla gives a sense of spiritual escalation through light to Christ, who is the source of light. Theophanes did something revolutionary to indicate Christ as the source of light, "*The body of Elijeh, Moses, and the three apostles are illuminated not only from the inside, as in customary in Byzantine iconography, but also from the outside in a way that indicates Christ as the sources of the physical light. This is highly unusual. Byzantine iconography never indicates any sources of the external light*".⁸² The rays emitting from Christ and reaching the apostles are intentionally asymmetrical and they end at the faces of Peter, John and James. Theophanes here indicates that the rays symbolize: 1. the uncreated energies of God, 2. the grace that was given to the three apostles from Christ, 3. The operation of the Holy Spirit that allowed them to see Christ in his divinity. The rays end not merely on the faces, but specifically on the eyes of the apostle. Thus, covered with the beauty of ineffable glory of the Spirit, apostles "*becomes all light, all face, all eye*"⁸³ (*Hom 1, 2*), because there is no part of the soul that is not full of the spiritual eyes of light.

Then the theological justification of the correct approach to the veneration of icons is found ultimately in the teaching of the Eastern Fathers on deification.⁸⁴ This "perception" of the participation of the icons in the uncreated, purifying and sanctifying energy of God is so intense that the only way out is through worship, that is, through actually turning toward God.⁸⁵

⁸² Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, p. 247.

⁸³ Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, Translated, Edited and with an Introduction By George A. Maloney, S.J., Preface By Kallistos Ware (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992), 31.

⁸⁴ Leonidas Contos, *The Concept of Theosis in Gregory Palamas, with a critical text of the 'Contra Akindynum'*, 2 vols. (Los Angeles, 1963). See, also: Alexis Torrance, "Precedents for Palamas' Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 47-70 and A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁸⁵ Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: a Theology of Beauty* (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood, Publications, 1972). Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978). Michel Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991).

8. Conclusion

The iconophile veneration of icons may be summarised as follows: The uncreated God imparts himself to his creatures in his uncreated glory or energies. Only the saints and the angels participate in the deifying energies of God. The illuminating energies are also participated in through the icon by virtue of the icon's hypostatic identity with its prototype. Contact/veneration with the icon/vehicle of these divine energies communicates the latter to the venerator himself in proportion to his spiritual state. Denial of the possibility of participation in divine energies by means of the veneration of the icons means the rejection of the Church's doctrine on the deification of human nature. Beholding the human face of Jesus Christ, whose "eyes are like a flame of fire" (Rev. 2, 18), the viewer sees the image of God reflected in God's Eternal Image. Studying the significance of icons is the best way for us to understand the theology of experience. The icon emits iconographic light from inside. The bodies of the saints seem to be lit from inside. Very often this light makes the faces and the bodies of the saints seem bright, almost transparent. Light gives substance (*hypostasis*) to the icons. This is no ordinary light, is the Uncreated light of the Second Jerusalem. Therefore, says Andreopoulos "*the icon certainly belongs to the East*".⁸⁶ There are many questions that could help us to approach the divine revelation: *what* was revealed, *who* was revealed, *who* received who participated in the revelation, and *how* did this revelation take place. The Transfiguration describes directly the revelation of the kingdom. But there is a key to understand the whole event through this icon: the body of Christ *is* light. Christ extends his light beyond the physical boundaries of his human body and by this sending of the light of the Father to the viewer, "*Christ's outpouring of his divinity as portrayed in the icon of the Transfiguration, he Christ-ifies those who step into his light and becomes part of his extended body*".⁸⁷ The transition from the narrative to the hesychast type is a shift of the focus of the icon to the experience of the divine light. There is a directional flow from the apostles toward Christ as they are invited to behold and participate in his glory. The first who connect the Transfiguration specifically with theosis is St Andrew of Crete. For him the Transfiguration is the revelation of the deified humanity of Christ.

During the hesychast controversy, St Gregory Palamas defended the reality of seeing a vision of light at the culmination of intense period of prayer. The light is nothing less than the uncreated radiance of God accessible to the

⁸⁶ Andreas Andreopoulos, *Gazing on God. Trinity, Church and salvation in Orthodox Thought and Iconography* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 59.

⁸⁷ Andreas Andreopoulos, *This is My Beloved Son. The Transfiguration of Christ* (Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2012), 83-93.

senses. This manifestation of Christ is not something external to ourselves, but *it is possible only by having Christ radiant within us*. Abba Pambo, Sisoës, Silvanus, St Seraphim of Sarov, were men whose radiance was the product of inward openness. For them the Transfiguration becomes an interior experience. In the fourteenth century, the distinction that Gregory Palamas draws between the divine essence and actions, *energeiai*, is offered in order to allow for the possibility of the vision of uncreated light without at the same time compromising the divine transcendence. This light of Christ is coming from within the ascetic as the radiance of God himself (but also shedding outside the body and concentrated on the shining face of the saint).

