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# Eastern Theological Journal

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# The History of Ecclesiastical Conflict within the Armenian Community of Transylvania (1697–1700): Bishop Oxendio Virziresco and the ‘Elia Mendrul’ Case<sup>1</sup>

Kornél NAGY<sup>2</sup>

1. Introduction; 2. The ‘Elia Mendrul’ Case; 3. Conclusion

## *I. Introduction*

The Hungarian-speaking intellectuals of Armenian descent of Transylvania in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries regarded Uniate Bishop Oxendio Virziresco Stefanowicz<sup>3</sup> (1654–1715) as an ‘Apostle’ of impeccable morality and unwavering faith. They praised his clerical leadership skills and his determination with which he fought for the interests of his people. On the other hand, they provided some useful information regarding the Bishop’s pastoral (missionary) proselytisation, and ecclesiastical-organisation-related activities.

- 1 Scholarly investigations on the subject of the present study were conducted in Rome and Vatican City thanks to the Klebelsberg Kunó Scholarships granted in the years 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2018. The author wishes to express his gratitude for the support provided. Furthermore, special thanks are also due to Kornélia Vargha and Dr Boldizsár Fejérvári for the English translation.
- 2 Kornél Nagy (1973) PhD (nkornel@yahoo.co.uk; nagy.kornel@abtk.hu) is an Armenologist, Historian and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Eötvös Loránd Research Network, Budapest, Hungary.
- 3 Hereafter referred him as (Bishop) Oxendio Virziresco in the main text.

In the Armenian community of Transylvania, the dominant view was that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's episcopate was devoid of any problems or conflicts, and the ecclesiastical union he accomplished in Transylvania happened seamlessly. The 'Elia Mendrul' Case in 1697, however, cast a dark shadow over this predominantly idyllic image. It is worth noting that the literature does not discuss this story at all, and the question arises whether historians in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries knew about it at all. If they did, they avoided this subject intentionally so as not to tarnish the Bishop's good reputation. Recently, a more complete and clearer picture of the conflict has emerged through studying some documents found at the Historical Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* = APF)<sup>4</sup> in Rome and at the Apostolic (Secret) Archives in Vatican City (*Archivio Apostolico/Segreto Vaticano* = AAV). Research in the past decade has helped to refine, modify, and rethink this idealistic image of the Bishop and provided new data on the case.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, important historical data that later proved to

- 4 The Sacred (Holy) Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*) as a missionary institution/body of the Holy See will hereafter be referred to as *Propaganda Fide*. This institution was founded by the Bull called *Inscrutabili divinae providentiae*, promulgated by Pope Gregory XV (1621–1623) on 6<sup>th</sup> of January in 1622. APF (= Archivio storico della Sacra Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o de "Propaganda Fide", Roma) Coll. Urb (= Collegio Urbano). Vol. 1. Fol. 11.-27/v.
- 5 T. Vanyó, *A bécsi pápai követség levéltárának iratai Magyarországról 1611–1786*, Budapest 1986, (Fontes Historiae Hungaricae Aevi Recentioris.), 180; B. Kovács, *Az erdélyi örménykatolikus egyház és a Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide a 18. század első évtizedében*, in S. Óze – B. Kovács (eds.), *Örmény diaszpóra a Kárpát-medencében*, Művelődéstörténeti műhely–Felekezet és identitás 1, Piliscsaba 2006, 57–58, 67; K. Nagy, „Az erdélyi örmény egyházhoz kapcsolódó olaszországi forrásokról”, in *Lymbus–Magyarságtudományi Közlemények* (2008), 411–428.

be incorrect hindered the historical study of the 'Elia Mendrul' Case. The few writings that dealt with Oxendio Virzirescos's life mentioned that the Bishop was captured by the Tartars of Crimea, who were allies of the Ottoman Empire when they attacked Transylvania in 1697, during the liberation war against the Ottoman Turks (1683–1699). They took him to the Ottoman Empire, where he was imprisoned for three years in Constantinople. He was released from his captivity following the Treaty of Karlowitz (*Sremski/Srjemski Karlovci, Karlóca*) in 1699. Scholarship has demonstrated absurdity of this story since Bishop Oxendio Virziresco sent many hand-written letters and reports on the 'Elia Mendrul' Case from Transylvania to the *Propaganda Fide*, the institution for missionary co-ordination of the Holy See, between 1697 and 1700. Thus, it seems impossible that, in the above mentioned period, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco could send hand-written letters and reports from his captivity when the place of writing was Transylvania.<sup>6</sup>

For almost twenty years, the idea of Catholic missions initiated by the Holy See among the Armenians who had escaped from Principality of Moldavia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to Transylvania between 1668 and 1672 under the leadership of Armenian Apostolic Bishop Minas Aléksanean T'oxat'eci,<sup>7</sup> could not be on the agenda at all.<sup>8</sup> In other words, not until the early 1680s

6 Ch. Lukácsy, *Historia Armenorum Transylvaniae e primordiis gentis usque nostram memoriam e fontibus authenticis et documentis antea ineditis elaborata*, Viennae 1859, 72; L. Bárány, „Verzirescul Auxendius I”, in *Armenia* 4/3 (1888), 101; G. Éble, *A szamosujvári Verzár család*, Budapest 1915, 15; G. Heckenast, *Ki kicsoda a Rákóczi-szabadságharcban?*, K. Mészáros (ed.), Budapest 2005, 455.

7 In the transliteration of Armenian names and terms in this article, the internationally accepted academic norms approved and mandated by the International Association of Armenian Studies (*Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes* = AIEA) were applied.

8 APF SC (= Scritture riferite nei Congressi) Fondo Moldavia. Vol. 1. Fol. 106r., Fol. 146r.–v.+ Fol. 149v., Fol. 155r.–156v., Fol. 358r.; APF SC Fondo

could the recently united Armenian (Uniate) Archiepiscopate in Lviv (*Lemberg, Lwów, Leopoli, Leopolis, L'vov, Ilov*) and the Holy See undertake Catholicising missions in this community.<sup>9</sup> Lviv had attempted to support its positions by stating that the Armenian refugees to Transylvania had always been under the jurisdiction of the Archiepiscopate, the jurisdiction of which could be enforced even after the ecclesiastical union in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1627–1652) during the tenure of Archbishop Nikol Torosowicz (1603–1681).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Francesco Martelli (1633–1708), Titular (*in partibus infidelium*) Archbishop of Corinth, and Opizio Pallavicini (1632–1700), Titular Archbishop of Ephesus, Apostolic Nuncios in

- Moldavia. Vol. 2. Fol. 120/r.–v., Fol. 121/r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Moscovia Polonia e Rutheni. Vol. 2. Fol. 179/r.–v.; APF FV (= Fondo di Vienna). Vol. 8. Fol. 74r.–77/v., Fol. 80/r.–v.; AAV (= Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Città del Vaticano) ANVAR (= Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Varsavia). Vol. 98. Fol. 641r.–644/v.; APMV (= Archivio dei Padri Mechitaristi di Venezia, Venezia) MS (= Manuscripta). No. 771. Fol. 124/r.–v.; BMK (= Bibliothek des Mechitaristenklosters, Wien) MS (= Manuscripta). No. 331. Fol. 1/v.–2r.; MAMAT (= Surb Mesrop Maštoc' i Anwan Matenadaran, Erewan/ Armenian National Archive called Saint Mesrop Maštoc') MS (= Manuscripta). No. 9484. Fol. 304r.
- 9 APF Acta SC (= Acta Sacrae Congregationis). Vol. 52. Fol. 122/r.–v., Fol. 155r.–156/v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 53. Fol. 248r.; APF SOCG (= Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali). Vol. 471. Fol. 324r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 482. Fol. 132/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 487. Fol. 64/r.–v.+ Fol. 70/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 488. Fol. 79r., Fol. 174r.–175r., Fol. 274/r.–v., Fol. 275r.–276/v., Fol. 283r.–284/v., Fol. 285r., Fol. 286r.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 1. Fol. 265r.–267/v., Fol. 525r.–526/v., Fol. 602r.–608/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 3. Fol. 377r.–381r.; APF SC Fondo Moldavia. Vol. 2. Fol. 126r.–127/v., Fol. 128r.–131/v., Fol. 134r.–135/v.; APF SC Fondo Moldavia. Vol. 3. Fol. 3/r.–v., Fol. 7/r.–v.
- 10 E. Schütz, *An Armenian-Kiptchak Document of 1640 from Lvov and its Background in Armenian and in the Diaspora*, in Gy. Kara (ed.), *Between the Danube and the Caucasus, A Collection of Papers concerning Oriental Sources on the History of Peoples of Central and South-Eastern Europe*, Budapest 1987, 247–330.

Warsaw, as well as Theatine Father Francesco Giambattista Bonesana CR (1649–1709), Rector of the Armenian College (*Collegium Armenum*) in Lviv founded by the Holy See in 1664, also reported to Rome that the Catholic missions among the Armenians in Transylvania should be seen as of prominent importance. The main co-ordinating body of the Holy See for mission work, the *Propaganda Fide*, did not raise objections in this regard.<sup>11</sup>

Before long, senior officials at the Holy See found the suitable clergyman in Oxendio Virziresco's person for Catholicising the Armenians of Transylvania.<sup>12</sup> He was a Moldavian-born Armenian, who had been educated at the Pontifical Urban College<sup>13</sup> (*Collegium Urbanum*) of the *Propaganda Fide* in Rome and spoke a number of languages fluently besides his native Armenian. His election was partly motivated by the indisputable fact that his family had escaped from Moldavia to Transylvania back in the year of 1668 together with Bishop Minas Alēksanean T'oxat'ec'i. For Oxendio Virziresco, the main aim of his missionary task was evident and simple from the perspective of the authorities of the Holy See: to implement the ecclesiastical union of the Armenians and organise the Armenian Uniate (Catholic) Church in Transylvania.<sup>14</sup>

11 APF SOCG. Vol. 496. Fol. 503r.; APF Lettere SC (= Lettere e Decreti della Sacra Congregazione). Vol. 72. Fol. 1/v.–2r.; AAV SSP (= Segretaria di Stato. Polonia). Vol. 101. Fol. 498r.–499/v.

12 APF Acta SC. Vol. 51. Fol. 81r., Fol. 114r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 70. Fol. 2/r.–v., Fol. 42r., Fol. 53/r.–v., Fol. 54r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 73. Fol. 252/r.–v.

13 Urban College (*Collegium Urbanum, Collegio Urbano*) in Rome was founded by Pope Urban VIII (1623–1644) with his Bull *Immortalis Dei Filii* promulgated on 1<sup>st</sup> of August in 1627. APF Coll. Urb. Vol. 1. Fol. 36r., Fol. 37r., Fol. 103r.–120/v., Fol. 131r.–139/v., Fol. 141r.–142/v., Fol. 161r.

14 APF Acta SC. Vol. 51. Fol. 154/r.–v., Fol. 232r., Fol. 255/v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 53. Fol. 248/r.–v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 54. Fol. 207/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 490. Fol. 110r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 491. Fol. 12/r.–v., Fol. 13/v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 74.

As a simple missionary and priest, Oxendio Virziresco set out from Rome and, via Lviv, arrived in Transylvania in 1685.<sup>15</sup> Soon he managed to convert many Armenians to Catholicism in the Gheorghen (*Gyergyó*) region, with its centre in the town of Gheorgheni (*Niklasmarkt, Gyergyószentmiklós*).<sup>16</sup> However, the newcomer missionary from Rome was not wholeheartedly welcomed by the local Armenian Apostolic community: The beginning of his mission was marked by fervent conflicts with Bishop Minas and his clergy. It was reported that, during his initial mission, Oxendio Virziresco was hit gravely on two occasions by the clergy and was titled ‘a Frankish heretic’ (Western Latin) priest ‘from the Lands of the Franks (i.e. Rome)’.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, Oxendio Virziresco had a contradictory relationship with Bishop Minas Alēksanean T’oxat’ec’i, the Apostolic Bishop of the Armenians in Transylvania. He knew that with full certainty that the key to uniting the Armenians in Transylvania with the Roman Catholic Church was persuading Bishop Minas into joining Catholicism. Although Oxendio Virziresco was not able to obtain the elderly Armenian Bishop’s consent to uniting with Rome, he succeeded in convince the Bishop to come with him to Lviv and start negotiations with Armenian Uniate Archbishop

Fol. 19/r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 1. Fol. 525r.–526/v., Fol. 602r.–610/v.; APF Coll. Urb. Vol. 1. Fol. 269r.

- 15 APF Acta SC. Vol. 55. Fol. 60/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 492. Fol. 310/v., Fol. 313/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 493. Fol. 30r.+ Fol. 31/v., Fol. 376r.+ Fol. 377/v.+ Fol. 378/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 495B. Fol. 232r.–234/v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 73. Fol. 252/r.–v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 74. Fol. 19/r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 3. Fol. 417r., Fol. 418r., Fol. 465/r.–v.
- 16 *Step’anosi Rōšk’ay Žamanakagrut’iwn kam tarekank’ ekelec’akank’* [An Ecclesiastical Annal Known as Chronology Written by Step’anos Rōšk’ay], ašx. (ed.) Hamazasp Anton Oskean OMeck, Vienna 1964, 185.
- 17 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 3. Fol. 462/r.–v., Fol. 464r., Fol. 465/r.–v., Fol. 468r.–469/v., Fol. 488r., Fol. 490r.

Vardan Hunanean (1644–1715) about a possible ecclesiastical union in November 1686.<sup>18</sup>

According to retrospective interpretations, due to Oxendio Virziresco's persuasion, Bishop Minas Aléksanean T'oxat'ec'i declared his adherence to the Catholic faith and officially pronounced ecclesiastical union with Rome on behalf of the whole Armenian community of Transylvania.<sup>19</sup> This event was attested by some scholarly unelaborated documents by the Jesuit fathers, Rudolf Bzensky SJ (1651–1715) from Czecho-Moravia and István Csete (1648–1718) SJ from Hungary in the mid-1690s.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, sources – missionary letters, reports, and relations – kept in the National Archives of Armenia in Yerevan (*Matenadaran*), the Archives of the Holy See in Rome have clearly disproved the fact that Bishop Minas Aléksanean

18 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 3. Fol. 370r.; APF SC Fondo Moldavia. Vol. 2. Fol. 345r.–346.; BMK MS. No. 511. Fol. 199r.; AAV ANVAR. Vol. 98. Fol. 661r.; ELTE EKK (= Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Egyetemi Könyv- és Kézirattár/University Library and Manuscript Collection, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) Coll. Hev (= Collectio Hevenesiana). Cod. 21. Pag. 81.; A. Molnár, *Lehetetlen küldetés? Jezsuiták Erdélyben és Felső-Magyarországon a 16–17. században*, TDI Könyvek 8, Budapest 2009, 213–215.

19 Lukácsy, *Historia Armenorum*, 68; *Kamenic': Taregirk' Hayoc' Lebastani ew Rumenioy* [Chronicle of Kamieniec: The Annals of the Armenians in Poland and Romania], ašx. (ed.) Łewond Ališan OMech, Venetik 1896, 126–127, 197; G. Petrowicz, *La chiesa armena in Polonia e nei paesi limitrofi, Parte Terza (1686–1951)*, Roma 1988, 78; K. Nagy, „Did Vardapet Minas Tokhatetsi, Bishop of the Armenians in Transylvania, Make a Confession of Faith in Roman Catholic Church?”, in *Haigazian – Armenological Review* 31 (2011), 427–442; K. Nagy, *The Church-Union of the Armenians in Transylvania: A Portrait of the Uniate Bishop Oxendio Virziresco*, in E. Pál – B. Kovács (eds.), *Far away from Mount Ararat. Armenian Culture in the Carpathian Basin*, Budapest 2013, 18–19.

20 APF SOCG. Vol. 537. Fol. 418/r.–v.; ARSI (= Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Roma) Fondo Austria. Historia. Vol. 155. Fol. 81/r.–v.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 16. Pag.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 21. Pag. 82; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 29. Pag. 346.; ELTE EKK Coll. Kapr (= Collectio Kaprinayana). A (= Első Sorozat/ First Series). Cod. 11. Pag. 112.

T'oxat'ec'i' could have pledged allegiance or declared the ecclesiastical union with Rome.<sup>21</sup> However, these documents have only yielded (the most detailed) accounts of Bishop Minas Alēksanean T'oxat'ec'i's sudden death and its circumstances at the very end of the year 1686.<sup>22</sup>

At any rate, the death of Bishop Minas had facilitated Oxendio Virziresco's further missionary efforts in Transylvania. His strongest adversary was now out of his way, so he was able to devote himself to the task of Catholicising the Apostolic (Oriental) Armenians, who had lost their spiritual and – of course – secular leader. As a result of his missionary activity and efforts, in February 1689, a large Armenian delegation led by members of the clergy, – Arch-Dean (*awagerēc'*) Elia Mendrul (ca. 1630–1701), Andrea Alacz (ca. 1631–1698), Astwacatur Nigošean, and Vardan Martinus Potoczky (ca. 1640–1702) – arrived in Lviv from Bistrița (*Bistritz, Nösen, Bistrizzi, Beszterce*), Transylvania. On behalf of the whole community, the group officially accepted the ecclesiastical union and made a formal declaration of their adherence to the Catholic faith to Archbishop Vardan Hunanean.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the Armenians in Transylvania consented to the

- 21 APF Acta SC. Vol. 55. Fol. 207r.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 70. Fol. 103r.–105/v., Fol. 341r.–346/v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 71. Fol. 69r.–70/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 494. Fol. 370r.–371/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 456r.–457r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 76. Fol. 40/r.–v., Fol. 90/v.–91r.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 3. Fol. 434/r.–v.+ Fol. 435/v., Fol. 498/r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 13/r.–v., Fol. 374r.–375/v.; APF Coll. Urb. Vol. 3. Fol. 472/r.–v.; AAV ANV (= Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Vienna). Vol. 196. Fol. 219r.–220r.; MAMAT MS. No. 9478. Fol. 60r., Fol. 61/v.
- 22 APF Acta SC. Vol. 56. Fol. 148/r.–v., Fol. 256r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 495/A. Fol. 232r.–234/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 496. Fol. 503r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 497. Fol. 337/r.–v., Fol. 338/r.–v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 76. Fol. 33/v.–34/v.; AAV ANVAR. Vol. 177. Fol. 161/v.–162/v.; AAV SSP. Vol. 100. Fol. 74r.–75r.; Rōšk'ay, *Žamanakagrut'iw*n, 186.
- 23 APF Acta SC. Vol. 59. Fol. 165r.–169/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 504. Fol. 103r., Fol. 104r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 78. Fol. 36/v.–37/v., Fol. 37/v.–38r.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 105/r.–v., Fol. 124r.; MAMAT MS. No. 1512. Fol. 557r.–

ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Armenian Uniate Archiepiscopacy in Lviv. The 1689 ecclesiastical union of the Armenians of Transylvania greatly contributed to Oxendio Virziresco's appointment by Pope Alexander VIII (1689–1691) as Titular Bishop of Aladia and Apostolic Vicar of the Armenians in Transylvania on 2<sup>nd</sup> of October in 1690. Moreover, an annual stipend of 100 Roman *scudi* was granted to him by the Holy See.<sup>24</sup> Simultaneously, Rome placed the Armenians of Transylvania under its own direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction in spite of considerable protest by the Armenian Uniate Archiepiscopate.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, many unanswered questions remained concerning the ecclesiastical union of the Armenians of Transylvania concluded in Lviv in 1689. It was not clear which former (mediaeval) ecclesiastical-union model the union of the Armenians in Transylvania was based upon. The ecclesiastical union was confined to the acknowledgement of the Pope's primacy and did not affect such important questions as the marital status of Armenian Uniate priests, the teaching of

560r.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 15. Pag. 251.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 16. Pag. 34.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 21. Pag. 83.

24 Finally, Oxendio Virziresco was consecrated bishop at the Armenian Uniate Cathedral dedicated to the Assumption of Holy Theotokos in Lviv on 30 July 1691. His principal consecrator was Archbishop Vardan Hunanean. Furthermore, his principal co-consecrators were Konstantyn Samuel Lipski (1625–1698), Roman Catholic (Latin-rite) Archbishop of Lviv, and Andrea Santacroce (1655–1712), Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw (later in Vienna), Titular Archbishop of Seleucia in Isauria. APF Acta SC. Vol. 61. Fol. 84r.–87v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 507. Fol. 87r.–88v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 510. Fol. 94r., Fol. 101r.–v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 80. Fol. 64r.–v., Fol. 65r.–v., Fol. 74r.–v., Fol. 86v.–87v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 81. Fol. 18r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 140r., Fol. 146r.–v.; PL (= Prímási Levéltár/ Primate's Archives, Esztergom) AEV (= Archivum Ecclesiasticum Vetus) SPSZ (= Sub Primate Széchényi). No. 273/2.; Lukácsy, *Historia Armenorum*, 70; Rõšk'ay, *Žamanakagrut' iwn*, 187; Petrowicz, *La chiesa armena in Polonia*, 94.

25 APF SOCG. Vol. 510. Fol. 95r.–v.; APF CP. Vol. 29. Fol. 612r.–613r., Fol. 617v.; APF Coll. Var (= Collegi Vari). Vol. 2. Fol. 704r.–705r.

the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), calendar use, the celebration of the Eucharist, the language of the liturgy, the remuneration of the clergy or the elevation of the clergy to nobility. When the Ecclesiastical Unions of Brest (*Brześć nad Bugiem*) (1596), Užgorod (*Ungwar, Ungvár*) (1646), and Alba Iulia (*Weissenburg, Apulum, Alba Giulia, Gyulafehérvár*) (1697–1701) were signed, these problems were addressed in the respective agreements. As a result of the ecclesiastical union, as could be predicted, a whole battlefield of conflicting interpretations would emerge in the following years.<sup>26</sup>

Unresolved issues would remain constant sources of conflict among the Armenian clergy in Transylvania. Ecclesiastical union was interpreted differently by Oxendio Virziresco and the Uniate Armenian clergy. The Armenian Uniate Church convened a synod

26 P. Tusor, „Lippay György egri püspök (1637–1642) jelentése Felső-Magyarország vallási helyzetéről, (Archivio Santacroce)”, in *Levéltári Közlemények* 73/1-2 (2005), 199–241; G.-M. Miron, *Biserica greco-catolică din Transilvania. Clerșienoriași (1697–1782)*, Cluj–Napoca 2004, 34–75; T. Végshő, „Pálos hittérítők kapcsolatai Északkelet-Magyarország görögkatolikusáival”, in *Athanasiana* 12 (2001), 65–81; Idem, „Benkovich Ágoston váradipüspök működésének görögkatolikus vonatkozásai”, in *Athanasiana* 16 (2003), 99–122; Idem, <*Catholice reformare*>Ágoston Benkovich O. S. P. P. E. *missionario apostolic vescovo di Várad (1631–1702)*, Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae, Classis II. Tom., 3, Budapest–Roma, 2007, 227–244, 291–294; I. Baán, „La pénétration de l’uniatisme en Ukraine au XVII siècle”, in *XVII siècle* 55 (2003), No. 3, 515–526; I. Baán, *Adalékok a jezsuiták tevékenységéhez a magyarországi rutének uniója terén*, in A. Molnár – Cs. Szilágyi – I. Zombori (eds.), *Historicus Societatis Iesu. Szilas László Emlékkönyv*, METEM Könyvek 62, Budapest 2007, 118–129; Idem, *The Process of Dispensation of Péter Parthenus, Greek Rite Bishop of Munkács*, in G. Platania – M. Sanfilippo – P. Tusor, *Gli archivi della Santa Sede e il regno d’Ungheria (secc. 15–20). In memoriam di Lajos Pásztor*, Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae 4, Budapest – Roma 2008, 113–132; T. Végshő, „...mint igazi egyházi ember.” *A történelmi munkácsi egyházmegye létrejötte és a 17. századi fejlődése*, Nyíregyháza 2011, 23–29, 117–126.

in Lviv at the end of October 1689.<sup>27</sup> The Armenians of Transylvania were also invited, but no-one attended the event for unknown reasons. Oxendio Virziresco did not accept the decrees as binding for himself, as has been mentioned before, since the Armenians in Transylvania were directly subordinated to the *Propaganda Fide* from 1690 and were not under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Uniate Archdiocese of Lviv.<sup>28</sup> This proved to be another source of conflict as Oxendio Virziresco's assistants were alumni of the Armenian College (*Collegium Armenum*) in Lviv and sought to honour the decrees of the 1689 Lviv Synod instead of endorsing Oxendio Virziresco's views on ecclesiastical union.<sup>29</sup>

Oxendio Virziresco, who had been studying at Urban College in Rome, intended to achieve total Latinisation of the Armenians of Transylvania following ecclesiastical union. In his understanding, an Armenian could only be a true Christian if he or she observed the traditions, rites and feasts of the Roman Catholic Church, and he considered any Armenian – whether a layperson or a clergyman – a heretic or a schismatic if they continued to adhere to the old Armenian customs and rites despite the ecclesiastical union. Oxendio Virziresco thought the reason for the hardships and sufferings of the Armenian

27 APF Acta SC. Vol. 58. Fol. 95r.-v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 59. Fol. 83r., Fol. 167/ r.-v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 503. Fol. 15r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 504. Fol. 104/r.-v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 587. Fol. 47r.-51r.; APF CP (= Congregazioni Particolari). Vol. 29. Fol. 361r.-367/v., Fol. 613r.-616/v., Fol. 629r., Fol. 634r.-635/v., Fol. 636r., Fol. 638r.-640/v., Fol. 643r.-635/v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 79. Fol. 2/v.-3/v., Fol. 94/v., Fol. 110r.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 51r., Fol. 53r., Fol. 56r., Fol. 69/r.-v., Fol. 70r., Fol. 92r.-93/v.; AAV ANVAR. Vol. 107. Fol. 151r.-152/v., Fol. 154r.-155r.; K. Nagy, *Lembergben kezdődött... Az örménykatolikus egyház születése*, Nyíregyháza 2020, 109–115.

28 APF CP. Vol. 29. Fol. 612r.-613/v., Fol. 617/r.-v., Fol. 628/r.-v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 512. Fol. 180r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 79. Fol. 134r.-135/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 140/r.-v.

29 APF SOCG. Vol. 510. Fol. 95r., Fol. 96r.

people was caused by the fact that the Armenians abandoned the Orthodox Catholic faith in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and embraced false and heretic teachings, incurring the constant punishment of God Almighty. Ecclesiastical union with the Roman Catholic Church would, therefore, be the only way for the Armenian people to avoid further ordeals.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the ecclesiastical union of the Armenians of Transylvania left a series of additional questions unanswered, leading to innumerable conflicts within the Armenian community of Transylvania in the 1690s. One had to do with the differences between Latin and Armenian church traditions and customs. Oxendio Virziresco himself was once dedicated to unconditional Latinisation, while the majority of his priests were converts to Catholicism, originally raised or 'socialised' in the cultural *milieu* of the Armenian Apostolic Church. As has been mentioned above, Oxendio Virziresco had been educated at Urban College, where Latin or Western theological training was favoured at the time. Despite his Armenian origins, he always considered himself a man of the Roman Catholic Church. A crucial constituent of that identity must have been the fact that on 9 August in 1681, in the Church of Santa Maria in Traspontina in Rome, he was ordained priest according to the Latin Rite by Edoardo/Odoardo Cybo (1619–1705), Titular Archbishop of Seleucia in Isauria and General Secretary of the *Propaganda Fide* at the time (and later Cardinal as well).<sup>31</sup> So, he would celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments in

30 APF SOCG. Vol. 572. Fol. 283r.–285v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 215r.–v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 265r.–268v.; ELTE EKK G (= Res Transylvanica. Historia). Vol. 522. Fol. 96r.–v., Fol. 137r.–v., Fol. 173r.–v.

31 Initially, the Holy See and the *Propaganda Fide* intended newly-Catholicised Archbishop Yovhannēs Tutunĵean Polsec'i (also known as Yovhannēs Šamiramkertac'i or Yovhannēs Vanec'i) (1618–1703), former Armenian Apostolic Patriarch of Constantinople (under the name John V) (1664–1664, 1665–1667), staying in Rome at the time, to perform the priestly ordination of

accordance with the Latin Rite. Consequently, he conducted services in Latin. By contrast, Armenian priests continued to celebrate Mass according to the Armenian Rite even after ecclesiastical union. For them, as has been suggested, ecclesiastical union consisted in more than acknowledging the supremacy of the Pope.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, at the turn of the years 1691 and 1692, a conflict was in progress in Bistrița centred around questions of church discipline and the ancient Armenian customs. Two former Armenian Uniate priests, Vardan Martinus Potoczky and Astwacatur Nigoşean, preached against the ecclesiastical union. Oxendio Virziresco requested the secular authorities in Transylvania to help but could not stop anti-union incidents.<sup>33</sup> Prince Michael Apafi II (1676–1713) offered protection to the resistant Armenians of Bistrița and settled down fifty families led by Priest Vardan Martinus Potoczky in

Oxendio Virziresco. However, the Holy See's authorities finally declined to comply because, in their view, Archbishop Yovhannēs Tutunjian was not a genuine Catholic convert. APF Acta SC. Vol. 51. Fol. 3r.–4v., Fol. 81r., Fol. 114r./v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 493. Fol. 30r.+ Fol. 31v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 70. Fol. 42r., Fol. 54v., Fol. 66r.–67v., Fol. 70r., Fol. 71r.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 3. Fol. 285r.–286v., Fol. 403r.–404v., Fol. 419r.–420v.; APF Ospizi. Vol. 1. Fol. 196r.–200v.; D. Sebouh Aslanian, “Many Have Come Here and Have Deceived Us.” Some Notes on Asateur Vardapet (1644–1728), An Itinerant Armenian Monk in Europe”, in *Handēs Amsōreay – Zeitschrift Für Armenische Philologie* 133 (2019), No. 1–12, 159–168, 173, 181.

<sup>32</sup> APF SOCG. Vol. 493. Fol. 376r.+ Fol. 377v. + Fol. 378/v.

<sup>33</sup> APF Acta SC. Vol. 61. Fol. 84r.–87v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 62. Fol. 125r.–128/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 512. Fol. 180r., Fol. 181r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 520. Fol. 286/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 522. Fol. 453r.–454/v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 81. Fol. 130r.–131/v., Fol. 215r.–216/v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 82. Fol. 24r.–25/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 261r./v., Fol. 262/r.–v., Fol. 263/r.–v., Fol. 265/r.–v., Fol. 266r., Fol. 267r.–268/v.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 21. Pag. 77., Pag. 84.; PL AEV SPSZ. No. 274/4.1., No. 274/4.2., No. 274./8.3., No. 274/8.4.

Dumbrăveni (*Ebbeschdorf, Ebesfalva, Elisabetopoli, Elisabethopolis*).<sup>34</sup> Anger, however, did not subside, but tensions continued to simmer.

## 2. *The 'Elia Mendrul' Case*

The conflict erupted in January 1697, when Bishop Oxendio Virziresco forced four Armenian married priests (three of them from Bistrița) to divorce their wives and leave their families since, due to their sodomite, errant customs (aka heresy), they were a threat to ecclesiastical union and the Uniate Armenian community in Transylvania. Oxendio Virziresco named Elia Mendrul, Andrea Alacz, Elia Teodorowicz and the apostate priest Vardan Martinus Potoczky Dumbrăveni and identified Archdeacon Elia Mendrul as the 'ringleader'.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, only little data is available about Elia Mendrul's life. He fled from Moldavia to Transylvania with Bishop Minas. He was considered head of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Transylvania after Bishop Minas's death as he was Vicar to the deceased Bishop. At the turn of the years 1688 and 1689, the missionary Oxendio Virziresco managed to enlist his support for the cause of ecclesiastical union. From Oxendio Virziresco's perspective, this was a victory because he was worried that after Bishop Minas's death, the Armenian Catholics would appoint Elia Mendrul as Apostolic Bishop of the Armenians

34 APF Acta SC. Vol. 63. Fol. 68r.-70v., Fol. 79r.-v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 514. Fol. 495r.-496v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 517. Fol. 102r.-v., Fol. 103r.-v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 82. Fol. 63v.-64v., Fol. 95v.-96v., Fol. 110r.-111v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 313r.-v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 148r.; K. Nagy, "The Document *Fidelis Relatio* (1693) and the Armenians in Transylvania. (A Memoire about the Armenian Church in Transylvania)", in *Haigazian – Armenological Review* 30 (2010), 379–394.

35 APF Lettere SC. Vol. 87. Fol. 8r.-9v.

in Transylvania.<sup>36</sup> Elia Mendrul and the apostate Vardan Martinus Potoczky, who would later move from Bistrița to Dumbrăveni, led the delegation of Transylvanian Armenians signing the ecclesiastical union with Archbishop Vardan Hunanean in February 1689.<sup>37</sup> They even requested Giacomo Cantelmi/Cantelmo (1645–1702), Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw and Titular Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to intervene at the Holy See for the appointment of Oxendio Virziresco as their Bishop.<sup>38</sup>

The priests incriminated in 1697 did not leave Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's charges unanswered. Elia Mendrul and Andrea Alacz contacted Giovanni Antonio Davia (1660–1740), Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw (subsequently in Vienna) and Titular Archbishop of Thebae, and sent him a letter of complaint on behalf of the Armenian community of Bistrița. They described Oxendio Virziresco as a corrupt and tyrannical prelate.<sup>39</sup> They informed Nuncio Davia that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco demanded money for every service. In case the members of the community failed to pay, the Bishop would

36 GYÖKPK (= Gyergyószentmiklósi Örmény Katolikus Plébánia Könyvtára/ Library of the Armenian Catholic Parish of Gheorgheni) PT (= A Plébánia története/ History of the Parish). No. I./1.

37 APF Acta SC. Vol. 59. Fol. 165r.–169v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 60. Fol. 14v.–19v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 504. Fol. 103r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 506. Fol. 61r.–v., Fol. 63r.–64v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 510. Fol. 97r.–98v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 78. Fol. 36v.–37v., Fol. 37v.–38r., Fol. 102r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 69r.–70v., Fol. 82r.–83v., Fol. 124r.–v.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 21. Pag. 77.; Rõšk'ay, *Žamanakagrut'iwn*, 186.

38 APF CP. Vol. 29. Fol. 630r.–631v., Fol. 638r., Fol. 644r.–v., Fol. 645r.–v., Fol. 647r., Fol. 648r.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 15. Pag. 251–252.; ELTE EKK. Coll. Hev. Cod. 16. Pag. 34.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 21. Pag. 77–80; Lukácsy, *Historia Armenorum*, 71; *Symbolae ad illustrandam historiam ecclesiae orientalis in terris Coronae S. Stephani*, ed. Nicolaus Nilles S. J., Vol. 2., Oeniponte, 1885, 921.

39 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 520r., Fol. 523r.–v.

not administer the sacraments to them.<sup>40</sup>

The only information available on Andrea Alacz is that, at the time of the conflict with Vardan Potoczky in 1692, he stood by Bishop Oxendio Virziresco and prepared the report for the Transylvanian *Gubernium* (Governorship) about Armenian religious customs in co-operation with another person. The Nuncio was also informed that, when visiting the Armenian households in Bistrița at feast of Epiphany in 1697, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco demanded money from every head of household. Those who were not willing to pay were threatened with excommunication. Oxendio Virziresco accused the Armenian community of celebrating Christmas not on 25 December but on 6 January 6, according to old Armenian customs. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco also charged the Armenian merchants of the Oriental Apostolic Church of Sibiu (*Hemannstadt, Cibinio, Cibinium, Nagyszeben*) surplice fees.<sup>41</sup> They were reluctant to pay since they were not under the Bishop's jurisdiction and they were not Transylvanians but Armenians from Greater Armenia. Therefore, the merchants 'harassed' by the Bishop contacted the priests who were also accused by Oxendio Virziresco and told them about the Bishop's actions.<sup>42</sup> The merchants called the Bishop a 'fraudulent scoundrel deserving to be hanged'. Elia Mendrul and the other priests believed that Oxendio Virziresco was intent on diverting attention from his obscure financial dealings by accusing them.<sup>43</sup>

News of the incident reached the Apostolic Nunciature in Warsaw thanks to the written complaint dispatched by the incriminated priests to Lviv. Moreover, Theatine Father Sebastiano Maria Accorsi CR (ca. 1640–1704), Rector of the Armenian College in Lviv, confirmed for

40 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 517r., Fol. 518r., Fol. 519r.–v.

41 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 523r.–v.; ELTE EKK. Coll. Hev. Cod. 24. Pag. 289–292.

42 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 523r.–v.

43 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 523r.–v.

the *Propaganda Fide* that, in Bistrița, Transylvania, the Bishop and the Armenian community were embroiled in a conflict not over the question of married priests but Oxendio Virziresco's unclear financial dealings.<sup>44</sup> Father Accorsi attributed the conflict to the poor financial situation of the Bishop, who received his annual remuneration of a hundred Roman *scudi* from the *Propaganda Fide* always with considerable delays. Due to the alleged cases of abuse, the Apostolic Nunciature in Warsaw proposed Oxendio Virziresco's removal to the Holy See. The Rector did not approve the suggestion. He argued that removing Oxendio Virziresco would do damage to the missionary work among the Armenians of Transylvania.<sup>45</sup>

Father Accorsi voiced his concern that the controversies among the Armenians in Transylvania might lead to chaos and, thus, the final outcome could well be the same as with the Lviv ecclesiastical union of the Armenian Archbishop Nikol Torosowicz (1603–1681). Therefore, Accorsi asked the *Propaganda Fide* to investigate the case of Oxendio Virziresco and the married priests in all its detail.<sup>46</sup>

The discord, however, persisted in Bistrița. Bishop Oxendio declared the married status of Elia Mendrul and his associates heretical, while the accused priests described the Bishop as ungodly and devious. Oxendio Virziresco set up an *ad hoc* commission to investigate the matter in June 1697.<sup>47</sup> Apart from him, Mihály Sorger OFM Conv., Prior of the Monastery of the Order of Friars Minor in Canta (*Szekler-Neumarkt, Kézdivásárhely, Kanta*) and Emmanuel Jakubowicz, a Uniate priest and son of the Armenian

44 APF SOCG. Vol. 488. Fol. 77r., Fol. 81r., Fol. 82r., Fol. 84r., Fol. 87/v., Fol. 91r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 514. Fol. 159r.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 86r.–87r.

45 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 521/r.–v., Fol. 522/r.–v.; AAV SSP. Vol. 116. Fol. 432r.–433/v., Fol. 677/r.–v.; AAV SSP. Vol. 118. Fol. 5/r.–v.; AAV SSP. Vol. 188. Fol. 339r.

46 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 524r.

47 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 531r.

Judge of Bistrița, were members of this commission. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco accused married priests of disobedience to him and the Roman Catholic Church. The incident left the community in Bistrița badly divided. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco spoke about 450 heads of household who were considered Elia Mendrul's loyal followers.<sup>48</sup>

Setting up the commission, however, was not seen as the right move by Oxendio Virziresco's enemies, as well as many of his staunch supporters alike as the Bishop summoned not only Elia Mendrul and his fellow priests but also one of his aids, Lazar Budachowicz (1668–1721).<sup>49</sup> In fact, he openly defended the accused priests and did not condemn them on account of their marital status.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco searched for a pretext to arraign him, too. In the end, he charged him with breaking his vow of chastity and having secret lovers. The accused priests and the majority of the Armenian Uniate clergy did not understand what was going on. Oxendio Virziresco, however, remained adamant in his missionary fervour and maintained his charges against the priests of the Armenian community.<sup>51</sup> When, in June 1697, a young Armenian priest, Sahak Jakubowicz asked to be married to Anna, the daughter of Yovhannēs Serikean, a rich Armenian merchant from Bistrița, Oxendio Virziresco was so outraged by the request that he not only rejected it but he also suspended priest Sahak from his office.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, the commission, the legitimacy of which the accused priests questioned from the very beginning, decreed that the Uniate Armenian priests could no longer practise their vocation, celebrate

48 APF Acta SC. Vol. 67. Fol. 303/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 272r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 86. Fol. 267/r.–v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 159r.–160/v., Fol. 161r., Fol. 164/r.–v.

49 APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 267r.; Vanyó, *A bécsi pápai követség*, 180.

50 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 82r.–83r.

51 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 165r.

52 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 166r.

Mass or administer the sacraments unless they divorced their wives. As the priests did not show obedience towards the Bishop, the commission interpreted this as a sign of disrespect not only to Bishop Oxendio Virziresco but also to the Catholic Church and its head, the Pope.<sup>53</sup> Oxendio Virziresco enclosed a hand-written letter to the report about the commission's work, drawing the attention of the Holy See to the conspiracy denounced by Oxendio Virziresco. The Bishop found a connection between the married priests and the apostate priest Vardan Martinus Potoczky in Dumbrăveni, who had successfully defied his intentions five years before. It was, therefore, not by chance that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco named Vardan as the cause of the conflict. He expressed his conviction that Elia Mendrul and his associates under the leadership of Vardan were, in fact, loyal followers of the 'heretical' Catholicos of Ējmiacin in Armenia. As he pointed out, they had remained in Transylvania in order to stir unrest within the Armenian community and destroy the ecclesiastical union and the result of his several-years long missionary work.<sup>54</sup>

It seems that the Bishop could not accept the Dumbrăveni failure of 1692, and this was the reason why he sought to link the 'Elia Mendrul' Case to apostate Vardan. Oxendio Virziresco first intended to settle the account with Vardan. He contacted General Jean Louis Rabutin de Bussy (1642–1717), who put soldiers at his disposal. Oxendio Virziresco arrested Vardan in Dumbrăveni and imprisoned the 'heretic' priest in Sibiu, whose followers – about fifty or sixty Armenian families – were left without a priest in Dumbrăveni.<sup>55</sup>

Elia Mendrul and his fellow priests considered the charges unfounded, hypocritical and unacceptable. Most of the population

53 APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 272r.–273v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 160v., Fol. 166r.

54 APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 267v., Fol. 269r.–v., Fol. 274r.–275v.

55 APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 275r.–v., Fol. 280r.–v., Fol. 281r.; APF CP. Vol. 31. Fol. 469r.–v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 162r.–v., Fol. 164r.–v.

also disapproved of the decrees. This could be due to the fact that the priests living in Bistrița since they had fled to Transylvania had more of an authority among the Armenians than the Bishop, who 'had come directly from Rome' and was seen as overbearing.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the decrees passed by Bishop Oxendio Virziresco did not accomplish their goal. Thus, Oxendio Virziresco attempted to find other pretexts to break the resistance of the priests and the people who supported them. He spread the rumour that Elia Mendrul and his associates denied the existence of Purgatory and the teaching about the two natures of Jesus Christ (Diophysitism) and were the followers of Monophysitism.<sup>57</sup> He divulged that Elia Mendrul and his fellow priests were in fact after his episcopal office, possibly in close cahoots with Catholic Bailiff István Apor (1638–1704), Treasurer of Transylvania.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, the Bishop set up another commission the main task of which was to determine whether Elia Mendrul and his associates were Monophysites. Lazar Budachowicz, who had previously defended the incriminated Armenian priests, was also summoned by the commission. The young priest attacked the Bishop and the legitimacy of his investigation. As the root of the problems, instead of Elia Mendrul, he identified Bishop Oxendio Virziresco himself. In

56 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 167r.–168r.

57 APF Acta SC. Vol. 66. Fol. 201r.–202/v.

58 APF Acta SC. Vol. 82. Fol. 144r.–147/v., Fol. 443/r.–v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 96. Fol. 143/v.–144r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 572. Fol. 278r.–280r.+ Fol. 281/v., Fol. 282/r.–v., Fol. 283r.–284/v., Fol. 285r., Fol. 287r.–288/v., Fol. 289r., Fol. 290r.–292r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 580. Fol. 559r., Fol. 560r.–565/v., Fol. 566r.–569/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 9. Fol. 60r.; GYFL (= Gyulafehérvári Főegyházmegyei Levéltár/The Archives of the Arch-Diocese of Alba Iulia/ Gyulafehérvár) I/4. (= Canonica Visitationes). Vol. 3. Fol. 107/r.–v.; MNL-OL (= Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára/The Central Collection of the National Archives of Hungary, Budapest) ) F 234 (= Erdélyi Fiscalis Levéltár/ Fiscal Archives of Transylvania) XII ½ Fasc. 2. Litt. A.

his view, with this case, the Bishop diverted attention from the real issues that concerned the community, and the investigation was a conscious effort to engender confusion.<sup>59</sup>

Father Budachowicz's standpoint stemmed from his conviction and not from selfish defiance. He was an Armenian born in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, painstakingly observant of ancient customs and unwilling to side with Oxendio Virziresco. He was aware that the decrees of the Synod of Lviv in 1689 declared that priests were free to marry prior to ordination and members of the Armenian clergy who had been married before the ecclesiastical union could continue in their vocation.<sup>60</sup>

Lazar Budachowicz was not content with criticising the Bishop's activities but also sent a report to the *Propaganda Fide*. In that report, he objected to Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's disregard for the teachings proclaimed at the Synod of Lviv in 1689. He noted that, with this pugnacious attitude, Oxendio Virziresco had created discord and division in the Armenian community of Bistrița. He confirmed the rumours of Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's dubious finance and stressed that the Armenian Uniate prelate sought to divert attention from himself by accusing others. Lazar Budachowicz added that the conflict generated by the Bishop Oxendio Virziresco might result in wrecking the ecclesiastical union of the Armenians and suggested that many Armenians could refuse to accept the ecclesiastical union signed in 1689.<sup>61</sup>

Despite Father Lazar Budachowicz's charges and disapproval, Oxendio Virziresco persevered with the procedure he had started. He considered celibacy important and, in his view, it was indispensable

59 APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 272r.–273/v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 160r.–161/v., Fol. 163r.

60 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Miscellanea. Vol. 14. Fol. 15/v.–18/v., Fol. 24/v.–27/v.; Petrowicz, *La chiesa armena in Polonia*, 20–22.

61 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 525/r.–v.

for priests to follow Christ's teaching on chastity. He called Lazar Budachowicz a trouble-maker, who was influenced by married priests, and questioned his Catholic faith.<sup>62</sup> Due to the aggravated situation, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco turned to Comte György Bánffy (1661–1708), Governor (*Gubernator*) of Transylvania and the Viennese Imperial Court for help and had to admit that he was no longer able to keep developments under control.<sup>63</sup>

Elia Mendrul and his associates launched a counter-attack and, in response to Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's charges, they attempted to discredit him with Vardan Hunanean, the Armenian Uniate Bishop of Lviv. They called Oxendio Virziresco's gravest sin the fact that, instead of defending his own community in Bistrița against the daily harassments of the German-speaking Saxons, he terrorised members of the community accusing them and their followers with unfounded charges at the secular authorities of Transylvania.<sup>64</sup> They also made it clear that, in discharging his office, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco was only motivated by money, and his greed for wealth was more and more insatiable. They informed Archbishop Vardan Hunanean that Oxendio Virziresco had lost the community's trust and was entirely unfit to hold the episcopal office. Therefore, they demanded to see a new Uniate Bishop in Transylvania. The incriminated priests did not have the faintest idea why being married posed a problem as, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Uniate priests were allowed to marry.<sup>65</sup>

Presumably at Elia Mendrul's urging, leaders of the community also voiced their opinion on the matter and sent a delegation of three to Lviv in the autumn of 1697, informing Uniate Archbishop Vardan Hunanean of the war waged within the community.<sup>66</sup> The

62 APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 266r.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 162r.

63 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 164r.

64 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 526/r.–v.

65 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 520/r.–v.

66 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 521/r.–v.

delegation primarily pleaded for protection for the Armenians against the abuse of Bishop Oxendio Virziresco. They also disapproved of the investigations under-way and the sanctions against married priests. They refuted Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's allegations that they were Monophysite heretics who acknowledged only the one divine nature of Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup> They voiced their concern reporting that, as a result of Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's attitude and activities, many Armenian families returned to Moldavia, thus jeopardising the ecclesiastical union in Transylvania. The delegation's arguments must have been convincing because Archbishop Vardan Hunanean notified the Holy See of the Bishop's abusive behaviour and exclusively blamed Bishop Oxendio Virziresco for the conflict in Transylvania.<sup>68</sup>

Oxendio Virziresco became aware of the community and the priests' move and, as he was intent on gaining time, he contacted the Holy See as well. He defended himself by saying that, in Bistrița, the secular community and Elia Mendrul, who had pushed several families into becoming apostates, conspired against him. Furthermore, he accused Elia Mendrul of wanting to secure the episcopacy for himself and he also tried to ruin his reputation in the eyes of the Armenian Uniate Archbishop of Lviv. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco considered István Apor's attitude especially unfair because he suspected that it was Treasurer István Apor who had turned the community against him by pulling strings behind the scenes. Finally, he suggested setting up a new commission of inquiry to rectify the situation.<sup>69</sup>

The polemic about the 'Elia Mendrul' Case would not cease in the following months. Tensions were on the rise within the community when Andrea Alacz died under controversial circumstances in January 1698. It was rumoured in the community that Andrea Alacz's death

67 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 282r., Fol. 283r.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 170r.–171r.

68 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 521r.–v., Fol. 526r.–v.

69 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 172r.–v.

was in way or another linked to Oxendio Virziresco. It was pointed out that Oxendio Virziresco did not leave his house from the time the priest's death and had lived in seclusion ever since.<sup>70</sup>

Oxendio Virziresco contacted the Apostolic Nunciature in Vienna and stated his position on the matter. At this point, he was critical not only of the priests on account of their married status but also objected to inappropriate calendar use, for Elia Mendrul and his followers observed major feasts according to the old Armenian calendar. To illustrate his point, Oxendio Virziresco referred to the much-deprecated practice of celebrating Christmas and Epiphany on the same day, 6 January. The charge of Monophysitism resurfaced among Oxendio Virziresco's allegations: In his view, the community continued to follow the false teachings of the Archimandrite Eutyches (378–456), although these had been refuted at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, so that these Armenians rejected the Orthodox (Dyophysite) dogma of the two natures of Jesus Christ (Dyophysitism).<sup>71</sup> Therefore, the Bishop urged that the *Propaganda Fide* allow the Holy See and Holy Office of the Inquisition (*Sanctum Officium*) to investigate the case of Elia Mendrul and his associates.<sup>72</sup>

70 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 517r., Fol. 518r., Fol. 525r.

71 In fact, according to contemporary sources, the Armenian Apostolic (Oriental) Church never accepted the dogmas and teachings of Archimandrite Eutyches on the Monophysitism. Moreover, the Church itself harshly condemned these views at its National Synods held in Dwin (in 505 and 555) and Manazkert (*Manzikert, Malazgirt*) (in 719 and 728). The accusation of Monophysitism against the Armenians arose due to the fact that they were unwilling to recognise the jurisdiction of either Constantinople or Rome over them. K. Sarkissian, *The Council of Chalcedon and the Armenian Church*, London 1975, 194–215; M. K. Krikorian, *L'operazione di rifiuto del Concilio di Calcedonia da parte della Chiesa Armena*, in A. Ducay (ed.), *Il Concilio di Calcedonia 1550 anni dopo*, Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Città del Vaticano 2003, 127–131.

72 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 175r.–176/v.

On the other hand, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's suspicious dealings were cited again not by Elia Mendrul or his associates but by Armenian merchants of the Oriental Apostolic faith, who had commercial bases in Braşov (*Kronstadt, Brassovia, Corona, Brassó*) and Sibiu. At the time when the conflict began, they had disagreements with Oxendio about financial matters. The four merchants, Melk'ior Mačewan, Israyēl Eriwanc'i, Aṛak'el Yerusaḷēmc'i and Azaria Mazarec'i, were of the opinion that it was not disobedience in ecclesiastical matters that caused the discord but business dealings and instances of disputed inheritance. They referenced the example from 1696, the previous year, when one of their business partners, one Gaspar, a wealthy Armenian merchant from Constantinople, died in Sibiu; his assets worth 6000 Rhenish guilders (*Rheingulden*) would be acquired by Oxendio Virziresco. The latter would use this amount to buy an estate for himself in Gurghiu (*Görgen, Görgényszentimre*).<sup>73</sup>

Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's excessive assertiveness attenuated the loyalty even of his closest associates. He had an argument with his staunchest supporter, the Theatine Father and missionary Giuseppe Maria Bonalini CR (1650–1703), who had a different interpretation of the conflict and deemed Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's moves exaggerated. The missionary disagreed with Oxendio Virziresco's aggressive campaigns to obtain money. He also disapproved of the inappropriate rites used by Armenian priests. For Holy Communion, for example, Armenian priests did not add water to the holy wine, which, in his view, represented a continuation of the old Armenian ecclesiastical tradition. The Theatine father saw that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's accusations and actions generated antipathy in the community, and this sense of dislike affected his followers as well. Father Bonalini considered it a mistake on the Bishop's part to insist

73 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 177r.+ Fol. 180v.

on his principles so much, endangering his mission started in 1685.<sup>74</sup> He was unable to convince the obstinate Bishop to use more gentle and diplomatic methods in the community. The decrees made by the commissions of inquiry of dubious legitimacy set up by Oxendio Virziresco triggered counter-reactions from the priests accused.<sup>75</sup>

Elia Mendrul and his colleagues turned to the Holy See for justice when they saw that their letters had not produced the desired effect. In their letter, they went as far as to suggesting that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco turned the Saxons against the Armenian community. As for their conflict with the Bishop, they pointed to Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's corruption cases, his intolerance and tyrannical methods.<sup>76</sup> They mentioned Vardan Martinus Potoczky's case of apostasy in 1692, blaming Bishop Oxendio Virziresco for the incident. They confirmed that many Armenian families from Bistrița and its neighbourhood left Transylvania due to the feud, many of them moving back to Moldavia, where they reverted to the Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>77</sup> The report was written by Efiay T'orossean, Armenian Prefect of Bistrița, who requested legal protection from the *Propaganda Fide*, and Treasurer István Apor, Oxendio Virziresco's opponent in Transylvania.<sup>78</sup> Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's position became more precarious when Giovanni Antonio Davia, the Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw – based on the complaints received – urged the *Propaganda Fide* to permit him to launch an investigation

74 APF Lettere SC. Vol. 80. Fol. 143/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 519/r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Moscovia, Polonia e Rutheni. Vol. 2. Fol. 315/r.–v., Fol. 335r., Fol. 386/r.–v.+ Fol. 388/v.; AGT (= Archivio Generale dei Teatini, Roma) CL (= Collegio di Leopoli). Portfolio No. 2. (Without folio numbers.); *Litterae episcoporum historiam Ucrainiae illustrantes*, Vol. 4. (1681–1710), Athanasius Welikyj (ed.), Romae 1976, 79–80.

75 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 527/r.–v.

76 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 181/r.–v.

77 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 181/r.–v.

78 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 185/r.–v.

inspecting every detail in the case of Oxendio Virziresco and the priests accused.<sup>79</sup>

The *Propaganda Fide* approached Theatine Father Accorsi, Rector of the Armenian College in Lviv, with a request to gather information about the Armenians of Transylvania. Father Accorsi would collect such information from Father Bonalini, who was critical of Oxendio Virziresco. Accordingly, it was established that the Armenian Uniate Catholics had bitter complaints about the Bishop. Their chief grievance had to do with the way he had been transformed from a benevolent priest full of good intentions at the beginning of his mission into a merciless and tyrannical clergyman driven by ill will following his episcopal appointment. As a consequence of his ruthlessly fanatic faith, he was in constant conflict with his priests and fellow missionaries and lost the support of his flock. This resulted in a considerable part of the Armenian community leaving Transylvania. The Rector concluded that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco was no longer in control of the situation due to the incessant tensions and was unable to remedy the situation. Archbishop Vardan Hunanean corroborated Father Accorsi's report. Oxendio Virziresco, however, repudiated the charges brought against him. In his assessment, all that was the fabrication of the priests accused, including Elia Mendrul, alleging that many of them had been displeased with his appointment as bishop by the Holy See in 1690.<sup>80</sup>

Having studied all the letters and reports received and after long debates, the *Propaganda Fide* made its decision on the 'Elia Mendrul' Case on 3 March 1698. Oxendio Virziresco was not removed from his office but Andrea Santacroce, Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna (1696–1700) (earlier in Warsaw between 1690 and 1696), Titular Archbishop of

79 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 186/r.–v.

80 APF SOCG. Vol. 529. Fol. 266r.–269/v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 162/r.–v., Fol. 164r.–165r.

Seleucia in Isauria, was requested to conduct further investigation on the matter.<sup>81</sup> The reason why they did not Oxendio Virziresco to more severe condemnation was the fact that they highly appreciated what the Bishop had achieved previously in his missionary work promoting the cause of Armenian ecclesiastical union in Transylvania. In the *Propaganda Fide*, the cardinals who had unanimously endorsed Oxendio Virziresco's episcopal appointment eight years before still constituted the majority.<sup>82</sup>

Apostolic Nuncio Santacroce authorised Bertalan Szebellébi (1631–1707), Episcopal Vicar of the Roman Catholic Church in Transylvania, with friendly ties with Bishop Oxendio Virziresco, to investigate the case. Jesuit Father Kristóf Gebhardt SJ (1657–1720) from Sibiu and Father Luca Fracano OFM Conv., General of the Franciscans in Bosnia, were also members of the commission of inquiry. Their report was completed on July 25 1698, concluding that, due to the conflict and the unfavourable situation, further investigation and interviews were needed.<sup>83</sup>

The members of the commission questioned Bishop Oxendio Virziresco, who named Elia Mendrul as solely responsible for the feud. The Bishop had one-to-one discussions with members of the commission and persuaded them that he was a victim in the story. The commission was of course biased towards Oxendio Virziresco because the Bishop had maintained excellent relations with its members from his appointment. Therefore, the result of the investigation was easy to predict. Elia Mendrul also realised that, given the composition of the commission, the conclusion would not be amenable to him or his associates, so he fled from Bistrița with his followers before

81 APF Acta SC. Vol. 66. Fol. 185/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 525. Fol. Fol. 57/r.–v., Fol. 68/r.–v.; ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 13. Pag. 108–152.; PL AEV SPK (= Sub Primate Kollonich). No. 303.

82 APF Acta SC. Vol. 68. Fol. 62r.–67/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 531. Fol. 368/r.–v.

83 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 187/r.–v.

the interrogations and deliberations began. In Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's view, Treasurer István Apor played a part in his escape.<sup>84</sup>

Afterwards, Oxendio Virziresco took the initiative and advocated the creation of a new commission to investigate Elia Mendrul and his followers' case in all the Armenian communities of Transylvania. Oxendio Virziresco's intentions in this respect were earnest, so he sent Father Bonalini, with whom he had been reconciled in the meantime, to Cluj-Napoca (*Clausenburg, Claudiopoli, Claudiopolis, Kolozsvár*) to negotiate about the 'Elia Mendrul' Case.<sup>85</sup>

Father Bonalini had discussions with Jesuit Father István Csete SJ, Roman Catholic parish priest of Cluj-Napoca, who bore the pseudonym 'Jesuit Zsigmond Vizkeleti' during the talks.<sup>86</sup> In line with the Bishop's intentions, they decided on the members of the new commission of inquiry. Although doubts about the need for this new commission must have been justifiable, it began operating within a month. The commission's single goal was to pass judgement on the question of innocence and guilt in relation to Elia Mendrul and Bishop Oxendio Virziresco. The composition of the commission was more advantageous for Bishop Oxendio Virziresco as he was on good terms with the members. Apart from Jesuit Father István Csete, Father Giuseppe Bonalini, a Theatine missionary, Bertalan Szebellébi, Roman Catholic Episcopal Vicar in Transylvania, János Antalffy (1644–1728), a Parish Priest from Ciucsângeorgiu (*Sankt Georg, Csikszentgyörgy*), and later Roman Catholic Bishop of Transylvania (1724–1728), Jesuit Father Tamás Merczis SJ (1648–1705), a Parish Priest

84 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 191r.–v.

85 AAV ANV. Vol. 31. Fol. 103r., Fol. 106r.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 192r.–v.

86 APF SC Fondo Ungheria e Transilvania. Vol. 3. Fol. 46r.–52/v.; M. Cserei, *Erdély históriája (1661–1711)*, I. Bánkúti (ed.), Bibliotheca Historica 274, Budapest 1983; *Litterae missionariorum de Hungaria et Transylvania (1572–1717)*, I. Gy. Tóth (ed.), Bibliotheca Academiae Hungariae–Roma, Fontes 4, Roma–Budapest 2005, 2931; Molnár, *Lehetetlen küldetés?*, 227–228.

from Gheorgheni, working under the pseudonym 'István Halászi' and Pál Székes SJ, an enigmatic Jesuit father from Transylvania, also participated in the commission's work.<sup>87</sup>

Under the new circumstances, Oxendio Virziresco became even more demanding. He accused Treasurer István Apor of aiding Elia Mendrul's escape. He even discovered that Elia Mendrul had fled to Petelea (*Birk, Petele*) with his followers. He was concerned that Elia Mendrul would antagonise the Uniate Armenian community against him and the cause of ecclesiastical union.<sup>88</sup> Before the new investigations in the 'Elia Mendrul' Case began, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco meant to give the priest one last chance to return to the Roman Catholic Church and give up his heretical customs. The Bishop sent Father Bonalini to Petelea to put psychological pressure on Elia Mendrul and his followers. Father Bonalini told them that a new commission conducted an inquiry into their case. However, Elia Mendrul was not impressed by Father Bonalini's arguments and refused to recognise Bishop Oxendio Virziresco as his bishop and denied the charges against him.<sup>89</sup>

The commission of inquiry started its work in October 1698. The members of the commission visited all the Armenian colonies in Transylvania in search of Elia Mendrul and his followers. The authorities

87 There are no further references to Jesuit Father Székes's life or ecclesiastical carrier in contemporary sources or documents kept in the Hungarian or in foreign archives. APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 472r.; L. Balla, *Csete István kéziratok prédikációi és Gyalogi János-félekiadásai: eredetiség, fordítás, közvetítés a koraujkori jezsuita prédikációkban*, Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca 2017, 42–45; K. Nagy, "Andrea Santacroce bécsi apostoli nuncius és az erdélyi örmények egyháza", in *Erdélyi Múzeum* 79/1 (2017), 102–117; K. Nagy, "Andrea Santacroce bécsi apostoli nuncius 1698. évi kiadatlan levele az erdélyi örmény egyházi vizsály kivizsgálása ügyében", in *Lymbus – Magyarságtudományi Közlemények* 18 (2020), 317–334.

88 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 194/r.–v.

89 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 195/r.–v.

and the army fully supported them in their work. They began their investigation in Dumbrăveni because it was a well-known fact that it was almost exclusively inhabited by Armenians of the Oriental Apostolic faith. Jesuit father István Csete employed intimidation and arrested the ten wealthiest heads of household. He forced them to testify against Elia Mendrul and his associates by means of torture.<sup>90</sup> He was willing to pardon them only if they agreed to convert to the Roman Catholic faith in the presence of the Bishop Oxendio Virziresco. In order to save their lives and wealth, they accepted the deal and officially condemned Elia Mendrul and his views.<sup>91</sup>

The commission then went to Petelea because Father Bonalini heard that it was the village in which Elia Mendrul was hiding. When the commission arrived there, the Armenian inhabitants of the place informed them that the renegade Armenian priest and his followers had left for Suseni (*Pränzdorf/Oberdorf, Marosfalfalu*). Obviously out of fear, the majority of the residents of Petelea declared their allegiance to the Uniate Catholic faith and condemned Elia Mendrul.<sup>92</sup>

Subsequently, the members of the commission went to Bistrița, where they interrogated Lazar Budachowicz. After the questioning, Father István Csete acquitted him of Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's previous charges and described him as a true Catholic Armenian firmly loyal to Rome. They did not find a single Armenian in Bistrița then who would be a follower of Elia Mendrul's or a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Next, the commission conducted an investigation in Tirgu Mureș (*Neumarkt am Mieresch, Novum Forum Siculorum, Marosvásárhely*) similar to the one in Bistrița. The outcome was also similar: Only Uniate Armenians vehemently opposed to Elia Mendrul's actions were to be found.

90 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 466r.

91 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 467r.–468/v.

92 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 469r., Fol. 470r.–471/v.

In the end, the investigations concluded that the only one to blame within the Armenian community was Elia Mendrul. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco was found innocent, and they declared that his controversial financial dealings were a mere fabrication by the priest condemned. Although they did not manage to arrest Elia Mendrul, he was suspended from his office, excommunicated from the Catholic Church and handed over to the secular authorities *in absentia*. Oxendio Virziresco was intent on launching a manhunt to capture Elia Mendrul.<sup>93</sup> In the meantime, he heard that Elia Mendrul had left Suseni and found refuge in Gurghiu, where the Virziresco family lived at the time. The Bishop was still suspicious that someone from higher circles was helping the priest to evade him and the authorities.

Bishop Oxendio Virziresco prepared a detailed memorandum about the conflict for the *Propaganda Fide*. Naturally, he claimed to be clean and innocent. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco regarded Elia Mendrul and his associates as mere instruments in fomenting conflict and believed that, in fact, it had been masterminded by Treasurer István Apor and the ‘heretical’ Armenian Catholicos Nahapet I (*Nahapet Ur̄hayec’i*) (1691–1705), engaged in a conspiracy against him. This supposition was highly unrealistic as it is not probable that the Catholic Treasurer Apor and the Armenian Patriarch could be in any contact with each other.<sup>94</sup>

Oxendio Virziresco thus was cleared of the charges of corruption, though no-one was able to substantiate innocence. The closure of the investigation did not mean that tensions within the community were quelled. Soon afterwards, an unknown person accused the Bishop at the *Propaganda Fide* of corruption and heresy.<sup>95</sup> It cannot be established who worded the letter, but it is not impossible that

93 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 44or., Fol. 442r.–443r., Fol. 444/r.–v.

94 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 445r.–448r.

95 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 45or.–451/v.

its author was the Bishop's enemy, Treasurer István Apor, since the letter included charges that had previously been mentioned only in István Apor's and Elia Mendrul's letters. As has pointed out above repeatedly, the Armenians in Bistrița were not on good terms with the local Saxons.<sup>96</sup> The Treasurer might have taken advantage of the animosity and extracted incriminating testimonies from the Saxons against the Bishop. The Saxons conducted an investigation, led by Johannes Klein, Royal Saxon Judge of Bistrița, against the Bishop and heard seven wealthy Saxon burghers in the 'Elia Mendrul' Case. All the seven burghers confirmed that the person who ignited the Armenian feud was not Elia Mendrul but Bishop Oxendio Virziresco by stealing from both the Armenian and the German-speaking Saxon communities.<sup>97</sup> Roman Catholic Episcopal Vicar Bertalan Szebellébi denied the Saxons' charges against the Bishop. In his letter written to István Apor, he called the charges made by Saxons on 'higher orders' – as he put it – despicable lies fuelled by jealousy.<sup>98</sup> He considered the Bishop a true champion of the Roman Catholic faith and rejected all allegations of corruption or heresy about Bishop Oxendio Virziresco.<sup>99</sup>

The Bishop's relationship with Treasurer István Apor, whom he suspected of conspiring with his enemies against him in investigating his dubious financial dealings, remained strained. Oxendio Virziresco assumed István Apor may have supported the discontent priest to undermine his authority as a Bishop and weaken his position within the Catholic Church.<sup>100</sup>

The 'Elia Mendrul' Case had its toll on the Bishop as well, which is illustrated by his letter written to the *Propaganda Fide* before the

96 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 461r.–463/v.

97 APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 449r., Fol. 459/r.–v.

98 APF SOCG. Vol. 531. Fol. 237r.–238r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 455r.–458/v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 218r.+ Fol. 221/v., Fol. 219r., Fol. 220r.

99 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 203/r.–v., Fol. 204r., Fol. 206/r.–v.

100 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 153r., Fol. 199r.–200r., Fol. 201r.–202r.

Christmas of 1698, hinting at his own responsibility in the matter for the first time. He admitted that it was his rash temperament and conservatism that had led to the eruption of the conflict among the Armenians. He did not, however, say anything about his dubious financial issues. He continued to consider Elia Mendrul a heretic and did not renounce his intention to arrest him.<sup>101</sup>

The conclusions of the commission of inquiry gave Bishop Oxendio Virziresco renewed impetus. After his visits to Petelea, Suseni and Gurghiu, he stated that the communities in these locations were almost entirely Roman Catholic, except for the ones that followed the renegade priest. The Bishop and Father Bonalini suspected that Elia Mendrul was closely connected to the Armenian Apostolic clergy in Moldavia and, through them, to the Armenian Catholicos. They believed that plans approved by the Armenian Catholicos for sending Armenian priests from Moldavia and Wallachia to Transylvania were under way aimed at undermining ecclesiastical union. They also informed the Holy See that Elia Mendrul had allegedly managed to convince a Uniate priest, Yovhannēs Naxšun, to be his associate in this effort. The Bishop notified the Holy See that a ‘legate’ (*nwirakn*) of the Armenian Catholicos arrived in Transylvania *incognito* in January 1699 and, ordained twelve young Armenian priests according to the tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the presence of Elia Mendrul and Yovhannēs Naxšun in Suseni. They were about to confront them, but Elia Mendrul, his follower and the mysterious ‘legate’ fled back to Moldavia. Therefore, he and Father Bonalini raised the possibility of missionary work to be carried out in Moldavia among the Armenians living there. The *Propaganda Fide* would not deal with the issue at that time.

101 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 208r.+ Fol. 210/v., Fol. 209r., Fol. 211r.; MNL-OL F 46 (= Gubernium Transylvanicum Levéltára/ Archives of the *Gubernium* of Transylvania – Ügyiratok/ Dossiers). 1698: 238.

The *Propaganda Fide* held a session about the ‘Elia Mendrul’ Case on 6 April 1699, with the involvement of Andrea Santacroce, Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna, as well. Although Oxendio Virziresco was cleared of the charges, the documents and the tone used clearly indicated that the Holy See no longer trusted him. Another circumstance also had an impact on the situation: From 1698, The Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* was no longer Cardinal Angelo Paluzzo Altieri degli Albertoni (1623–1698), Bishop Oxendio Virziresco’s main patron in Rome, but Cardinal Carlo Barberini Jr. (1630–1704), who had previously recommended Deodatus Nersesowicz (1644–1709), Titular Bishop of Traianopolis in Rhodope, alumnus of the Armenian College of Lviv, as the Uniate Bishop in Transylvania in 1689 and 1690.<sup>102</sup> Cardinal Barberini proposed Oxendio Virziresco be removed from his office in connection with the ‘Elia Mendrul’ Case and sought to replace him with Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz. As coadjutor to Archbishop Vardan Hunanean, he had headed the Armenian Archdiocese of Lviv from 1683 to 1686 and provided the initiative for missionary work among the Armenians of Transylvania.<sup>103</sup>

Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz, who had not maintained amicable ties with Bishop Oxendio Virziresco since his episcopal appointment in 1690, seized the opportunity and did all he could to vilify the Bishop at the Holy See. His goal was to bring about Bishop Oxendio

102 APF Acta SC. Vol. 53. Fol. 245r.–248/v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 54. Fol. 17/r.–v., Fol. 98/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 488. Fol. 277r.–281r.; APF CP. Vol. 29. Fol. 159r.–160r.+ Fol. 161/v., Fol. 165/r.–v., Fol. 166/v., Fol. 636r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 72. Fol. 199/v.–200r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 79. Fol. 15/r.–v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni Vol. 2. Fol. 209r.–211/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 3. Fol. 318r., Fol. 325r.; APF SC Fondo Moscovia Polonia e Rutheni. Vol. 2. Fol. 195/r.–v.; APF FV. Vol. 42. Fol. 49/r.–v.; AAV ANVAR. Vol. 177. Fol. 109r., Fol. 129/v.

103 APF Acta SC. Vol. 69. Fol. 107r.–116/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 532. Fol. 434r.–440r.; APF SC Fondo Moscovia, Polonia e Rutheni. Vol. 2. Fol. 520/r.–v.

Virziresco's removal.<sup>104</sup> He suggested that the Cardinals summon Oxendio Virziresco to Rome to rebuke him for his inefficient church-organisational work over the preceding years. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco was saved from removal thanks to a report by the Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna. Andrea Santacroce, Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna, clarified that Oxendio Virziresco had not committed any crime.<sup>105</sup> After reading this report, the *Propaganda Fide* did not relieve him of his office but reprimanded him for mishandling the 'Elia Mendrul' Case and causing considerable damage to the Catholic Church among The Armenians in Transylvania. They thought the strict investigations had been unnecessary and were particularly critical of the fact that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco had not attempted to resolve the conflict in a peaceful manner through talks, resulting in clashes with his flock (e.g., involving Father Budachowicz and Father Bonalini, at the beginning of the conflict). The corruption charges were not mentioned during the session, but it was stated that these charges were not substantiated and were consequently seen as empty fabrications. In the end, the decision was favourable for Bishop Oxendio Virziresco.<sup>106</sup>

At Easter 1699, one of the followers of Elia Mendrul, the priest Yovhannēs Naxšun arrived in Bistrița from Moldavia with a few men. The reason for his return is unclear, but the Bishop believed that the apostate priest could not have any other motive than converting the Armenians from the Roman Catholic faith back to the Armenian Apostolic Church. With the help of General Jean Louis Rabutin de Bussy, the priest was arrested and imprisoned in Sibiu. Oxendio Virziresco declared that he intended to charge the priest with apostasy

104 APF SOCG. Vol. 563. Fol. 185/r.-v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 85. Fol. 26/r.-v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 98. Fol. 247r.-248/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 592/r.-v.; APF SC Fondo Moscovia, Polonia e Rutheni. Vol. 3. Fol. 280/r.-v.

105 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 212/r.-v.

106 APF Lettere SC. Vol. 88. Fol. 30r.-31r., Fol. 58r.

and sodomy.<sup>107</sup>

In the meantime, Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz conducted a private investigation about Oxendio Virziresco and sent a report about the abuses the Bishop allegedly committed. Upon the intervention by Father Accorsi and Archbishop Vardan Hunanean, the *Propaganda Fide*, however, checked his manoeuvres. At the request of the Uniate Archbishop, Bishop Nersesowicz was called back to Lviv in the summer of 1699 to assist the ailing Archbishop as his coadjutor.<sup>108</sup> Cardinal-Prefect Barberini, however, asked Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz to keep an eye on Oxendio Virziresco and to send him a report as soon as he heard of any maladministration. He summoned the Bishop to Cluj-Napoca in July 1699 for the investigation of his dubious financial dealings. At the hearing of the commission in the city of Cluj-Napoca, Treasurer István Apor called Bishop Oxendio Virziresco to account regarding his unclear financial matters and sudden growth of fortune in 1696. Treasurer István Apor also remarked that the commission in the autumn of 1698 had been biased towards the Bishop Oxendio Virziresco because his right-hand man, Father Bonalini, had been involved in its decision making. In fact, the activities of that commission was but a farce to cover up the Bishop's dishonest actions, casting doubt on the commission's legitimacy.<sup>109</sup>

107 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 207/r.–v.

108 APF SOCG. Vol. 531. Fol. 298r., Fol. 308r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 533. Fol. 483/r.–v., Fol. 484r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 85. Fol. 61/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 542/r.–v.

109 Relations between the two Armenian Uniate Bishops were strained by tensions. Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz left no stone unturned to remove Bishop Oxendio Virziresco from his office in Transylvania. In fact, Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz was unable to forgive Bishop Oxendio Virziresco for the refusal of the Holy See and the *Propaganda Fide* to appoint him as Armenian Uniate Bishop of Transylvania. APF Acta SC. Vol. 56. Fol. 138r.–140/v., Fol. 254/v.–256/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 495B. Fol. 231r., Fol. 235r.; APF SOCG. Vol. 496. Fol.

At the hearing, Bertalan Szebellébi, Apostolic Vicar, and the Jesuits of Cluj-Napoca headed by Father István Csete and Father Gábor Kapi SJ (1658–1728) came to Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's defence.<sup>110</sup> It was especially Vicar Bertalan Szebellébi who stood by the Bishop and let the Treasurer know with absolute clarity that the investigations of 1697 and 1699 had cleared the Bishop and acquitted him of corruption charges. Therefore, he could not see a reason for launching a new investigation. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco himself replied to István Apor's charges vehemently. In his view, the Treasurer hindered him in his activities all along and intended to ruin his reputation. To him, István Apor was a heretic because he defended and supported heretical Armenians. He also expressed his astonishment that the Treasurer had not been brought to justice yet. In August 1699, the commission of inquiry closed its operations without any tangible results.<sup>111</sup>

This news reached Lviv as well. Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz hoped to remove Oxendio Virziresco as head of the Uniate Armenian Church in Transylvania and sent a report to the *Propaganda Fide*. He informed Congregation that, due to his alleged corruption cases, an investigation was under-way against Bishop Oxendio Virziresco, whom he described in rather negative terms.<sup>112</sup> In the autumn of 1699, he intended to travel to Transylvania to investigate the Bishop's case. As Bishop Deodatus Nersesowicz did not request authorisation for this step, the Apostolic Nuncios in Warsaw and Vienna, as well as Archbishop Vardan Hunanean forbade him to do so.<sup>113</sup> Nuncio Andrea Santacroce declared that the cases of Elia Mendrul and Bishop Oxendio Virziresco had been closed, and the right decision had

503r.–v., Fol. 505r.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 76. Fol. 90v.–91r.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 217r.; Petrowicz, *La chiesa armena in Polonia*, 79.

110 Cserei, *Erdély históriája*, 273, 276, 296–301, 308.

111 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 213r.–214v., Fol. 223r.–v.

112 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 231r.

113 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 237r., Fol. 251r.

been made. The Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna asked Cardinal-Prefect Barberini in particular not to remove Bishop Oxendio Virziresco from his office. Nuncio Andrea Santacroce agreed with the stance of Nuncio Giovanni Antonio Davia and Archbishop Vardan Hunanean on the matter, and recommended that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's financial situation be resolved because, in his view, that was the cause of all the problems among the Armenians in Transylvania. On the other hand, he also promised to closely watch the Bishop's work.<sup>114</sup>

The case of Elia Mendrul's associate, Yovhannēs Naxšun, was heard in Sibiu in October 1699. Bishop Oxendio Virziresco realised that there was no point in generating further conflicts within the community.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, he offered a deal to the priest and his followers: If they returned to the Catholic faith, he would ensure that the charges against them would be dropped and they could live in Transylvania as free men. Furthermore, he proposed that, in case Yovhannēs Naxšun converted to Catholicism, he could continue to be a priest. The priest accepted the offer and, after his release on 3 November 1699, with his followers, he ceremonially endorsed ecclesiastical union in Petelea along.<sup>116</sup>

At this point, a question arises what could motivate Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's gentle and generous attitude. Perhaps he grew tired of the endless controversies and wished to avoid another example of his merciless rigour as he did with Elia Mendrul in the summer of 1697 increasing tension within the Armenian communities in Bistrița and elsewhere and leading to even greater division. However, his conduct this time could be explained by a more likely reason.<sup>117</sup> In 1692, at

114 APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 601r.–v.

115 APF Acta SC. Vol. 69. Fol. 396r.–397v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 534. Fol. 426r.–v. + Fol. 427v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 88. Fol. 259r.–260v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 224r., Fol. 225r.