The "*aesthetics of apophaticism*" is an icon of *the invisible beauty* as light in the "shining face" of the ascet. Therefore, this "Shining Face" Christology⁸⁸ is developed in the theology of the icon.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Bogdan G. Bucur notes that "face" Christology, one of the early building blocks for emerging Christian doctrine, never became a major player, but was replaced by more precise vocabulary shaped by the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries. See, on this subject: Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Divine Face and the Angels of the face: Jewish Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christology and Pneumatology," in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids 2009), 143-153. Bucur outlined the occurrence of "face" Christology in Clement of Alexandria, Aphrahat the Persian sage, and in the seven spirits of the book of revelation.

⁸⁹ A direct experience of God's presence, identified as "uncreated light" is found in the theophanic experiences. In this "mystical realism" of the divine-human communion, God is manifesting Himself as absolutely transcendent and immanent at the same time. This theological description of the light of Christ's Face, consisting in different views of God, is a *theology of facts*. Such an "aesthetics of apophaticism" (the beauty of the body, participating in the light of grace) "visible" in the bodies of ascetics, a theology of "brightness", may explain, also, the spirituality of light founded in the contemporary monastic theology (Seraphim of Sarov, Siluan the Athonite, Sophrony Sakharov or Paisios the Athonite). Anthro-*phanie* as "aesthetics of apophaticism", i.e. theophanic experience of the past and present "Holy Fathers", is also reflected in mystical theology of Father Stăniloae by: 1) "intermediary apophaticism" 2) "transfiguration" of the heart 3) "shining face" of man 4) "Face of Christ" (divine energies, irradiated in His human face). For this, see my recent studies: "Orthodox Spirituality as 'Aesthetics of Apophaticism' – an open dialogue between contemporary monastic experience and spiritual theology of Father Dumitru Stăniloae", in *Monahismul creștin și lumea post-modernă*, ed. Alexandru Ionitță & Éliane Poirot OCD, Studia Oecumenica 11 (Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2016); "The Aesthetics of Asceticism. 'The feeling' (*aisthesis*) of the Apophatic as Irradiance of the Inner Presence of Christ (Prolegomena for a Dialogue between Ascetic and Phenomenology)," *Mitropolia Olteniei* 5-8 (2016): 149-163; "Aesthetics Of Apophaticism. The Christophany as the enipostatic Light of Godhead shining of the face of the ascetic," *Studii teologice* 2 (2015); "'The Shining Face' and the revealing Paradox - Man is theopathic. The light of the Face of Christ, despite its uncreated and incomprehensible nature, is perceptible by human senses (purity-illumination-vision or κάθαρσις-φωτισμός-θέωσις)," *Studii Teologia* 3 (2015); "Body (*epsoma*) and Glory / Light (*peooy*). Apa Aphou and the Hesychastic-Eucharistic turn of the Anthropomorphic controversy," in *Dumnezeu - izvorul înțelepciunii : teologie și educație ascetică la Sfinții Părinți*, ed. Daniel Lemeni (Astra Museum, Sibiu: 2016); "The Splendour of the Deified Flesh. Glorification

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MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE IN PAUL EVDOKIMOV'S PERSPECTIVE

ADRIAN EUGEN TRUȚĂ*

ABSTRACT. This article comprises the contributions and the original expressions/formulations of the Russian theologian Paul Evdokimov in his efforts to present the essence of the mystical life within the eastern tradition. The current study gathers explanations related to apophatic theology, *epektasis*, the knowledge of God, the mystical experience and the integration of culture in the ecclesiastical understanding.

Keywords: Paul Evdokimov, mystical experience, Orthodox theology.

The present article tries to comprise the theological expressions resulted from the main directions of mystical experience in orthodoxy, in the manner they were perceived by the erudite theologian Paul Evdokimov, a prominent member of the Russian intelligentsia in Diaspora. The novelty of this study consists of a progressive and logical inclusion of the traits that characterize the experience of God within the space of eastern Christianity in the way they were portrayed over time by the mentioned theologian.

The analysis that is primarily centred on the ecstatic experiences of the spiritual life should not be considered a neo-protestant approach (harismatic/pentecostal) to faith development. These experiences have their origin in the mystical life of the Church, though the eastern tradition has never made a clear distinction between the dogma confessed by the Church - "theology"- and the personal experience of the sacraments of the Church - "mysticism". "The theology is mystical and the mystical life is theological: this is the culmination of theology, theology par-excellence, the contemplation of the Holy Trinity"¹

Evdokimov adds to the icon of the Russian Christianity an innate mysticism of the absolute, yet born from the founding moments of the nation and the faith,

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¹ Paul Evdokimov, *Cunoașterea lui Dumnezeu în tradiția răsăriteană*, trans. Vasile Răducă (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013), 159.

among which the most important is the conversion of Prince Vladimir and the entire Russia followed by the abrogation of the death penalty, “an extreme act for that epoch”² and an extensive social reform centred on Christian philanthropy.