116 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 226r.–227r.

117 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 232r.–233r., Fol. 251r.

the time of Vardan Martinus Potoczky's apostasy, Yovhannēs Naxšun took Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's side. He rejected Vardan's anti-ecclesiastical-union sermons and, together with another incriminated priest, Andrea Alacz, he prepared a report for the Gubernium in attempt to prove that the Armenians in Transylvania were of the Roman Catholic faith and not of the Oriental Apostolic one.<sup>118</sup>

After the resolution of the dispute, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco made a visit to Dumbrăveni to see whether the Armenians there were indeed devout Catholics. He noticed that no trace of heresy among them and concluded that the men of the Armenian Catholicos were not engaged in any missionary work in that community.<sup>119</sup>

Oxendio Virziresco put the organisation of a missionary campaign among the Armenians of Moldavia on his agenda again.<sup>120</sup> He contacted Giovanni Antonio Davia, Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw.<sup>121</sup> He thought that, by organising successful missionary activities in the Principality, they might be able to stop heretical efforts from spreading from Moldavia to Transylvania and could solve the problem posed by Elia Mendrul once and for all.<sup>122</sup> The Nuncio accepted Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's suggestion and reported the intentions of the Armenian Uniate hierarch to the *Propaganda Fide*. When visiting Petelea in March 1700, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco advocated the missionary campaign with determination and urged that the Holy

118 ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 21. Pag. 77–80.

119 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 241/r.–v.

120 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 235/r.–v.

121 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 236r., Fol. 237r.

122 APF Acta SC. Vol. 70. Fol. 103r.–106/v., Fol. 166/r.–v., Fol. 175/r.–v., Fol. 267r.–269/v., Fol. 341r.–346/v.; APF Acta SC. Vol. 71. Fol. 69r.–70/v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 535. Fol. 346/r.–v., Fol. 347/r.–v., Fol. 350/r.–v., Fol. 352/r.–v.; APF SOCG. Vol. 536. Fol. 318r.–329/v., Fol. 416r.–417/v., Fol. 418r.–419/v.; APF Lettere SC. Vol. 89. Fol. 116r.–117/v., Fol. 224r.–225/v.; APF SC Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4. Fol. 610/r.–v., Fol. 615/r.–v., Fol. 708r.–709/v.; APF Coll. Urb. Vol. 3. Fol. 613r.–614/v.; AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 245r.–246/v., Fol. 248/r.–v.

See authorise the implementation of missionary activities in Moldavia in order to prevent Elia Mendrul's return.<sup>123</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Behind the Uniate Bishop's conflict with Elia Mendrul and his associates lay a different interpretation of the ecclesiastical union signed in Lviv in 1689, unconditional acceptance of the Latin Rite, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's sudden gain in wealth (the acquisition of an estate in Gurghiu) and the married status of Uniate priests. The Bishop labelled the last of this heresy, which he illogically linked to Monophysitism. In any case, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco sought to expel such priests and used their married status as a pretext against them. It was only in Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's letter that the possibility of Elia Mendrul as a candidate for the episcopate after (Armenian Apostolic) Bishop Minas Alēksanean T'oxat'ec'i's death was raised. The Uniate Bishop of course overlooked the fact that a married priest was not eligible to be a bishop even according to Oriental Armenian Canon Law as the office was available only to monastics. It is reasonable to assume that Bishop Oxendio Virziresco saw a potential rival in the old Armenian priest since Elia Mendrul was a figure of authority both in the Armenian Uniate Church of Transylvania and within the Armenian community at large. Furthermore, he was obsessed with the idea that the married priest and his followers were intent on depriving him of his episcopal office, so he levelled such accusations at the Armenian priests who were in disagreement with him. It cannot be ruled out that the conflict was also fuelled by the struggle to secure the top position within the Armenian community of Transylvania.

123 AAV ANV. Vol. 196. Fol. 242r.+ Fol. 249v.

The 'Elia Mendrul' Case was a turning point in the history of the Armenian Church in Transylvania. Thanks to the resolution of the feud, the ecclesiastical union of the Armenians in Transylvania was complete and the whole of the Armenian community of Transylvania became irrevocably Uniate or Catholic. Due to the conflict, however, Transylvanian Armenians weakened substantially, and their number decreased in Transylvania primarily because large groups of those opposing Bishop Oxendio Virziresco moved to Moldavia between 1697 and 1700. The Bishop, however, prevailed in the end. Although the size of the Uniate Armenian community shrank, Oxendio Virziresco came to have a more compact and confessionally more homogeneous community. In the conflict, the Catholic Church stood by him, while Elia Mendrul's supporters dwindled due to a series of excommunications.<sup>124</sup>

Finally, inappropriate handling of the conflict in the Armenian community of Bistrița did a lot of damage to Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's authority. For example, after the 1699 investigations, his relationship with Jesuit Father István Csete would become strained because, before the Roman Catholic Status (*Status Catholicus*), the superior state organisation of Roman Catholics in Transylvania, the most important body of self-government of Transylvanian Catholics, István Csete SJ did not give him the respect due to a Bishop, and, according to Oxendio Virziresco's account, Csete even humiliated him in the presence of other Catholic clergymen. Therefore, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco addressed his complaint to Cardinal Lipót Kollonich (1631–1707), Archbishop of Esztergom, accusing Father Csete of disrespectful behaviour towards him in the presence of other clergymen and the faithful. In the absence of relevant data, it cannot

124 ELTE EKK Coll. Hev. Cod. 29. Pag. 346.; ELTE EEK Coll. Kapr. A. Cod. 11. Pag. 112.

be reconstructed how case was resolved in the end.<sup>125</sup> At the same time, this indicates that the authority of the Uniate Armenian Bishop was perceived differently after the Armenian religious conflict erupting among the Catholics of Transylvania in 1697.

Last but not least, prior to his studies at Urban College in Rome, Oxendio Virziresco had been a staunch supporter of complete Latinisation. In his view, the Uniate Armenian clergy of Transylvania were to have the same rights and obligations as the Latin-rite clergy. As the 'Elia Mendrul' Case illustrates, however, the Armenian clergy in Transylvania continued to embrace ancient Armenian (Oriental) liturgical traditions despite the ecclesiastical union concluded in Lviv in 1689. In the eyes of the Uniate clergy, ecclesiastical union was limited only to recognising the primacy of the Pope. Different interpretations of ecclesiastical union culminated in a case of apostasy spearheaded by Archdeacon Elia Mendrul in city of Bistrița in 1697. In addition, the exploration of this event considerably challenges the earlier academic view widely held throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that the ecclesiastical union of the Armenians of Transylvania as a process happened without any major difficulties, conflicts or incidents. Instead, it would seem more appropriate to suggest that ecclesiastical union would in fact be achieved only in 1699–1700, when, with the aid of his assistants, as well as thanks to Andrea Santacroce, Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna, Bishop Oxendio Virziresco, forced the apostate Armenians to accept ecclesiastical union in Transylvania. His opponent, accompanied by large numbers of Armenians, left Transylvania forever and returned to Moldavia, renouncing their Uniate (Catholic) faith.

125 ELTE EKK Coll. Pray (= Collectio Prayana). Cod. 20. Pag. 283–284., Pag. 285.; Nagy, *Andrea Santacroce bécsi apostoli nuncius és az erdélyi örmények egyháza*, 116–117.

# Zizioulas's Criticism of Afanasiev<sup>1</sup>

VICTOR ALEXANDROV

I. History of the Appearance of the Present Article; 1. Established Consensus; 2. My Pervious Study; 3. Need to Revisit the Issue; II. Issues Criticised by Zizioulas; 1. Ambiguity of Zizioulas's Attitude towards His Predicessors; 2. "One-sidedness"; 3. "Enlarging the Horizon" to Avoid Sacramentalization of Theology; 4. "Where the Eucharist Is, There Is the Church"; 5. Parish as a "Catholic Church"; 6. Localism: Priority of the Local Church over Universal; 7. Participation of Other Bishops in an Ordination of a Local Bishop; 8. Afanasiev's Attitude towards Law in the Church; 9. Ministry: Functional or Ontological?; 10. Historical Theological Topics; III. Conclusion; 1. Evaluation of Zizioulas's Criticism; 2. Two Different Versions of Eucharistic Ecclesiology; 3. Peculiarity and Necessity of Afanasiev

## *I. History of the Appearance of the Present Article*

### *1. Established Consensus*

In the 1980–90s, a number of prominent Orthodox theologians mentioned with approval the criticism of Fr Nicholas Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology by John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon.

The first one to support that criticism was probably Fr John Meyendorff. In the Foreword to Zizioulas's book *Being as Communion* published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press in 1985, he, on the one hand, pointed out that the ideas of Metropolitan John were close to those of Afanasiev but, on the other hand, emphasized the sharp criticism of the latter by the former. In Meyendorff's opinion, the criticism was "justified". Showing solidarity with the criticism of Zizioulas, Fr John

1 I am thankful to Fr Michael Plekon for proof-reading my English text.

formulated the following rhetorical question:

Was not Afanasiev somewhat overlooking the Trinitarian and anthropological dimension of ecclesiology, focusing his thought on the “local” nature of the eucharistic community and, somewhat, excluding the problems of truth and of the universal presuppositions of unity?<sup>2</sup>

It was not the first time Meyendorff conducted polemics with Afanasiev: in the mid-1950s, being a young theologian residing in Paris, he argued against some opinions Afanasiev expressed in his book on the ministry of laity in the Church.<sup>3</sup> However, in the present article I would like to explore a different topic.

*Being as Communion* was recommended as the work containing “important correctives” to Afanasiev’s eucharistic ecclesiology by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware.<sup>4</sup> Fr John Ericson claimed that, “once identified chiefly with the late Fr Afanasiev and émigré Russian theologians, ‘eucharistic ecclesiology’ has been given both balance and scholarly precision quite independently by John Zizioulas”.<sup>5</sup>

- 2 John Meyendorff, foreword to John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, St Vladimir’ Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 1997, 12. The book appeared in 1985. The text of 1997 which I am using seems to be an unchanged new printing of the edition of 1985.
- 3 Иоанн Мейендорф, “Иерархия и народ в Православной Церкви. По поводу книги прот. Н. Афанасьева ‘Служение мирян в Церкви’”, in *Вестник РСХД* 39 (1955), 36–41; Виктор Александров, *Николай Афанасьев и его евхаристическая экклезиология*, Свято-Филаретовский православно-христианский институт, Москва 2018, 195–196; Anastacia Wooden, *The Limits of the Church: Ecclesiological Project of Nicholas Afanasiev*. PhD Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC 2018, 366–367 (chapter 3, section a; as the work has not been published yet, page numbers may slightly differ in the word file).
- 4 Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia), *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin Books, 1997, 338.
- 5 John Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past: Studies in Orthodox Canon Law and Church History*, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 1991, 91.

(Looking ahead, the words about “scholarly precision” seem to be a strong exaggeration in the light of the arguments developed later in the present article). The idea of Zizioulas’ corrections to Afanasiev was accepted, in a very cautious manner though, even by Fr Boris Bobrinsky, who was a student—and later colleague—of Fr Nicholas in the Saint Sergius Theological Institute: “Correcting certain aspects of Afanasiev’s thought, he [Zizioulas], nevertheless, develops the basic ideas of Fr Nicholas’ ecclesiology”.<sup>6</sup>

The recommendations of the leading Orthodox scholars together with the reputation of Metropolitan John as one of the prominent and original Orthodox theologians of the present—the reputation which was established approximately in the same period of the 1980–1990s and which I would not like to question—contributed to the fact that the criticism of Afanasiev expressed in the writings of Zizioulas was widely received by theologians as correct and justified. In the scholarship, the opinion that Metropolitan John offered an “improved” and, so to speak, “advanced” version of eucharistic ecclesiology became widely-accepted. The passages and chapters viewing the ecclesiology of Zizioulas as a more developed stage of the modern Orthodox teaching about the Church became a common place in theological writings. Towards the end of the twentieth century, a scholarly consensus on the correlation of the theological achievement of Afanasiev and Zizioulas was firmly established.

That consensus, however, came as a surprise for those theologians who, for whatever reasons, studied Afanasiev. It is probably Fr Michael Plekon who was the first to draw attention to the fact that critics, of whom Zizioulas was the most persistent, attributed to Fr Nicholas the opinions he never held.<sup>7</sup> Since then, several more

6 Boris Bobrinsky, *Le mystère de l'Église: Cours de théologie dogmatique*, Cerf, Paris 2003, 123.

7 Michael Plekon, “‘Always Everywhere and Always Together’: The Eucharistic Ecclesiology of Nicholas Afanasiev’s *The Lord’s Supper Revisited*”, in *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 41/1-2 (1997), 143, 147.

scholars including the author of the present article have examined the criticism of Zizioulas and have come to the conclusion that in general it is not justified and that Metropolitan John's knowledge of the ecclesiology of Afanasiev is only scarce and often distorted.<sup>8</sup> This conclusion should not be viewed only as usual polemics between different generations of theologians—the criticism of Zizioulas itself included an element of such polemics<sup>9</sup>—but as a fact established by research into texts and ideas.

## 2. *My Previous Study*

My previous study of the criticism of Afanasiev by Zizioulas was written because of my disagreement with the consensus that I mentioned above. I will repeat what I consider the two main findings of the study immediately:

First, the familiarity of Zizioulas with the writing of Afanasiev is very fragmentary, he always criticizes Fr Nicholas in passing, his criticism abounds with inaccuracies, and it is quite often that he simply distorts Afanasiev's ideas.

Secondly, although Metropolitan John recognizes<sup>10</sup> he is not familiar with the works of Afanasiev written in Russian, the problem

8 Victor Alexandrov, "Nicholas Afanasiev's Ecclesiology and Some of its Orthodox Critics", in *Sobornost* 31/2 (2009), 45–68; Wooden, *The Limits of the Church*, 340–344 (chapter 3, section a), 479–487 (Appendix II); and Christophe D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères chez Nicolas Afanassieff*, Presses universitaires de Louvain, Louvain 2020, 314–333.

9 J. Zizioulas, "L'apport de la théologie orthodoxe occidentale", in *Service orthodoxe de press* 326 (mars 2008), 25–26; quoted in Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 333 (n. 85).

10 John D. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*, Elizabeth Theokritoff (trans.), Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts 2001, 36 (n. 47).

is not merely linguistic. After a certain moment, which I would define now as the early- or mid-1970s—but I do not pretend to be very precise as regards such a chronology—Zizioulas does not demonstrate a greater familiarity with Afanasiev than the one he has gained by that moment. He does not show he is aware even of the works of Afanasiev available in French or English, including *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, Fr Nicholas's opus magnum published in French in 1975. Despite that, Zizioulas continues to make critical comments about Afanasiev (and sometimes about Fr Alexander Schmemmann, too) either in the new writings or in his old, reprinted, ones. I supposed that from a certain period Metropolitan John lost his interest in real Afanasiev and was satisfied „with the folkloric image of Afanasiev's ecclesiology that Zizioulas created for himself in the 1960s”.<sup>11</sup>

### *3. Need to Revisit the Issue*

There no use in excessive polemics. This time, nevertheless, after some hesitation I decided to revisit the issue and set the record of Zizioulas's "corrections" strait once again. First of all, because in the years which have passed since the moment my previous article on Zizioulas' criticism was published, I have come to better understanding of the ecclesiology of Zizioulas himself. However, the most important reason is that, despite there are signs that *the myth of Zizioulas' corrections to Afanasiev has slightly been shaken*,<sup>12</sup> *it is still very much alive and decreases interest towards Afanasiev*. It is not

11 V. Alexandrov, "Nicholas Afanasiev's Ecclesiology and Some of its Orthodox Critics", 63–65.

12 See the studies quoted above in n. 7 and 8. Also, consult Kallistos Ware, "Sobornost and Eucharistic Ecclesiology: Alexei Khomiakov and his successors", in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11/2–3 (2011), 216–235, where Metropolitan Kallistos presents a significantly more adequate view on the correlation of Afanasiev and Zizioulas as he is not talking about Metropolitan John's "corrections" to Fr Nicholas and does not view the

only Metropolitan John who has been engaged into polemics with Fr Nicholas,<sup>13</sup> but it is his criticism—not lengthy but persistent and being repeated for about four decades, the criticism of a prominent theologian with a good reputation—that influenced current attitude towards Afanasiev the most. Convinced by Zizioulas, theologians found the ecclesiology of Afanasiev superseded by the “emended” version of Metropolitan John. Whereas the matter of fact is that *the ecclesiology of Zizioulas is not an advanced version of eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev with Fr Nicholas’s mistakes corrected, but Zizioulas’s own version of ecclesiology, the author of which has quite a vague idea of Afanasiev.*<sup>14</sup> Afanasiev, whose writings were quite popular in the years following the Second Vatican Council (in the last sessions of which he took part as an Orthodox observer) became a theologian read rarely by new generations. Meanwhile, he deserves attention in his own right not just a sacramental reference as an imperfect step to the “advanced” ecclesiology of Zizioulas. Moreover, he often raises the topics which Zizioulas was not really interested in and offers solutions which are better justified historically or dogmatically than those of Metropolitan John.

The following text is a new, hopefully more profound, variation on the same topic. Occasionally, I borrow sentences from my English text of 2009, but otherwise this is a completely new piece of writing. Besides, I do my best to avoid the extremes of polemical style.

I have not tried to take into account all critical remarks of Zizioulas about Afanasiev. It is not really necessary since the discussed ones

ecclesiology of the former as a nicer upper floor built on the slightly defective ground floor constructed by the latter.

13 For the analysis of the criticism of some other theologians, see: A. Wooden, *The Limits of the Church*, 335–339, 340–366; Ch. D’Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 334–342.

14 Cf. В. Александров, *Николай Афанасьев и его евхаристическая эkkлeзиология*, 72, 203–204.

give sufficient idea of the disagreement of the two theologians. I have attempted to present criticism of Zizioulas as systematically as possible. Naturally, this systematization reflects my own vision of the discussed issues and bears witness to my own views and preferences.

## *II. Issues Criticised by Zizioulas*

### *1. Ambiguity of Zizioulas's Attitude towards His Predicessors*

Zizioulas criticizes Afanasiev already in his earliest book *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, which was his dissertation that appeared in Greek back in 1965, but which became widely known after the publication of its English translation in 2001.<sup>15</sup> Further portions of criticism are found in his collections of articles *Being as Communion* (1985)<sup>16</sup> and *The One and the Many* (2010).<sup>17</sup> The attitude of Metropolitan John to the eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev and Schmemmann—Zizioulas understands that Fr Alexander accepts and, in his own way, develops many basic ideas of Afanasiev—is ambiguous, not exclusively critical. Both in *Eucharist, Bishop, Church* and in *Being as Communion* he refers to eucharistic ecclesiology as an important and positive phenomenon.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in *Being as Communion* he accepts that in this book “the reader will easily recognize the fundamental presuppositions of eucharistic ecclesiology”, pointing, thus, if not to his belonging to that current of theological thought, at least, to his relation to it. Nevertheless, criticism is absolutely predominant in the references of Metropolitan John to Afanasiev (his criticism of Schmemmann is less extensive and seems to fade over

15 For the full publication data, see n. 10 above.

16 See n. 2 above.

17 John D Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World Today*, Fr Gregory Edwards (ed.), Sebastian Press, Alhambra, CA 2010.

18 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 17; Idem, *Being as Communion*, 23.

the years, being limited to one or two specific points). In *Being as Communion*, having accepted his connection with the eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev, Zizioulas observes immediately that the attentive reader will also discover important differences from that ecclesiology. Zizioulas warns that he would like “to go further than Afanasiev or to dissociate his own opinions from the latter without either underestimating or minimizing the importance of this Russian theologian and those who have faithfully followed him.”<sup>19</sup> Zizioulas recognizes that he is not familiar with the works of Afanasiev written in Russian and is aware of eucharistic ecclesiology only on the basis of the French- and English-language publications of Fr Nicholas and his follower Alexander Schmemmann.<sup>20</sup>

In different books of Zizioulas, his criticism of Afanasiev varies as regards its length and decisiveness. In *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, the criticism is very cautious and its wording is somewhat vague. When writing the book published in 1965, Zizioulas was still a young theologian (he is born in 1931). It is a criticism addressed to a senior scholar, whose theology is recognised, by a junior one, whose views are still being shaped.<sup>21</sup> However, major elements of his subsequent criticism are already present in *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, although not in a developed form. By that moment, Metropolitan John has already internalized the idea of “corporate personality”, which became one of the “guiding stars” of his theological career.<sup>22</sup> In the book, the idea is present at the background, and a great part of the disagreement of Zizioulas with Afanasiev and Schmemmann is due to the conclusions he makes from that intuition.

19 Ibid., 23.

20 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 36 (n. 47).

21 Cf. A. Wooden, *The Limits of the Church*, 340.

22 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 55 (including n. 56). For this idea in Zizioulas, see Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1993, 166–186.

*Being as Communion* reflects the theology of Metropolitan John at a more advanced stage of its development. The criticism of Afanasiev—Schmemmann is replaced by “those who faithfully followed Afanasiev” in this book published by St Vladimir’s Seminary Press in 1985—is more developed and definite. However, *Being as Communion* also belongs to quite an early period of Zizioulas’s theological career: the book is based on *L’Être ecclésial*, a collection of his articles published in French in 1981. The English version is completed with one more text (chapter 3), and, thus, includes writings written in the period from 1969 to 1981, so to speak, „in the long 1970s”.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the book *The One and the Many* comprises the articles published from 1969 to 2006, that is to say, first, the works of the same period as *Being as Communion* but, for some reason, not included in it, and, secondly, the articles written later. *The One and the Many* contains the most brave criticism addressed by Metropolitan John to Afanasiev.

Mostly, my discussion of Zizioulas’s criticism is based on these three volumes of Zizioulas although occasionally I refer to his other writings.

Despite the fact that criticism of Zizioulas is developing from his early works to mature ones, a significant continuity of topics is characteristic of it, and basic critical remarks are repeated by Metropolitan John.

## 2. “One-sidedness”

Several times Zizioulas criticized the eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev for “one-sidedness”. He was not only one to make similar comments about Afanasiev. Fr Alexander Schmemmann, when he was a young theologian, reproached Afanasiev, his senior colleague at the

23 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 261 (the list of the sources of the chapters of the book).

St Sergius Theological Institute in Paris, for a narrow understanding of the Church.<sup>24</sup> It happened in the period when Schmemmann was looking at Florovsky as his teacher and at Florovsky's theology as a sample to follow. Even later, after the influence of Afanasiev on Schmemmann overshadowed that of Florovsky, he called Afanasiev—quite well-intendedly—a man of one idea, one vision, which was, to a great extent, true since Fr Nicholas worked in not a broad field and explored not a great number of topics. It was not due to Afanasiev's blindness or deafness to other topics, but because he had no taste or interest in them as he was preoccupied with his main vision, namely, the Church.<sup>25</sup>

Zizioulas' criticism is, however, of a different kind, and Metropolitan John drew different conclusions from it. What does he mean by Afanasiev's "one-sidedness"? This is not always formulated clearly. In *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, when the claim of the "one-sidedness" of the eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev appears for the first time in Zizioulas, it happens after he states that his predecessors (Afanasiev and Schmemmann) had identified the Church with Eucharist "fully and exclusively". Metropolitan John warns that it is one-sided to study the Eucharist isolated from other phenomena of the Church, in particular, from faith, love, baptism, and sanctity of life. This warning is formulated, however, extremely carefully, even vaguely, and sounds rather as a general methodological principle that comes to the author's mind with regard to eucharistic ecclesiology. It remains unclear what it means exactly when applied to Afanasiev and Schmemmann.<sup>26</sup> A "full

24 Александр Шмеман, Георгий Флоровский, *Письма 1947–1955 годов*. Павел Гаврилюк (ed., intr.), ПСТГУ, Москва 2019, 262.

25 Александр Шмеман, "Памяти отца Николая Афанасьева", in Idem, *Собрание статей, 1947–1983*, Русский путь, Москва 2009, 838–839.

26 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 17–18. For a more detailed criticism of this passage, see: V. Alexandrov, "Nicholas Afanasiev's Ecclesiology and Some of its Orthodox Critics", 50–51

and exclusive" identification of the Church with Eucharist is in itself quite an alarming statement for the reader familiar with Afanasiev and Schmemmann as it appears to be an evident oversimplification.

Later Zizioulas attributed "one-sidedness" to the eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev directly and related it to the principle "where the Eucharist is, there is the Church".<sup>27</sup> Thus, it would be correct to conclude that Zizioulas considers the ecclesiology of Afanasiev one-sided because it "identifies the concept of Church and Eucharist fully and exclusively" and because it follows the principle "where the Eucharist is, there is the Church". The two formulas are essentially identical in Zizioulas since the first formula is an earlier variant of the second one. I shall discuss the principle "where the Eucharist is, there is the Church" in section 4 below.

It is ironic that later the reproach of one-sidedness returned to Zizioulas as boomerang since he himself was accused of it, by the next generation of scholars, for excessive concentration on Eucharist and for giving little weight to Baptism.<sup>28</sup> It seems that in the Orthodox theology a concentration on a favourite topic is exposed to reproaches, and not to be viewed one-sided one has to write a book of the scope of *Summa Theologiae*.

### 3. "Enlarging the Horizon" to Avoid Sacramentalization of Theology

In the book *Being as Communion* (1985), which made Zizioulas widely-known among theologians and which has been the most quoted of his books so far, Metropolitan John, states that he would like "to

27 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 66, 311 (the articles written in 1982 and 1985 respectively). The first of the quoted articles is also included in another book of Metropolitan John: John D. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, Luke ben Tallon (ed.), T&T Clark, London 2011, here at p. 104.

28 For more details, see Kallistos Ware, "Sobornost and Eucharistic Ecclesiology", 231–232.

enlarge, as much as possible, the horizon of ecclesiology in order to relate the theology of the Church to its philosophical and ontological implications as well as to the rest of theology”. One may suppose that this intention is related to the opinion of Metropolitan John that eucharistic ecclesiology of his predecessors is one-sided. Commenting on the aim of the first two chapters of his book, Zizioulas writes that he would like “to distance the present studies from the opinion that eucharistic ecclesiology is founded simply on the concept or on the celebration of a sacramental act”. Metropolitan John emphasizes that he is doing so because, on the basis of eucharistic ecclesiology, many people, both Western Christians and the Orthodox, believe that Orthodox ecclesiology is “only a projection of the mystery of the Church into the sacramental categories: a sacramentalization of theology”.<sup>29</sup> Up to this point, the wish of Zizioulas mostly corresponds to a short “defence” of Afanasiev’s ecclesiology by Schmemmann, who emphasizes that it is wrong to see this ecclesiology as a reduction of the Church to Eucharist and liturgy.<sup>30</sup> However, Zizioulas immediately makes a statement which suggests that, perhaps, he himself is one of those whom the “defence” of Schmemmann should be addressed:

Such an impression (that eucharistic ecclesiology is only a sacramentalization of theology – *V. A.*) is inevitable if we do not go beyond what eucharistic ecclesiology has said up until now, if we do not try to widen both the theological and philosophical horizons.<sup>31</sup>

In itself, an intention to relate ecclesiology to other fields of theology or even philosophy is intelligible and welcome. The success of such a project depends on what it involves and how it is completed. However, I would like to question whether the conclusion that the eucharistic ecclesiology of Zizioulas’ predecessors is *only* a sacramentalization

29 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 23.

30 А. Шмеман, “Памяти отца Николая Афанасьева”, 840.

31 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 24.

of theology is really inevitable. Metropolitan John does not explain what kind of danger that greater attention to sacraments which is characteristic of Afanasiev—and especially of Schmemmann (as this comment is even more pertinent to his theology)—leads to.

Ecclesiology cannot replace other fields of theology. It always will remain only a part of theology and should be connected to its other parts. Normally, ecclesiology does not pretend to substitute the whole of theology. Afanasiev and Schmemmann were feeling it was necessary to emphasize the importance of sacraments for theology since the theology of the preceding generations had been cut off from its sacramental roots. Such a “re-sacramentalization” was necessary not as a substitute for entire theology but as a source of it and as a new—in fact, the oldest—perspective of theology.

The ecclesiology of Zizioulas' predecessors does not exclude other areas of theology and does not pretend to do so. To use an expression of Fr Alexander Schmemmann, eucharistic ecclesiology makes an attempt to point to the eucharistic roots of theology.<sup>32</sup> The message of that ecclesiology is that theology should be re-connected to praising the Lord in the Eucharist within the local Church. She is the source and primary holder of that *theologia prima* about which Aidan Kavanaugh writes.<sup>33</sup> In his correspondence with Bernhardt Schulze, Afanasiev introduced an interesting division of theologians into “historians” and “dogmatic theologians” (where “dogmatic” is used in a healthy theological, not pejorative, sense).<sup>34</sup> Should we not see in Zizioulas' criticism of Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology a resistance of a mainly “dogmatic theologian” against a “historian”

32 А. Шмеман, “Памяти отца Николая Афанасьева”, 840.

33 Aidan Kavanaugh, *On Liturgical Theology*, Pueblo, New York 1984, 73–121.

34 Bernhardt Schulze, “Ekklesiologischer Dialog mit Erzpriester Nikolaj Afanas'ev”, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 33 (1967), 388. Cf. my discussion of differences between Afanasiev and Bulgakov: В. Александров, *Николай Афанасьев и его евхаристическая экклезиология*, 32.

within eucharistic ecclesiology, a resistance of speculative thought (again in a theological sense of the word) against the eucharistic historicism of Afanasiev? It is true that in his first book Zizioulas made a serious, although by no means impeccable, attempt to harmonize his main—at that moment—dogmatic idea of “corporate personality” with contemporaneous historical data about the Early Church. However, he never went significantly further as regards his historical knowledge, and his theology was becoming increasingly speculative.

4. “Where the Eucharist Is, There Is the Church”

The formula “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church”, which Zizioulas considers the basic principle of eucharistic ecclesiology, turns out to be the key to understanding the criticism of that ecclesiology by Zizioulas himself.

The criticism of the formula appears already in the book *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*. At the end of the book, summarizing the results of his study, Zizioulas objects to that formula, which is found in Afanasiev’s article *Una sancta*.<sup>35</sup> Zizioulas believes that

Emphasized to the extreme, the axiom “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church”, destroys in the final analysis any notion of *canonical* unity in the Church, leading in essence to the antithesis introduced by R. Sohm of Religion and Law.<sup>36</sup>

(It is to be observed that, according to Sohm, it is the Christian Church not religion in general which is incompatible with law.<sup>37</sup>)

35 Nicholas Afanasiev, *Una sancta*, in Michael Plekon (ed.), *Tradition Alive: On the Church and the Christian Life in Our Time / Readings from the Eastern Church*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham 2003, 14.

36 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 258.

37 Rudolph Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*, Duncker und Humblot, Leipzig 1898, 22–28.

Such an absolute view of the eucharistic character of the Church to the exclusion of canonical preconditions leads Fr A. Schmemmann, too, to the view that we have ecclesiological fullness even in the parish, inasmuch as the Eucharist is celebrated there, which conflicts with the conclusions of this study in which the eucharistic element is interwoven with the canonical, which is to say, the Eucharist with the Bishop.<sup>38</sup>

In this quotation, the three mutually related elements emerge, although not in a fully-articulated form, the elements which Zizioulas will repeatedly criticize later. The first one is the formula “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church”, the second is Afanasiev’s attitude to law, and the third is the issue of a parish as a catholic Church. In this section, I will discuss the first element while the second and third ones will be analysed later.

In this passage quoted from the early book of Zizioulas, it is not clear who actually emphasizes the formula “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church” to the extreme. Is this Afanasiev himself? Or is it only general, methodological, warning made by Zizioulas. However, in later works of Metropolitan John, this formula is presented as the main, “well-known”, principle or even axiom of the eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev.<sup>39</sup> In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas claims:

Eucharistic ecclesiology such as has been developed by Fr Afanasiev and his followers raises serious problems, and because of this it is in need of fundamental correction. The principle “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church” on which this ecclesiology is built, tends to lead to two basic errors that Fr Afanasiev did not avoid, any more than those who have faithfully followed him.<sup>40</sup>

38 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 259.

39 Idem, *Being as Communion*, 24 (Introduction written in 1981); Idem, *The One and the Many*, 66, 280, 311 (the articles published in 1982, 2004, and 1985 respectively).

40 Idem, *Being as Communion*, 24.

Let us have a more attentive look at the “well-known” principle of Afanasiev’s ecclesiology. The expression “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church” is a verbal formula. It is one of the *several* expressions which Fr Nicholas uses to demonstrate the interdependence—or even identity—of the Eucharist and the Church. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, this phrase emerges in his works only *once*, namely, in the article *Una sancta*. As any theological formula, whatever aphoristic and aptly-phrased might it be, it cannot be exhaustive and understood without its context. This is neither a slogan, nor a template one uses to ascertain if there is the Church or there is not.

Afanasiev actually offers quite a developed, dialectical theology of the Eucharist and the Church. The passage, from which Zizioulas takes the phrase, testifies to this as well. In that passage, Afanasiev is looking for an appropriate wording to express the relation of the Church and Eucharist: “As the Body of Christ the Church in her fullness is manifested in the eucharistic assembly of each local Church”, “the Church abides where a eucharistic assembly is”, “a distinctive empirical feature of the Church is a eucharistic assembly”, “by claiming that a eucharistic assembly is the principle of the unity of the Church, we do not exclude the thesis [...] that a distinctive empirical feature of the local church is a bishop because he is included in the concept of Eucharist”. (By the way, the last phrase quoted addresses the question Zizioulas raises about the lack of the canonical element in Afanasiev. See the quotation from *Being as Communion* above. For Afanasiev, the Eucharist and Bishop are two interwoven elements. It is true that this norm is derived from the Early Church history, namely, from the period when the local Church has not split into parishes yet. I cannot dwell into the topic at this point). If one turns to other works of Afanasiev, it would be not difficult to find more statements by which Fr Nicholas attempts to express the identity of the Eucharist and the Church.

By limiting this idea of Afanasiev to a template-like principle “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church”, Metropolitan John makes the

thought of his opponent more schematic—even primitive—than it is. Moreover, in one of his works *he definitely pushes his readers towards a mechanistic interpretation of Afanasiev*:

The Church is not simply this convocation for celebration of the Eucharist; it also involves the people of God dispersed all over the world every day, and not simply when they meet for the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>41</sup>

Would it be, however, correct to interpret Afanasiev in the sense that the Church exists only when a Sunday or other festive Eucharist is being celebrated and disappears as soon as the people of God leave for home? Such a reading of Afanasiev, inspired by Zizioulas consciously or unconsciously, is an evident vulgarization of Fr Nicholas's thought. Afanasiev's idea of identity of the Church and Eucharist, which is shared by Schmemmann—and, as we shall immediately see, by Zizioulas himself!—is definitely more subtle.

It is worth noting that in the article quoted above, even in the same paragraph quoted, Metropolitan John expresses the very same idea as Afanasiev or Schmemmann and uses the wording not radically different from theirs:

If we ask what is the nature of the Church in the Orthodox understanding, what expresses the nature of the Church in its fullness, the answer, if anything, is certainly the Eucharist.<sup>42</sup>

In his late-period writings, Zizioulas often talks about the Eucharist as the identity of the Church.<sup>43</sup> In one of his relatively recent articles,

41 *Idem*, *The One and the Many*, 311 (an article of 1985).

42 *Ibid.*

43 Иоанн Зизиулас, митрополит Пергамский, *Церковь и Евхаристия. Сборник статей по православной экклезиологии*, Богородице-Сергиева Пустынь 2009, 34–40 (an article of 1997); John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, T&T Clark, London 2008, 123 f. (on p. 123–124, see in particular a sympathetic reference to Maximus the Confessor who, according to Zizioulas, maintains that the Eucharist expresses the identity of the Church in the best manner).

Metropolitan John distances himself from those who warn against an excessive identification of the Eucharist and the Church (which is again a sort of a boomerang since it was he himself who warned against the extreme emphasis on the Eucharist in his earliest book!). He believes that the fears of this sort are based on that erroneous concept of the Eucharist as one of the seven sacraments which was developed in medieval scholasticism.<sup>44</sup> In a word, for Zizioulas it is not a problem to talk about *the identity of the Eucharist and the Church and to describe this identity with his own terms*. When, however, the same idea is articulated by Afanasiev, Metropolitan John chooses one of Afanasiev's expressions, reduces Fr Nicholas' ecclesiology to a schematic, almost mechanistic, principle, and attributes to his opponent "one-sidedness" leading to serious mistakes. In this manner, *Zizioulas conducts polemic not with real Afanasiev but his shade pale, distorted and created by Zizioulas himself*. Whatever reasons for such an attitude are, such a polemic is, at least, scholarly inaccurate. The reduction of Afanasiev's theology to the formula "where the Eucharist is, there is the Church", which is presented as a template and lacks nuances and context, is the basis of Zizioulas' criticism. This basis could easily have been modified and completed with nuances and context if Metropolitan John were more interested in understanding Afanasiev than criticising him.

##### *5. Parish as a "Catholic Church"*

According to Zizioulas, the principle "where the Eucharist is, there is the Church" leads to two basic errors.

The first of these errors consists in considering even the *parish* where the Eucharist takes place as a complete and "catholic" Church. Several Orthodox, following Afanasiev, have come to this conclusion without

44 И. Зизиулас, *Церковь и Евхаристия*, 45 (an article originally published in 2004).

recognizing that they are raising in a very acute manner the entire problem of the structure of the Church.<sup>45</sup>

Who are these mysterious “several Orthodox” who followed Afanasiev? In the book *Eucharist, Bishop, Church* Zizioulas attributes that mistake directly to Schmemmann.<sup>46</sup> He also credits Afanasiev and Schmemmann with the same error later.<sup>47</sup> This means that in *Being as Communion* the main addressee of his criticism, along with Afanasiev, is Schmemmann. (I guess that to name him directly was somewhat uncomfortable because this book of Zizioulas was published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press and the reputation of Fr Schmemmann, who had only recently died, was extremely high at that moment.)

I have several times drawn the attention of the readership that neither Afanasiev, nor Schmemmann considered the parish as a catholic Church.<sup>48</sup> Zizioulas attributes them the position they never held. Afanasiev was looking for the “ecclesiastical norm” in the epoch when the local Church did not split into the parishes as we know them today. In the book *The Lord's Supper*, he proposed a discussion on what can appropriately be considered a local Church in modern circumstances.<sup>49</sup> In his writings, one could find two or three places which might be interpreted as leaning to considering the parish as the catholic Church, however, this position is nowhere expressed clearly

45 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 24.

46 Idem, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 259. Here Metropolitan John refers to the following article: Alexander Schmemmann, “Towards a Theology of Councils”, in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 6 (1962), 174–184.

47 И. Зизиулас, *Церковь и Евхаристия*, 68–69, 145, 148 (the referred articles were published in 2001 and 1987 respectively).

48 Most fully and precisely in: Victor Alexandrov, “Local Church in Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 63 (2019), 384–389. Besides, see В. Александров, *Николай Афанасьев и его евхаристическая эклезиология*, 82–86.

49 Н. Афанасьев, *Трапеза Господня*, Религиозно-педагогический кабинет при Православном богословском институте, Paris 1952, 63–64.

or developed. At the same time, Afanasiev is fully aware that the modern parish significantly differs from the ancient local Church. Fr Christophe D'Aloisio remarks that Zizioulas never refers to the places where Afanasiev calls the parish the local Church.<sup>50</sup> It is not surprising since there is no such place in Afanasiev. The criticism of Zizioulas is based not on works of Afanasiev but on the abstract use of the formula “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church”. Applying this formula mechanistically, Zizioulas concludes that Fr Nicholas believes that anywhere the Eucharist is celebrated, including the parish, there is a local Church.

A good illustration to what I have just said provides Zizioulas' article *Orthodox Ecclesiology and the Ecumenical Movement* (1985). Here, Zizioulas briefly describes the structure of the local Church in Antiquity in the manner *quite similar* to how Afanasiev saw that structure in the pre-Nicaean and early-Nicaean period. Then Metropolitan John states suddenly that Afanasiev “did not take into account the structure of the eucharistic community as I have described it”;<sup>51</sup> This statement comes as a great surprise to any reader familiar with Afanasiev. In saying this, Zizioulas seems to be ignorant of the real views of Afanasiev. This and similar statements of Metropolitan John may be understood properly if one keeps in mind that Zizioulas is trapped by the illusion he created for himself—and, alas, for his readers, too—namely, by the illusion that Afanasiev's ecclesiology may be comfortably reduced to the formula “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church”. For this reason, Metropolitan John believes that for Afanasiev “simply the fact of the celebration of the Eucharist was enough [...] to speak of the Church”;<sup>52</sup> and, thus, the parish, where the Eucharist is celebrated, is, according to Zizioulas's interpretation of Afanasiev, the local Church.

50 Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 324.

51 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 313.

52 *Ibid.*

The position of Schmemmann regarding the parish and eparchy is actually close to the view of Zizioulas himself although, when comparing them, one can see interesting peculiarities of which the most important one is a different understanding of the role of a bishop, parish priest and “college of presbyters”.<sup>53</sup> However, in the present article, there is no need to come back to the comparison of the position of the three theologians as, first, it has already been done,<sup>54</sup> and, secondly, it will lead us far from the topic of the article.

It is again worth noting that Zizioulas is not actually interested in establishing the real position of Afanasiev and Schmemmann. He continues to repeat his criticism of their alleged view of a parish as a catholic Church in his later articles<sup>55</sup> whereas in *The Eucharist* (published in French in 1985 and in English in 1987) Schmemmann writes absolutely clearly that the parish is not a catholic Church but a part of a greater unity with a bishop at its head.<sup>56</sup> Zizioulas is familiar with *The Eucharist*: he quotes it in the articles published in 1995 and 1999 and included in two different volumes of his writings,<sup>57</sup> nevertheless, he did not pay attention to what Schmemmann wrote about the parish.

Once I observed that Afanasiev and Schmemmann, on the one hand, and Zizioulas, on the other hand, had different experience of parishes. The former two belonged to the Churches following the

53 For more details, see V. Alexandrov, “Local Church in Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, 389–390.

54 Ibid., 384–394.

55 И. Зизиулас, *Церковь и Евхаристия*, 68–69, 145, 148 (the articles of 2001 and 1987 respectively); John Zizioulas, *Eucharistic Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Tradition*, in J.-M. Van Cangh (ed.), *L'ecclésiologie eucharistique*, Academie internationale des sciences religieuses, Bruxelles 2009, 189, quoted in Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 321.

56 Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, Paul Kachur (trans.), St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 1987, 96.

57 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 103, 112; Idem, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 39, 85, 93.

decrees of the Moscow Council of 1917–18. In those Churches, it was mandatory to have parish councils, a sort of a new *presbyterion* similar, to some extent, to that of the Early Church. Zizioulas is talking about a single-priest parish, which most probably did not have a parish council.<sup>58</sup> This is important to keep in mind when we are evaluating his arguments of why a parish cannot be a local Church. To be such, according to Metropolitan John, the following conditions should be met: it must be “a gathering of all the members of the Church of one place [...] in the presence of all the ministers, including the college of presbyters with the bishop at its head.”<sup>59</sup> This definition may be accepted if two issues are clarified: a territorial (what is „one place”?) and ministerial one (what kind of ministry is meant by the “presbyters” and “bishop”?).

For Zizioulas, an ideal “one place” would be a small eparchy,<sup>60</sup> which sounds quite reasonable. The precise borders of the “one place” may be debated. The principle “one city, one bishop”, which is derived from canon 8 of the First Ecumenical Council and is currently viewed as an ideal (although not followed in practice) norm of canonical organization of the Orthodox Church, is not a primordial rule of ecclesiology. It became a standard principle in the Church of the Roman Empire from the time of Constantine the Great. However, on the basis of what we currently know, in the pre-Nicaean period it was not followed in big Roman cities— in Rome and Alexandria for sure, but probably and some other cities, too. There was also the important exception of “rural bishops” (*chorepiskopoi*).<sup>61</sup> In addition, the borders of the “one place” could not be absolutely impenetrable in modern urbanized and mobile society. To clarify the issue of “one

58 V. Alexandrov, “Local Church in Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, 391–392.

59 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 24.

60 *Ibid.*, 251–252 (n. 6).

61 Cf. V. Alexandrov, “Local Church in Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, 380–383 and 394.

place” further is a creative task for modern practical—so to speak, “applied”—ecclesiology.

As regards the ministries of the presbyters and bishop, they—namely, their “content” or functions—have been fluid enough in the course of history. The historical ideal of Zizioulas is the Church before the appearance of parishes with the presbyters surrounding the bishop and not acting as heads of separate Eucharistic assemblies. His bishop of that period is a static figure that emerges in the very beginning of the history of the Church<sup>62</sup> and whose ministry remains basically unchanged until the parish appears as a common phenomenon. At this point, a bishop becomes the administrator of his diocese while the presbyters undertake the role of “mass-specialists”.<sup>63</sup> However, if one goes beyond the names of ministries and concentrates on their functions, parishes of several jurisdictions in the so-called “diaspora” appear to be a close analogy of the ancient local Church. Their parish council plays the role of the ancient *presbyterion* while their parish priest is essentially very close to the head of the ancient *presbyterion*, to its *proestos*, that is, to the bishop of the *monepiscopate* period. The definition of Zizioulas, quoted above, tries to fit the modern eparchy back into the ancient local Church pattern but does so rather solely on the basis of the very names of the ministries of “presbyters” and “bishop”. If we pay attention not to the names but real content of the ministries (in other words, to the services performed by their holders), in some jurisdictions of the “diaspora” parishes suit the pattern of the ancient, pre-parochial, local Church much better than modern eparchies. Should one ignore this fact and apply a terminologically

62 See a remark of Fr Andrew Louth who points out that, at the current stage of research, it is impossible to keep the main thesis of the early book of Zizioulas on monepiscopate as an original phenomenon of the Early Church: Andrew Louth, review of *Eucharist, Bishop, Church* by John Zizioulas, in *Ecumenical Review* 56.1 (2004), 147–148.

63 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 250–251.

uniform, “correct”, structure with the eparchy as the local Church to all regions of Christianity?<sup>64</sup>

All in all, Zizioulas’s criticism of Afanasiev’s and Schmemmann’s alleged idea of the parish as the local Church, first, distorts the real position of the two theologians, and secondly, reveals shortcomings of Zizioulas’s own position regarding what should be called the local Church in the present.

### *6. Localism: Priority of the Local Church over Universal*

Establishing the “well-known” main principle of the ecclesiology of Afanasiev leads Zizioulas to discover one more basic “error” of Fr Nicholas. It may be called localism. Metropolitan John claims:

The principle “where the Eucharist is, there is the Church” risks suggesting the idea that each Church could, *independently of other local Churches*, be the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.’ Here there is a need for special attention and creative theological work to keep an adequate balance between the “local Church” and the “universal one”.

Zizioulas briefly discusses the changing balance between the two concepts in the Catholic theology and says:

In certain Protestant churches, the local Church [...] retains priority and almost exhausts the concept of Church. Several Orthodox theologians faithful to the doctrine of eucharistic ecclesiology—Afanasiev had already given such an interpretation—have an equal tendency to give priority to the local Church. Others, by contrast, [...] refuse to accept both catholicity of the local Church and eucharistic ecclesiology, which they regards as responsible for an inadmissible ‘localism’ in ecclesiology. It is clear that we must steer towards a third solution, which would justify eucharistic ecclesiology without carrying with it the risk of “localism”. And it is the Eucharist itself which will guide us in this, for, by its nature, it expresses simultaneously both the “localisation” and the “uni-

64 Cf. V. Alexandrov, “Local Church in Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, 392–394.

versalisation” of the mystery of the Church, that is, the transcending of both “localism” and “universalism”.<sup>65</sup>

Zizioulas comes back to the issue in another place of *Being as Communion*. Here, he writes about the role of local Church in ecclesiology and concludes:

The local Churches are as primary in ecclesiology as the universal Church. No priority of the universal over the local Church is conceivable in such an ecclesiology [eucharistic one – V.A.]. Ever since Afanasiev this idea has become current in Orthodox theology. But there is a danger in it which Afanasiev did not see and which many Orthodox theologians fail to see too. Because of the lack of a proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology in Orthodox ecclesiology, it is often too easily assumed that eucharistic ecclesiology leads to the priority of the local Church over the universal, to a kind of “congregationalism”. But as I have tried to argue in another study of mine,<sup>66</sup> Afanasiev was wrong in drawing *such conclusions* [italics added – V.A.], because the nature of the Eucharist points not in the direction of the priority of the local Church but in that of the *simultaneity* of both local and universal.<sup>67</sup>

At the end of this passage, Zizioulas attributes to Afanasiev the idea of *priority of the local Church over the universal one* although at the beginning of the passage he claimed only—and quite sympathetically—that Afanasiev *did not recognise the priority of the universal Church over the local*. Evidently, this is not the same!

Metropolitan John assures his readers that Afanasiev considered the local Church primary while the universal one secondary later, too. In a work written in 1997, he addresses the same reproach to Afanasiev

65 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 25 (the Introduction written in 1981).

66 Here, Metropolitan John makes a reference to chapter 4 of *Being as Communion*, which is an article published originally in 1969, thus, being quite an early writing of his.

67 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 132–133.

and this time, surprisingly, Meyendorff<sup>68</sup> in the following manner:

There have been theological voices in my own Church which tried to reverse the priority traditionally preferred by Roman Catholic ecclesiology (see e.g., Rahner and Ratzinger) according to which the Church first universal and only secondary local. Orthodox theologians such as late Afanassieff and Meyendorff put forth the view that the local Church comes first, both historically and theologically, and it is only in a secondary way, if at all (Afanassieff would not allow even for that until the time of Cyprian), that we can speak of the Church universal. My personal view has always been different, and it was so because I have always believed that the nature of the Eucharist points to the simultaneity of locality and universality in ecclesiology.<sup>69</sup>

It is needless to say that in none of the two places quoted above does Zizioulas inform his readers in what writings Afanasiev (or Meyendorff) develops the idea of the priority of the local Church.

Finally, in the article *Orthodox Ecclesiology and Ecumenical Movement* (1985), which I have already quoted and which contains several surprising statements about the ecclesiology of Afanasiev, Metropolitan John claims that Fr Nicholas's view

also fails to take into account the fact that the Eucharist involves a universal communion: there is only one Eucharist, even if it is celebrated in different places, just as there is one Body of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

Contrary to what Zizioulas states, the thesis of the universal Church unity based on identity of the Eucharist, which is the same despite the fact that it is celebrated in many local Church, is one of the basic ideas of Afanasiev. It follows directly from his basic intuition of the mysterious and sacramental identity of eucharistic gifts ("this is my body" Mf 26,26, Mk 14,22, Lk 22,19, and 1Cor 11,24) and the

68 Earlier Zizioulas never criticised localism of Meyendorff, who died in 1992.

69 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 266.

70 *Ibid.*, 313.

Church (“you are the Body of Christ” 1Cor 13,27) or, otherwise, of the eucharistic and ecclesial body. This idea is developed in many places including, in particular, the Foreword to *The Church of the Holy Spirit*.<sup>71</sup> For the reason of the unity of the Eucharist, Afanasiev makes the conclusion about the extant unity between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches as they mutually recognise the validity of their Eucharist with the priestly ministry included in it<sup>72</sup> (which, however, does not mean that Afanasiev promoted *intercommunion*<sup>73</sup>).

Discussing the critical remarks of Zizioulas on the priority which is allegedly given by Afanasiev to the local Church over the universal one, I would like to draw attention to the two aspects of the problem. One may be conventionally called “essential” while another “institutional”.

### *Essential Aspect*

The correlation between the local Church and the universal is undoubtedly one of the main problems of ecclesiology. However, it cannot be adequately solved in terms of primary or secondary nature of one of them. Neither Afanasiev nor Schmemmann try to solve the issue in this manner. Nowhere were they writing about the priority of the local Church and secondary nature of the universal one. Actually, it is Zizioulas who places the problem in this context. Such a way of posing the question was typical of that discussion which was going

71 Nicholas Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, Vitaly Permiakov (trans.), Michael Plekon (ed., intr.), Rowan Williams (forward), University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana 2007, 4–5. Also, see N. Afanassieff, “L’Église de Dieu dans le Christ”, in *Pensée Orthodoxe* 13 (1968), 33–38.

72 Idem, “L’Eucharistie, principal lien entre les Catholiques et les Orthodoxes”, in *Irénikon* 38 (1965), 337–339.

73 Contrary to Kallistos Ware, “Sobornost and Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, 229, but in agreement with Ch. D’Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 304 and 317.

on in the Catholic theology in the last two or three decades of the twentieth century, that is, after Afanasiev's death. In the late 1990s–early 2000s, the discussion culminated in the well-known debate between cardinals Ratzinger and Kasper, which, however, is irrelevant from the point of view of the present article. Nevertheless, the way of putting the question seems to be borrowed by Zizioulas from the theology contemporaneous to him.

Afanasiev insisted, indeed, on the catholicity of the local Church. Is not this the position Zizioulas defends, too? Afanasiev claimed, indeed, that in early Christianity each eucharistic assembly was the local Church and that the Church did not exist in the form of a universal structure. Is not this very close to what Zizioulas means when he claims that all ecclesiastical structures exceeding a bishop's diocese are not Churches in the proper sense of the word and that Church councils are not institutions to dominate and govern the local Churches?<sup>74</sup> It is quite ironic that, criticizing Afanasiev and claiming that in the Eucharist the local and the universal coincide, Zizioulas formulates—in somewhat different terms to be sure—the idea very similar to that of Afanasiev. For Afanasiev, in the early Christianity “the Church resided, lived, and was revealed in all the fullness of its unity and in all the unity of its fullness in each local Church.”<sup>75</sup> The approach of Afanasiev does not exclude the “simultaneity of locality and universality in ecclesiology” but implies it. The real, not fictional, position of Afanasiev—and Schmemmann, who shares the position of Fr Nicholas in this regard—on the correlation of the local and universal Church is not radically different from that of Zizioulas. We can rather talk about the peculiarities of their terms and about

74 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 252–253; Métropolitte Jean (Zizioulas) de Pergame, *L'Église et ses institutions* Cerf, Paris 2011, 190.

75 N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, 255. One can find several more similar places in Afanasiev. For example, see: N. Afanasiev, *Una sancta* 15, and Н. Афанасьев, *Трапеза Господня*, 27–28.

the difference of accents but hardly about any essential discrepancy. This is not the only case when Zizioulas does not notice the extent to which his views are close to the position of Afanasiev he criticises.<sup>76</sup> To confirm the closeness of the views of the three theologians, let us compare two more quotes: this time from Schmemmann and Zizioulas. In 1960 in the writing where the influence of Afanasiev on Schmemmann probably culminates, Fr Alexander wrote:

Universal unity is indeed unity of the church and not merely unity of churches. Its essence is not that all churches together constitute one vast, unique organism, but that each church—in the identity of order, faith, and gifts of the Holy Spirit—is the *same* Church, the same Body of Christ, indivisibly present wherever is the “ecclesia.” It is the same organic unity of the church herself, the churches being not complementary to each other, as parts or members, but each one and all of them together being nothing else, but the One, Holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.<sup>77</sup>

And here is a quotation from Zizioulas’s article published in 1981:

Thanks to the eucharistic vision of the “catholic Church” the problem of the relationship between the “one catholic Church in the world” and the “catholic Churches” in various local places was resolved apart from any consideration of the local Church as being incomplete or any scheme of priority of the one over the other, and in the sense of *unity in identity*.<sup>78</sup>

What then is the point of the polemics which Zizioulas conducted, with such an enthusiasm and persistence, with Afanasiev,

76 Cf. A. Wooden, *The Limits of the Church*, 343, 479–487; Ch. D’Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 324.

77 Alexander Schmemmann, *The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology*, in John Meyendorff (ed.) *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church*, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press Crestwood, NY 1992, 155. Following the Russian original, I made minor changes to the first two sentences of the English translation.

78 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 157–158.

Schmemmann and even Meyendorff? A fictional image of them as opponents emerged in Zizioulas' mind while in fact they are rather his allies. In itself, this is not tragic, nevertheless, quite surprising, given that Metropolitan John has been criticising Afanasiev and, to a lesser degree, Schmemmann without addressing their relevant texts *for decades*.

The positions of Afanasiev, Schmemmann, and Zizioulas on the correlation of the local and universal Church are, in fact, very close. They all believe that the unity of local Churches is due to their inner identity but not due to them being parts of the universal Church and that in each local Church the whole Church of God is present. There is no serious difference between their views on this matter, and the differences that may be found are terminological and those of nuances not essence.

### *Institutional Aspect*

The critique addressed to Afanasiev would be correct if it were properly formulated. However, to make such a properly-formulated critique, Zizioulas' familiarity with Afanasiev is far too fragmentary.

In the works of his mature period (after the World War II), Afanasiev concentrated on developing the theology of the local Church. He did not avoid the problems of the universal Church absolutely. In his works, you can find discussion of such issues as primacy, reception, ecclesiastical councils, and the limits of the Church. However, the core of his thought was definitely the theology of the local Church. Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology *is not a completed system*. It is a pioneer attempt to see the Church from the perspective of the Eucharist. To make that attempt, Fr Nicholas had to start with the local Church and its ministries. It is worth noting that, being a historian of the Ancient Church by training, he was an expert in such universal institutions and phenomena as ecclesiastical councils and canon law. Nevertheless, in his mature years, developing

a coherent theology of the local Church, it is as if he lacked interest in many issues related to the supra-local structures of the Church. The universal Church pales, being perhaps a remote task, in the light of his repeated efforts to formulate his vision of the local Church precisely. It is due to that peculiarity of Afanasiev's thought which Schmemmann called him—with empathy—"a man of one idea".<sup>79</sup>

Since Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology is not a finalized structure, it implies there must be additions and corrections. The criticism that could be appropriately addressed to Afanasiev is the lack of a clear idea of the place and role of supra-local institutions in his ecclesiology. There is no coherent theology of regional or universal (in the territorial sense of the word) institutions in Afanasiev. This is what can authentically be identified as his localism. In this field, there is an opportunity—or even necessity—for a creative development of the eucharistic ecclesiology of Fr Nicholas, and that opportunity is understood by both Schmemmann and Zizioulas.<sup>80</sup> However, Zizioulas's criticism of Afanasiev's localism is directed not against undeveloped theology of supra-local institutions in Afanasiev. Zizioulas claims Afanasiev allegedly gave priority to the local Church over the universal as if it were a major element of Afanasiev's vision. One cannot talk about Afanasiev's ecclesiology as a completed construction in which the correlation between the local and universal is established and the local was given an explicit priority.

### *7. Participation of Other Bishops in an Ordination of a Local Bishop*

There is one more remark of Zizioulas which is related to the problem of correlation between the local Church and the universal. Zizioulas claims,

79 А. Шмеман, "Памяти отца Николая Афанасьева", 838–839.

80 Cf. К. Х. Фелми, *Введение в современное православное богословие*, Свято-Филаретовский православно-христианский институт, Москва 2014, 231–232.

There is a fundamental point which Afanasiev has failed in his eucharistic ecclesiology to see and appreciate, as one may gather from the views expressed, for example, in his article *Una sancta* [...] and elsewhere.<sup>81</sup>

We are not told what Metropolitan John refers to as “elsewhere”. As Zizioulas believes, the fundamental point is “the fact that in each episcopal ordination at least two or three bishops from the neighbouring Churches ought to take part”. This fact ties “episcopal office and with it, the local eucharistic community in which the ordination took place with the rest of the eucharistic communities in the world in a fundamental way”.<sup>82</sup>

In *Una sancta*, Afanasiev did not mention, indeed, the presence of neighbouring bishops at the ordination of a new bishop. However, *Una sancta* is not a full exposition of Afanasiev’s ecclesiology and does not pretend to be such. Nevertheless, even in *Una sancta* Afanasiev develops the idea of the unity of local Churches due to identity of their nature, through their communication in love, and via the reception of what happens in each of them by other ones.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the idea of active relation between the local Churches is present in *Una sancta*, but the concrete manifestations of reception—one of which is, according to Afanasiev, the attendance of neighbouring bishops to the ordination of a local bishop—are not discussed in that article.

However, the reception of a bishop’s ordination by other local Churches is briefly but clearly discussed in *The Church of the Holy Spirit*<sup>84</sup> (published in 1971 in Russian and in 1975 in French). Most clearly, Afanasiev formulates the idea of the reception of an ordination through the attendance of neighbouring bishops in a published fragment of his course of canon law (1968):

81 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 155, n. 57.

82 Ibid., 155.

83 N. Afanasiev, *Una sancta*, 15–17.

84 Idem, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, 98–99.

In the pre-Nicaean period, the ordination of a bishop had to be accepted by other local Churches. Ideally, all local Churches should have accepted the ordination, but in practice it was done by the nearest ones including that local Church which had primacy. For that reason, the Church that needed to ordain her bishop tried to invite as many bishops as possible since their participation in the ordination of the new bishop was, to some extent, a guarantee that the local Churches represented by their bishops would accept the ordination.<sup>85</sup>

Let me draw attention to the dates. Chapter 4 of *Being as Communion*, where the critical remark of Zizioulas is found, is his early article published in French in 1969 and in English in 1970.<sup>86</sup> I cannot expect that Zizioulas must be familiar with the phantom emigré publication of 1968, which was printed in Russian. However, after 1975 *The Church of Saint Spirit* was available in French. By the moment the article of Zizioulas was reprinted in his books *L'Être ecclésial* (1981) and *Being as Communion* (1985), quite enough time passed to take into account the relevant passage in the *The Church of Saint Spirit* and either delete his comment or correct it. For the sake of comparison, I would mention that in 1989 Aidan Nichols grasped and presented the idea of Afanasiev in an absolutely adequate manner:

For Afanasiev it is important that, when the *proestos* of a local church is made such, the presidents of other local churches should take part. They bear witness to the fact that in its life and faith this local church now receiving its bishop is one with the whole Church of God.<sup>87</sup>

85 Николай Афанасьев, *Экклесиология. Вступление в клир*, Вода живая, Paris 1968, chapter 3, section 3. I am using the text placed on the web (<http://www.golubinski.ru/ecclesia/klircont.htm>) as neither original edition nor its reprint (Задруга, Киев 1997) is not available to me. The Paris edition of 1968 was a low-number one made on a Rotaprint machine as a textbook for students of the Saint Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute.

86 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 261.

87 Aidan Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora: Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas'ev (1893–1966)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989, 179.

Nichols does not share Afanasiev's opinion that the presence of the bishops is an act of testimony rather than ordination itself, but this is a different theological interpretation of the elements of ordination.

*8. Afanasiev's Attitude towards Law in the Church*

Already in the book *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, Zizioulas showed his disagreement with Afanasiev's understanding of ecclesiastical law but did so in passing. (See the beginning of section 4 above). He made more distinct and detailed comments on the topic significantly later. I am aware of two remarks of this sort.

In 2004, Zizioulas criticised the fact that Afanasiev' denied the juridical understanding of primacy, and Metropolitan John was also dissatisfied with the terminological difference introduced by Afanasiev to avoid that kind of understanding. Fr Nicholas differentiated between primacy (*primauté*), which he understood as juridical one, and priority (*priorité*), which he understood as non-juridical primacy of testimony. This difference was explained by Afanasiev in detail, and its conventional, even artificial, nature was emphasized by him.<sup>88</sup> For this reason, Zizioulas' objection concerning the lack of a natural difference between the two terms is resolved in that text of Afanasiev which Metropolitan John discusses. According to Zizioulas, the main problem of Afanasiev's denial to see the ties between local Churches as juridical ones is that it leads to isolationism of those Churches. Moreover, one of its possible interpretations—Metropolitan John refers with approval to N. Lossky—may result in strengthening autocephalism and infiltration of nationalism into Orthodoxy. The last warning is made in a conditional and vague mood, which may be due to the fact that Zizioulas realizes intuitively that to find any support of autocephalism in Afanasiev, who actually criticized

88 Nicholas Afanasiev, *The Church Which Presides in Love*, in Meyendorff (ed.), *The Primacy of Peter*, 115–116.

autocephalism,<sup>89</sup> would not be an easy task.<sup>90</sup>

This criticism of Afanasiev's understanding of law is intelligible in the light of the position of Zizioulas himself who believes that primacy in the Church comes with real rights not abstract "honour." This means that primacy is a juridical phenomenon.<sup>91</sup> However, Zizioulas is not really familiar with the attitude of Afanasiev towards canon law. I have to accept that it is not only his fault but an absolutely common misconception about Afanasiev. Fr Nicholas issued a good number of invectives against law in the Church. The most famous of them are found in his lecture *Power of Love* (1949), which finally became the last chapter of *The Church of the Holy Spirit*. Nevertheless, he never clarified his concept of canon law enough for such an ordinary reader who is not a diligent student of his theology to grasp it. Afanasiev insists on the primacy of love which is, after all, the only genuine foundation of ecclesiastical life and structure. At the same time, he emphasizes that the very concept of the Church implies order<sup>92</sup> and canons belong to the nature of the Church.<sup>93</sup> This order and canons are not law in the sense attributed to law by Roman, later Byzantine, emperors, and Afanasiev does not consider them as law. However, from the perspective different from that of Afanasiev, they may also be called law but of another kind. Thus, by order and canons Afanasiev means law of a special sort, to which some phenomena inevitable in the other types of law (for example, enforcement using violence) do not apply and in which a legal decision becomes effective only after reception of it by all parties involved.<sup>94</sup> Zizioulas is generally unaware of all this.

89 Николай Афанасьев, *Вступление в церковь*, Паломник, Москва 1993, 17; В. Александров, *Николай Афанасьев и его евхаристическая экклезиология*, 74–77.

90 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 281.

91 *Ibid.*, 272 (an article of 1999).

92 N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, 134.

93 Н. Афанасьев, *Вступление в церковь*, 8–9.

94 An extremely helpful discussion of Afanasiev's concept of law is found in A. Wooden, *The Limits of the Church*, 441–462.

In one more of his relatively recent writings (2009), Zizioulas claims that there is a link between Afanasiev's concept of law and the predominance of pneumatic element in his understanding of the Church: "Canon law for him incompatible with the essence of the Church as love. For him the Church is *L'Église du Saint Esprit* [the Church of the Holy Spirit] – not the Body of Christ".<sup>95</sup> As I have tried to demonstrate above, for Afanasiev it is not the canon law which is incompatible with the Church (canon law implying order and rules is inevitable in the Church) but that sort of law which was accepted by the Church with the conversion of the Roman Empire and have been dominating in ecclesiastical life until the present. The claim of Metropolitan John that for Afanasiev the Church is that of the Holy Spirit while not the Body of Christ contradicts to what is really found in the works of Afanasiev. First, the basic intuition of Afanasiev about the identity of eucharistic gifts ("this is my Body") and the Church ("you are the Body of Christ") is Christological. Secondly, according to Zizioulas himself, the institutional element of the Church belongs to its Christological dimension<sup>96</sup> (which, in my opinion, is correct), but the most of the works of mature Afanasiev, including *The Church of the Saint Spirit* and *The Lord's Supper*, are on ministries (inseparable of institutions) and sacraments (inseparable of ministries). In this case, Zizioulas criticizes Afanasiev without looking into the real content of his ecclesiology. Would not it be more appropriate to see in Afanasiev a kind of balance between Christology and Pneumatology about the lack of which in the Orthodox theology Zizioulas has complained so many times?<sup>97</sup>

95 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharistic Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Tradition*, 188, quoted in Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 320.

96 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 66.

97 For example, see Idem, *Being as Communion*, 133.

9. *Ministry: Functional or Ontological?*

One more critical remark of Zizioulas is related to the issue of ordination and ministry although this remark does not belong to his “fundamental corrections” to Afanasiev. In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas offers his understanding of ordination and nature of ministry. According to Zizioulas, in the most widespread interpretation of ordination, it comes with a transmission of power (*potestas*), which is either accompanied or not with a transmission or bestowal of a charisma (or grace). This implies that grace is understood as an object that can be possessed and transmitted.<sup>98</sup> Metropolitan John develops his own understanding of ministry as a relation into which ordination puts an ordained person. This relates the ordained person to those who are inside the local Church and those who are outside it.<sup>99</sup> Zizioulas argues that, if ordination is perceived in such a way, it is impossible to put a traditional question whether it is ontological or functional. In a footnote, he mentions Afanasiev (along with Nissiotis) as one of those who understood ordination as functional while others (Trembelas is mentioned) perceived it as ontological.<sup>100</sup>

The chapter 6 of *Being as Communion*, which includes this remark, is a translation of a German article published in 1973.<sup>101</sup> Zizioulas makes the same remark but in a sharper, polemical, form in his slightly earlier article (1970):

Even Afanasiev, despite his eucharistic ecclesiology (and there is no need to reiterate its importance here), has not managed to escape the dilemma between “ontological” and “functional”. Thus, he attached a “functional” character to the diversity of ministries in the Church.<sup>102</sup>

98 Ibid., 214.

99 Ibid., 214–225.

100 Ibid., 226.

101 Ibid., 261.

102 J. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 22 (n.37). In both cases, he refers to N. Afanassieff, “L'Église de Dieu dans le Christ”, 19.

The problem is, however, that Afanasiev's theology of ministry is very different from that of Zizioulas. What might seem inappropriate in the theology of Metropolitan John is quite appropriate in the theology of Fr Nicholas, and, having compared the two theologies, one cannot claim that the approach of Zizioulas is undoubtedly more advantageous.

*a. Afanasiev's Theology of Ministry*

Afanasiev's theology of ministry is based on classical loci in the New Testament. He starts from the teaching of Paul on various gifts of the same Spirit and on the Church as one Body which consists of many members (1Cor 12 and Rom 12,1–8). By the way, *πρᾶξις* in Rom 12,4 may comfortably be translated to English as “function”. For example, in the translation of the Good News Bible of the United Bible Societies, which is found on my book-shelf, the place reads: “We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions.”

The opposition of the ontological and functional was usual for the theological vocabulary of Fr Nicholas' time.<sup>103</sup> In particular, it was widely used in the debates on the *character indelibilis* of the priestly ministry. In the article *L'Église de Dieu dans le Christ* (“The Church of God in Christ”), to which Zizioulas refers, and in Afanasiev's opus magnum *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, Fr Nicholas uses this opposition to emphasize that the Christians have the same nature, as they belong to one Body, but their ministries—functions in the Body—are different. At the same time, Afanasiev is disinterested in the discussion of *character indelibilis*.

Christians share the same Spirit, which gives different gifts. The significance of these gifts is different as are the ministries based on them, and this creates a hierarchy of ministries. The Church is unity

103 Cf. Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 329.

in diversity. The variety of gifts generates the difference of ministries, which are functional, but this does not destroy the unity of the Body as it is ontological.<sup>104</sup> That is how Afanasiev's (actually, St Paul's) teaching on ministries may briefly be summarized. *The diversity of ministries is an indispensable characteristic of the Church: she is impossible without this diversity.* The functional could not be separated from the ontological as it does not exist separately: a function is not without that member of the Body who has it while the member necessarily has a function. The difference of ontological and functional serves for Afanasiev to express the interplay between the unity of the Church and the plurality of her ministries. It fulfils this function well.

Besides, Afanasiev underlines the fact that in primitive Christianity—and ideally in any epoch—ordination is, in fact, a sort of recognition by the local Church that the ordained person already possesses a special gift of the Spirit (received in baptism), which makes him or her capable of accepting an individual ministry in ordination. (It is unclear from Afanasiev if ordination comes with another special gift though this seems likely). Thus, this member of the Church to be ordained is pre-elected by God for a definite ministry.<sup>105</sup> The Church seeks members possessing necessary prerequisites for the ministry. In general, this is in line with the pathos of Zizioulas who opposes the idea of a mechanic transmission of grace in ordination.

### *b. Zizioulas's Theology of Ministry*

Metropolitan John, however, puts his emphasis quite differently. His logic could be better grasped not in *Being as Communion*, where the chapter on ministry was written in 1973, but in a later article

104 N. Afanassieff, "L'Église de Dieu dans le Christ", 15–20.

105 For more details on the Afanasiev's view on ordinations, see В. Александров, *Николай Афанасьев и его евхаристическая эkkлезиология*, 143–145.

(1980) included subsequently in the book *The One and the Many*.<sup>106</sup>

Zizioulas starts from 1Cor 12, too, and draws attention not to the content of that chapter of Paul's letter but to its structure. Regarding the content, he emphasizes only 1Cor 12,11 which states that the same Spirit gives a different gift to each person. Zizioulas points out that it is immediately after Paul's teaching on the gifts of the Spirit that his famous "hymn of love" follows (1Cor 13). Metropolitan John concludes that the hymn helps to interpret Paul's preceding teaching on gifts and members of the Body. All ministries are relational, and their holders are related either to other members of the Church or to those who are outside. This is a remarkable observation as usually theologians do not relate Paul's "hymn of love" to his teaching about ministries. However, the "hymn" is inserted between the two lengthy passages of the teaching and, hence, is an integral part of it. Zizioulas's observation is supported by the fact that Rom 12,1–8, which contain the same teaching on gifts, although in a shorter form, is followed by a verse on the importance of love in ministry.

In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas also attempts to provide a patristic background to this relational understanding of ministry, but in my opinion with lesser success. His references to post-Nicaean and early-Byzantine fathers are patchwork efforts and do not convince that the quoted fragments reflect a coherent relational understanding of ministry by the fathers.<sup>107</sup>

Here, it is not my aim to give a detailed analysis of the theology of ministry in Zizioulas. It is evident, however, that, emphasising the relational character of ministry as the central aspect which gives meaning to the whole of ordination, Metropolitan John basically does not discuss St Paul's doctrine itself as expressed in 1Cor 12 and Rom 12,1–8 (except for 1Cor 12,11, which has a crucial importance

106 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 181–189.

107 Idem, *Being as Communion*, 227–230.

for Zizioulas). If ordination is presented in such a manner, the issue of the ontological versus the functional does not emerge, indeed. Nevertheless, is this highly selective attitude towards the New Testament loci on ordination sufficient to present a coherent theology of ministry? Could Paul's teaching about the gifts of the Spirit and about the Body and its members be basically avoided? The relational aspect of ordination seems to be rather an opportune addition to a more traditional theology of ministry whereas this theology is hard to imagine without a greater use of Paul's teaching itself.

*c. Criticism of McPartlan*

Comparing Zizioulas and Afanasiev, Paul McPartlan also criticizes Afanasiev's theology of ministry together with his views on unity and diversity. McPartlan is probably inspired by Zizioulas's assertion that Afanasiev "attached a 'functional' character to the *diversity* (italics added – V. A.) of ministries in the Church" and is trying to develop this idea. He claims that Afanasiev's view of unity is atomistic. "The *unity* of the people depends on the *sameness* of their priesthood", "all are one because all are the same", "differentiation isolates and divides": this is what underlies Afanasiev's insistence on the common priesthood of believers and causes his criticism of the doctrine of consecration to ministerial priesthood. According to McPartlan, in Afanasiev the unity is primary since it is ontological while diversity is secondary because it is functional. "Differentiation harms unity whereas sameness secures it", that is the way McPartlan summarizes Afanasiev.<sup>108</sup>

Hardly can the thought of Afanasiev be presented in such a way. In his theology, the unity of the people of God is the consequence of their belonging to the same Body of Christ. The unity of the Church is the unity of the Body and the Spirit indwelling it. The common

108 P. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, 227.

priestly ministry of the people of God is a result of their incorporation into this Body and of receiving a gift, common to each Christian, to participate in this priestly Body and serve God as His priests. This does not mean they do not receive other, individual, gifts. Thus, their unity does not depend on the sameness of their priesthood, as McPartlan claims, but on the belonging to the same Body while their priesthood is an attribute or manifestation of this belonging.

McPartlan insists on the primary nature of the ontological and on the secondary nature of the functional in Afanasiev. However, Afanasiev never presents these two categories exactly as *primary* and *secondary*. When using them, he rather emphasizes the common versus the specific. The use of Paul's imaginary of members of body by Fr Nicholas does not favour reading into his theology of ministry too much of the opposition of primary and secondary. An arm is a part of the body and has its specific functions. Is it secondary with regard to the whole body? Perhaps. Is the heart or head secondary when compared to the entire body? This is doubtful given a body with a stopped heart or dead brain is just a corpse. The attempt to present the unity of the Church and diversity of ministries in terms of primary and secondary is ambiguous, and it is not the path Afanasiev follows.

In addition—and that is probably the most important—there is an idea of necessity of the diversity of ministries in Afanasiev. “There is a hierarchy of ministries within the Church, but there is not hierarchy of her members. *This hierarchy is necessary for the life of the Church, but this is a hierarchy within the Church. To destroy the differences is to destroy the Body of the Church in its integrity.*”<sup>109</sup> That is to say, in Afanasiev's dialectic of the ontological and the functional *the diversity of ministries plays an important role as there is no Church without such a diversity*. This remains unnoticed by McPartlan although Fr Nicholas expresses this idea in the very same article on the page following the one

109 N. Afanassieff, “L'Église de Dieu dans le Christ”, 20.

to which Zizioulas and McPartlan refer.<sup>110</sup> In fact, Afanasiev's view on diversity does not differ greatly from Zizioulas' idea that the diversity of ministries is constitutive for the Church although one has to accept that in Zizioulas this idea is emphasized much stronger than in Afanasiev.

10. *Historical Theological Topics*

Zizioulas argues with Afanasiev regarding two concrete historical theological topics.

a. *St Cyprian of Carthage*

Metropolitan John disagrees with that image of the “father” of universalist ecclesiology which Afanasiev attributes to St Cyprian of Carthage. In his different writings, Zizioulas makes two critical remarks regarding Afanasiev's view of Cyprian. In the *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, he argues that since the title of the treatise *De catholica ecclesiae unitate* belongs to Cyprian himself and it is the Church of Carthage which is understood by the *catholica ecclesia*, Cyprian follows the preceding tradition and calls the local Church catholic.<sup>111</sup> For this reason—Zizioulas concludes—we cannot consider St Cyprian the first person to formulate the idea of the universal ecclesiastical structure similar to that of the Roman Empire as was claimed by Afanasiev.<sup>112</sup>

Zizioulas' argument is extremely shaky. First, as follows from Zizioulas himself, there is no unanimity on whether the title of

110 Both of them refer to *Ibid.*, 19.

111 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 126. Afanasiev devoted a special detailed study to the expression “catholic Church” in the most ancient Christian writings: Николай Афанасьев, “Кафолическая церковь”, in *Православная мысль* 11 (1957), 17–44. Zizioulas seems to be unaware of that work. In *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 124–126 he briefly writes about the “catholic Church” and arrives at the conclusions quite similar to those of Afanasiev.