We should also mention here the Testament of Vladimir Monomakh and the canonization of the first two Russian saints, Boris and Gleb. A first mention of their celebration was made on 24th July 1093, when they offered themselves as martyrs who died a violent death after refusing the fratricid fight between them and their armies³.

These actions organically give birth to a mystical characteristic of the Russian soul, which creates a certain apophatism: “Orthodoxy has no need to formulate, it has the need not to formulate”⁴, something that is found in the contemplativeness of Andrei Rubliov and in the foundation with the patron saint of the Holy Trinity of Saint Serghie of Radonej⁵. The anamnesis of this truth appears in the words of the Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow: “The creed is not yours as long as you have not experienced it”⁶.

Overall, we notice in Evdokimov a permanent reference to an extensive patristic bibliography which allows him an authentic theological evolution, deprived of any dogmatical schematism. We therefore mention the freshness of a dialogue between the Holy Scripture and the *men of note* of the Scripture which summarises the Christian experience.

Thus, the spiritual life develops on three directions: human, evil and God-like. Every choice or deed is part of one of the above categories. One of the benefits obtained from the Russian Orthodox theologians who lived in the Western Europe was the ability to make a comparison between the two types of spirituality divided by time and space. Incorrectly termed as mystical experience by Paul Edvokimov, the life of orthodoxy is in fact the life of orthopraxy. “Orthodoxy speaks of participation, spiritual advance in life and *theosis*. But if a mystic is always an ascetic, then isn’t an ascetic always a mystic as well?”⁷

A statement that deserves detailed analysis describes an antinomic and dialectical relation between God and man, in which the man’s salutary efforts to know God are not salutary from the viewpoint of an autonomous will directed to God, but through co-participation, thus only God’s work in us can be salutary.

² Paul Evdokimov, *Hristos în gândirea rusă*, trans. Ion Buga (Bucharest: Editura Symbol, 2001), 45.

³ Ibid., 44-45.

⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, trans. Irineu Ioan Popa (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1996), 118.

Regarded from a certain perspective, this statement seems to be the beginning of an argumentation in favour of pantheism rather than of an apology of a Christian kind. The interaction between grace and sin neither disappears nor appears in the absolute superhuman as only the Embodiment offers the human being the possibility to discover something both humanlike and divine, that is a spiritual-human union, simultaneous and distinctive in manifestation, offering infinite possibilities, indescribable at the same time. That is why, "if we have to save something in this world, it should not be necessary the human, but God's love because He loved us first"⁸

The experience of this love can be understood in Orthodoxy through a pneumatology that aligns the mysteries of an eastern triadocentrism in which it is not the contemplated power that dominates the spirituality, but the source of life that supports the mysteries of the ecclesiastical and personal life. As far as the participant to the religious life succeeds in transferring the mystery of his personal life to his community life then deification is achieved. This transfer is made under the auspices of divine instinct, called to arise life-giving grace. This is what Saint Gregory of Nyssa describes in "Life of Moses", talking about the three ages of the spiritual life: God showed Himself to Moses in light (διὰ φωτός); then He talked to him in the cloud (διὰ νέφελης); finally, when Moses became faultless, he contemplated God in darkness (ἐν γνόφῳ τὸν Θεὸν βλέπει)⁹

This is the main focus for us: the epektasis¹⁰. Through cleanliness towards contemplation in darkness, Evdokimov observes the unitary, inexpressible and transdiscursive¹¹ characteristic of spiritual life in the excellence of its ultimate forms, in the climax of the dialogue between God and man. Iconosofia can be regarded as a form of this process, as well, because it gives rise to teognosia, through the understanding of the invisible that appears to be in the visible of the iconic representation, devoid of the blushing of the human emotions and full of the absence of darkness of Byzantine eternalized long faces. In the past, the crowds went in the wilderness to contemplate the Stylites, "to engrave in their memories the power of spirit over matter [...]; then they came back with clumsy

⁸ Ibid., 119.

⁹ Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa, *Scieri. Partea Întâia*, trans. Dumitru Stăniloae, and Ioan Buga (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1982).

¹⁰ This word summarizes the aspects of ekstasis and enstasis by the fact that "the soul is out of itself towards Another one and the Other one makes His place in the soul, being more innermost for the soul than the man's soul itself. Which explains the paradoxical expression: "To find God is to continually seek for Him", "The Man moves forward just for the fact that he stopped". Paul Evdokimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, trans. Gabriela Moldoveanu (Bucharest: Editura Sophia, 2015).

¹¹ Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, 120.

drawings, prototypes of icons to recall the greatness that man can reach"¹² Only in the iconic sobriety of the prolonged bodies and intentionally darkened faces was the sensual and mystical erotism¹³ specific to other religious spaces dismissed. That is why the Veneration of the Cross in the East does not mean the worship of the wood meant for torture, but the revelation of the Tree of Life that grows from Paradise.