112 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 126 (including n. 205). He refers to the article Nicolas Afanassieff, “La doctrine de la primauté à la lumière de l'ecclésiologie”, in *Istina* 2 (1957), 401–420.

the treatise belongs to Cyprian himself.<sup>113</sup> The other of Zizioulas's examples of the use of *catholica* or *catholica ecclesia* with regard to a local Church do not belong to Cyprian but are from a letter of Pope Cornelius.<sup>114</sup> The cases of such a use in the letters of Cyprian himself either cannot be interpreted equivocally (Letter 55, 1) or refer rather to the universal Church (Letter 55, 21 and 73, 1–2). In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas quotes a passage from Letter 55, 21 where it is extremely difficult to see in *catholica ecclesia* a reference to a local Church, but he passes that place without making a comment on it (see this passage below in the next paragraph).<sup>115</sup> If one takes into account the content of the treatise *The Unity of the Church* (chapter 5), the images of the sun with its rays, of a tree with its branches, and of a source with the streams flowing from it imply the vision of the Church as a universal organism:

The Church is one which with increasing fecundity extends far and wide into the multitude, just as the rays of the sun are many but the light is one, and the branches of the tree are many but the strength is one founded in its tenacious root, and, when many streams flow from one source, although a multiplicity of waters seems to have been diffused from the abundance of the overflowing supply nevertheless unity is preserved in their origin.<sup>116</sup>

113 J. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 126 (including n. 203 and 204).

114 Cyprian, Letter 49, 2. I use the numeration of letters in the edition of Hartel: Thasci Caecili Cypriani opera omnia. Vol. 3. Pars 1. Ex recensione G. Hartelii. Vindobonae, 1868. It is interesting to note that the difference of the use of *catholica* by Cyprian and Cornelius was noted by Afanasiev in the Russian original of *Una sancta*, but in the French version this passage was omitted. It is published as a variant in the first publication of the article in Russian in *Православная община* 34 (1996), no pagination, note 41 (<https://pravoslavnyaya-obshina.ru/1996/no34/article/protopresviter-nikolai-afanasev-una-sancta/>) (visited 6/1/2021).

115 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 156, n. 59.

116 Saint Cyprian, *Treatises*, Roy J. Deferrari (trans., ed.), Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC 1958, 99–100.

In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas advances another argument against depicting Cyprian as the father of universalist ecclesiology. The chapter that contains this remark was initially published as an article in 1969 and, thus, is separated from his dissertation (*Eucharist, Bishop, Church*) by only a four-year interval. Metropolitan John believes that for Cyprian the authority of councils was moral and quotes a famous place concerning the direct accountability of a bishop to God:

While the bond of concord remains, and the undivided sacrament of the Catholic Church endures, every bishop disposes and directs his own acts, and will have to give an account of his purposes to the Lord. (Letter 55, 21)<sup>117</sup>

“This makes it difficult”, concludes Zizioulas, “to attribute to Cyprian the beginning of a ‘universalist ecclesiology’ as N. Afanassieff has done.”<sup>118</sup>

In chapter 5 of the same book, which is an article published originally in 1974, Zizioulas insists that for Cyprian each bishop's throne is that of Peter. “It is, therefore, wrong to read in universalistic ideas into ecclesiology of Cyprian”, concludes Zizioulas. “As it was done, for example, by N. Afanassieff”, remarks he in a footnote.<sup>119</sup>

Without discussing the essence of the claim that each bishop's throne is that of St Peter, I would observe that in *none* of the places Zizioulas refers to—namely, Cyprian's Letters 69, 5 and 43, 5 and the treatise *The Unity of the Church* 5—this idea is expressed directly. One can consider it only as an interpretation of the teaching of St Cyprian on bishops, an interpretation which should be supported

117 Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, Charles Scribner's Sons, NY 1919, 332. Here, it is Letter 51.

118 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 156–157 (including n. 59) with the reference to the same article as above: N. Afanassieff, “La doctrine de la primauté”, 401–420.

119 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 200–201 (including n. 107) with the reference, again, to N. Afanassieff, “La doctrine de la primauté”, 401–420.

with additional arguments. The emphasis of all the referred places is on the unity of the Church and bishops not on independence of their local Churches.

The basic problem is, however, that despite the reference to Afanasiev's article *La doctrine de la primauté à la lumière de l'ecclésiologie*, Metropolitan John ignores the arguments Fr Nicholas offers in this and other writings with which Zizioulas was familiar, namely, *Una sancta* and *The Church Which Presides in Love*. Nor does he discuss the texts Afanasiev quotes from Cyprian. Afanasiev provides two main arguments: first, the places in which Cyprian presents the Church as a universal organism (see a quotation from *The Unity of the Church* 5 above) and, second, Cyprian's teaching on collective nature of episcopate. Together these arguments point strongly to the emerging vision of the Church as a universal organisation. According to Cyprian, "there is one Church, divided by Christ throughout the whole world into many members, and also one episcopate diffused through a harmonious multitude of many bishops" (Letter 55, 24).<sup>120</sup> "The episcopate is one, the parts of which are held together by the individual bishops" (*The Unity of the Church* 5).<sup>121</sup>

Afanasiev presented his interpretation of the ecclesiology of Cyprian in several writings, most thoroughly in the article *The Church Which Presides in Love*.<sup>122</sup> According to Fr Nicholas, Cyprian's writing include only the first elements of universalist ecclesiology while the features of eucharistic ecclesiology are still strongly present in Cyprian's letters. These features include, first, Cyprian's commitment to consulting his clergy and laity prior to making decisions and, second, considering elections of bishops as a norm. These features, however, cannot overshadow emerging elements of universalist ecclesiology in his writings.

120 *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 333.

121 Cyprian, *Treatises*, 99.

122 N. Afanasiev, *The Church Which Presides in Love*, 93–99.

Critical comments of Zizioulas on Afanasiev's understanding of Cyprian as the father of universalist ecclesiology are always made in passing. Metropolitan John never dwells into the discussion of Cyprian's ecclesiology in detail, except probably for his earliest book. He has a significantly scarcer knowledge of Cyprian's texts compared to that of Afanasiev. Zizioulas is in no way an expert on Cyprian. His criticism is interesting for ascertaining his own position but is insufficient to refute the point of view of Fr Nicholas.

Afanasiev's view of the ecclesiology of Cyprian of Carthage, when that view became well-known among theologians, faced opposition both among Catholic and Orthodox scholars as a sort of attack on the theological reputation of that highly venerated saint in whose writings both the Catholic and Orthodox would find proofs of their doctrinal statements.<sup>123</sup> The teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the collegiality of bishops, to a great extent, builds on Cyprian. While in Orthodox theology (as well as in "classical" Protestantism), St Cyprian is traditionally considered as a churchman opposing the Roman primacy: see Zizioulas' argument that each bishop's throne is that of St Peter. I think that Zizioulas' criticism has something to do with the emotional confusion Afanasiev caused with his views on Cyprian. To evaluate Afanasiev's position on Cyprian, one should examine the theology of the Carthaginian father without attempting to defend any preconceived confessional or doctrinal thesis.

#### *b. Apostolic Succession*

In chapter 5 of *Being as Communion* (which is an article from 1974), Zizioulas attributes to Afanasiev the following vision of apostolic succession and then contests it:

123 Cf. Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 68–69.

N. Afanasiev, in spite of his eucharistic ecclesiology, failed to appreciate the indivisibility of the apostolic college in succession and put forward the view which is incompatible with eschatological image of the Church that, through his Church, a bishop becomes a successor of this or that apostle and not of the apostles in general.<sup>124</sup>

This statement of Zizioulas distorts what Afanasiev really said. Fr Nicholas's article is devoted to the analysis of the idea of collegiality of bishops and specifically to the historical evidence supporting the idea. The doctrine of collegiality was developed in the Catholic theology before and during the Second Vatican Council and is set out in its dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>125</sup> Afanasiev approached the idea of collegiality as a historian and in such a capacity failed to find in the earliest Church history any evidence that, after the emergence of the Church at Pentecost, the Twelve existed and acted as a college. For this reason, neither could they succeed Christ as a college. Nor could the college of bishops, provided any such ever existed since we have no evidence for that, succeed the non-existent college of the Twelve.<sup>126</sup> Returning to the remark of Zizioulas, it should be noticed that Afanasiev only claimed that the most usual form in which the idea of the apostolic succession appeared in early ecclesiastical history was the succession of a bishop, through his Church, to a concrete apostle.<sup>127</sup> The simplest way to refute his allegation would be to demonstrate that the historical evidence is different. Zizioulas does nothing of this sort but simply refers to the indivisibility of

124 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 194, n. 83 with reference to Nicolas Afanassieff, "Réflexions d'un Orthodoxe sur la collegialité des évêques", in *Le Messager Orthodoxe* 29-30 (1965), 7-15.

125 For a brief summary, see Jean-Pierre Torrel, *A Priestly People: Baptismal Priesthood and Priestly Ministry*, Paulinist Press, New York 2013, 164.

126 N. Afanassieff, "Réflexions d'un Orthodoxe sur la collegialité des évêques", 7-8.

127 *Ibid.*, 9.

apostolic college as to something evident, which Afanasiev “failed to appreciate”.

### III. Conclusion

#### I. Evaluation of Zizioulas's Criticism

In the end, *all* (!) critical comments of Zizioulas are problematic in one way or another. Metropolitan John conducts polemic not with the real Afanasiev but fictive one “invented” by Zizioulas himself. In his own theology, Metropolitan John may be perceptive of theological nuances and context, but when it comes to Afanasiev, this quality leaves him. At the same time, Afanasiev is a constant “companion” of Zizioulas: Metropolitan John has been referring to “errors” of Fr Nicholas for decades. The most of his comments about Afanasiev are critical: even if he mentions Fr Nicholas or his ecclesiology approvingly, it is rare that he does not add a critical remark.

The review of Zizioulas' criticism reveals his scant knowledge of the larger body of Afanasiev's writings. In the *Eucharist, Church, Bishop*, he mentions five of Afanasiev's articles while in *Being as Communion* he refers to four, of which two are the same as in his earliest book. One cannot find references to more writings of Afanasiev in other books of Zizioulas. Thus, in total he is familiar with *seven* articles of Fr Nicholas of which two, *Una sancta* and *The Church Which Presides in Love*, may be called programmatic. In addition, Zizioulas references to these articles leave doubts he read them in full and attentively. Metropolitan John does not demonstrate any familiarity whatsoever with either of Afanasiev's major works, *The Lord's Supper*<sup>128</sup> and *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, although some of his criticism would be unnecessary if he had read them.

128 Once he refers to page 3 of the Russian text of *The Lord's Supper* (J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 194, n. 91), but evidently he is not familiar with the rest of the book.

I would like again to draw attention to the fact that approximately *after the early- or mid-1970s* one finds no signs of Zizioulas' greater familiarity with the ideas of Afanasiev despite the continuing, even more extensive and sharp, criticism in the later writings of Metropolitan John.

The most surprising is in fact the consensus with the description of which I started this article. Claiming that he would like to go further than Afanasiev and make corrections to Afanasiev's ecclesiology, Zizioulas easily convinced theologians that he has managed to reach the both aims. The superfluous trust that theologians give to the claims of Metropolitan John is paradoxical. *To go further than Afanasiev Zizioulas does not really need Afanasiev himself.* It is not my intention to evaluate the scholarly precision that Zizioulas allegedly gave to eucharistic ecclesiology,<sup>129</sup> but his references to Afanasiev are quite far from such a precision. The major part of his criticism is either incompetent or inaccurate and may be ignored.

In theological writings, mentioning "errors" of Afanasiev corrected by Zizioulas serves as a demonstration of the knowledge of how eucharistic ecclesiology has so far developed. A rare work on Orthodox ecclesiology lacks a "ritual" passage, paragraph or chapter of the alleged corrections. This leads me to a sad conclusion on how the common opinion of theologians is formed and how we read (that is to say, not read) still relevant writings of recent fathers. The claim that Zizioulas "corrected" or "emended" eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanasiev is not based on any serious juxtaposing of their writings and should be rejected.

## 2. *Two Different Versions of Eucharistic Ecclesiology*

In 2008, receiving the title of a doctor *honoris causa* in the St Serge Theological Institute, Zizioulas said:

129 As claimed by J. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 91.

Although I have never met either Vladimir Lossky or Afanasiev personally, the major part of my theological career has been a dialogue with the contribution they made. [...] Afanasiev drew our attention to the central role of the divine Eucharist in ecclesiology. It happened that I disagreed with one or another of these theologians regarding certain issues, which is natural in a dialogue. Almost everything my generation achieved in theology was built on the foundation laid by those great men. They are the pillars of the modern Orthodox theology to whom I turn my mind with a profound gratitude, and I pray for our Lord to accept them among His saints along with great teachers and shepherds of His Church.<sup>130</sup>

Despite these moving words, that analysis of Zizioulas' criticism which I have undertaken in the present article, leaves doubts on the extent Metropolitan John, being so fragmentary familiar with Afanasiev's writings, could build on Fr Nicholas's ecclesiology. It is certain that Zizioulas shares Afanasiev's and Schmemmann's idea of centrality of the Eucharist for ecclesiology (and probably for theology in general). This leads him to a great appreciation for the local Church, which is also a common feature he shares with his two predecessors. It is true, too, that his theology has numerous points of intersection with that of Afanasiev and Schmemmann, and it is probably correct that he was inspired by their writings. Nevertheless, Zizioulas builds rather a separate version of ecclesiology, which has its own theological roots different from those of Afanasiev and Schmemmann.

First, the main root of Metropolitan John's theology is, perhaps, the intuition of "corporate personality" which involves the dialectic of the one and the many.<sup>131</sup> This concept is not identical to Afanasiev's

130 J. Zizioulas, "L'apport de la théologie orthodoxe occidentale", 25–26; quoted in Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 333, n. 85.

131 J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 145–149, 182–183, 230–231; P. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, 166–186.

basic intuition of the unity of eucharistic and ecclesial body.<sup>132</sup> The idea of “corporate personality” has been underlying the ecclesiology of Zizioulas since his earliest writings, but he has never discussed it in detail, at least, with regard to ecclesiology. I can only agree with Metropolitan Kallistos Ware who finds the use of this idea by Zizioulas “unclear and confusing”.<sup>133</sup>

Secondly, it is to the idea of corporate personality that Zizioulas’ emphasis on the unity of the local Church and on the bishop as the embodiment of this unity is related (see the subtitle of his dissertation: *The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop*). In the bishop, Metropolitan John discerns not only the person who is on the place of Christ in the liturgy but also the one who is an icon of Christ<sup>134</sup> and sometimes even the one who “incarnates” his Church.<sup>135</sup> Hardly could the last idea be found in Afanasiev or Schmemmann. Zizioulas’ giving an excessive weight to this ministry of bishop is one of the most criticised—rightly!—elements of his ecclesiology.<sup>136</sup>

Thirdly, the aspect of a table fellowship in the Eucharist, so crucial for Afanasiev (see his *The Lord’s Supper*), is pale, almost non-present, in Zizioulas.

Fourthly, neither present in Zizioulas is the teaching on the people of God as the royal priesthood in the liturgy (not as a man as a priest of creation), from which Afanasiev’s theology of ministries starts (*The Church of the Holy Spirit*, chapter 1) and which is also important for Schmemmann (*Eucharist*, chapter 1). It is true that one can discern some reminiscences of it in either the idea of the ordained laity, or in

132 The intuition is extensively developed in N. Afanassieff, “L’Église de Dieu dans le Christ”, 1–38.

133 Kallistos Ware, “Sobornost and Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, 231.

134 J. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 242–246 (an article of 1985).

135 Ibid., 318 (a writing of 1985); Metropolitan Jean, *L’Église et ses institutions*, 187–189 (an article of 1980).

136 Cf. Kallistos Ware, “Sobornost and Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, 232.

the insistence on the presence of all ministries in the local Church, or in the emphasis on the importance of “axios” and “amen” proclaimed by the whole of the local Church.

Fifthly, although in Afanasiev and Schmemmann one can find references to “communion” (*koinonia*), in neither of the two does it become a universal category of their theology.

The list of differences may be continued. I have mentioned only the most evident ones. All in all, *although the real Afanasiev influenced, to some extent, Zizioulas while the imagined one is a permanent point of reference and criticism for him, Metropolitan John does not really build his theology on Afanasiev.* The two versions of ecclesiology, those of Afanasiev and Zizioulas, are not on the same line of development. They have parallel, although not completely different, trajectories.<sup>137</sup> Zizioulas builds not a “corrected” version of Afanasiev’s eucharistic ecclesiology but a significantly different and rather alternative to that of Afanasiev.

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In the same speech which I mentioned at the beginning of this section and which was delivered at Saint Sergius Theological Institute in 2008, Zizioulas continued with criticism of Afanasiev and went so far as to judge Fr Nicholas’ type of ecclesiology potentially dangerous:

137 Cf. В. Александров, *Николай Афанасьев и его евхаристическая эkkлезиология*, 203–204. This is contrary to the conclusion of Fr Christophe D’Aloisio, who believes that, “to an attentive reader [...] Zizioulas appears to be rather a faithful continuator of Afanasiev’s thought with those improvements which the writings of an outstanding disciple often include compared to the works of a teacher even though Zizioulas was not a disciple of Afanasiev but of the theologians who knew Afanasiev” (the author mentions Florovsky, Schmemmann and Meyendorff as Zizioulas’s “direct” teachers). Ch. D’Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 332.

That eucharistic ecclesiology which is not episcopocentric—this is one of the shortcomings of the ecclesiology of Afanasiev—makes a bishop a mere administrator and not a eucharistic *proestos*. This undermines the sacramental basis of the authority of the bishop in the Church and leads to a dichotomy between doctrine and canon law. If the Eucharist, bishop and local Church are not interdependent, in the future such eucharistic ecclesiology may be a real danger for the Orthodox Church.<sup>138</sup>

The list of the negative consequences which follow, according to Zizioulas, from the lack of *episcopocentrism* in Afanasiev confirms well that the image of Afanasiev which Metropolitan John bears in his mind has little to do with the writing of Fr Nicholas. One of Zizioulas' basic allegations is, nevertheless, correct. From the point of view of Metropolitan John, whose bishop is an icon of Christ and even incarnates the local Church, Afanasiev's ecclesiology is not *episcopocentric*, indeed. Afanasiev's *proestos* is a more modest figure. His main role, from which all other functions derive, is—contrary to what Zizioulas claims—presiding the Eucharist. He occupies the place of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but I doubt Afanasiev ever considered his *proestos* an icon of Christ—despite the fact it might have been a stable element of the Byzantine liturgical symbolism—and by no means claimed that the *proestos* incarnated his local Church. His *proestos* is rather the sacramental presider of the eucharistic assembly, and also a teacher who shares the ministry of the government of his Church with the presbytery surrounding him. Zizioulas considers this difference between him and Afanasiev a vital one and believes it is the major shortcoming of the ecclesiology of Fr Nicholas. Is this really so? The reality of the Church that we live in points rather to dangers of the excessive *episcopocentrism* which Zizioulas promotes than to its advantages.

138 J. Zizioulas, "L'apport de la théologie orthodoxe occidentale", 28; quoted in Ch. D'Aloisio, *Institutions ecclésiales et ministères*, 321–322.

3. *Peculiarity and Necessity of Afanasiev*

As Fr Plekon once observed, the attitude to Afanasiev has often been neuralgic.<sup>139</sup> The reason is probably the theological radicalism of Fr Nicholas.<sup>140</sup> Avoiding polemics in his writings, “evasive”, as Fr Vasily Zenkovsky labelled him, in oral debates,<sup>141</sup> he was decisive and consistent in his theology. Afanasiev was looking for the “ecclesiastical norm”<sup>142</sup> and derived it from the ecclesiology of the Early Church. In his search of the norm and in his application of it, he hurt some very sensitive illusions of many of the Orthodox (and not only of them). There are scholars who believe his historical method is limited.<sup>143</sup> However, “back to sources” (*ressourcement*) was the mainstream of the theology in the twentieth century, and was a chief factor in theological renovation. We do not really have anything better to replace it. Zizioulas too, taking into account his earliest book, paid tribute to the historical method even though his theological development led him finally to a more dogmatic (in the theological sense) approach.

Afanasiev's ecclesiology deserves attention in its own right. Time will allot his writings the place they deserve.<sup>144</sup> After Fr Schmemmann, whose liturgical theology was to a great extent build on Afanasiev, there was no *direct* continuation of Afanasiev's line in theology. We

139 M. Plekon, “Always Everywhere and Always Together”, 145.

140 Cf. Александр Шмеман, “Русское богословие за рубежом”, in Idem, *Собрание статей*, 662. English version: <https://www.schmemann.org/byhim/russiantheology.html> (in *Ecclesiology* section).

141 В. В. Зеньковский, *Из моей жизни. Воспоминания*, Дом русского зарубежья, Москва 2014, 292.

142 Николай Афанасьев, “О церковном управлении и учительстве”, in Idem, *Церковь Божия во Христе*, А. А. Платонов – В.В. Александров (eds.), ПСТГУ, Москва 2015, 478.

143 Aidan Nichols, “The Appeal to the Fathers in the Ecclesiology of Nikolai Afanas'ev”, in *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992), 263–264.

144 А. Шмеман, “Памяти отца Николая Афанасьева”, 838.

have to go further along the path he took, listening to a competent criticism and ignoring that which is incompetent and biased. This is the main conclusion of the study which I have undertaken and the results of which I have shared in the present writing.

## **Abstract**

### Критика Афанасьева Зизиуласом

В статье анализируется критика эkkлезиологии известного православного богослова отца Николая Афанасьева (1893–1966) другим известным православным богословом Иоанном Зизиуласом (род. 1935), митрополитом Пергамским. В богословии до сих широко распространено мнение, что Зизиулас предложил исправленную версию евхаристической эkkлезиологии Афанасьева. Автор статьи подробно рассматривает критические комментарии митрополита Иоанна по поводу богословия Афанасьева (а также Александра Шмемана, который во многом является продолжателем отца Николая), систематизирует их, и демонстрирует весьма ограниченное знание эkkлезиологии Афанасьева Зизиуласом. Анализ критики Зизиуласса показывает также, что, несмотря на то, что его эkkлезиология имеет многие точки соприкосновения с эkkлезиологией Афанасьева, исходные интуиции двух богословов и целый ряд их ключевых идей существенно иные. По этой причине, эkkлезиология Зизиуласса может рассматриваться только как другая версия евхаристической эkkлезиологии, мало основанная на афанасьевской. Причем, по мнению автора, именно версия Афанасьева предлагает подходы и решения более оправданные как исторически, так и догматически.

# Der Katechismus der Ukrainischen Griechisch-Katholischen Kirche (2011) und das patristische Erbe

Thomas Mark NÉMETH

1. Zum Dokument; 2. Zum Stellenwert und zur Rolle der Kirchenväter im Katechismus; 3. Zu einzelnen Abschnitten und Aussagen; 3.1. Zu Teil I; 3.2. Zu Teil II; 3.3. Zu Teil III; 4. Theologische Aspekte; 4.1. Zur Theologie in der UGKK; 4.2. Zum Umgang mit den Kirchenvätern; 4.3. Fazit und Ausblick

## 1. Zum Dokument

Der Katechismus der Ukrainischen Griechisch-Katholischen Kirche (in der Folge: UGKK) mit dem Titel „Christus – unser Pascha“ wurde am 2. Juni 2011 durch den Ersthierarchen dieser Kirche, Großerbischof Sviatoslav Shevchuk, im Namen der Synode der Bischöfe<sup>1</sup> verlautbart<sup>2</sup> und am 24. Juni desselben Jahres feierlich vorgestellt.<sup>3</sup> Neben der – korrigierten – ukrainischen Ausgabe<sup>4</sup> ist

1 „Постанови Синоду Єпископів УГКЦ 2010 року, Nr. 11“, [http://ugcc.ua/official/official-documents/postanovy\\_patriarshoho\\_synodu/postanovi\\_synodu\\_yepiskop%D1%96v\\_ugkts\\_2010\\_roku\\_70049.html](http://ugcc.ua/official/official-documents/postanovy_patriarshoho_synodu/postanovi_synodu_yepiskop%D1%96v_ugkts_2010_roku_70049.html) (abgerufen am 07.05.2021).

2 Siehe das dem Katechismus vorgeschaltete Schreiben des Großerbischofs.

3 Блаженніший Святослав (Шевчук), *Оце подаю Вам катехизм*, in *Презентація Катехизму Української Греко-Католицької Церкви „Христос – наша Пасха“*. *Матеріали всецерковної науково-практичної конференції (Львів, 24–25 червня 2011 р. Б.)* (Патріарша катехитична комісія УГКЦ / Катехитично-педагогічний інститут УКУ), Львів 2012, 4–12.

4 Синод Української Греко-Католицької Церкви, *Катехизм Української Греко-Католицької Церкви „Христос – наша Пасха“*, Львів 2012; Onlineversion: <http://catechismugcc.org/> bzw. <http://catechismugcc.org/doc/Catechism>

dieses Dokument inzwischen auch in russischer<sup>5</sup>, portugiesischer<sup>6</sup> und englischer<sup>7</sup> Übersetzung erschienen. Eine spanische Übersetzung ist in Drucklegung, eine französische, polnische, italienische und deutsche sind in Vorbereitung. Weiters existiert ein Präsentationsband, der insbesondere Beiträge von an der Erarbeitung des Katechismus beteiligter Theologen sowie des Großerbischofs umfasst.<sup>8</sup> Kurz vor Fertigstellung dieses Beitrags wurde ein Jugendkatechismus veröffentlicht, der auch ins Englische übersetzt werden soll. Auf dieses Dokument wird hier nicht eingegangen.<sup>9</sup>

UGCC.pdf (abgerufen am 07.05.2021). Die Version des Katechismus von 2011 (bibliographische Angaben ansonsten unverändert) ist überholt und wird in diesem Beitrag nicht herangezogen. Die Korrekturen beziehen sich neben stilistischen Anpassungen offensichtlich nur auf geringfügige Änderungen (vgl. unten Anm. 56).

- 5 Синод Української Греко-Католицької Церкви, *Катехизис української Греко-Католицької Церкви „Христос – Наша Пасха“*, Львів 2014.
- 6 Sinodo da Igreja Greco Católica Ucrainiana, *Cristo nossa Páscoa: Catecismo da Igreja Greco-Católica Ucrainiana*, übers. v. Soter Schiller, Curitiba 2014.
- 7 Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Christ – Our Pascha*, Київ–Edmonton 2016. Diese Übersetzung wurde – im Unterschied zu anderen – punktuell zum Vergleich herangezogen. Die Änderung der Kirchenbezeichnung im Titel ist unklar. Auch bei der ukrainischen Ausgabe steht statt der offiziellen Bezeichnung „Synode der Bischöfe“ nur „Synode“.
- 8 *Презентація Катехизму*. Zur Entstehung des Dokuments vgl. auch Луїза Цюпа, „3 історії написання катехизму УГКЦ «Христос – наша Пасха»“, <https://ct.ugcc.ua/catechism/catechism-books/pro-katechizm/28688> (abgerufen am 01.06.2021); zur Entwicklung bis 2003 Thomas Németh, *Eine Kirche nach der Wende. Die Ukrainische Griechisch-Katholische Kirche im Spiegel ihrer synodalen Tätigkeit* (Kirche und Recht 24), Freistadt 2005, 199f. Für einschlägige Unterlagen und freundliche Einschätzung in diversen Fragen danke ich Dr. Taras Barščevski, dem Sekretär der Arbeitsgruppe zur Erstellung des Katechismus.
- 9 *Ми йдемо з Христом. Катехизм для молоді*, Львів 2021, vgl. dazu „Мати-Церква хоче сьогодні стати поруч із кожною молодою людиною, щоб іти разом“, – Глава УГКЦ під час проголошення Катехизму для молоді“,

Der Katechismus der UGKK stellt einen wesentlichen Meilenstein in der jüngeren Geschichte dieser Kirche dar. Seit ihrem Wiederauftreten aus dem Untergrunddasein in der Sowjetunion zwischen 1946 und 1989 verzeichnet sie eine dynamische Entwicklung, die sich nicht nur in struktureller Ausdehnung und funktionaler Differenzierung, sondern – insbesondere in letzter Zeit – in zahlreichen kirchlichen Dokumenten niederschlägt. Während sich ein Großteil von ihnen auf rechtliche, ökumenische und organisatorische Fragen bezieht,<sup>10</sup> wurde mit dem Katechismus ein auf die Glaubensvermittlung bezogenes Dokument veröffentlicht.<sup>11</sup> Der Name „Christus – unser Pascha“ wird im Dokument nicht erklärt, steht aber wohl im Zusammenhang mit dem Bewusstsein einer nach der Zeit der Unterdrückung und des Totalitarismus wiedererstandenen Kirche.<sup>12</sup> Großerzbischof Sviatoslav merkte zum Dokument programmatisch an:

[http://news.ugcc.ua/video/matitserkva\\_hoche\\_sogodn%D1%96\\_stati\\_poruch\\_kozhnoi\\_molodoi\\_lyudini\\_shchob\\_podorozhuvati\\_razom\\_\\_blazhenn%D1%96shiy\\_svyatoslav\\_p%D1%96d\\_chas\\_progoloshennya\\_katehizmu\\_dlya\\_molod%D1%96\\_93729.html](http://news.ugcc.ua/video/matitserkva_hoche_sogodn%D1%96_stati_poruch_kozhnoi_molodoi_lyudini_shchob_podorozhuvati_razom__blazhenn%D1%96shiy_svyatoslav_p%D1%96d_chas_progoloshennya_katehizmu_dlya_molod%D1%96_93729.html) (abgerufen am 29.06.2021).

10 Vgl. insbesondere die Ökumenische Konzeption: *Українська Греко-Католицька Церква, Екуменічна концепція Української Греко-Католицької Церкви/The Ecumenical Position of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church*, Львів 2016, Onlineversion: [http://ugcc.ua/documents/kontsepts%D1%96ya\\_ekumen%D1%96chnoi\\_pozits%D1%96i\\_ukrainskoi\\_grekokatolitskoi\\_tserkvi\\_75625.html](http://ugcc.ua/documents/kontsepts%D1%96ya_ekumen%D1%96chnoi_pozits%D1%96i_ukrainskoi_grekokatolitskoi_tserkvi_75625.html) (abgerufen am 25.05.2021) sowie die Kanones des Partikularrechts: „Канони партикулярного права Української Греко-Католицької Церкви“ (geltende Fassung vom 04.04.2018), [http://ugcc.ua/official/official-documents/kanony/kanony\\_partikulyarnogo\\_prava\\_ugkts\\_82426.html](http://ugcc.ua/official/official-documents/kanony/kanony_partikulyarnogo_prava_ugkts_82426.html) (abgerufen am 14.05.2021); zur Entwicklung bis 2003 auch: Th. Németh, *Eine Kirche nach der Wende*.

11 Weitere relevante Dokumente finden sich auf der Webseite der Katechetischen Kommission der UGKK: <https://ct.ugcc.ua/> (abgerufen am 01.06.2021).

12 So Роман Андрійовський, „Новий Катехизм УГКЦ – новизна та виклики“, in *Патріархат* 2011, Nr. 5, 5–7, hier 5.

Es ist gleichsam das erste Mal in unserer Geschichte, dass unter Zusammenarbeit des ganzen Leibes unserer Kirche zur Aneignung ein Katechismus der UGKK als Lokalkirche [*pomisna Cerква*] geboten wird, der ihre Identität widerspiegelt. Er wurde nicht von jemand anderem für unsere Kirche geschrieben, noch wurde er nur von einem ihrer Vertreter geschrieben. Vielmehr ist er die Frucht der Arbeit und des Gebets der ganzen Kirche [...] die ihre eigene theologische, liturgische und geistlich-asketische Tradition besitzt, die leider sehr oft vergessen oder nicht bekannt ist.<sup>13</sup>

Der Katechismus versteht sich wesentlich als eine amtliche Darstellung der katholischen Glaubenslehre und -praxis in der spezifischen Ausdrucksweise der UGKK. Als östliche Kirche weiß sie sich der byzantinischen Tradition und deren Kyjiver Ausprägung zugehörig. Das Zweite Vatikanum hat in *Unitatis Redintegratio*<sup>14</sup> Nr. 17 unterstrichen, dass östliche Kirchen ihr eigenes liturgisches, geistliches, rechtliches und theologisches Erbe besitzen. Nach can. 28 § 1 CCEO<sup>15</sup> gilt dies auch für die katholischen Ostkirchen. Damit existiert das gesamtkirchliche Glaubensgut legitimerweise in unterschiedlichen Lesarten. Von daher lässt sich Großerbischof Sviatoslavs Aussage in seinem Schreiben zur Erlassung des Katechismus verstehen:

Die Besonderheit der theologischen Tradition der UGKK, die in ihren Quellen der östlichen christlichen Tradition angehört, bestimmt auch den Bedarf eines eigenen Katechismus für unsere Kirche.<sup>16</sup>

13 Блаженніший Святослав (Шевчук), „Оце подаю Вам катехизм“, in *Презентація*, 9. Zum Begriff „Lokalkirche“ siehe unten Kap. 3.2.

14 Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil, „Dekret über den Ökumenismus *Unitatis Redintegratio*“, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 (1965), 90–107.

15 „Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium“, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 82 (1990) 1033–1364, zuletzt geändert durch das *Motu Proprio Ab Initio* (21.11.2020). Rechtliche Vorgaben zur katechetischen Unterweisung finden sich in cc. 617–626 CCEO.

16 Синод Української Греко-Католицької Церкви, *Катехизм*, 7.

Die Tradition der UGKK bildet allerdings weder in synchroner noch in diachroner Perspektive einen homogenen Bestand. Viele Einflüsse erklären sich auch durch die Gemeinschaft mit der römischen Kirche seit der Union von Brest (1595/96). Bis heute existiert eine Polarität zwischen einer latinisierenden und einer östlich orientierten Richtung, nicht nur in der liturgischen Praxis, sondern – wenngleich abnehmend – auch in der Theologie, die sich in einem Spektrum bewegt, das von römisch-katholischer Schultheologie wie auch von Bemühungen um eine Rückkehr zu altkirchlichen Wurzeln und Annäherungen an die Orthodoxie geprägt ist. Zeitgenössische Diskurse der westlichen Theologie spielen vergleichsweise eine geringe Rolle und eigenständigere theologische Profile befinden sich noch in einer Aufbauphase.

Peter Galadza hat darauf hingewiesen, dass der Katechismus mit einem theologischen Anspruch einhergeht und eine Öffnung der Kirche zur Gesellschaft und zu Gegenwartsfragen zum Ausdruck bringt. Großerbischof Shevchuk hatte maßgeblichen Anteil daran gehabt, die Stimmen aus der Ukraine und der kirchlichen Diaspora zusammenzuführen.<sup>17</sup> Unter den acht bei der Erarbeitung des Katechismus führenden Theologen stammen fünf aus ersterem und drei aus letzterem Gebiet, die Ausbildungswege sind unterschiedlich.<sup>18</sup>

Obwohl dieser Beitrag primär die Frage der Rezeption patristischer Traditionen im Blick hat, ist dieses Thema durchaus

17 Peter Galadza, „Address at the Launch of the English Translation of the Catechism of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church, Christ Our Pascha, Edmonton, October 18, 2016“, in *Logos. A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 57 (2016), 239–250, hier 243f.

18 Zur ersten Gruppe zählen Dr. Sviatoslav Shevchuk (Koordinator für Teil III), Dr. Myron Bendyk (Koordinator für Teil I) und die theologischen Mitarbeiter Ivan Havan'o, Taras Koberynko, Matej Havryliv, zur zweiten Dr. Michael Petrowycz (Koordinator für Teil II), Dr. Taras Barščevski und Sr. Luiza Ciupa. Vgl. Цюпа, „3 історії написання катехизму“. Darüber hinaus haben weitere Theologen zum Katechismus beigetragen.

gegenwartsbezogen. Denn es sind gerade neuere kirchliche Dokumente, wie das Konzilsdekret *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, die den katholischen Ostkirchen auftragen, sich (wieder stärker) nach ihren älteren Überlieferungen auszurichten.<sup>19</sup> Zudem zeigt sich gerade auch im Umgang mit diesen Traditionen, wie sich eine Kirche aktuell verortet und verhält.

Ein Konnex zur alten Kirche ist bereits in der Einteilung des Katechismus grundgelegt. In Nr. 1 wird als „methodischer Schlüssel“ zu diesem 342 Seiten bzw. 1001 Nummern umfassenden Dokument die Verbindung des Nizäno-Konstantinopolitanischen Glaubensbekenntnisses mit der Anaphora (dem Hochgebet) der Basiliusliturgie (abgedruckt in Nr. 8) angeführt.<sup>20</sup>

Teil I des Katechismus („der Glaube der Kirche“) bezieht sich laut Eigendarstellung (Nr. 9–11) auf den ersten, heilsgeschichtlich-dogmatisch orientierten Abschnitt der Anaphora, Teil II („das Gebet der Kirche“) auf den eigentlichen eucharistischen Abschnitt, Teil III („das Leben der Kirche“) auf den kommemorativen Abschnitt, der auf die Heiligung der Menschen und der Welt abzielt. Diese Dreiteilung, die einen markanten Unterschied zum auf die

19 Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil, „Dekret über die katholischen Ostkirchen *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*“, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 (1965), 76–85; Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali, *Istruzione per l'applicazione delle prescrizioni liturgiche del Codice dei Canoni delle Chiese Orientali*, Città del Vaticano 1996; vgl. Péter Szabó, „Return to the «ancestral traditions» (OE n. 6a). Reasons and meaning“, in *Ostkirchliche Studien* 66 (2017), 256–284.

20 Diese, vermutlich ins 4. Jh. zurückreichende Anaphora war jedenfalls bis ins 9. Jh. das vorherrschende Hochgebet der Liturgie Konstantinopels, bevor sie von der wesentlich kürzeren (und wohl auch deshalb nicht für den Katechismus herangezogenen) Chrysostomusliturgie zurückgedrängt wurde. Heute wird sie nur zehn Mal im Laufe des Kirchenjahres gefeiert. Zur hier nicht erörterten komplexen Frage nach der Einordnung dieses Textes vgl. Stefano Parenti, *L'anafora di Crisostomo. Testo e contesti* (Jerusalem theologisches Forum 36), Münster 2020, 169–214.

Gesamtkirche bezogenen, aber theologisch römisch-katholisch geprägten Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche (KKK)<sup>21</sup> bildet, erscheint in ihrer Verknüpfung von Gottesdienst und Gebet gerade aus ostkirchlicher Perspektive sinnvoll.

Allerdings wirkt die Anaphora in die einzelnen Teile inhaltlich wenig hinein, selbst wenn Passagen zu Beginn mancher Abschnitte angeführt werden. Nüchtern betrachtet spielt auch der Text dieses Hochgebets im liturgischen Bewusstsein der Gläubigen kaum eine Rolle. Von einigen liturgisch besonders bewussten Gemeinden abgesehen werden die Anaphoren in der UGKK (wie in den meisten byzantinischen Kirchen) leise gelesen, abgesehen von einigen Ausrufungen. Damit können die Gläubigen den Großteil der zentralen Texte der Eucharistiefeier nicht mitvollziehen. Mit der Veröffentlichung des Katechismus wurde die Chance nicht wahrgenommen, solchen längst als notwendig erkannten Schritten liturgischer Erneuerung amtliche Rückendeckung zu geben.<sup>22</sup>

## *2. Zum Stellenwert und zur Rolle der Kirchenväter im Katechismus*

Der Katechismus zeichnet sich durch eine beträchtliche Anzahl an Kirchenväterverweisen aus.<sup>23</sup> Von den insgesamt circa 260 Referenzen

21 *Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche*, München-Città del Vaticano 1993, eingeteilt in: I. Das Glaubensbekenntnis, II. Die Feier des christlichen Mysteriums, III. Das Leben in Christus, IV. Das christliche Gebet.

22 Vgl. dazu auch Василь Рудейко, „Тихі“ молитви як джерело для коментування літургійної традиції, in Idem. (Hg.) *Літургійні коментарі як джерело літургіології* (Ad Fontes Liturgicos 5), Львів 2015, 112–122; Thomas Németh, *Liturgische Reformen – (k)ein Thema in den Ostkirchen?*, in Martin Stuffer – Tobias Weyler (Hgg.), *Liturgische Normen: Begründungen, Anfragen, Perspektiven* (Theologie der Liturgie 14), Regensburg 2018, 221–228.

23 Der Zählung liegt der Index der ukrainischen Katechismusversion zugrunde, die (anders als der KKK) nur Autoren und Werke, nicht aber Stellen in diesen anführt.

auf Väterschriften finden sich im ersten (dogmatischen) Teil an die 130, im zweiten (liturgischen) über 70, im dritten (praxisbezogenen) immerhin an die 60. Auf die insgesamt 1001 Nummern bezogen ist diese Zahl bemerkenswert, wenn man bedenkt, dass im KKK mit insgesamt 2865 Nummern nur ca. 350 Kirchenväterstellen existieren. Im Vergleich mit letzterem Dokument zeigt sich im Katechismus der UGKK auch ein deutliches Überwiegen der östlichen und insbesondere byzantinischen Traditionslinie. So wird auf Johannes Chrysostomus 47mal, Gregor von Nyssa 25mal, Basilius den Großen 23mal, Johannes von Damaskus 18mal und Maximus Confessor 15mal verwiesen, während der die westliche Tradition dominierende Kirchenvater Augustinus nur achtmal herangezogen wird, damit sogar seltener als der zehnmal zitierte Origenes.<sup>24</sup> In der ukrainischen (portugiesischen und russischen) Fassung werden bei Kirchenvätern nur deren Werke mit Kapitelangaben angeführt, in der englischen Fassung wurden Verweise auf die *Patrologia Graeca* und *Latina* sowie (zweimal) auf *Sources Chrétiennes* hinzugefügt und einige Zitate bearbeitet und berichtigt. Ein Verweis auf die jeweils neueste oder beste Textausgabe liegt aber nicht vor. Nach „Müttern unter den Vätern“ sucht man im Katechismus vergeblich. Auch unter den Heiligen werden – abgesehen von der Gottesmutter – nur die hl. Anna und die hl. Maria von Ägypten ganz beiläufig erwähnt.

Auf ökumenische Konzilien des ersten Jahrtausends wird neunmal verwiesen, darüber hinaus viermal auf das Florentinum und einmal auf das Erste Vaticanum. Verweise auf das Zweite Vaticanum sind

24 Weitere Autoren bis 8. Jh.: Ambrosius, Athanasius, Klemens und Kyrill v. Alexandrien, Basilius v. Seleukia, Cyprian v. Karthago, Gregor v. Nazianz, Diadochus v. Photike, Didymus der Blinde, Dorotheus v. Gaza, Ephräm der Syrer, Evagrius Ponticus, Hermas, Hieronymus, Hippolyt und Klemens v. Rom, Ignatius v. Antiochien, Irenäus v. Lyon, Isaak der Syrer, Johannes Cassian, Johannes Klimakus, Justin der Philosoph, Kyrill v. Jerusalem, Leo der Große, Leontius v. Byzanz, Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita, Ps.-Makarius, Makarius v. Ägypten, Romanos Melodos, Tertullian und Theophilus v. Antiochien.

vergleichsweise häufig (35mal explizit). 24mal wird auf Schreiben Papst Johannes Pauls II. Bezug genommen. Im Zusammenhang mit dem altkirchlichen Erbe ist die hohe Anzahl an Verweisen auf liturgische Texte auffällig, die zum allergrößten Teil aus dem ersten Jahrtausend stammen (über 130 Stellen).

Angesichts der Tatsache, dass in der orthodoxen Kirche die in der westlichen theologischen Tradition vorherrschende Beschränkung der Kirchenväterzeit auf die ersten acht Jahrhunderte relativiert wird, überrascht es auch nicht, wenn Myron Bendyk im Präsentationsband feststellt, dass sich diese Periode „in der konziliaren Lehre der Bischöfe, der römischen Päpste und der Väter der UGKK fortsetzt“.<sup>25</sup> Herangezogen werden im Katechismus etwa Symeon von Thessaloniki († 1429)<sup>26</sup> in Zusammenhang mit Eucharistie und Ehe (Nr. 478) sowie Nikolaos Kabasilas († nach 1391) in Hinblick auf die Eucharistieauslegung (Nr. 387, 397). Dies kann auch als ein ökumenisches Signal gewertet werden, zumal der Katechismus neben Hl. Schrift, liturgischen Texten, Kirchenvätern und lehramtlichen bzw. bischöflichen Aussagen bewusst auf keine modernen Theologen Bezug nimmt. Andernfalls wäre in Hinblick auf den liturgischen Teil gewiss Alexander Schmemmann (†1983) als Ideenlieferant zu nennen gewesen, wie auch in der Ekklesiologie Metropolit John Zizioulas öfters Pate gestanden haben dürfte.

Eine nicht unbedeutende Rolle spielen auch zwei neuere „Väter“ der UGKK. 30mal wird Metropolit Andrej Šeptyc'kyj (†1944) angeführt, bezeichnender Weise in Nr. 49 mit der Aussage „den Hl. Vätern folgend“. Großerbischof Josyf Slipyj (†1984) kommt achtmal zu Wort. Auf Schriften des ersten Kyjiver Metropoliten slawischer Herkunft, Hilarion (†1054), wird elfmal verwiesen, auf den bei der

25 Мирон Бендик, *Представлення першої частини катехизму УГКЦ: „Віра Церкви“*, in *Презентація*, 32–39, hier 34. Vgl. auch das Schreiben in Anm. 2. oben

26 Dieser wird auch im KKK (Nr. 1690) in Hinblick auf den Begräbnisritus angeführt.

Erlassung des Katechismus bereits emeritierten Großserzbischof Lubomyr Husar (†2017) zweimal.

Zur Bedeutung der Kirchenväter nimmt der Katechismus in zwei Passagen des ersten Teils ausdrücklich Stellung. Zunächst heißt es im Kapitel über die Offenbarung der Dreifaltigkeit unter dem Punkt „Die heilige Tradition“ beginnend mit Nr. 35:

Die ungebrochene Kontinuität der Tradition wird im liturgischen Leben der Kirche und in der Lehre der Heiligen Väter verwirklicht, die für die Wahrheit nicht gemäß menschlichen Erinnerungen Zeugnis ablegen, sondern auf Grundlage einer lebendigen und ununterbrochenen Erfahrung des Hl. Geistes. Die Beständigkeit dieser Erfahrung innerhalb der christlichen Gemeinschaft ist Garant für unsere Treue zur apostolischen Lehre, zum Erbe der Hl. Väter und zur Lehre der Kirche, die unsere Hoffnung auf die Verheißung der kommenden Welt stärkt.

Diese Interpretation wird in Nr. 37 in Bezug auf den Zusammenhang von Schrift und Tradition folgendermaßen weitergeführt:

Auf der Grundlage der Hl. Schrift bestimmt die Kirche die Wahrheit der mündlichen Tradition, die umgekehrt die Hl. Schrift interpretiert und erklärt. Die mündliche Tradition wird durch die Lehre der hl. Väter, insbesondere auf ökumenischen und lokalen Konzilien ausgedrückt. Aus diesem Grund lehrt uns die Kirche mit Glauben und Ehrfurcht sowohl die Hl. Schrift wie auch die mündliche Tradition anzuerkennen.

Sodann wird im Kapitel „Kerygma und Katechese“ unter dem Punkt „Überlieferung der Hl. Kirchenväter“ (Nr. 55-59) das Thema wiederaufgenommen. Den Ausgangspunkt bildet zunächst die Einordnung der Kirchenväter als Fortsetzung der apostolischen Verkündigung des Evangeliums (Nr. 55). Hier werden Klemens von Rom, Ignatius von Antiochien und Polykarp von Smyrna als „Apostelschüler“, die ihre Lehre und ihr Zeugnis von den Aposteln erhielten, vorgestellt. Diese Formulierung mag historische Anfragen aufwerfen, lässt aber durchaus einen Interpretationsspielraum beim Schülerbegriff zu.

Gemäß Nr. 56 werden von der Kirche als Hl. Väter Personen bezeichnet,

die das Evangelium in der Wahrheit der Lehre und in der Heiligkeit des Lebens verkündet haben. Deswegen haben sie die Frohe Botschaft in der Kraft des Hl. Geistes, des Geistes der Wahrheit verkündet.

In Nr. 57 werden sie vorgestellt als „Zeugen der apostolischen Überlieferung, deren Reinheit sie verteidigt haben und an der sie ihre eigene theologische Lehre ausgerichtet haben“. Ihnen wird der Verdienst zugesprochen, die Tiefe der Offenbarung im Laufe der Geschichte immer mehr enthüllt, das Verständnis der apostolischen Überlieferung vertieft und in konziliarer Weise bekannt zu haben. Die derart geäußerte Auffassung der Väter bestimmt laut Nr. 58 den Inhalt des Glaubens, wobei Festlegungen der Ökumenischen Konzilien als Dogmen die Lehre der Kirche ausdrücken. Das Lehramt der Kirche wird an den bischöflichen Dienst der Kirche geknüpft. Schließlich wird in Nr. 59 ausgesagt, dass

die konziliaren dogmatischen Festlegungen des Glaubens sich auf die Übereinstimmung der Väter (lat. *consensus Patrum*) stützten. Zum konziliaren Denken der Kirche trugen die Heiligen Athanasius von Alexandrien, Basilius der Große, Gregor der Theologe, Gregor von Nyssa, Augustinus, Leo der Große, Kyrill von Alexandrien, Maximus Confessor, Johannes von Damaskus und andere bei.

Bei all diesen Aussagen ist die doktrinäre Akzentsetzung auffällig. Dem korrespondieren häufige Formulierungen, wie „die Väter lehren“ oder „die Väter betonen“. Mit den direkten Väterziten bedient sich das Dokument aber auch der Ausdrucksweise bzw. Bild- und Symbolsprache der Väter. Daneben wird auch mit Paraphrasen gearbeitet, wie auch nicht selten ein einzelner Kirchenvater als Vertreter „der Heiligen Väter“ angeführt wird. Mitunter wird auch ohne näheren Verweis auf die Ansicht der Kirchenväter verwiesen (so etwa Nr. 730, 734 und 809).

Die Bezugnahme auf Kirchenväter im Dokument ist insgesamt heterogen. Dies hängt sowohl mit der unterschiedlichen redaktionellen Verantwortung für einzelne Teile als auch mit Überarbeitungen zusammen. Einige Passagen deuten auf eine spontane Entstehungsgeschichte des Textes hin. Der ursprünglich eher apologetische Tenor des Dokuments wurde offensichtlich stellenweise auch durch Väterverweise abgemildert. So versucht etwa Nr. 31 über Aussagen von Irenäus von Lyon und Basilius ein stärker patristisch konnotierendes Bild von Tradition im Spannungsfeld von Glaube und Liturgie zu entwerfen. Insgesamt lässt sich eine gewisse Emanzipation gegenüber der römisch-katholischen Traditionslinie erkennen, aber auch die Absicht, eigene Interpretationswege abseits der Rezeption orthodoxen Gedankenguts zu entwickeln.

### *3. Zu einzelnen Abschnitten und Aussagen*

#### *3.1. Zu Teil I*

Natürgemäß spielt die Kirchenvätertheologie im ersten Teil des Katechismus, der sich vor allem der Trinitätstheologie und Christologie widmet, eine bedeutende Rolle.<sup>27</sup> Häufig wird dabei auf die Kappadokier Bezug genommen. Ein Anliegen ist es auch, der östlichen Theologie folgend die Unbegreiflichkeit Gottes und die Unerkennbarkeit seines Wesens zu betonen. Dieser apophatische Ansatz ist in Nr. 71f. der Darlegung über die drei göttlichen Personen vorgeschaltet und kommt im Abschnitt über die Offenbarung (Nr. 18), die Gottesebenbildlichkeit (Nr. 122) und im liturgischen Teil (Nr. 376) zur Sprache.

Im Katechismus kommt der für die ostkirchliche Theologie wesentliche Topos der Vergöttlichung (*theosis*) in unterschiedlichen Zusammenhängen zur Sprache, insbesondere im dritten Teil (Nr.

<sup>27</sup> Vgl. M. Бендик, *Представления*, 32–39.

850-855). Die Darstellung bewegt sich durchaus auf dem Boden der patristischen Tradition.<sup>28</sup> Die in der Orthodoxie allgemein als Lehre geltende Unterscheidung zwischen dem Wesen und den Energien Gottes wird aber ebenso wenig erwähnt, wie der für diesen Ansatz maßgebliche Erzbischof Gregorios Palamas (†1359).

Nr. III des Katechismus stellt fest: „Gott der Schöpfer erfüllt die Schöpfung mit der Gnade seiner Gegenwart, gleichzeitig bleibt er unerreichbar in seinem Wesen.“ Dies könnte als eine Brücke zur Energienlehre gedeutet werden, sofern man von der ungeschaffenen Gnade ausgeht. Hier stellt sich aber die Frage nach den dahinterstehenden theologischen Konzepten. Mitunter bleibt offen, ob mit einer Wortwahl ein bestimmter theologischer Akzent beabsichtigt ist.

Einzelne Theologen der UGKK stehen dem Palamismus, einer mit der thomistischen Theologie kollidierenden und daher innerkatholisch lange Zeit diskreditierten Denkrichtung zwar positiv gegenüber,<sup>29</sup> doch bringt der Katechismus die diesbezügliche Zurückhaltung auf offizieller Ebene zum Ausdruck. Freilich hat dieser Ansatz auch in der russischen Schultheologie vor seiner Wiederentdeckung im 20. Jh. nur eine geringe (positive) Rolle gespielt.

Katholischerseits hatte 1971 die Melkitische Griechisch-Katholische Kirche die liturgische Kommemoration von Palamas ermöglicht und die Ungarische Griechisch-Katholische Kirche ihn jüngst in den liturgischen Kalender aufgenommen.<sup>30</sup> Darüber hinaus scheint

28 Vgl. dazu Тарас Коберинко, *Обожествлення як суть християнського духовного життя*, in *Презентація*, 87–95, zur *theosis* besonders 89.

29 Vgl. Віктор Жуковський, „Святий Григорій Палама і його легітимізація в УГКЦ“, in *Наукові записки Українського Католицького Університету* 1, Серія Богослов'я 1 (2009), 145–159.

30 Vgl. „Sur la «réintroduction» de la fête de Grégoire Palamas dans le liturgie melkite“, in *Istina* 21 (1976), 55–64; Lijnat al-lituriyyah al-batriyarkiyyah (Hg.), *Kitâb al-salawât al-taqsiyyah alâ madâr al-sanah li-Kanîsat al-Rûm al-*

der Palamismus auch innerkatholisch an Akzeptanz zu gewinnen.<sup>31</sup> Es bleibt eine Frage der Rezeption, ob und welche Rolle er in der theologischen und spirituellen Tradition einzelner katholischen Ostkirchen spielen wird.

Peter Galadza hat angemerkt, dass Teil I insgesamt durch einen „proklamatorischen“ bzw. „kerygmatischen“ Charakter gekennzeichnet ist. Im Unterschied zum liturgischen Teil II liegt seine Stärke aber nicht in der Information (oder gar in Begründungen), sondern in einer Basis für die geistliche Aneignung von Glaubensinhalten.<sup>32</sup> Dazu trägt gewiss auch die Kirchenväterrezeption bei, doch wird dem Leser vielfach kein Schlüssel für das Verständnis unterschiedlicher Texte geboten. Dies betrifft etwa die Frage, ob und inwieweit aus einem anderen Kontext stammende biblische und patristische Aussagen (etwa zur Schöpfungsgeschichte) in einem wörtlichen oder übertragenen Sinn zu verstehen sind.

Eine für das Selbstverständnis katholischer Kirchen östlicher Tradition schwierige Herausforderung ist der Umgang mit dem *filioque*. Der Katechismus der UGKK strebt grundsätzlich nach einem östlichen, „nicht-filioquistischen“ Ansatz (Nr. 91f. und 97f.).

*Malakiyyin al-Kâthûlik: al-Sawâiyyah (Horologium), wa Kitâb al-Mu'azzî (Octoechus), wa Khidmat al-Sawm (Triodium), wa Khidmat al-ashhur (Menaea)*, zusammengestellt von Loutfi Laham, Bd. 2, Teil 1, Jûniyah (Libanon) 2000, 1072; „Görögkatolikus szertartási útmutató a szent szolgálatok végzéséhez a 2020/2021. Egyházi évré“, 14, 98, [https://hd.gorogkatolikus.hu/media\\_doc/2c66bd604741d869c36e7a403def9261.pdf](https://hd.gorogkatolikus.hu/media_doc/2c66bd604741d869c36e7a403def9261.pdf) (abgerufen am 05.07.2021).

<sup>31</sup> Dazu Hinweise bei Thomas Németh, *Theological Reflections on the Dialogue with the Orthodox Church from an Eastern Catholic Perspective*, in Vladimir Latinovic – Anastacia Wooden (Hgg.), *Stolen Churches or Bridges to Orthodoxy?* Volume 1: *Historical and Theological Perspectives on the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Dialogue*, Basingstoke 2021, 339–354, hier 351, Anm. 48.

<sup>32</sup> P. Galadza, *The English Translation*, 246.

Kürzlich hat diesbezüglich Theodoros Alexopoulos<sup>33</sup> die klare Bezeichnung des Vaters als Ursprung von Sohn und Geist, die Aussagen zum Hervorgang des Geistes aus dem Vater und seinem Ruhen im Logos und die Unterscheidung zwischen dem inneren Leben der Dreifaltigkeit und ihrer Offenbarung aus orthodoxer Perspektive gewürdigt. Dass die Berufung auf die Aussagen des Konzils von Ferrara-Florenz über den Hervorgang des Geistes „durch den Sohn“ aus orthodoxer Sicht abgelehnt wird, überrascht wenig. Allerdings offenbart die in Nr. 97f. etwas leichtfertig vorgenommene Berufung auf Kyrill von Alexandrien zur Begründung eines Hervorgangs „durch den Sohn“,<sup>34</sup> die in der neueren Literatur inzwischen abgelehnt wird,<sup>35</sup> eine argumentative Schwäche. Darauf und auf die Problematik, dass im Glaubensbekenntnis selbst das *filioque* in – nicht näher spezifizierten – Klammern angeführt wird, hat bereits Daniel Galadza hingewiesen. Diese Unentschiedenheit

33 Theodoros Alexopoulos, *The Filioque Issue in the Light of the Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and in Dialogue with V. Bolotov's „33 Theses“*, in Latinovic – Wooden, *Stolen Churches*, 203–218.

34 Unter Berufung auf Kyrill von Alexandrien, *De sancta Trinitate dialogi II* [423]: PG 75, 722–723. Neuere Ausgabe: Cyrille d'Alexandrie, *Dialogues sur la Trinité* (hg. u. übers. v. Georges Matthieu de Durand, SC 231, Paris 1976, 238, 240); Kyrill von Alexandrien, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate*: PG 75, 9–656. Die *filioque*-Argumentation scheint beeinflusst von: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, „The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit“, in *L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly English Edition*, 20 September 1995, 3, 6. Doch hat schon die Pro Oriente-Studentagung von 1998 festgestellt, dass dieses Dokument zwischen immanenter und ökumenischer Trinität nicht genügend unterscheidet und Unklarheiten auch bei der Bezugnahme auf von Kyrill von Alexandrien bestehen, Vgl. Alfred Stirnemann – Gerhard Wilflinger (Hgg.), *Vom Heiligen Geist. Der gemeinsame trinitarische Glaube und das Problem des Filioque* (Pro Oriente 21), Innsbruck–Wien 1998, 219.

35 Vgl. Th. Alexopoulos, *The Filioque Issue*, 211. So auch schon Edward Sicienski, *The Filioque. History of a Doctrinal Controversy*, Oxford 2010, 49.

ist in theologischer und ökumenischer Hinsicht problematisch, so dass der Katechismus in diesem Punkt eine Chance „für echte theologische und liturgische Erneuerung“ vertan hat.<sup>36</sup> Natürlich braucht eine solche, bislang ungelöste Differenz zwischen Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in einem Katechismus nicht gelöst werden, sollte aber auch nicht überspielt werden. Bei aller Achtung der lateinischen Variante des Credo hätte man sich für das Glaubensbekenntnis ohne *filioque* entscheiden können.

Von dieser Frage abgesehen hat der Katechismus Abstand genommen, Kirchenväter apologetisch zum Ziel konfessioneller Abgrenzung einzusetzen; sie bilden umgekehrt eher ein Bindeglied zur Orthodoxie. In Nr. 308 wird die Beteiligung der UGKK an ökumenischen Bestrebungen ausdrücklich betont. Positiv zu würdigen ist auch, dass der Katechismus gerade in Bezug auf das Thema Hölle in Nr. 251 mit Origenes einen im Bereich der Eschatologie nicht unproblematischen Autor herangezogen hat, freilich mit einer rechtgläubigen Aussage.<sup>37</sup> Origenes wird auch im KKK in anderen Zusammenhängen zitiert, im ukrainischen Katechismus kommt aber der große Theologe der alten Kirche damit noch spezifischer zur Geltung. In Nr. 250 wird der Topos Fegefeuer zurückhaltend als „Zustand der Heilung“ behandelt, das Väterzitat scheint aber thematisch nicht zu passen.<sup>38</sup>

36 Daniel Galadza, „Die griechisch-katholischen Kirchen und die liturgische Erneuerung. 50 Jahre nach Sacrosanctum Concilium“, in Hans-Jürgen Feulner – Andreas Bieriniger – Benjamin Leven (Hgg.), *Erbe und Erneuerung. Die Liturgiekonstitution des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils und ihre Folgen*, Wien 2015, 104–107, hier 107.

37 Origenes, *De principiis* II,10,5: PG 11, 257. Neuere Ausgabe: Origenes, *Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien* (hg. u. übers. v. Herwig Görgemanns u. Heinrich Karpp. Texte zur Forschung 24, Darmstadt 1992, 430).

38 Neben Verweisen auf 1 Kor 3,15, den KKK und das Florentinum wird auf Johannes Chrysostomus, *In epistulam I ad Corinthios argumentum et homiliae* 41,5: PG 61, 361, und insbesondere auf Gregor von Nazianz, *Oratio* 7,21: PG

Im Bereich der Ekklesiologie setzt der Katechismus im Vergleich mit dem KKK manche ostkirchliche Akzente.<sup>39</sup> Gleich zu Beginn des Abschnittes wird in Nr. 272 die Kirche als „Ikone der allerheiligsten Dreifaltigkeit“ vorgestellt. Dabei handelt es sich um einen in der orthodoxen Theologie des 20. Jh. unter Rückgriff auf die Kirchenvätertradition entwickelte Deutungslinie, deren ekklesiologische Aussagekraft aber unterschiedlich bewertet wird.<sup>40</sup> Nach einer biblischen Grundlegung zur Ekklesiologie werden die Attribute der Kirche (Einheit, Heiligkeit, Katholizität, Apostolizität, Nr. 283-300) ausgeführt, bevor das Thema *pomisnist'* der UGKK und ihre *Communio* mit anderen Lokalkirchen entfaltet wird.<sup>41</sup>

Dieser etwas im Randbereich der Thematik dieser Besprechung angesiedelte, aber für den Identitätsdiskurs der UGKK wesentliche Topos soll hier nur angeschnitten werden. Der ukrainische Terminus *pomisna Cerkva* (bzw. das Substantiv *pomisnist'*) steht

35, 781, zurückgegriffen. Neuere Ausgabe: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 6–12* (hg. u. übers. v. Marie-Ange Calvet-Sebasti. SC 405, Paris 1995, 232, 234). Allerdings scheint sich diese Stelle nicht auf eine postmortale Reinigung, sondern auf die Befreiung der Seele vom Leib im Tod zu beziehen. Zudem wird auf Gregor auch zur Ablehnung des Fegefeuers verwiesen, vgl. Demetrios Bathrellos, *Love and Forgiveness versus Justice and Punishment?: Purgatory and the Question of the Forgiveness of Sins at the Council of Ferrara-Florence*, in Theresia Hainthaler – Franz Mali – Gregor Emmenegger – Mantè Lenkaitytė-Ostermann (Hgg.), *Für uns und für unser Heil. Soteriologie in Ost und West* (Pro Oriente 37), Innsbruck–Wien 2012, 355–374, hier 368.

39 Тарас Барщевський, *Еклезіологія катехизму УГКЦ*, in *Презентація*, 54–62.

40 Vgl. dazu Theodoros Alexopoulos, „Auf dem Weg zu einem Konsens zwischen den Schwesterkirchen des Westens und des Ostens? Ein theologischer Vorschlag im Blick auf die Ökumenizität der Synode von 879/80, das Filioque und das Verhältnis zwischen Theologia und Oikonomia“, in *Catholica* 72 (2018), 184–214, hier 197–198.

41 Mir ist nicht ersichtlich, weshalb Myron Bendyk im Kommentarband bezüglich des Verhältnisses zwischen der Kirche Christi und den einzelnen Lokalkirchen bei letzteren ansetzt. Бендик, *Представлення*, 38.

in der ostslawischen Tradition für einen Kirchenverband, also katholischerseits für eine Kirche *sui iuris* bzw. orthodoxerseits für eine autokephale oder autonome Kirche und drückt deren Eigenstand und -charakter aus. Er wird im Katechismus von *miscuva cerkva* unterschieden (Nr. 291), der sich auf die Eparchien bzw. Diözesen bezieht, wobei beide Ausdrücke mit *miscu* (Ort) zusammenhängen. In der englischen Version wird *pomisna cerkva* meines Erachtens nicht sehr geglückt mit dem juristisch konnotierenden „self-governing Church“ wiedergegeben, der häufig für quasiautonome orthodoxe Kirchen verwendet wird. Wenn in diesem Beitrag *pomisna Cerkva* dem Wortfeld entsprechend mit „Lokalkirche“ wiedergegeben wird, ist sie jedenfalls von der Ortskirche auf diözesaner Ebene zu unterscheiden. Es wäre meines Erachtens angebracht gewesen, den für das katholische Ostkirchenrecht einschlägigen Terminus Kirche *sui iuris* in der ukrainischen Fassung zumindest anzuführen, was in der englischen nur untergeordnet in Nr. 289 geschieht.

Die Grundlegung der *pomisnist'* in Nr. 301 des Katechismus findet sich fast wortgleich in Nr. 32 der Ökumenischen Konzeption<sup>42</sup> und wurde inzwischen kritisch thematisiert. Dass die kirchliche Selbständigkeit mit „Gebräuchen“, „Kultur“ und „Mentalität“ von bestimmten Völkern in Verbindung gebracht wird, sieht Dietmar Schon nicht in gesamtkirchlichen Vorgaben begründet, aber auf dem Hintergrund der komplexen kirchlichen Situation der Ukraine nachvollziehbar.<sup>43</sup> Die Besprechung des Katechismus durch Mykola Krokosh beinhaltet mitunter polemische und undifferenzierte Kritik, die sich neben der Anknüpfung der *pomisnist'* an die Inkulturation auch an geltenden gesamtkirchlichen Vorgaben und neuzeitlichen

42 Siehe oben Anm. 10.

43 Dietmar Schon, „Die Ukraine als Laboratorium der Ökumene. Perspektiven des Ökumenedokuments der Ukrainischen Griechisch-Katholischen Kirche“, in *Ostkirchliche Studien* 67 (2018), 149–186, hier 171f.

innerkirchlichen sowie ökumenischen Diskursen abarbeitet.<sup>44</sup> Die derzeitigen Diskussionen um den Status der orthodoxen Kirchen in der Ukraine machen deutlich, dass die komplexen Fragen um Begründung und Ausgestaltung von Autonomiestrukturen insgesamt nur bedingt mit Rückgriff auf die kirchenrechtliche Tradition des ersten Jahrtausends lösbar sind.<sup>45</sup> Es hat generell den Anschein, dass die Aussagen des Katechismus zur Kirche weniger ekklesiologisch-kanonistisch sondern im Kontext neuerer Identitätsdiskurse zu verstehen sind, wie auch das Slipyj-Zitat in Nr. 302 nahelegt.

Der Begriff *sopryčastja* im Sinne von *communio* bzw. Gemeinschaft kommt in über 30 Nummern, also recht häufig vor. Einschlägige Passagen erinnern an Aussagen von Metr. John Zizioulas bzw. spiegeln

44 Mykola Krokosh, „Der neue Katechismus der Ukrainischen Griechisch-Katholischen Kirche aus ökumenischer Sicht“, in *Der Christliche Osten* 67 (2012), 163–170; ukr. Fassung: Микола Крокош, „Катехизм УГКЦ» в екуменічній перспективі: Крок вперед, два назад“, <https://www.religion.in.ua/main/analitica/page,1,5,12797-katexizm-ugkc-v-ekumenichnij-perspektivi-krok-vpered-dva-nazad.html> (12.05.2021). Krokosh ist zuzustimmen, wenn er bemängelt, dass in Nr. 17 des Katechismus die auf Diözesen abstellende Passage von *Lumen Gentium* Nr. 23 „in quibus et ex quibus“ auf die Lokalkirchen bezogen wird. Jedoch wird auf Grundlage von OE 2 eine „mutual immanence of the Particular Church and the universal Church“ auch in Hinblick auf Kirchen *sui iuris* vertreten: George Nedungatt, *The Spirit of the Eastern Code*, Bangalore 1993, 90. Die Behauptung von Krokosh, dass „keine ekklesiologisch relevanten Zwischengrößen zwischen der *ecclesia universalis* und *ecclesia localis* [gemeint Bistumsebene]“ (S. 166) bestehen, ist so nicht haltbar. Vgl. dazu kürzlich: Péter Szabó, *Synodality and Primacy. Perspectives of Interaction between East and West*, in Idem (Hg.), *Primacy and Synodality. Deepening Insights. Proceedings of the 23rd Congress of the Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches. Debrecen, September 3-8, 2017* (Kanon 25), Debrecen 2019, 693–722, hier 708–712.

45 Vgl. dazu etwa Eva M. Synek, „Wie wird eine orthodoxe Lokalkirche autokephal? Einige Anmerkungen anlässlich des Konstantinopler Autonomietomos für die Orthodoxe Kirche in der Ukraine“, in *Österreichisches Archiv für Recht & Religion* 67 (2020), 46–83.

sie orthodoxe theologische Ansätze des 20. Jh. wider. Nach Nr. 292 „erzeugt die *communio* der Lokalkirchen die *sobornist'* [Katholizität] der Kirche“. Dieser Begriff wird im dritten Teil (Nr. 923f.) in einem in der slawischen Orthodoxie gebräuchlichen Sinn als „Prinzip der Solidarität“ weiter entfaltet.

Nr. 305 weist auf die fundamentale Gleichheit aller Lokalkirchen hin, zu der implizit auch die lateinische gerechnet wird. Nr. 304 bezeichnet die „*Communio* mit der römischen Kirche als Merkmal und Bedingung der Zugehörigkeit zur Universalkirche“. Der Papst, „dessen Primat in der Liebe und im Dienst der Lehre zum Erbe des Glaubens der Gesamtkirche gehört“, ist sichtbares Zeichen dieser Einheit. Während in Nr. 287 die *regula fidei* in der Hl. Schrift und in der Hl. Tradition gesehen wird, deren Bewahrung und Treue zu ihr durch den Dienst des Bischofs von Rom garantiert wird, wird in Nr. 291 der Papst als „Lehrer und Regel des apostolischen Glaubens“ herausgestellt. Diese Aussage scheint ekklesiologisch nicht allzu geglückt. Michael Fiedrowicz hat darauf hingewiesen, dass nach altkirchlichem Verständnis die Glaubensregel sich nicht auf kirchliche Amtsautorität bezieht, sondern die Wahrheit darstellt, „die vom kirchlichen Amt zu bewahren, nicht erst zu schaffen ist“.46 Der Katechismus verwendet in Nr. 291 und 304 auch den in den liturgischen Büchern enthaltenen, aber nicht unproblematischen Papsttitel „Vselens'kyj Archyjerej“ („Universaler/Ökumenischer Hohepriester/Bischof/Pontifex“).47 Insgesamt zeigt sich im Bereich

46 Michael Fiedrowicz, *Theologie der Kirchenväter. Grundlagen frühchristlicher Glaubensreflexion*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2010, 195. In der byzantinischen Hymnographie werden heilige Bischöfe im entsprechenden Troparion (siehe etwa Offizium des Hl. Nikolaus von Myra) zwar als „Regel“ bzw. „Richtschnur des Glaubens“ (κανών πίστεως/правило вѣры) bezeichnet, doch wird diese durch die „Wahrheit [ihrer] Taten“ erwiesen.

47 In der englischen Fassung des Katechismus: Universal Pontiff. Vgl. dazu Serge Keleher, „Ukrainian Catholics: Four Translations of the Divine Liturgy. Some

des ekklesiologischen Profils der Versuch, eigene Identität im Rahmen gesamtkirchlicher Vorgaben zu artikulieren.

Stellenweise offenbart Teil II das fehlende Hinterfragen von historisch späten Konzepten oder Interpretationen und legt eine sorgfältigere Rezeption neuerer Erkenntnisse nahe. Dies betrifft die allzu vereinfachende Charakterisierung von Ikonen als Ort von Präsenz des Dargestellten (Nr. 597-598) und den Stellenwert ihrer erst in der Neuzeit aufkommenden Segensriten.<sup>48</sup>

### *3.2. Zu Teil II*

Der zweite Teil des Katechismus über die Liturgie ist von der Absicht geprägt, die Gläubigen über ihre liturgische Tradition zu informieren.<sup>49</sup> Viel Raum nimmt hier besonders die Erklärung der Eucharistischen Liturgie ein (Nr. 342-402). Insgesamt schöpft dieser Teil stark aus liturgischen Texten, die in das 1. Jahrtausend zurückgehen. Deutlich tritt der Auftrag zur Rückkehr zu älteren Traditionen gemäß *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* Nr. 6 zutage.<sup>50</sup> So wird in Nr. 260 und 381 der Stellenwert der Epiklese herausgehoben und in Nr. 431 die Kommunion der Neugetauften und -gefirmten begründet. Der in Nr. 393 beschriebene und auf can. 52 des Trullanums (691/692) beruhende und in der Orthodoxie einhellig beachtete Grundsatz, wonach in der Großen Fastenzeit (mit Ausnahme von Mariä Verkündigung) zwischen Montagen und Freitagen nur die sog. Liturgie der Vorgeweihten Gaben zu feiern ist, wurde auch in

Early Translations“, in *Logos. A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 39 (1998), 267–402, hier 273–275.

48 Vgl. dazu Thomas Németh, „Ikonen. Grundlagen, Zugänge, Anfragen“, in *Wort und Antwort* 60 (2019) Heft 3, 122–127, hier 123f.

49 Vgl. Михайло Петрович, *Представлення другої частини катехизму УГКЦ: „Молитва Церкви“*, in *Презентація*, 40–48.

50 Siehe oben Anm. 19.

das geltende Partikularrecht<sup>51</sup> aufgenommen. Anzumerken ist, dass er selbst in Kathedralen nicht immer Anwendung findet, geschweige denn in der Gemeindepraxis.<sup>52</sup> Das Teil II abschließende Kapitel über das persönliche Gebet (Nr. 668–703; siehe in Teil III auch Nr. 799–821) erscheint etwas heterogen, spiegelt aber unterschiedliche geistliche Traditionen innerhalb der UGKK wider.

Im Zusammenhang mit dem Ehesakrament stellen sich Fragen nach dem Umgang mit Gleichheit und Unterschiedlichkeit von Mann und Frau in der UGKK. Im Trebnyk (*Rituale*) existiert ein – westlich beeinflusster – Trauungsspruch, in dem die Braut dem Bräutigam Gehorsam verspricht. Diese Passage wird in der Diaspora teilweise ausgelassen und kommt auch im Katechismus nicht vor. In Nr. 479 ist nur vom beidseitigen Versprechen von Liebe, Treue und Achtung die Rede. Allerdings wird in Nr. 475 unter Hinweis auf Eph 5,22–24 (enthalten in der Perikope der byzantinischen Trauungsfeier) der Mann als Haupt der Frau bezeichnet, ohne diese Aussage näher zu erläutern. Auch in Nr. 134 wird nicht gesagt, worin die behauptete biblisch begründete Gleichheit und Unterschiedlichkeit von Mann und Frau besteht. Man hat den Eindruck, dass diese der Reflexion bedürftige Fragestellung in der UGKK noch nicht thematisiert wird.

Der Katechismus thematisiert die Verehrung der Gottesmutter hauptsächlich im Kontext der Kirchenfeste (Nr. 311, 313, 576) und folgt vor allem dem liturgischen Glaubensausdruck; die Dogmen der Unbefleckten Empfängnis und Himmelfahrt (im Haupttext: Entschlafung) Mariens werden in den Fußnoten 274 und 276 erwähnt. Auf die unbefleckte Empfängnis Mariens nimmt auch Nr. 188 Bezug, indem er auf einen Hymnentext verweist. Allerdings steht dort im Unterschied zu slawischen liturgischen Büchern in – mir vorliegenden – griechischen Ausgaben nicht unbefleckte Empfängnis

51 „Канони партикулярного права“, сар. 88.

52 Ein Beitrag zu diesem Thema ist in Vorbereitung.

(непорочное зачатіе), sondern (Mannes)samenlose Empfängnis (ἄσπορος σύλλησις),<sup>53</sup> womit wohl eine christologische und nicht eine mariologische Aussage getroffen wird.<sup>54</sup> Es stellt sich aber auch darüber hinaus die Frage nach dem Zusammenhang zwischen liturgischen Texten und dogmatischen Aussagen.

Einige Detailanmerkungen seien hier noch erlaubt. In Nr. 385 wird das Hauptbeugungsgebet der Chrysostomusliturgie auf Grundlage der fehlerhaften ukrainischen Liturgieübersetzungen wiedergegeben. Es geht hier gemäß dem griechischen und kirchenslawischen Text nicht um die vorliegenden Gaben, sondern um die vor einem liegende Zeit.<sup>55</sup> In Nr. 540 ist der Zusammenhang zwischen dem siebenmaligen täglichen Beten und den neun Einheiten des Stundengebets weiterhin etwas erklärungsbedürftig.<sup>56</sup> Nicht unproblematisch ist auch, wenn in Nr. 490 ohne nähere Erläuterung der 1. Klemensbrief als Beleg

53 Troparion der 6. Ode des 2. Kanons zu Mariä Geburt (8. September): (Ὑμνοῦμεν.../Поемъ...), z. B.: Книга Минія. Мсць Септемврій, Почаєвъ 1761, 46; *Μηναία τοῦ ὄλου ἐνιαυτοῦ*, Bd. 1, Roma 1888, 99. Zu diesem Kanon vgl. Peter Plank – Carolina Lutzka – Christian Hannick (Hgg.), *Das byzantinische Eigengut der neuzeitlichen slavischen Menäen und seine griechischen Originale. I. Teilband: Vorwort, Einführung, Incipitarium und Edition der Monate September bis Februar* (Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 112 = Patristica Slavica 12), Paderborn 2006, 15–25.

54 Wenig wahrscheinlich scheint sich die griechische Passage – in Anbetracht der Mehrdeutigkeit des *Protevangeliums von Jakobus* – auf die Empfängnis Mariens zu beziehen. Vgl. dazu Thomas R. Karmann, *Apokryph oder doch geradezu kanonisch? Zur Rezeption des Protevangelium Jacobi im antiken Christentum*, in Jan N. Bremmer – James Andrew Doole – Thomas R. Karmann – Tobias Nicklas, Boris – Repschinski, *The Protevangelium of James* (Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 16), Leuven 2020, 1–48, hier 26f.