The Russian theologian notes: "As the purpose of this ascent is *Θεωρία τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος*, the mysticism of the light accomplishes itself in the mysticism of the darkness, gnosis in super-gnosis"¹⁴

The truth reiterated by Saint Isaac the Syrian remains more important, and it states that the *vision* of God in any tangible form represents the vision of our own imaginings. This understanding does not suppress faith, but it will never be a direct or real understanding¹⁵.

This way of thinking endorses the apophatism, knowledge through ignorance and it proves the impossibility of the human being to know the essence of God, Who in His divine mercy gives us the over-bright darkness as a point of receptivity and approach. The closer God is to us, the darker he is, concludes Evdokimov¹⁶. This fact allows us to make an exercise of intimacy: something that we want through His initiative, seconded by our will, God is known more through the darkness of the absence than through the light of the certainty or the feeling. Thus, "the ekstasis through «one's self rapture» is once again reunited with the enstasis (staying into one's self) which makes the mystic give up himself and trust himself to God"¹⁷.

This gives one the powerful sensation that knowing God culminates with total silence. The intelligence is mute. The sensation is interrupted. "The theognosis prevails over Eros, but this theognosis cannot be explained. It happens and the amazement springs from the soul"¹⁸

Beyond-knowledge is denied knowledge offered from God's transcendence that obscures the light but Whose immanence creates deification. It is Evdokimov who notices that the Embodiment opens the Eucharist as intimate implication towards the acquisition of grace, without the latter to conduct special categories.¹⁹

¹² Evdokimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, 108.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁴ Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, 120.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁸ Evdokimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, 124.

¹⁹ Due to this reality of grace, our doubt is related to the affiliation of certain saints to certain specific social vocations: will the patron saint of children drastically oppose to the patron saint of the army when it bombards civilians and children, only to win a war? Unwillingly, we use the instruments of an ideological fight between saints and we approach the ridiculous.

These two latter realities, of direct knowledge of comprehensibility and of divine presence turn the mystical union into a point of convergence of mutual relations between God and man. The theologian adopted by the Western World states that "the soul entirely fulfills its destiny only by surpassing itself towards the Other one" in a synthesis that "keeps its own antinomy"²⁰. He compares the western mysticism to the eastern one, reminding us that the latter helps us to know God through God, in contrast to the Latin one that identifies a direct relation between the soul and God²¹, devoid of the liberating antinomy of the patristic spirit.

The problem extends to the outside exposure of the faith, creating thus a conflict between the contemplative state (specific for the Easterners) and the western activism, translated into different social and cultural developments.²²

However, the mystical eros is structured by the dogma. "Apart from the Church, there is no mystical life. The mystical life reaches the peak of freedom, but inwardly it is supported by the dogma experienced in the Mysteries"²³, which entails distancing from the disorganised psychisms of denominations. Christification is not a procedure of sensual or mental imitation; it is the intimate connection with Christ through the Holy Spirit. This explains the lack of stigma in the Eastern spirituality and which proves a mental understanding of the imitation of Christ. Following Christ implies becoming a *Christophore* and at the same time a *pneumatophore*.

The experience of God is not just about the feeling of His suffering humanity, as it is emblematically portrayed in the western mysticism, in some saints' autobiographies or memories. It is the Resurrection and not the Crucifixion that crowns the world, and the Resurrection begins by entering the sealed tomb from which eternal life springs. The thorny issue is the removal of any lyricism which threatens a Christian's spiritual life. It is one of the reasons that justify the abandonment of art, for example, namely Sophrony Sakharov's painting, out of the desire to connect directly and antinomically to the energy of the grace of the Holy Spirit. In mysticism, art is not a direct means of approaching God, as it is the direct impediment of His discovery.

The mystical prayer by excellence (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner) confesses the Holy Trinity, the Embodiment and the abyss

²⁰ Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, 124.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² The charge of notoriety that Orthodoxy slows down the development of civilization as opposed to the creative activism of western Latinity can be solved by appealing to the memory of the history: a thousand years ago, the situation was exactly the opposite; the East was the tip of the creative civilization while the West delayed its cultural improvement.

²³ Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, 125.

from which the mystique invokes the life-giving spirit. It is inaccurate to call it invocation as the Holy Spirit is the one that prays within us with unspoken sighs, to paraphrase a biblical quote. Thus, we discover the theophanic aspect of the prayer of the heart that balances in the present of the Lord the meaning of life and death.

That is why, the ekstasis, as a sign of mystical state, is considered by Saint Symeon the New Theologian as an “occupation of the novices and not of those consummate” (P.G., 143, 401B). Even more interesting is the remark made by Saint John of Lycopolis who said that performing miracles is not an action of the spirit but of the psyche. (“*Orientalia Christiana*”, 120, 1939, p. 35).