55 Vgl. Robert Taft, *The Precommunion Rites* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 261), Roma 2000, 163–177.

56 In Hinblick auf die Version von 2011: vgl. oben Anm. 4 und Василь Рудейко, „Катехизм УГКЦ – свідомий чи несвідомий крок до літургійної реформи“, in *Патріархат* 2012, Nr. 3, 16–19.

für die Apostolische Sukzession angeführt wird.<sup>57</sup> Zwar kann hier bei Klemens mit Jochen Wagner durchaus ein Keim für diese Lehre gesehen werden, doch bezieht sich der angeführte Text noch auf eine kollegiale Gemeindeleitung und nicht auf den Monepiskopat.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.3. *Zu Teil III*

Der dritte Teil des Katechismus ist wesentlich von der theologischen Arbeit von Großerbischof Sviatoslav geprägt. 2001 promovierte er an der Päpstlichen Universität Hl. Thomas von Aquin (*Angelicum*) im Bereich der theologischen Anthropologie und Moralthologie der byzantinischen Tradition<sup>59</sup> und publizierte eine Moralkatechese.<sup>60</sup> Im Katechismus zeigt sich sein Bestreben, im Spannungsfeld zwischen einer in ostkirchlichen Kreisen vertretenen Ablehnung der Moralthologie als westlichem Theologiezweig und der Tradition der Asketik einen eigenen Weg zu formulieren. Dieser bewegt sich im Rahmen der katholischen Morallehre, möchte sich aber die liturgische Akzentuierung der Kirchentradition und die Dynamik der östlichen Askese zu Nutze machen und auch stärker die therapeutische Sicht der Kirchenväter auf moralische Fragen einbringen.<sup>61</sup> Tatsächlich

57 Clemens von Rom, *Epistola ad Corinthios* 42: PG I, 192. Neuere Ausgabe: Clemens von Rom, *Epistola ad Corinthios/Brief an die Korinther* (hg. u. übers. v. G. Schneider. FC 15. Freiburg i. Br. u. a. 1994, 166), vgl. auch KKK Nr. 861, Anm. 1

58 Jochen Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche. Presbyter und Episkopen in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Texte und Arbeiten zum Neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 53), Tübingen 2011, 234f., 239–241.

59 Sviatoslav Chevtschouk, *Vita trasfigurata in Cristo. Prospettive nel pensiero di Pavel Evdokimov* (Dis. Fac. Theol., P. Univ. a S. Thoma Aq.), Roma 2001; vgl. auch Pavel N. Evdokimov, *Trasfigurata in Cristo. Prospettive di morale ortodossa*, eingeleitet v. Sviatoslav Ševčuk, Roma 2001.

60 *Життя у Христі: Моральна катехиза*, zusammengestellt von Святослав Шевчук, Львів 2004.

61 Блаженніший Святослав (Шевчук), *Представлення третьої частини катехизму УГКЦ: „Життя Церкви“*, in *Презентація*, 49–53, hier 51f.

beziehen sich zahlreiche Verweise auf Kirchenväter, aber auch auf die im beginnenden 20. Jh. dominierende Bischofsgestalt von Metropolit Andrej Šeptyc'kyj.

Terminologische Anfragen ergeben sich zu den „acht Hauptsünden“ (Nr. 758 und darauffolgende Überschrift).<sup>62</sup> Die Bezeichnung des Großen Bußkanons des hl. Andreas von Kreta in Nr. 818 als das „beste und vollständigste Vorbild des Bußgebets“ unterschätzt unterschiedliche geistliche Zugänge.

Auffällig, aber im Kontext aktueller Diskurse christlicher Kirchen der Ukraine nicht überraschend ist der breite Raum, den das Thema Familie einnimmt. Bereits in Teil II existiert ein Abschnitt über das Gebet in der Familie (Nr. 654–667). In Teil III wird in der Überschrift zum langen Kapitel Nr. 856–910 (!) die christliche Familie als „neue Schöpfung“ bezeichnet. Dieser, auch in anderen Zusammenhängen verwendete Terminus erscheint hier aber – trotz eines Kommentars im Präsentationsband<sup>63</sup> – klärungsbedürftig. Insgesamt 13 Nummern (885–897) befassen sich mit Empfängnisverhütung und verantwortlicher Elternschaft. Die Vermischung unterschiedlicher anthropologischer, sozialer und theologischer Ebenen im Kapitel über die Familie wirft Fragen auf, ist aber nicht Gegenstand dieses Beitrags.

Bei der Schwerpunktsetzung des Katechismus fällt auch auf, dass die Rolle und Bedeutung der Laien nur punktuell zur Sprache kommt (etwa in Nr. 299), selbst wenn das Thema implizit auch andernorts

62 In der englischen Fassung wurde die Wortwahl in der Aufzählung im Anhang (S. 316) und in der Anmerkung zu Nr. 759 mit „passions leading to sin“ und „evil tempting thoughts“ stärker dem klassischen asketischen Sprachgebrauch angepasst. Auch in der Achtzahl besteht ein Unterschied zur westlichen Konzeption. Vgl. Tomáš Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*, Volume 1, (Cistercian Studies 79), Kalamazoo, MI 1986, 248–266.

63 Блаженніший Святослав (Шевчук), *Представлення третьої частини катехизму*, 51f.

begegnet, etwa im Zusammenhang mit der Myronsalbung (N. 424–427). Das für die östlichen Kirchen prägende Mönchtum wird auch nur zweimal thematisiert (Nr. 298, 503).

#### *4. Theologische Aspekte*

##### *4.1. Zur Theologie in der UGKK*

Aus der bisherigen, keineswegs erschöpfenden Durchsicht des Katechismus ergibt sich ein vielschichtiges und teils ambivalentes Bild vom Umgang mit dem Erbe der alten Kirche. Doch zeigt sich, dass die Auseinandersetzung mit diesem Thema für die kirchliche Identität bedeutsam ist. Mit der Ukrainischen Katholischen Universität (UCU) in Lemberg wurde nach der Wende in der Ukraine eine bedeutende Ausbildungsstätte mit mehreren Fakultäten etabliert, die auf verschiedenen Ebenen an gesellschaftlichen Diskursen beteiligt ist. Deren philosophisch-theologische Fakultät befindet sich aber noch in Entwicklung. Unterstützungsbedarf besteht dabei nicht nur auf der institutionellen Ebene. Im Jahr 2011 wurden Diskussionen um den Stand der Theologie in der UGKK geführt,<sup>64</sup> die Problematik scheint immer noch aktuell. Denn für gut ausgebildete Theologen fehlt es immer noch häufig an Rahmenbedingungen für akademische Tätigkeit und in Kirche wie auch Gesellschaft an Verständnis für den Sinn und Wert wissenschaftlicher Theologie.

Dagegen werden im ukrainischen und internationalen Kontext theologische Aussagen von Kirchenoberhäuptern der UGKK

64 Vgl. dazu „Дискусія про теологію в УГКЦ: перші підсумки“, <https://www.religion.in.ua/main/analitica/12989-diskusiya-pro-teologiyu-v-ugkc-pershi-pidsumki.html> (abgerufen am 06.07.2021); „Віктор Жуковський: Критерії оцінки розвитку богослов'я і небезпеки квазібогословлення (Християнин і світ)“, <https://ucu.edu.ua/news/kryteriji-otsinky-rozvytku-bohoslova-i-nebezpeky-kvazibohoslovlennya/> (abgerufen am 06.07.2021); Михайло Димид, „Стан академічного богослов'я в УГКЦ“, in *Метров/Міра* 2012, Heft 9, 54–61.

deutlicher wahrgenommen. So hat Großerbischof Lubomyr seine Kirche im Bereich der Ekklesiologie und Ökumene geprägt, Großerbischof Sviatoslav im Bereich der Ethik und Moral Akzente gesetzt. Auch die identitätsstiftende Rolle der Brester Union und der Folgezeit und ihr hoher Stellenwert in den letzten drei Jahrzehnten erklärt, weshalb sich die Patrologie und die alte Kirchengeschichte noch in einer Aufbauphase befinden. Erst in allerjüngster Zeit ist ein Erscheinen von patristischen Arbeiten und Übersetzungen in ukrainischer Sprache festzustellen. Über den Lehrstuhl für Theologie der UCU bieten etwa 10 Dozenten patristische Lehrveranstaltungen an, dies geschieht auch an den Priesterseminaren. In der Reihe „Витоки християнства“ (Quellen des Christentums, mit Abteilungen „Quellen“ und „Studien“) erschien – neben patrologischen Monographien – inzwischen eine Anthologie zu den frühen Vätern der Kirche und eine Vätersammlung zu Armut und Reichtum.<sup>65</sup> Auf diese akademische Basis konnte bei der Erarbeitung des Katechismus aber noch nicht zurückgegriffen werden. Es hat den Anschein, dass sich bei der Textauswahl der erschwerte Zugang zu Originaleditionen und der Rückgriff auf bestimmte Übersetzungen (teilweise in russischer Sprache) ausgewirkt haben.

Die Bedeutung patristischer Studien zeigt sich auch daran, dass in anderen theologischen Disziplinen die Frage nach dem altkirchlichen Erbe thematisiert wird. Der Bedarf des Zugangs zur normativen Frühzeit stellt sich angesichts wachsender kirchlicher Herausforderungen ja gerade in Kirchen östlicher Tradition deutlich. Im Katechismus wurde dabei auch auf neuere Richtungen der orthodoxen Theologie zurückgegriffen. Es zeigen sich Berührungen mit der sog. Neopatristik des 20. Jh. Diese, mit Georges Florovsky († 1979) verbundene Strömung, bemühte sich, die orthodoxe Theologie

65 Марія Горяча (Hg.), *Ранні Отці Церкви: Антологія* (Витоки християнства 1: Джерела 1), Львів 2015; Eadem (Hg.), *Отці Церкви про багатство і бідність* (Витоки християнства 1: Джерела 2), Львів 2018.

von westlichen Einflüssen zu befreien und an die Tradition des ersten Jahrtausends anzuknüpfen. Freilich stößt dieser Ansatz, der mitunter auch mit Antiwestlertum und Abgrenzung zu anderen Konfessionen einhergeht, im orthodoxen theologischen Diskurs zunehmend auf Kritik. Ihm wird eine Abgrenzungstendenz gegenüber der Moderne vorgeworfen, die sich negativ auf die Kommunikabilität auswirke.<sup>66</sup> Diese Anfragen sind auch für die katholisch-ostkirchliche Theologie in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit westlicher Überformung und der Neubesinnung auf das eigene Erbe von Bedeutung – und möglicherweise auch ein Ansatzpunkt für interkonfessionelle Zusammenarbeit.

#### 4.2. Zum Umgang mit den Kirchenvätern

Gerade in der theologischen Tradition der UGKK stützt man sich gerne auf Autoritäten wie Metropolit Andrej Šeptyc'kyj oder Großerbischof Josyf Slipyj. Demgegenüber haben aber in der westlichen Kirchenlandschaft auf dem Hintergrund eines gewandelten Geschichtsbegriffs und historisch-kritischen Zugangs Autoritäten insgesamt massiv an orientierender Wirkung eingebüßt. Von diesen neuzeitlichen Prozessen blieb auch der Umgang mit den Kirchenvätern nicht verschont.<sup>67</sup> Im Zusammenhang mit gesellschaftlichen und theologischen Entwicklungen, die den Umgang mit Autoritäten hinterfragen, wird sich auch in der UGKK die Frage nach der Tragfähigkeit der *auctoritas patrum* stellen. Andreas Merkt, auf dessen Ausführungen ich im Folgenden verweise, hat gerade die Instrumentalisierung der Kirchenväter auf dem Hintergrund einer statischen Auffassung von Tradition als gleichbleibendes *Depositum*

66 Vgl. Paul Ladouceur, *Modern Orthodox Theology. Behold, I Make All Things New* (Rev 21:5), London u. a. 2019, 95–122.

67 So Andreas Merkt, *Das patristische Prinzip. Eine Studie zur theologischen Bedeutung der Kirchenväter* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 58), Leiden-Boston-Köln 2001, 218.

*fidei* letztlich für die Bedeutungslosigkeit der Väter wesentlich verantwortlich gemacht.<sup>68</sup> Er schlägt vor, sie in eine „kommunikative Vernunft“<sup>69</sup> einzubinden, was freilich neben Wahrnehmung von Rationalitätsargumenten auch eine solide theologische Hermeneutik verlangt. Diesbezüglich stellen sich nun Anfragen, wie eine Aussage von Großerbischof Sviatoslav zur Präsentation des Katechismus deutlich macht:

Als ich dieses Buch in die Hand nahm, dachte ich mir: Wer wird unzufrieden sein mit diesem Katechismus? Ich denke, dass es viele von ihnen geben wird. Und das ist gut. Einerseits werden diejenigen mit ihm unzufrieden sein, die meinen, dass sie – angeblich – besser wissen, woran die Kirche glaubt, als dies die Synode der Bischöfe und Theologen sowie Katecheten der ganzen Welt ausdrücken können. Vielleicht werden Theologen mit ihm unzufrieden sein, und das ist auch normal, weil dieser Katechismus kein Handbuch der Theologie darstellt. In den Text des Katechismus können nicht diese oder jene theologischen Hypothesen, Theologumena und Theorien eingehen. Weshalb? Weil sie alle vorläufig sind. Morgen können sie verschwinden oder ihre Gestalt verändern. Der Katechismus hat aber zum Ziel, den Glauben der Kirche als solchen darzulegen, den die Kirche übergibt von Jesus Christus durch die Apostel bis zum Ende der Welt.<sup>70</sup>

Diese Passage wirft Fragen auf. Geht es bei der Unzufriedenheit mit dem Katechismus um bestimmte Theologen? Diese Aussage hat offenbar einen Kontext, der dem Leser nicht vermittelt wird. Sie verwundert auch deshalb, weil ja gerade Theologen dieses Dokument erarbeitet oder Entwürfe dazu geliefert haben. Dass mit einem solchen, in zehn Jahren erarbeiteten Dokument unterschiedliche Erwartungen und Emotionen verknüpft sind, ist nachvollziehbar, doch besteht die Gefahr, dass aus Verallgemeinerungen Missverständnisse entstehen.

68 Ibid., 226.

69 Ibid., 223.

70 Блаженніший Святослав (Шевчук), *Оце подаю Вам катехизм*, 7f.

Zugleich zeigt sich hier der Bedarf nach Reflexion in Hinblick auf den Zusammenhang von Glaubensaussagen und Theologie. Dass zwischen dem Glauben der Kirche und seinen Formulierungen eine Differenz besteht, ist ja gerade im ökumenischen Dialog mit östlichen Kirchen evident. Anders wäre etwa die christologische Einigung zwischen der katholischen Kirche und orientalisch-orthodoxen Kirchen kaum möglich gewesen.<sup>71</sup> Dies steht auch nicht der grundlegenden Kontinuität entgegen, die gerade die Kirchenväter bezeugen. So werden sie etwa in einer einschlägigen Instruktion der Bildungskongregation von 1989 als „Autoren und Exponenten einer konstitutiven Überlieferung [bezeichnet], die spätere Zeiten zu bewahren und ständig zu entfalten haben“.<sup>72</sup> Freilich ist, wie Merkt feststellte, der *consensus patrum* gerade kein „Refugium unerschütterlicher Gewißheit“.<sup>73</sup> Sein Plädoyer, zu dieser Ebene im Sinne einer „Kindheitsgeschichte der Kirche“<sup>74</sup> eine erwachsene Beziehung zu entwickeln, die auch kritische Distanz verlangt, kann nur unterstrichen werden. Hier bestünde nun gerade in der UGKK eine wichtige Rolle der Theologie. Dass jedenfalls ein realistischer Blick angebracht ist, belegt eine Aussage von Roman Andrijuvskij, der schreibt, dass es übertrieben sei, den Katechismus als „Höhepunkt des theologischen Denkens [der UGKK anzusehen, er aber] das reale Niveau der theologischen Wissenschaft in [ihr] widerspiegelt“.<sup>75</sup> Andrijuvskij verknüpfte damit den Wunsch, dass mit dem Katechismus ein „theologischer Pfad“ beginne. Auch

71 Vgl. Theresia Hainthaler, „Entwicklungen im Dialog der Orientalisch-Orthodoxen Kirchen“, in *Materialdienst des konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim* 57 (2006), 15–18.

72 Kongregation für das katholische Bildungswesen, *Instruktion über das Studium der Kirchenväter für die Priesterausbildung, 10.11.1989* (Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhles 96), Bonn 1990, 13.

73 A. Merkt, *Das Patristische Prinzip*, 250.

74 *Ibid.*, 258.

75 Андрійовський, „Новий Катехизм УГКЦ“, 6.

Großerbischof Sviatoslav äußerte sich in einem jüngeren Interview durchaus differenziert. Der Katechismus benötige entsprechende Mechanismen für die Aneignung seiner Inhalte und richte sich primär an erwachsene Leser mit einer gewissen Basis, darunter an Katecheten. Er habe seine starken und schwachen Seiten und vielleicht sei eine verbesserte Ausgabe sinnvoll.<sup>76</sup>

#### *4.3. Fazit und Ausblick*

Eine Revision des Katechismus bedürfte jedenfalls theologischer Grundlagenarbeit. Wie bereits angedeutet, bedarf auch die Frage nach der Rolle der Theologie in der UGKK größerer Aufmerksamkeit. Sie wird allzu oft in einer absichernden bzw. apologetischen Funktion wahrgenommen, oder auch in einer mystagogischen, während ihre – auch innerkirchlich – kritische Rolle weniger entwickelt ist. Dabei kann die UGKK – im Vergleich mit anderen Konfessionen der Ukraine – auf gut ausgebildete Theologen und hohes zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement verweisen. Aktuelle „Gender-Debatten“ zeigen aber fehlende Auseinandersetzung von kirchlicher Seite mit anthropologischen Grundlagenfragen und die Gefahr unreflektierter Ideologisierung.<sup>77</sup> Auch hierzulande kontrovers geführte Diskussionen um Anspruch und Grenzen von Katechismen<sup>78</sup> kommen im ukrainischen Diskurs bislang kaum in den Blick.

76 „Блаженніший Святослав: «Драматичні події ставлять дуже радикальні питання: або ти – справжній християнин, або ти – out», <https://synod.ugcc.ua/data/blazhennishyy-svyatoslav-dramatychni-podiy-stavlyat-duzhe-radykalni-pytannya-abo-ty-spravzhniy-hrystyyany-n-abo-ty-out-5653/> (abgerufen am 01.06.2021).

77 Vgl. Regina Elsner, „Orthodoxy, Gender and the Istanbul-Convention: Mapping the Discourse in Ukraine“, in *ZOIS Report* 2021, Nr. 2, 13f.

78 Vgl. etwa Ehrenfried Schulz (Hg.), *Ein Katechismus für die Welt. Informationen und Anfragen* (Schriften der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern 150), Düsseldorf 1994; Ulrich Ruh, *Der Weltkatechismus. Anspruch und Grenzen*, Freiburg-Basel-

Zugleich existiert innerhalb der UGKK ein kritischer Traditionsstrang im Umgang mit der Kirchengeschichte. Die Kirchenleitung selbst hat seit den 1990er Jahren die historische Untersuchung der eigenen Unionsgeschichte unterstützt und diese damit als Zeitphänomen ökumenisch bearbeitbar gemacht. An das Bewusstsein um Geschichtlichkeit anknüpfend ließe sich auch die im Katechismus greifbare theologische Arbeit offener gestalten. Dafür bietet auch die durch apophatische Theologie geprägte ostkirchliche Tradition mit ihrem Gespür für Grenzen menschlicher Aussagen gute Ansatzpunkte, wie auch die „mystagogische“ Komponente des Katechismus. Auch die innerkatholische und ökumenische Vielfalt in der Ukraine bietet dafür einen guten Boden.

Die Theologie katholischer Ostkirchen besitzt mit ihrer Orientierung an der katholischen Lehre, an theologischen Ansätzen der Orthodoxie sowie an der alten Kirche sowohl eine innere Pluralität als auch einen gewissen Schutz vor Extrempositionen. Dies könnte auch dazu beitragen, den Katechismus stärker als ein diskussionsoffenes Dokument zu begreifen. Er spiegelt eine Kirche wider, die nach gut zwei Jahrzehnten seit der Wende ein deutliches Zeichen der Identitätsbildung setzt. Gleichzeitig stellt das Dokument keinen Schlusspunkt, sondern eine nach vorne hin offene Momentaufnahme kirchlicher Entwicklung dar. Neben Lehraussagen enthält er auch eine Menge an Informationen und Anregungen für das kirchliche Leben der Kirche, und eben auch zeitbedingte Theologumena. Neben bedenkenswerten und kritikwürdigen Passagen wirft das Dokument angesichts methodischer Schwächen auch grundlegende Fragen auf, wie etwa jene nach dem Umgang mit „den“ Kirchenvätern. Die Behandlung weiterer, über den patristischen Kontext hinausgehender Fragen hätte aber den thematischen Rahmen dieser – durchaus wohlwollenden – Besprechung gesprengt.

Wien 1993; jüngst auch: Michael Seewald, „Gute Katholiken sollten nicht päpstlicher sein als der Papst“, in *Christ in der Gegenwart*, 02.05.2021, Nr. 18, 3f.

Angesichts der Veränderungen in Kirche und Gesellschaft wies Franz Dünzl darauf hin, dass gerade die Kirchenväter für eine Zeit des Wandels stehen, in der einerseits wesentliche Konstanten der Kirche geformt wurden, aber auch ihre Geschichtlichkeit und innere Pluralität grundgelegt wurde. In der Auseinandersetzung mit ihrer Umwelt haben Kirchenväter innerkirchliche Veränderungsprozesse mitgestaltet und -begleitet.<sup>79</sup> Das Bewusstsein darum könnte auch in der UGKK dazu beitragen, anstelle normativer Aufladung von kirchlichen Dokumenten ihre Kontextbezogenheit zu akzeptieren und über den Weg von theologischer Argumentation innovatives Potential im Spannungsfeld von Tradition und Gegenwart zu entwickeln.

79 Vgl. dazu Franz Dünzl, *Fremd in dieser Welt? Das frühe Christentum zwischen Weltedistanz und Weltverantwortung*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2015; wie auch mehrere seiner Beiträge in Michael Bußer – Daniel Greb – Johannes Pfeiff (Hgg.), *Geschichtlichkeit als religiöses Existenzial: Gedenkschrift für Franz Dünzl (1960–2018)* (Würzburger Theologie 17), Würzburg 2020.

## **Abstract**

This article „Der Katechismus der Ukrainischen Griechisch-Katholischen Kirche (2011) und das patristische Erbe“ analyzes the extensive catechism of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) with a focus on the role of the patristic heritage.

The introduction of the article places the catechism in its church context and describes the significant role of the early church for it. The three parts of the catechism – focusing on the faith, prayer, and life of the church – raise several questions concerning the reception and interpretation of the church fathers.

After describing the catechism, and indicating positive and problematic issues, a discussion of the role of theology in the UGCC follows. There is a need to reflect on the authority of the church fathers, the meaning of tradition, and the contribution of academic theology.

# La croce nella disputa antignostica di Clemente Alessandrino

Miklós GYURKOVICS

1. La croce di Cristo nelle interpretazioni antropologiche; 2. La croce nella esegesi valentiniana interpretata da Clemente Alessandrino; 3. L'arma della croce; 4. La filosofia della croce e la meditazione della morte; 5. La croce della salvezza universale; 6. I chiodi e le spine della sofferenza e della salvezza; 7. Conclusioni

## *1. La croce di Cristo nelle interpretazioni antropologiche*

Ad uno sguardo superficiale, i sommari dei manuali di storia della teologia possono dare l'impressione che i dibattiti dottrinali del cristianesimo dei primi tre secoli si concentrassero pressappoco esclusivamente sulle domande cristologiche o trinitarie. Tuttavia, al cuore dei dibattiti trinitari c'è l'uomo che aspira a Dio, in particolare l'uomo che cerca la sua originaria identità e la profondità di Dio per trovare se stesso. Nonostante disponiamo di poche informazioni che ci permettano di ricostruire la storia dell'evoluzione della dottrina antropologica cristiana dei primi tre secoli, possiamo sostenere, alla luce delle fonti, che la sfida più importante di quest'epoca sia stata l'auto-interpretazione dell'uomo cristiano nel mistero di Cristo. L'uomo cristiano dei primi secoli è stato quel "figlio" di una società, che si potrebbe chiamare "religiosa", che, a un certo punto della sua vita, è diventato seguace ed imitatore di Cristo. I documenti più antichi attestano che l'uomo proveniente da qualsiasi classe della società dei primi tre secoli, durante il percorso della ricerca di se stesso, ha trovato in Cristo e nel messaggio cristiano una identità nuova, nello specifico una identità capace di svelare l'origine dell'uomo e, inoltre,

profeticamente indicare il futuro della vita di ogni persona, compiuta in Dio. Gli scritti di Clemente Alessandrino testimoniano l'impegno della interpretazione della identità dell'uomo nello specchio della tradizione cristiana primitiva. Il presente studio intende mettere in risalto il processo dottrinale attraverso il quale il segno della croce è diventato il simbolo emblematico della antropologia, della filosofia e della cristologia di Clemente Alessandrino.<sup>1</sup> Si tratta di un simbolo attraverso il quale Clemente è riuscito ad esprimere la nuova identità dell'uomo cristiano che partecipa non solo delle sofferenze, ma anche della divinità del Salvatore. Inoltre, nella teologia dell'Alessandrino la croce stessa diventa il simbolo del metodo della filosofia cristiana originatasi dalla riconciliazione della Sacra Scrittura con la sapienza degli antichi, nonché il simbolo dell'arma contro le dottrine eretiche. Come già in altre occasioni, anche questa volta avremo modo di mettere in evidenza la complessità dottrinale con cui Clemente discute una tesi teologica e le sue multiformi conseguenze.

## 2. *La croce nella esegesi valentiniana interpretata da Clemente Alessandrino*

Il significato teologico della croce di Cristo è trasmesso non solo dagli insegnamenti degli scrittori della Grande Chiesa del sec. II, ma anche dagli scritti eterodossi, specialmente gnostici. Allo scopo di esaminare il rapporto esistente tra la teologia di Clemente e la

1 Sul tema della “croce” nella teologia patristica cf. T. Piscitelli, *La croce: da strumento di passione a segno di vittoria*, in *I Padri della Chiesa e la teologia: in dialogo con Basil Studer*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, Milano 1995, 147-170; Ead., *La croce nell'esegesi origeniana*, in L. Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, Peeters, Leuven 2003, 715-726; Ead., *La croce nell'esegesi patristica del II e III secolo*, in *La croce: Iconografia e interpretazione*, vol. I, De Rosa, Napoli 2007, 129-152; Ead., “La croce negli scritti cristiani dei primi due secoli”, in *KOINONIA* 38 (2014), 165-192.

teologia gnostica il testo più importante di cui dobbiamo occuparci è *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (= *Exc.*).<sup>2</sup> *Exc.* è un'opera scritta da Clemente che raccoglie gli appunti dottrinali provenienti dal cristianesimo del sec. II, permettendoci di comprendere meglio gli interessi teologici non solo di Clemente e del maestro gnostico Teodoto, ma anche di vari esponenti delle diverse spiritualità dell'epoca.<sup>3</sup> Infatti, la principale difficoltà che si incontra nelle traduzioni e nei commenti di *Exc.* consiste proprio nell'identificazione degli appunti che, in qualche modo, risultano diversi sia dalla teologia di Clemente sia dal taglio teologico di Teodoto. Veronika Černušková ha riscontrato una

- 2 *Excerpta ex Theodoto*: il testo primario si trova nel codice *Laurentianus Pluteus V<sub>3</sub>* (sec. X-XI). La edizione critica, a cura di O. Stählin, è: *Clemens Alexandrinus*, III, Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller 17, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1909 (1); O. Stählin – L. Früchtel – U. Treu, Berlin 1970 (2). La traduzione inglese, a cura di R.P. Casey, è: *Clement of Alexandria. The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, Studies and Documents 1, Christophers, London 1934. La traduzione francese, a cura di F. Sagnard, è: *Clément d'Alexandrie. Extraits de Théodote*, Sources Chrétiennes 23, Cerf, Paris 1948; la traduzione italiana (relativamente ai soli testi gnostici), a cura di M. Simonetti, si trova in: *Testi gnostici in lingua greca e latina*, Scrittori greci e latini, Fondazione Lorenzo Valla-Mondadori, Milano 1993. La traduzione italiana del testo intero, a cura di G. Chiapparini, è: *Clemente di Alessandria. Estratti da Teodoto. Frammenti delle perdute Ipotiposi*, Letture Cristiane del Primo Millennio 60, Paoline, Milano 2020.
- 3 Secondo J.L. Kovacs, *Exc.* sarebbe una raccolta degli appunti privati di Clemente di Alessandria. Si tratta di una raccolta delle citazioni e degli insegnamenti gnostici prevalentemente valentiniani. Questa raccolta include ottantasei notizie o appunti tra cui è possibile identificare: a) le notizie teologiche provenienti dal maestro gnostico della scuola valentiniana con il nome di Teodoto; b) le notizie di Clemente; c) inoltre, ci sono anche altre notizie che non trovano corrispondenza né con la teologia di Clemente, né con la teologia di Teodoto. Cf. J.L. Kovacs, *Participation in the Cross of Christ: Pauline Motifs in the Excerpts from Theodotus*, in E. Thomassen – Ch. Marksches (eds.), *Valentinianism: New Studies*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 96, Brill, Leiden 2019, 457-477.

difficoltà simile in uno studio dedicato all'interpretazione del tema della sofferenza nella teologia di *Eclogae Propheticae*.<sup>4</sup>

Occorre segnalare che già E. Thomassen e J.L. Kovacs hanno dimostrato l'importanza di *Exc.* per la chiarificazione dei principi metodologici della teologia e dell'esegesi dello gnosticismo valentiniano;<sup>5</sup> contestualmente, le ipotesi di Pierre Nautin, i quesiti di Bogdan G. Bucur insieme con le proposte risolutive di Veronika Černušková e le riflessioni di Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski hanno attualizzato le domande intorno alla identificazione della natura di *Exc.* e alla cronologia delle opere di Clemente.<sup>6</sup> Di recente, la traduzione e il commento di *Exc.* da parte di Giuliano Chiapparini hanno sollecitato l'attenzione degli studiosi sull'importanza delle questioni sollecitate da *Exc.*<sup>7</sup>

- 4 V. Černušková, *The Eclogae Propheticae on the Value of Suffering: A Copyist's Excerpts or Clement's Preparatory Notes?*, in M. Vinzent – P. Ashwin-Siejkowski (eds.), *Studia Patristica* LXXIX, Peeters, Leuven 2017, 29-54.
- 5 E. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed. The Church of the 'Valentinians'*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 60, Brill, Leiden 2006, 491-450; J.L. Kovacs, *Participation in the Cross of Christ*; Ead., *Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian Exegesis in the Excerpts from Theodotus*, in F. Young – M. Edwards – P. Parvis (eds.), *Studia Patristica* XLIII, Peeters, Leuven 2006, 187-200.
- 6 P. Nautin, "La fin des Stromates et les Hypotyposes de Clément d'Alexandrie", in *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976), 268-302; P. Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Excerpta ex Theodoto – A Search for the Theological Matrix. An Examination of the Document in the Light of some Coptic Treatises from the Nag Hammadi Library*, in M. Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica* XCVIII, Peeters, Leuven 2017, 55-69; B.G. Bucur, "The Place of the Hypotyposes in the Clementine Corpus: An Apology for «The Other Clement of Alexandria»", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17 (2009), 313-335; V. Černušková, *The Eclogae Propheticae on the Value of Suffering: A Copyist's Excerpts or Clement's Preparatory Notes?*. Sulla scuola valentiniana: J. Kalvesmaki, "Italian versus Eastern Valentinianism?", in *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008), 79-89.
- 7 A proposito di *Exc.*, G. Chiapparini è convinto che "solo oggi si afferma la piena paternità di Clemente, in quanto raccolta di tredici frammenti provenienti con tutta probabilità dalle Ipotiposi" (G. Chiapparini, *Clemente di Alessandria. Estratti da Teodoto*, 10). Inoltre, per il tema della identificazione di *Exc.* cf.

Judith Kovacs ha dimostrato accuratamente che dai frammenti di *Exc.* si può dedurre l'importanza del tema della croce per le scuole valentiniane del sec. II sia nell'ambito cristologico sia nell'ambito antropologico.<sup>8</sup> Inoltre, questa stessa studiosa ha constatato che la teologia della croce dei valentiniani è stata ispirata dalle lettere paoline, specialmente dalla *Lettera ai Colossesi*, dalla *Lettera agli Efesini* e, infine, dalla *Lettera agli Ebrei*.<sup>9</sup> Infatti, già le prime righe degli estratti (*Exc.* 1,1-3) attestano l'importanza del tema di Cristo crocifisso:

[Il Salvatore] dice: Padre, a te, fra le mani consegno il mio spirito (πνεῦμα), [cioè], il seme spirituale (τὸ πνευματικὸν σπέρμα) che “Sophia – dice [Teodoto] – procurò al Logos come elemento carnale”. Dopo essersene rivestito, il Salvatore discese. Di conseguenza, durante la passione, [il Salvatore] consegna Sophia al Padre, allo scopo di metterla al sicuro presso il Padre e affinché non venga trattenuta qui da coloro che hanno il potere di sottrar[glie]la. Così secondo l'espressione sopraccitata, [il Salvatore] consegna tutto il seme spirituale, [cioè] gli eletti (τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς).<sup>10</sup>

A. Le Boulluec, *Extraits d'œuvres de Clément d'Alexandrie la transmission et le sens de leur titres*, in Id., *Alexandrie Antique et Chrétienne, Clément et Origène*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 2012, 125-138.

8 J.L. Kovacs, *Participation in the Cross of Christ: Pauline Motifs in the Excerpts from Theodotus*; inoltre, cf. A. Orbe, “La Muerte de Jesús en la economía valentiniana. I”, in *Gregorianum* 40 (1959), 467-499; E. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed. The Church of the 'Valentinians'*, 491-450.

9 Cfr. *Lettera agli Ebrei* (Ebr 2,10-17; 9,19-22; 26; 10,10-13) e la *Lettera ai Colossesi* (Col 1,16-18; 1,20; 2,8-9; 2,12-13; 2,9-15; 3,3-5). Un esempio eloquente è Col 2,9-10: “9. È in lui (in Cristo) che abita corporalmente (σωματικῶς) tutta la pienezza della divinità (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότης), 10. e voi partecipate della pienezza (πεπληρωμένοι) di lui, che è il capo di ogni Principato e di ogni Potenza (ἀρχαὶ εἶτε ἐξουσίαι)”.

10 *Exc.* 1,1-3, traduzione di G. Chiapparini, 147-149.

Secondo la posizione valentiniana documentata da *Exc.* 1,1-3, i membri della chiesa dei salvati/eletti sono uniti nel corpo “spirituale” (pneumatico) del Salvatore, e la loro salvezza proviene dalla passione di Cristo. A questa nozione teologica si riferisce anche il simbolo della totalità dei “semi” dei salvati, correlato al corpo di Cristo sofferente sulla croce. Questo simbolo si riferisce non solo alla unione con il Salvatore, ma anche alla unione con la Chiesa, che costituisce il corpo mistico di Cristo.<sup>11</sup>

L'allegoria teologica della croce gioca un ruolo assai rilevante nel sistema dei valentiniani, poiché la croce si identifica con il limite (ὄρος) che separa la Chiesa dei salvati dal resto del cosmo, e il Pleroma dal cosmo. Oltre alla funzione separatrice, la croce esercita anche una funzione salvifica che, però, è sempre collegata con l'attività della separazione: infatti, sembra che la salvezza, per i valentiniani, significhi il distacco totale dei salvati dagli elementi del cosmo, e la sanazione completa del Pleroma. I valentiniani conosciuti da Clemente considerano il corpo pneumatico, oppure psichico, del Salvatore come quello strumento attraverso il quale i salvati sono distaccati dal mondo e sono portati in pienezza divina, appunto nel Pleroma.<sup>12</sup> Pertanto, il corpo fisico di Gesù sulla croce, per i valentiniani, rappresenta tutto ciò che dovrebbe essere sconfitto in ragione della decisione dell'elemento divino presente nell'uomo. Per questa stessa ragione, in *Exc.* 61,6-7 il corpo morto sulla croce di

11 Cf. *Exc.* 1,1-2; 26,1-3; 41,1-2; 58,1-2; 59,1-2 (secondo Sagnard, i testi 58,1-2; 59,1-2 provengono da una fonte difficilmente identificabile).

12 Notiamo che in *Exc.* 1,1-3 chiaramente si tratta della chiesa degli pneumatici, e del corpo pneumatico di Gesù, invece in *Exc.* 42,1-2 leggiamo che la croce è il segno del limite del Pleroma, che separa i fedeli dagli infedeli. Per questo motivo è probabile che anche qui si tratti dagli psichici, che per la loro fede vengono salvati: “vengono messe sul corpo psichico” di Gesù: “sulle spalle di Gesù” in *Exc.* 42,1-2. Invece *Exc.* 41,1 descrive una idea diversa da quella di *Exc.* 42, perché in *Exc.* 41,1 leggiamo sulla salvezza dei semi superiori, che sono gli pneumatici, e non psichici.

Gesù, abbandonato dallo Spirito, rappresenta la sconfitta della materia e delle passioni malvagie<sup>13</sup> insieme alla morte stessa<sup>14</sup>. In *Exc.* 73,1-3, che probabilmente testimonia l'insegnamento di una scuola diversa da quella di Teodoto, leggiamo di una battaglia (μάχη) condotta per l'uomo, precisamente per l'anima (ψυχή) dell'uomo, che per mezzo della sua corporalità ("corpo e le cose esterne") è diventato quasi una preda facile delle potenze malvagie.<sup>15</sup> L'uomo, in questa descrizione, è incapace di difendersi dalle insidie degli avversari e, per tale motivo, i valentiniani ne associano la condizione a quella medesima delle pecore menzionate dal Vangelo, per le quali il pastore è pronto offrire la sua anima (ψυχή).<sup>16</sup> Dunque, nella interpretazione dei valentiniani il conflitto (la battaglia) non si svolge tra l'uomo e gli spiriti malvagi, bensì tra il Salvatore, che riceve anche una componente psichica allo scopo di potersi unire agli "psichici", e le potenze malvagie, che intendono mettere l'uomo nella schiavitù delle passioni irrazionali. Secondo questa concezione, l'uomo sarebbe talmente debole nei confronti delle insidie degli "avversari" che sarebbe incapace di combattere per sé, anzi a causa delle passioni della sua anima sarebbe disposto verso il peggio e perfino collaborerebbe con coloro che appunto lo odiano.<sup>17</sup>

Bisogna notare che i passi di *Exc.* 58,1-2; 59,1-2; 61,6-7; 71,1-72,3; 73,3; 76,1 (eccetto *Exc.* 1,1-3) presumibilmente non esprimono le dottrine proprie di Teodoto,<sup>18</sup> ma documentano le tesi teologiche

13 Cf. *Exc.* 71,1-72,3 (Il Salvatore distrusse la morte con l'inganno del corpo mortale. La morte è sconfitta con la morte).

14 Cf. *Exc.* 76,1 (Gesù con la sua morte vince le potenze e le passioni malvagie; la passione di Gesù ha sconfitto la passione).