Moreover, living in God is not an over-survival; it is a natural wish for life, more natural than the ordinary and its naturalness. “He comes unexpectedly and, without mingling, He mingles with me... My hands are the hands of a miserable, but when I move my hand, it is all Christ” (Hymns of divine love). The hymn is similar to the pauline expression “I know a man in Christ” (II Cor. 12,2) and which throws us into confusion as we inevitably compare it either to the Symeon’s quote on ekstasis which interests only the novices or the biblical passage presenting a man who was caught up to the third heaven, an episode from St. Apostle Paul’s spiritual biography.

The Russian theologian reckons that “the rapture is nothing but personal grace, at all indispensable and never searched”²⁴, and it is much more important to keep in our spiritual memory the expression “I know a man *in* Christ” as one that describes the quintessence of Christian life and which through the Sacrament of Baptism inaugurates sacramental mysticism: “nobody is a mystic without Eucharist”²⁵. At the same time, Evdokimov patristically argues for the ages of spiritual becoming: “Baby Jesus grows up under different images, following each measure, He manifests as a child, as a teenager or as a grown-up” (Sf. Grigore de Nyssa- In Cant. Or. III, P.G. 44, 828) based on the passages: “that Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4,19), “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, as we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4,13).

In other words, each person’s spiritual journey is related to the intimate discovery of our Christ the Saviour’s spiritual age. It might be the case that as grown-ups we discover Christ only as an adolescent. Where can we place mystical ekstasis on this ladder of self-discovery through Christ discovery? The authentic anthropology is that of divine-humanity Embodiment of Christ, but where exactly is the place of mystical ekstasis in this Christian anthropology?

²⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *Vârstele vieții spirituale*, trans. Ion Buga (Bucharest: Asociația filantropică medicală creștină CHRISTIANA, 1993), 210.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

One of the traits of advancing on the path of discovering Christ is the discovery of liturgical dimension of history²⁶ in which every doxology “redeems time” (Ef. 5,16) revealing the eternity of present and its deeds and suppressing the burden of temporal fragmentation, meaning death. “The man of the history lives out of time”²⁷, he feels and chooses that everything he does this moment, the man that he meets right now to be more important, unlike the man who wants “to kill time” and solve his problems in the future or past on whose frontispiece it is written *Escape*.

The spiritual man does not escape, he knows that what seems to be a carceral regime is the antechamber of Christic entirety in which the scent of the life-giving spirit feels extremely real. “The liturgical liberation from the oppression of times, oppression caused by its non-existing dimensions gives rise to the presence of divine in man and allows him to acknowledge it”²⁸. This explains why Mary Magdalene does not recognise Christ after His Resurrection: she was looking for the image she had inside her and thus she could not recognise the Risen Lord. It is also the case with the two apostles on the road to Emmaus, or our situation at turning points and rebirth.

We can conclude that at least one type of self-liberation is the liberation from the past and admission into the liturgical time, of the eternity of the present that intimately discovers the true liberation: God’s entry in us. This may be the red line of our effort: the mystic ekstasis or God’s entry. The more we liberate ourselves, the more we receive God in ourselves. The more we leave ourselves, the more we discover Christ; the more our liberation feels like a rapture, the freer we are to attract Christ in ourselves and to become divine through grace – because we forced God to live within us; the more we force Him to come, the more He comes with His goodness and thus we understand the mystery that never leaving ourselves we have not abandoned the essence of our being and, at the same time, our complete receiving of God in ourselves does not deny us our ordinary characteristic.

Another trait of the spiritual life is the contemplation of the inexpressible, when the light can be seen as both object and means of vision²⁹ as the Scripture testifies about Moses, about the Holy Tabernacle, the Holy Transfiguration, the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the conversion of St. Ap. Paul and in Revelation. There is an inextricable connection between the Tabor light and the Parousia light and the light of the future. In the same way, “the nimbus of the saints in iconography

²⁶ Ibid., 211.

²⁷ Ibid., 212.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 215.

reveal the luminosity of their bodies as an ontological natural state³⁰ in an anticipation that includes the realities of Parousia. Even the angels live ecstatically the light of the King of Glory as the sheep becomes one with the Sheperd³¹.

The Russian theologian notes that “the mystic soul expands and spreads in a cosmic love, it assumes the universal evil, goes through the agony of Gethsemane and arrives at another view that surpasses any judgement”³² that all men are good and worth loving. This motion of the soul does not signify abstinence or sweetness of grace, but the shift from fear to love (I In. 4,18), in which the shadow is light, drunkenness is sober, the fountain has living water (flowing) and the movement is still. “The multiple of gnosis makes room for uniqueness and simplicity”³³.

Moving the centre of gravity of our analysis towards some brief remarks that accompany the representatives of the neo-patristic theology as Evdokimov preceived them, he notes in the theology of Father Gheorghe Florovski a determination to return from the classroom to the altar³⁴, where the economy of the Embodiment of Christ restores the body of Christ, that is the Church. “His judgements are severe and often unjust”³⁵, he concludes. Vladimir Lossky is part of a first remarkable attempt of neo-patristic synthesis³⁶, while Olivier Clement enriches the thinking of his magister (Lossky)³⁷.

Father Jean Meyendorff and Father Alexander Schmemmann produce a collection of articles on the *Primacy of Peter in the Orthodox Church*³⁸ on the life of the Spirit in the Church confessing the truth of ecumenicity and veracity of a synod. Antonie Kartaciov makes an integrative statement: “Any negation, any refusal of social and political duty is a Monophysite heresy, ignorance of the human nature of Christ, a sin against Incarnation”³⁹ with an immediate consequence that the Christian faith cannot accept any totalitarian regime, or any neutral position⁴⁰ of secularism.

Bishop Cassian Bezobrazov addresses these socio-theological theses considering that any initiative to create a state according to evangelical

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Evdokimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, 128.

³² Evdokimov, *Vârstele vieții spirituale*, 215-216.

³³ Evdokimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, 127.

³⁴ Evdokimov, *Hristos în gândirea rusă*, 229.

³⁵ Ibid., 230.

³⁶ Ibid., 231-233.

³⁷ Ibid., 230.

³⁸ Ibid., 234.

³⁹ Ibid., 236.

⁴⁰Neutral at least declaratively, as any option is the option of subjectivity and not that of objectivity of knowledge and action.

laws is doomed to fail, thus rather opting for a permanent testimony like that of Martyrs⁴¹. Equally realistic is his perspective on biblical hermeneutics and inspiration of the texts of the Sacred Scripture so that “those who do not believe in the Resurrection of Christ as it is lived in the Church, found in the Liturgy, proclaimed in the Creed, will never be able to properly read the Bible”⁴².

When others write about Paul Evdokimov, they recognise in him the providence of the integration of human culture in ecclesiastical understanding, like the overthrow of Jung's statement who saw in Christ the image of the Self in the more specific enunciation to the eastern mysticism, that the Self is the image of God. The requirement of a state of psycho-synthesis in the Holy Spirit targets the integration of every being in the light⁴³; thus the symbolic understanding of the eschatological revelation of the feminine is born in which the Spirit and the discovery of the “viscera of the forgiveness”⁴⁴ of God move cvasi-feminine, consoling, revealing, embodied⁴⁵. This will be mostly seen in *Woman and the Salvation of the world* when he uses the psychological concept of archetype and other terms formulated by Jung.

What we overall attempted to do in this study was to gradually describe the points that identify the exceptional mystic experience in the Christian East, selecting the statements that contain the differentiating nuances of the Orthodox faith. The entire effort was animated by a dialogic perspective between the Revelation and the cultural reception, Evdokimov proposing a re-foundation of civilisation through a liturgical experience of the historic time.

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⁴¹ Evdokimov, *Hristos în gândirea rusă*, 237.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 239-240.

⁴³ Olivier Clément, *Orient-Occident. Deux passeurs: Vladimir Lossky et Paul Evdokimov*, Labor et Fides 1, rue Beauregard, CH-1204, (Genève, 1985), 125.

⁴⁴ In original: „des entrailles de miséricorde”.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

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BOOK REVIEWS

Irina Gorainoff, *Sfântul Serafim de Sarov. Convorbirea cu Motovilov* [Saint Serafim From Sarov. The Conversation With Motovilov], Translated in Romanian by His Eminence Andrei Andreicuț (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea Publishing House, 2016)

Despite being such an important figure for the Orthodox Theology, Saint Seraphim of Sarov is not very well known in Romania. Many of the works dedicated to him are in fact popularising books¹ and a lot of them are difficult to find today. That is why the translation of Irina Gorainoff's book, dedicated to the conversation between the Russian Saint and Motovilov, his disciple, represents such an important event for us. It brings the Saint to the attention of the contemporary research and it offers the general

public the possibility to find out more about Father Seraphim, his ideas and his activity and it returns an important document to the historiographical research².

The book is accompanied by a short foreword, written by His Eminence Andrei, Metropolit of Cluj, Maramureș and Sălaj, Archbishop of Vad, Feleac and Cluj, who highlights the fact that Saint Seraphim's words "*The goal of Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit*"³ are as valid as ever today and speaks of various ways in which they can be applied. After a short presentation of his biography (p. 56), his Eminence notes:

"About the work of the Holy Spirit grace, the following comparison is very illustrative: the sinner is like a piece of rusty iron, spreading no light and no heat. When the piece of iron is put into fire, it is cleaned of its rust and it starts spreading light and warmth, so that in the end you can't tell the difference be-

¹ Gheorghe Băbuț, *Sfântul Serafim de Sarov și Sfântul Nil Sorschi – cuvinte duhovnicești (Saint Serafim from Sarov and Saint Nil Sorschi – spiritual words)*, (Oradea, Romanian Pilgrim Press, 1991); Archimandrite Dosoftei Morariu, *Sfântul Serafim de Sarov – viața, nevoițele și învățăturile, his life, struggles and teachings*, 2nd edition, edited by Archimandrite Ioanichie Bălan, (Vânători, Sihăstria Monastery Press, 2004); Michel Evdochimov, *Să ne rugăm 15 zile cu Sfântul Serafim de Sarov (Let's pray 15th days with Saint Serafim from Sarov)*, translated in Romanian Language by Măriuca Alexandrescu, (Bucharest, Sophia Press, 2010); Saint Serafim from Sarov, *Rânduiești de viață creștină (Ordinances of Christian life)*, translated in Romanian Language by Adrian Tănăsescu-Vlas and Xenia Tănăsescu-Vlas, (Bucharest-Alexandria, Sophia Press- „Orthodox Book” Press, 2007); Oxana Toporcean (ed.), *Minunile Sfântului Serafim de Sarov – din însemnările călugărilor Mănăstirii Sarov (The miracles of Saint Serafim from Sarov – from the notes of the monks from Sarov Monastery)*, (Bucharest-Alexandria, Sophia Press - „Orthodox Book” Press, 2009.

² This is because Motovilov's notes were offered to Serghei Nilus by his wife, 72 years after the conversation and, which makes it very important even as a historical document. Cf. Irina Gorainoff, *Sfântul Serafim de Sarov. Convorbirea cu Motovilov (Saint Serafim from Sarov. The conversation with Motovilov)*, translated in Romanian by His Most Holiness Andrei Andreicuț, (Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea Publishing House, 2016), p. 68.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

tween the iron and the fire. The light and heat do not belong to the nature of the iron, but to that of the fire itself. It is the same for the sinner, full of "rust". Entering the fire of the Holy Spirit, living in Christ through the Sacraments, he gets rid of the rust of sins, and becomes God-bearer, spreading spiritual light and heat around him"⁴.

The foreword is then followed by the conversation between Saint Seraphim and his disciple, divided according to various topics: the purpose of the human life (p. 10-11), the receiving of the Holy Spirit (pp. 14-19), the prayer (p. 20), the prayer and the Holy Spirit (p. 22-25), seeing God (p. 29-31), the creation and the ancestral sin (p. 32-37) etc. The Spiritual master offers Motovilov arguments from the Old and the New Testament, in order to convince him about the rationality and the truth of his assertions, but he doesn't just quote from the Holy Scripture, but also speaks of his own spiritual experience. We are reproducing bellow a paragraph which explains how when the Holy Spirit comes, the faithful needs to listen and contemplate, rather than keep praying:

"By praying, we become worthy of meeting Him, our life giver and Saviour. But we should pray only until the Holy Spirit descends upon us and gives us heavenly grace. When He comes, we must stop praying. Indeed, what would be the purpose of saying "come and dwell in us and cleanse us from all uncleanness and save our souls" when He

has already come as an answer to our call, as an answer to our thirst for Him? I will give you an example. Let us assume that you invited me to your house and I came as an answer to your invitation, but you, although I am already with you, you keep saying: "Come to me". I would certainly say: "What is happening with him? This is madness. I came and he keeps calling me. The same thing happens with the Holy Spirit"⁵.

For those who didn't have the experience of the meeting God, these words are beyond comprehension. Saint Seraphim obviously experienced the presence and the work of the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Later on, the disciple will understand his master better, having himself a similar experience, as an answer to his prayers⁶.

Written in an accessible language and beautifully translated, the Irina Gorainoff's book is both an interesting read, and a possible topic an academic research, that would certainly be useful for the contemporary scholar.

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⁴ His Holiness Andrei Andreicuț, "Saint Serafim founded the sense of life", in Irina Gorainoff, *Sfântul Serafim de Sarov. Convorbirea cu Motovilov (Saint Serafim from Sarov. The conversation with Motovilov)*, translated in Romanian by His Holiness Andrei Andreicuț, (Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea Publishing House, 2016), p. 7-8.

⁵ Irina Gorainoff, *Sfântul Serafim de Sarov. Convorbirea cu Motovilov (Saint Serafim from Sarov. The conversation with Motovilov)*, p. 24.

⁶ This moment is described, with all his details, in the book. See: *Ibidem*, pp. 52-60.

BOOK REVIEWS

Protos. Dr. Benedict Vesa, *Personalități duhovnicești contemporane* [Contemporary spiritual personalities], 1st volume (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2016)

The contemporary Orthodox Theological research needs works that provide an overview of the most important biographies and works in the Christian space, and that creates bridges among different faiths. Now, this need is partly fulfilled by the first volume from the series *Contemporary spiritual personalities*, written by Father Benedict Vesa.

The author, well-known in the Romanian Theological research¹, provides a list of 24 biographies of contemporary personalities from the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant space, highlighting the defining element of their lives. Thus, in an unusual presentation, the reader discovers, gathered together, Orthodox Saints: John of Kronstadt (p. 37-44), Nectarios of Aegina (p. 45-52), Nicholas Velimirović (p. 69-76), Maria Skobtsova (p. 77-84), Porphyrios the Kapsokalyvite (pp. 133-140), John Jacob of Neamț (p. 149-156), Paisios of Mount Athos

(p. 205-212), Catholic Saints: Thérèse of the Child Jesus (p. 61-69), Maximilian Kolbe (pp. 93-100), Teresa of Calcutta (p. 141-148), Pier Giorgio Frassati (p. 197-204), Faustina Kowalska (p. 125-132), or Chiara Lubich (p. 181-188) and Protestant spiritual personalities like Dag Hammarskjöld (p. 117-124). Each title contains the name of the spiritual character and one of his/her important qualities, which is then analysed in the presentation. Therefore, when the author speaks about Saint John of Kronstadt, he highlights the importance of the Liturgy in his spirituality (p. 37), when he speaks about Saint Maria Skobtsova, he highlights her mundane apostolate (p. 7), when he presents Maximilian Kolbe, he speaks about his apostolate of love manifested in martyrdom (p. 93), when he speaks about Dag Hammarskjöld, he emphasises the way in which, in his love, the political career and the mystique of faith interacted (p. 117), and s. o.

The book contains a foreword written by His Eminence Andrei, Metropolitan of Cluj, Maramureș and Sălaj (p. 5), where he highlights the importance of spiritual models for today's society and speaks about the importance of the Spiritual Father nowadays. Then, in his foreword (p. 7-11), the author himself explains the reasons behind his approach:

¹ Through books such as: Valentin Vesa, *Cântând milele Domnului. Scurtă introducere în Teologia Sfântului Isaac* (*Singing God mercies. Short introduction in Saint Isaac the Syrian's Theology*, (Alba-Iulia, Reîntregirea Publishing House, 2010); Valentin Vesa, *The Experiential Theology of the Saints and its ecumenical role: St. Isaac the Syrian and St. Thérèse of Lysieux. Comparative study*, (Alba-Iulia, Reîntregirea Publishing House, 2011); Valentin Vesa, *Cunoașterea lui Dumnezeu la Sfântul Isaac Sirul* (*The Knowledge of God at Saint Isaac the Syrian*), (Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea Publishing House, 2013).

"This volume simply wants to highlight the incredible power that the people of God have in preaching the Gospel by living it, and, as a consequence, in the creation of a beautiful world. I have selected 24 personalities, all contemporary, to enlighten our personal lives. We need models and they do exist! There they are, in contemporaneity" (p. 9).

After this foreword, father Benedict dedicates two chapters to His Eminence Andrei, His Spiritual Father (p. 15-35), highlighting the particular aspects of his thinking, his models and his sensibilities. Then, he presents each personality, in a beautiful presentation of several pages each. For the presentation, the author resorts to interesting books, published especially abroad². However, despite the documentation and despite the presence of footnotes for each presentation, the book cannot be considered scientific research, but rather an interesting book that can be read by anyone curious to find out more about the most important personalities of the Christian spirituality of the 20th century.

Written in an accessible language and having a beautiful design and an interesting content, father Benedict's book, which, of course, is not addressed to Orthodox fundamentalists, but to open-minded believers, is an interesting contribution that speaks about the importance of models and tries to emphasise a few examples from all Christian denominations.

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² For example, for Maria Skobtova, he uses: Mother Maria Skobtova, *Essential Writings* (New York, Orbis, 2002), for Maximilian Kolbe: Luigi Boriello, Rafaele di Muro, *Breve storia de la spiritualita cristiana*, (Milano, Ancora, 2013); for Dag Hammarskjöld: Bernhard Erling, *A Reader's Guide to Dag Hammarskjöld, Waymarks*, Minnesota, St. Peter, 2010). But, at the same time, he never forgets to mention Romanian works dedicated to the personalities presented in the book. For example, Saint John of Kronstadt, *Liturghia - cerul pe pământ (Liturgy, the Sky on the Earth)*, translated in Romanian Language by Fr. Ioan Ică jr., (Sibiu, Deisis, 2002); Saint Nectarie of Eghina, *Morala Creștină (Christian Morals)*, (Iași, Doxologia, 2013); or Saint Nicolas Velimirovici, *Răspunsuri la întrebările lumii de azi (Answers to the today's world questions)*, (Bucharest, Predania, 2008).