15 Sui demòni cf. *Exc.* 14,1-3; 85,1.

16 Cf. Gv 10,11-12.

17 Secondo J.L. Kovacs, questa idea valentiniana si basa sulla teologia espressa in Col 1,15-22; Ebr 1,13 8,1, cf. *Participation in the Cross of Christ*, 471.

18 In *Exc.* abbiamo solo cinque passi con il nome di Teodoto: 22,7; 26,1; 30,1c; 32,2; 35,1. Inoltre, si ritiene che da Teodoto provengano anche i seguenti estratti: 1,1;

dei diversi maestri appartenenti alle scuole valentiniane.<sup>19</sup> Judith Kovacs ci ricorda che la sezione di *Exc.* 43,2-65 è l'unica parte degli estratti che descrive la distinzione tra gli psichici e gli pneumatici, e che menziona l'insegnamento relativamente al Cristo psichico (cf. *Exc.* 47,3).<sup>20</sup> Idee simili a quelle contenute in questa sezione possono leggersi nella notizia valentiniana riportata da Ireneo, nella quale può parimenti osservarsi l'influenza teologica delle lettere paoline sullo sviluppo della teologia della croce.<sup>21</sup> Nella notizia di Ireneo, infatti, l'attività salvifica della croce è indirizzata verso Sophia, che è caduta in preda alle passioni, è rimasta priva di forze, incapace di difendersi. Dunque, in questa descrizione Sophia stessa è talmente indebolita dalle passioni che da sola è incapace di ristabilire il suo stato originale all'interno del Pleroma. Tra l'altro, da questa descrizione è chiaro che l'attività salvifica della croce consiste nel consolidare e nel ristabilire la sizigia del Pleroma, che è stata frantumata dal turbamento di Sophia: "Infatti, separata da lei l'intenzione con la sopraggiunta passione, essa restò dentro il Pleroma; invece l'intenzione con la passione fu espulsa dal Pleroma e crocifissa dal Limite, e messa fuori dal Pleroma".<sup>22</sup>

22,1; 25,2; 38,2; 41,1; 67,1. Cf. R. Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, 5-6; Sagnard, SC 23, 30-31; G. Chiapparini pensa diversamente, e ritiene che non sia necessario rafforzare i dati, quindi pensa che "il rapporto fra Teodoto e i valentiniani resta oscuro": Clemente di Alessandria, *Estratti da Teodoto*, 117.

19 Cf. Sagnard, SC 23, 28-49.

20 Simili osservazioni sono già in G. Heinrici, *Die Valentinianische Gnosis und die Heilige Schrift*, 92; O. Dibelius, "Studien zur Geschichte der Valentinianer", in *ZNW* 9 (1908), 230-247; 329-340; M. Simonetti, *Testi gnostici*, 514-515.

21 In questo testo la croce viene denominata pure "limite" e "redentore". Cf. Ireneo, *Adversus haereses* I, 2, 3-4; TLG 1,1,3,13 – 1,1,3,29; SC 264, 42-45; SC 263, 178-181 (A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau s.j.). Ireneo scrive che i valentiniani chiamano la croce anche "redentore", "liberatore", "limitatore" e "guida" (Ireneo, *Adversus haereses* I, 3, 1; TLG 1,5,1 – 1,1,5,9).

22 Ireneo, *Adversus haereses* I,2,4, traduzione di M. Simonetti, *Testi gnostici*, 291.

In questo stesso contesto narrativo, l'insegnamento di Cristo viene interpretato come un'azione che si rivolge nei riguardi degli Eoni per renderli stabili nel Pleroma.<sup>23</sup> Perciò, in questa teologia valentiniana le due facoltà evangeliche della croce (limite) sono, da un lato, la facoltà che consolida (Lc 14,27; Mc 10,21) e, dall'altro lato, la facoltà che divide (Mt 10,34; Lc 3,1), e sono reinterpretate attraverso le immagini teologiche di 1Cor 1,18 e Gal 6,14.<sup>24</sup> L'immagine teologica di Cristo disteso sulla croce sta a significare il Salvatore che si unisce alla Sophia Achamoth, la quale è stata espulsa dal Pleroma, per formarla (risanarla dalle passioni), e riunirla al Pleroma (cf. Mt 27,46; 26,38-38; 12,27).<sup>25</sup> Di conseguenza, questi passi evangelici descrivono le sofferenze psichiche di Cristo provocate dall'abbandono e dal disagio completo. Risulta chiaramente che questa idea fondata sui parallelismi teologici è affine alla teologia espressa in *Exc.* 61,1-7: le passioni delle anime vengono annientate con le passioni del Salvatore sulla croce (*Exc.* 61,3); la morte è stata sconfitta, con la morte del corpo sulla croce (*Exc.* 61,7-7).

Secondo il testo di *Adversus haereses* I,8,3-4, i valentiniani hanno interpretato le parole di Rm 11,16 a modo loro: infatti, secondo costoro, il Salvatore sulla croce avrebbe assunto anche i semi dell'elemento spirituale e la Chiesa psichica di "quaggiù". Sempre dalla notizia di Ireneo si ricava che gli stessi valentiniani, per mezzo della rilettura di Ef 5,32, ritengono che la crocifissione del Salvatore misticamente raffiguri l'unione salvifica di Cristo con la Chiesa.<sup>26</sup> Dunque, questa

<sup>23</sup> *Ibi*, I,2,5-6.

<sup>24</sup> In seguito Ireneo ci informa sull'insegnamento esegetico dei valentiniani sulle circostanze "al di fuori del Pleroma", *Adversus haereses* I,2,8.

<sup>25</sup> Ireneo, *Adversus haereses* I,2,4; I,2,8,2, le passioni rilevate sulla croce sono: dolore, timore, disagio e sono elencate anche in Ps.-Ippolito, *Elenchos* VI,32,2-5, dove sono: paura, dolore, disagio e supplica.

<sup>26</sup> Questa idea deve essere confrontata con *Exc.* 61,8: "Infatti, in questo modo (qui si intende la crocifissione del Salvatore) gli elementi psichici sono stati sollevati e salvati, invece quelli spirituali, dato che hanno avuto fede, vengono salvati al

visione valentiniana attribuisce valore teologico al corpo e alla croce di Gesù Cristo attraverso le parole di Ef 5,32, elaborando così una propria idea di salvezza: i valentiniani affermano che, secondo l'esempio analogo del Salvatore, la salvezza equivale alla mortificazione e alla separazione da tutto ciò che viene messo in contatto con il cosmo e, anzi, si realizza grazie alla unione mistica con il corpo mistico del Salvatore. Inoltre, alla luce di questa prospettiva teologica è evidente che l'effetto salvifico dell'opera del Salvatore non genera la risanazione dell'umanità, ma la risanazione del Pleroma.

L'anonimo autore dell'*Elenchos* (VI,31,5) fa riferimento ad un eone con il nome di "croce" (σταυρός) che esercita la funzione di limite (ὄρος), per "fare da fortificazione e da muraglia" degli eoni del Pleroma. Secondo la critica dell'autore dell'*Elenchos*, i valentiniani, a causa delle loro idee circa le divisioni e i vari calcoli riferiti al Pleroma, alla Ogdoade, alla Ebdomade e al mondo fisico, sono caduti nel medesimo errore dei pitagorici. Fra l'altro, essi dividono gli esseri umani secondo la loro sostanza materiale, psichica o pneumatica, e sostengono che l'uomo "ilico" (materiale) sia corruttibile, nonché plasmato da sostanza diabolica, e lo assimilano ad un albergo, abitato dai numerosi demòni.<sup>27</sup> Bisogna sottolineare che per l'autore dell'*Elenchos* è importante rilevare le fonti esegetiche dei valentiniani, tra le quali la principale è Ef 3,14.16: "Affinché abbiate capacità di considerare qual è la profondità" – che è il Padre di Tutto – "e la larghezza" – che è la croce, il limite del Pleroma – "la lunghezza" – che è il Pleroma degli eoni.<sup>28</sup> Nel prosieguo l'autore anonimo ci informa sulla crisi teologica interna ai valentiniani, che si dividono in due

di sopra di quelli, dopo aver preso le anime come vesti nuziali (cf. Mt 22,12; Sal 110 [109],1)". Traduzione di G. Chapparini, 325.

<sup>27</sup> Ps.-Ippolito, *Elenchos* VI,34,1-6.

<sup>28</sup> Ps.-Ippolito, *Elenchos* VI,34,7. Traduzione italiana: Ippolito, *Confutazione di tutte le eresie*, a cura di Aldo Magris, Letteratura cristiana antica, Nuova serie 25, Morecelliana, Brescia 2012, 223-224.

gruppi: 1) quelli dell'Italia, tra i quali ci sono Eracleone e Tolomeo, dicono che il corpo di Gesù è psichico; 2) quelli dell'Oriente, come Assionici e Ardesiane, dicono che il corpo del Salvatore è spirituale.<sup>29</sup> In accordo con l'iscrizione di *Exc.*, lo stesso Teodoto apparteneva alla scuola orientale e, quindi, anch'egli era dell'opinione che il corpo del Salvatore fosse spirituale (pneumatico), ragion per cui il Salvatore sulla croce avrebbe messo nelle mani del Padre il seme pneumatico, non quello psichico.<sup>30</sup> Per questo motivo, E. Thomassen ritiene che gli appunti di *Exc.* 43,2-65 corrispondano alla teologia del gruppo "italiano" e, al contrario, che la sezione di *Exc.* 66-86 coincida con l'insegnamento del gruppo "orientale".<sup>31</sup>

Dal momento che all'interno del materiale raccolto in *Exc.* si trovano le notizie teologiche provenienti dai diversi autori valentiniani, possiamo ipotizzare che l'originale intenzione di Clemente non sia stata quella di compilare un semplice riassunto dell'insegnamento di Teodoto, ma piuttosto di collezionare le teorie più importanti delle scuole eterodosse, in prevalenza valentiniane, allo scopo di confutarle attraverso l'insegnamento della Grande Chiesa. Secondo questa ipotesi, *Exc.* sarebbe una raccolta di appunti, adatti alle consultazioni private in vista della composizione delle opere teologiche. Nel seguito

29 Notiamo che nel titolo di *Exc.* si legge: Εκ τῶν Θεοδοῦτου καὶ τῆς ἀνατολικῆς καλουμένης διδασκαλίας κατὰ τοὺς Οὐαλεντίνου χρόνους ἐπιτομαί. Sulla discussione attuale sul titolo di *Exc.* cf. P. Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Excerpta ex Theodoto – A Search for the Theological Matrix*; J. Kalvesmaki, "Italian versus Eastern Valentinianism?"; G. Chiapparini traduce il titolo nel modo seguente: "Passi compendiarî utili, ricavati a partire dagli (scritti) di Teodoto e della cosiddetta dottrina orientale dei seguaci di Valentino", *Estratti da Teodoto*, 145 per il commento cf. 153-154. Diversamente pensa A. Le Boulluec, *Clément d'Alexandrie*, in Bernard Pouderon (ed.), *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne des origines à 451*, T. III. De Clément d'Alexandrie à Eusèbe de Césarée, Paris 2017, 150.

30 Cf. *Exc.* 1,1.

31 E. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 133-145; 333-341.

di questa ricerca prenderemo in esame il tema della teologia della croce formulato nel libro II degli *Stromati* (= *Strom.*) che, come vedremo, sarebbe difficilmente comprensibile senza il riferimento a quanto già incontrato in *Exc.*

### 3. *L'arma della croce*

In *Strom.* II,108,2–110,1 Clemente proferisce le sue parole sulla croce e sulla passione in modo che alle orecchie del suo lettore risuonino le espressioni teologiche degli gnostici valentiniani (limite- $\delta\rho\sigma$ , croce- $\sigma\tau\alpha\nu\rho\acute{\sigma}$ ). Una delle domande alle quali Clemente cerca di fornire una risposta riguarda la identificazione del vero male contro il quale i cristiani devono lottare, in particolare se questo male possa essere la materia stessa, le potenze malvagie oppure le malattie e le passioni dell'anima umana. L'altra questione che è posta da Clemente si concentra sul mezzo della battaglia, con l'obiettivo di indentificare "l'arma" efficace contro i mali dell'umanità. La parte più interessante del testo in oggetto è un *collage* composto da due versi di Paolo (Ef 6,11 e 2Cor 10,3-5), che si presenta come una frase conclusiva sul tema. Infatti, il metodo impiegato da Clemente prevede che il lettore sia accompagnato fino alla piena comprensione del messaggio teologico rivelato attraverso le lettere del Nuovo Testamento:<sup>32</sup>

32 Sul metodo dell'esegesi scritturistica e dell'interpretazione filosofica di Clemente cf. M. Monfrinotti, *Il silenzio precorre la Parola: Clemente d'Alessandria (Prot. 10,1)*, in *Silenzio e Parola nella Patristica. XXXIX Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana (Roma, 6-8 maggio 2010)*, Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, Roma 2012, 257-272; E. Albano, "Dalla parola al silenzio: Le diverse forme della rivelazione divina. Un itinerario all'origine della Scuola di Alessandria", in *Eastern Theological Journal* 3/2 (2017), 183-255; A. Le Boulluec, *L'interprétation de la Bible et le «genre symbolique» selon Clément d'Alexandrie*, in V. Černušková – J. L. Kovacs – J. Plátová (eds.), *Clement's Biblical Exegesis. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29–31, 2014)*, Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 139, Brill, Leiden 2017, 55-79;

Bisogna dunque che ci rivestiamo “dell’armatura di Dio per poter far fronte agli agguati del Diavolo” (Ef 6,11), poiché “le armi della nostra battaglia non sono carnali, ma potenti per Dio a distruggere baluardi: con esse noi abbattiamo i ragionamenti e ogni superbia che si erge contro la gnosi di Dio, e facciamo prigioniero ogni intelletto, riducendolo all’obbedienza a Cristo” (2Cor 10,4-5) dice il divino Apostolo.<sup>33</sup>

Per rintracciare la logica dell’argomentazione finale di Clemente e, inoltre, per identificare i veri destinatari del nostro brano, iniziamo con l’analisi di *Strom.* II,20,108,2. Così facendo, cerchiamo di portare alla luce l’approccio esegetico nei confronti del Nuovo Testamento da parte di Clemente, che si attiene ad una regola ben precisa, poiché egli, innanzitutto, spiega i contenuti teologici del passo biblico studiato e, solo alla fine della sua esegesi, riporta letteralmente la citazione biblica. Questa strategia fa in modo che il lettore legga e intepreti i passi biblici secondo quelle istruzioni teologiche che sono state già esposte e che lo conducono alla decifrazione delle citazioni scritturistiche. Infatti, Clemente è un pedagogo che compone le sue opere scritte al fine di insegnare ai suoi lettori l’esegesi biblica sulla base della tradizione teologica della Grande Chiesa.

Nel caso che prendiamo in esame, Clemente sollecita l’attenzione dei lettori con un argomento “classico” desunto da Platone: “«Infatti, gli animi di coloro che si credono seri il piacere li rende molli come cera», a dir di Platone”.<sup>34</sup> La citazione platonica qui riportata intercetta

M. Gyurkovics, “La teologia «non scritta» in Clemente di Alessandria”, in *Eastern Theological Journal* 3/2 (2017), 289-316.

33 *Strom.* II,20,109,2 (SC 38, 116). Nel prosieguo tutte le citazioni di *Strom.* sono le traduzioni di Giovanni Pini in Clemente Alessandrino, *Stromati. Note di vera filosofia*, introduzione, traduzione e note di Giovanni Pini, introduzione di Marco Rizzi, *Lecture cristiane del primo millennio 40*, Edizione Paoline, Milano 2006.

34 *Strom.* II,20,108,2 (a). Cf. *Strom.* V,14,97,5; Platone, *Leg.* I,633c-d: πότερον ἀπλῶς οὕτως εἶναι πρὸς φόβους καὶ λύπας διαμάχην μόνον, ἢ καὶ πρὸς πόθους τε καὶ ἡδονὰς καὶ τινὰς δεινὰς θωπεΐας κολακικὰς, αἱ καὶ τῶν σεμνῶν οἰομένων

la reale esistenza dei lettori cristiani, insieme con i loro impegni spirituali nel nome della fede in Cristo. Le parole di Platone, però, sono indirizzate ai lettori fallibili, semplicemente umani, e così svelano tristemente che essi non riusciranno mai a concretizzare con le loro sole forze l'immagine del "supereroe" spartano, di cui parla Platone nel passo sopra menzionato. Clemente, invece, non smette di convocare i suoi lettori alla "battaglia" e così di nuovo argomenta con le parole di Platone: «Poiché, ogni piacere e dolore inchioda al corpo l'anima», di colui, s'intende, che non si distacca dalle passioni, e non se ne premunisce come una palizzata».³⁵ Esiste, allora, qualcuno tra gli uomini che non è sedotto dai piaceri, né toccato dai dolori? E come

εἶναι τοὺς θυμοὺς ποιῶσιν κηρίνους – “Diremo che esso è, così, semplicemente una lotta contra la paura, e la sofferenza, o anche contro i desideri e certe irresistibili blandizie e adulazioni che rammolliscono gli animi anche di quelli che si credono a prova di ogni seduzione?”. Traduzione di Roberto Radice, in Platone, *Tutti gli scritti*, Il pensiero occidentale, a cura di Giovanni Reale, Bompiani, Milano 2000, 1467.

- 35 *Strom.* II,20,108,2 (b) (SC 38, 117): ὅτι ἐκάστη ἡδονὴ τε καὶ λύπη προσπασσαλοῖ τῷ σώματι τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ γε μὴ ἀφορίζοντος καὶ ἀποσταυροῦντος ἑαυτὸν τῶν παθῶν. Platone, *Phaed.* 83d: ὅτι ἐκάστη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥσπερ ἦλον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ προσπερονᾷ καὶ ποιεῖ σωματοειδῆ, δοξάζουσαν ταῦτα ἀληθῆ εἶναι ἄπερ ἄν καὶ τὸ σῶμα φῆ – “Perché, ogni piacere e ogni dolore, come se avesse un chiodo, inchioda e fissa l'anima nel corpo, la fa diventare quasi corporea e le fa credere che sia vero ciò che il corpo dice essere vero”. Traduzione di Giovanni Reale, *ibi*, 93; cf. Platone, *Phaedr.* 240a-b in *Strom.* V,14,93,1. Secondo Camelot (SC 38, 117 n. 2) questo brano di *Strom.* va confrontato con Gal 5,24: “Quelli che sono di Cristo Gesù hanno crocifisso la carne con le sue passioni e i suoi desideri”. Tuttavia, bisogna menzionare che il tema di *Strom.* II,20,108,2b non concorda esattamente con quanto detto in Gal 5,24, in quanto qui Clemente con il simbolo dei chiodi descrive l'effetto negativo dei piaceri carnali, mentre Gal 5,24 parla dell'atto ascetico dei cristiani che opprimono i desideri carnali. Per il tema della passione e del dolore nell'interpretazione di Clemente nell'ambito dell'insegnamento cristiano dei sec. II-III occorre considerare lo studio già menzionato di V. Černušková, *The Eclogae Propheticae on the Value of Suffering: A Copyist's Excerpts or Clement's Preparatory Notes?*

è possibile restare indifferenti, riuscire a soffocare il dolore oppure placare la tentazione del piacere? Queste domande non compaiono letteralmente nel nostro brano, ma tali interrogativi possono essere suscitati nel lettore dall'intreccio delle citazioni. Una possibile risposta a queste domande ipotetiche, suscitate dalle righe di Clemente, viene articolata successivamente con le parole di Gesù citate nei Vangeli: "Dice il Signore: «Colui che ha perduto la sua anima (vita-ψυχή), la salverà» (Lc 9,24; Mc 8,35): sia che la getti con sprezzo d'ogni pericolo per il Salvatore, come Egli ha fatto per noi, sia che la svincoli dalle abitudini della vita ordinaria".<sup>36</sup>

Ricordiamo che in *Exc.* 73,1-3 Clemente ha documentato l'insegnamento di un maestro valentiniano (da noi sconosciuto) sulla battaglia condotta per l'anima (vita-ψυχή) dell'uomo tra le potenze malvagie e il Salvatore. Nell'ambito di questa descrizione, per mezzo delle immagini bibliche (Gv 10,11-12) l'uomo è stato giudicato incapace di difendersi (come una pecora), al punto tale che il pastore offre la sua anima in cambio dell'anima dell'uomo.<sup>37</sup> Piuttosto che dettagliare questa descrizione gnostica in *Strom.* II,20,108,3, Clemente ricorre a una citazione di Platone per attualizzare la domanda filosofica e per accendere la curiosità dei lettori.<sup>38</sup> Una stimolazione intellettuale – proveniente dalla filosofia di Platone, e non dagli gnostici – che va compiuta con l'insegnamento di Cristo. Per Clemente, solo il Salvatore è colui che riesce ad individuare la strada verso la vittoria finale nella "battaglia" di cui parlano Platone e gli gnostici.<sup>39</sup> Tuttavia,

36 *Strom.* II,20,108,3 (SC 38, 117): Ὁ ἀπολέσας τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ, φησὶν ὁ κύριος, σώσει αὐτήν, ἥτοι ῥιψοκινδύνως ὑπὲρ τοῦ σωτήρος αὐτὴν ἐπιδιδούς, ὡς αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πεποίηκεν, ἢ ἀπολύσας αὐτὴν ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὸν συνήθη βίον κοινωνίας.

37 Cf. Gv 10,11-12.

38 Sull'interpretazione allegorica delle pecore in Clemente cf. *Pedagogo* (= *Paed.*) I,14,2-2; 15,4.

39 Cf. *Strom.* I,18,88,6-8; 90,2-5; 20,97,2; 98,4. *Strom.* I,18,100,1: "La dottrina del Salvatore è esauriente e sufficiente a sé stessa, poiché è potenza e sapienza di

la “battaglia” stessa va combattuta dall’uomo secondo le istruzioni di Gesù Cristo.<sup>40</sup> Al contrario, secondo l’insegnamento valentiniano riportato in *Exc.* 73,1-3, l’umanità è incapace di opporsi alle insidie del male e rimane nello stato della passività paralizzata. L’uomo istruito da Gesù Cristo, secondo il passo di *Strom.* II,20,108, è in grado di liberarsi dalle “paure” che lo tengono legato alle passioni.<sup>41</sup> Gli insegnamenti del Salvatore sono i precetti che rendono l’uomo libero dai vincoli delle passioni, per affrontare la “paura” dalla morte ed essere in grado di accettare quest’ultima liberamente.<sup>42</sup>

Clemente vede nei cristiani a lui contemporanei un’umanità rinata in Cristo (un’umanità rinata dalla umanità intera, e non solo da una classe prescelta), che si è *sciolta* dal passato e dalla tradizione pagana,

Dio”. Per la visione circa l’insegnamento salvifico del Logos divino i passi di *Paed.* sono emblematici cf. *Paed.* I,1,1-4,2; I,12,1-13,3; I,53,3; III, 86, 1-88,3.

40 Vale la pena rileggere il passo di *Strom.* II,20,108,3 con le parole di *Quis dives salvetur* 37, 4. In questo passo oltre ai concetti simili (anima, vita, salvezza) si rispecchia la stessa dottrina sul sacrificio del Salvatore, che è un esempio da seguire per i cristiani che combattono per la loro salvezza: “E quando era (il Salvatore) sul punto di offrirsi in sacrificio e di dare sé stesso come riscatto ci ha lasciato una nuova alleanza «Vi do il mio amore». E cos’è questo amore e quanto grande; per ciascuno di noi ha dato la sua vita (anima ψυχή), che è pari al tutto: ci chiede in cambio questa stessa vita (anima ψυχή) gli uni per gli altri”. La traduzione è di Simona Cives in Clemente Alessandrino, *Il ricco e la salvezza. Quis dives salvetur?*, Edizioni San Paolo, Milano 2003. Inoltre, per l’esempio vivificante del sacrificio di Cristo sull’albero della croce cf. *Strom.* V,11,72,1-5. Giovanni Pini menziona che nel *Vangelo di Verità* 18,24-27 si dice che il Cristo sulla croce è frutto della gnosi. Sul sacrificio di Cristo in senso eucaristico cf. V. Černušková, “The Mystery of the Eucharist and Childhood in Clement of Alexandria”, in *Eastern Theological Journal* 5 (2019), 219-236.

41 Cf. Per il tema della liberazione dalle passioni e dall’orrore dalla morte attraverso la vera “gnosi” cristiana cf. *Strom.* IV,6,40,1-4; V,10,63, 1-66,5; V,11,70,1-77,2. Sulle paure dei cristiani con il valore positivo cf. *Ecl.* 9-12; *Prot.* 9,82,3; *Paed.* I,25,1-32,4; *Strom.* II,12,55,1-6; II,6,31,1; III,12,78,5. Sulla liberazione dalle paure: *Quis dives salvetur* 39,1.

42 *Strom.* III,9,63,2-64,1-2; III,14,94,1-95,3; *Exc.* 67-68.

si è *allontanata* dai peccati – lavati con il battesimo – e moralmente è stata *separata* da tutti quelli che non sono cristiani.<sup>43</sup> Così scrive Clemente: “Se, infatti, vorrai sciogliere, allontanare, separare (ché ciò significa la croce) la tua anima dai dilette e dai piaceri di questa vita, la possederai «ritrovata» nella pace dell’attesa speranza. E questo sarà la meditazione della morte”.<sup>44</sup>

Pertanto, la pace e la libertà degli spartani (e anche degli gnostici) è vinta con la croce di Cristo, che predica la libertà assoluta dei cristiani per scegliere la vita condotta secondo l’istruzione dei Vangeli. La libera morte di Cristo svincola l’umanità dalle passioni, dalle forze che spingono lo spirito umano verso la schiavitù del peccato e anche dalle paure che gli impediscono di scegliere la vita condotta secondo la visione morale del Nuovo Testamento.

#### *4. La filosofia della croce e la meditazione della morte*

“E questo sarà la meditazione della morte”: questa dichiarazione riportata da Clemente rivela una interpretazione della posizione platonica radicalmente diversa dall’intenzione di Platone e anche dalle intenzioni dei valentiniani, poiché, grazie alla rilettura dell’Alessandrino, le parole di Platone vengono applicate alla morte di Cristo.<sup>45</sup> Per il lettore degli *Stromati* il concetto platonico di “meditazione della morte”, armonizzato con la teologia paolina, corrisponde alla meditazione sulla crocifissione di Cristo e sul

43 Il battesimo di Cristo è l’esempio universale per tutti i cristiani cf. *Paed.* I,26,1; I,6,27,3-28,3; 29,30,1; 32,1; l’insegnamento gnostico sul battesimo si trova in: *Exc.* 22,5-6; 82.

44 *Strom.* II,20,108,4 (SC 38, 117): Ἐὰν γὰρ ἀπολύσαι καὶ ἀποστῆσαι καὶ ἀφορίσαι (τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ σταυρὸς σημαίνει) τὴν ψυχὴν ἐθελήσης τῆς ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ζῆν τέρψεώς τε καὶ ἡδονῆς, ἕξεις αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ ἐλπίδι τῇ προσδοκωμένην εὐρημένην καὶ ἀναπεπαιμένην.

45 Cf. Platone, *Phaed.* 81a: τεθνάναι μελετῶσα ῥαδίως: ἢ οὐ τοῦτ’ ἂν εἴη μελέτη θανάτου; παντάπασί γε.

battesimo tramite il quale l'uomo partecipa della libera vita, compiuta dalla morte di Cristo.<sup>46</sup> Inoltre, Clemente segnala che la realizzazione dell'ideale della vita filosofica, che moralmente si identifica con l'icona del guerriero spartano, è possibile solo tramite il segno della croce di Cristo, che è lo strumento della lotta contro i legami dei vecchi sistemi del mondo pagano.<sup>47</sup> Ciò implica che, nella visione di Clemente, il cristianesimo della Grande Chiesa è l'unica scelta razionale per tutti coloro che cercano di realizzare nella loro vita le idee espresse dagli antichi filosofi, dall'Antico Testamento e anche dagli maestri gnostici. A questo punto ci imbattiamo in un paradosso: Clemente condivide ed è pienamente d'accordo con le domande etiche e teologiche che sono sollevate dalle scuole filosofiche e che sono riconosciute anche dai valentiniani; tuttavia, egli reputa che le risposte giuste si trovino esclusivamente nella sapienza cristiana insegnata dai maestri della Grande Chiesa. In sostanza, Clemente fonda la sua sapienza "barbara" (cristiana) sulla teologia di Paolo, formulata attraverso il metodo "scientifico" della filosofia pagana, specialmente quella platonica. I concetti filosofici e la logica di Platone servono a Clemente per preservare l'esegesi delle lettere paoline tra le barriere teologiche della Grande Chiesa. Nell'ottica di Clemente i maestri gnostici sono "scivolati" nelle eresie a causa della mancanza di

46 Cf. Gal 2,19; 5,11; 24; 6,14; Ef 2,16; Col 1,20; 2,1-21; 1Cor 1,13-25; 2,8; Fil 2,5-11; Ebr 12,2; Rom 6,6. Sulla libera volontà dell'uomo nel più ampio contesto dell'opera salvifica di Dio cf. *Strom.* VII,3,13,3; VII,7,48,1-2; VI,9,76,3 e in più: M. Havrda, "Grace and Free Will According to Clement of Alexandria", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 (2011), 21-48; J.L. Kovacs, *The Language of Grace: Valentinian Reflection on New Testament Imagery*, in Z. Bennett – D. B. Gowler (eds.), *Radical Christian Voices and Practice, Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012, 69-85; Ead., *Grace and Works: Clement of Alexandria's Response to Valentinian Exegesis of Paul*, in T. Nicklas – A. Merkt – J. Verheyden (eds.), *Ancient and New Perspectives on Paul*, Göttingen 2013, 191-210.

47 Su questo tema si basa il passo di *Paed.* II. – III.

approfondimento nella formazione filosofica e a causa della mancanza di rispetto delle regole scientifiche di quella filosofia autentica la quale si basa sulle verità apodittiche (che richiedono la fede) rivelate dal Logos divino. Infatti, i veri filosofi cercano la verità assoluta e non la vanagloria alla pari dei sofisti.<sup>48</sup>

Ciò detto, occorre dire che le idee espone da Paolo includono anche alcuni accenni evidentemente minacciosi contro l'utilizzo della filosofia ellenistica, anche in rapporto alla croce di Cristo. Un passo emblematico che non è sfuggito alla attenzione di Clemente è certamente Col 2,1-14:<sup>49</sup>

1. Voglio infatti che sappiate quale dura lotta devo sostenere per voi [...] 3. in lui (in Cristo) sono nascosti tutti i tesori della sapienza e della conoscenza. [...] 8. Fate attenzione che nessuno faccia di voi sua preda con la filosofia e con vuoti raggiri ispirati alla tradizione umana, secondo gli elementi del mondo e non secondo Cristo. [...] 12. con lui sepolti nel battesimo, con lui siete anche risorti mediante la fede nella potenza di Dio, che lo ha risuscitato dai morti. [...] 14. annullando il documento scritto contro di noi che, con le prescrizioni, ci era contrario: lo ha tolto di mezzo inchiodandolo alla croce.

Le osservazioni espresse a proposito di Col 2,1-14 da parte di Clemente non riguardano la filosofia intera, ma si rivolgono contro

48 Sul valore della filosofia cf. *Strom.* I,11,54,1-4; 17,87,1-7; 18,88,1-90,5; 20,100,1-5. Contro il sofismo degli gnostici cf. *Paed.* I,16,3; 25,1; 28,3; *Strom.* II,310,2: "I valentiniani dal canto loro lasciano la fede a noi, ai semplici, ma pretendono d'aver essi in sé la "gnosi", perché essi sarebbero salvati per natura, conforme alla superiore qualità della loro semenza distinta; essi sostengono che la "gnosi" è di gran lunga separata dalla fede, come ciò che è spirituale da ciò che è psichico".

49 Col 2,8 in Clemente: *Strom.* I,11,50,4-5 (Qui Clemente contrappone la filosofia di Epicuro e quella di altri filosofi che valutano eccessivamente gli elementi materiali); *Strom.* I,11,51,1-2 (Qui si trova un'altra contrapposizione della "tradizione umana" con la filosofia del Logos divino); *Strom.* VI,117,1 (La dottrina dei greci è elementare, quella secondo Cristo è perfetta); *Paed.* I,52,3 (I perfetti nella gnosi sono rigenerati nel battesimo).

le “false” dottrine che, secondo la sua interpretazione, sono state considerate scorrette sia nell’ambito della filosofia non-cristiana sia nell’ambito della teologia gnostica.<sup>50</sup> L’atteggiamento di Clemente nei confronti delle dottrine filosofiche è più aperto rispetto a quello che si legge letteralmente nelle righe paoline. Clemente, allo scopo di neutralizzare la tensione esistente tra la filosofia e la teologia cristiana, ricorre all’allegoria della croce di Cristo. Nella interpretazione di Clemente, l’allegoria della croce di Cristo separa tutti quegli elementi della filosofia greca che potrebbero creare dei danni alla teologia cristiana e, nello stesso tempo, unisce gli elementi positivi della filosofia con la verità delle Scritture. Clemente vede nella filosofia condotta secondo i criteri “scientifici” un’arma efficace contro le idee gnostiche che, secondo la sua prospettiva, hanno distorto le verità della vera filosofia. Così facendo, Clemente riesce ad incoraggiare i suoi lettori provenienti dalla cultura ellenistica a cogliere la sapienza cristiana come il compimento di tutta la filosofia.

Pertanto, la elaborazione della sapienza cristiana di Clemente si costituisce come una via di riconciliazione tra il paganesimo, che respinge la filosofia cristiana basata sulla fede nelle Scritture, e Paolo, che respinge la filosofia degli elleni resti alla rivelazione di Gesù Cristo.<sup>51</sup> Clemente dimostra che il metodo scientifico della filosofia fornisce alla dottrina cristiana l’esattezza scientifica, e che l’insegnamento del Logos divino rivela alla filosofia le verità assolute. Per altro, attraverso questa “fusione” della disciplina filosofica con l’esegesi biblica l’Alessandrino si adopera per contrastare le tesi vaghe e dossografiche dei maestri gnostici.<sup>52</sup>

50 L’interpretazione di Col 2,1-14 in Clemente: *Strom.* V,9,61,2; V,12,80,5-6; I,10,50,5; 51,5-52,1; VI,8,62,1-3; 15,117,1; *Prot.* 2,27,2 (*Exc.* 48,3; valentiniano; *Exc.* 31,1; valentiniano).

51 Cf. *Strom.* V,4,19,1-31,5 specialmente: V,4,25,3-5.

52 Gli eretici per Clemente sono come i sofisti nel campo della filosofia: cf. *Strom.* I,18,88,1; III,11,71,1; V,1,5,1; 8,1; cf. il commento di G. Pini p. 35, n. 15.

Nella concezione di Clemente, lo strumento allegorico della riconciliazione di due dottrine opposte (pagane e cristiane) è la croce, che si separa, ma che nello stesso tempo unisce. Nella logica della riconciliazione della filosofia con la teologia cristiana dell'Alessandrino l'allegoria della croce di Cristo unisce la sapienza degli antichi con la fede del "nuovo popolo", rinato dalla morte di Cristo.

Infatti, nelle lettere paoline (come anche negli estratti valentiniani) la teologia della croce si riferisce più spesso alla separazione. La teologia di Paolo separa radicalmente la sapienza cristiana da tutte le altre idee provenienti dalle diverse culture ellenistiche o giudaiche, come si legge anche in 1Cor 1,18-19.22-24:

La parola della croce infatti è stoltezza per quelli che si perdono, ma per quelli che si salvano, ossia per noi, è potenza di Dio. Sta scritto infatti: "Distruggerò la sapienza dei sapienti e annullerò l'intelligenza degli intelligenti". (Is. 29,14 [LXX]). [...] Mentre i Giudei chiedono segni e i Greci cercano sapienza, noi invece annunciamo Cristo crocifisso: scandalo per i Giudei e stoltezza per i pagani; ma per coloro che sono chiamati, sia Giudei che Greci, Cristo è potenza di Dio e sapienza di Dio.<sup>53</sup>

La visione teologica di Clemente si appoggia alle parole di 1Cor 1,21-24 per esplicitare il significato del concetto dei "chiamati" (1Cor 1,24). In continuità con lo spirito di Paolo, il maestro alessandrino enfatizza il valore del segno della croce di Gesù, per sottolineare l'armonia tra fede e sapienza, con cui i cristiani rispondono all'invito alla salvezza:

"Poiché", continua, "i Giudei chiedono miracoli", per credere, "ma i Greci cercano la sapienza", vale a dire i ragionamenti "che obbligano all'assenso", così li dicono, e i sillogismi in genere; "e noi predichiamo

53 Per la nostra ricerca è importante rilevare le interpretazioni di Clemente di 1Cor 1,18-24: *Paed.* I,16,3; *Strom.* I,2,21,2; I,3,24,4 (Is 29,14); I,18,88,1; 89,2; V,1,8,1; V,4,25,4-5; VI,15,126,1-127,5, I,20,100,1; I,26,169,3-4; I,27,174,3; II,12,52,6; VI,6,47,3; VI,15,127,3; VII,2,7,4. Inoltre, cf. 1Cor 3,19-21 in *Strom.* I,11,50,1.

Gesù Cristo crocifisso, scandalo per i Giudei”, perché pur conoscendo la profezia non credono alla sua attuazione, “e follia per i Greci”. [...] “Ma per i chiamati, Giudei o Greci, Cristo è potenza di Dio e sapienza di Dio” (1Cor 1,21-24). [...] Ora tutti gli uomini sono stati chiamati, anche se ricevettero l’appellativo di “chiamati” solo quelli che vollero ascoltare (il Vangelo), poiché “non c’è ingiustizia presso Dio” (Rm 9,14).<sup>54</sup>

Da ciò si deduce che, secondo l’insegnamento di Clemente, la “sapienza della croce” rispecchia la teologia della croce di Paolo (fede) e la sapienza di Platone (filosofia) in opposizione con le idee gnostiche.<sup>55</sup> La “morte” in questo senso significa sia la morte salvifica di Gesù Cristo, sia la mortificazione dei costumi pagani nel nome dell’etica cristiana, sia la mortificazione dei ragionamenti umani errati al fine di accettare la teologia della Grande Chiesa.<sup>56</sup> Per Clemente, questa mortificazione dei ragionamenti dei “sapianti di questo secolo” porta ad accogliere i cosiddetti dogmi apodittici della rivelazione biblica, che costituiscono il campo primario della fede e della gnosi cristiana.<sup>57</sup>

54 *Strom.* I,18,88,4.8; 89,3. La nozione teologica di “chiamati” è stata formulata contro quei maestri valentiniani che non insegnavano la chiamata universale del Cristo Salvatore.

55 1Cor 1,18-19 in Clemente cf. *Strom.* I,24,4 (Contro i sofisti e gli eretici bisogna considerare anche: *Strom.* III,11,71,1; V,1,5,1; 8,1); *Strom.* I,18,88,1-90,5 (Descrive l’opposizione fra i sapienti di questo secolo con la sapienza della croce di Cristo); *Strom.* V,1,8,7 (contrappone la “intelligenza” dei falsi sapienti con la intelligenza basata sulla fede nel Logos divino). Vale la pena rileggere anche l’esegesi scritta a proposito di 1Cor 1,23 in *Strom.* V,4,25,4; VI,15,127,1-3; *Ecl.* 27,5-6. Clemente celebra la dottrina di Cristo crocifisso nel Logos della verità.

56 Sull’etica di Clemente cf. M. Havrda, “Two Projects of Christian Ethics: Clement, *Paed.* I 1 and *Strom.* II 2, 4-6”, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 73/2 (2019), 121-137; K. Gibbons, *The Moral Psychology of Clement of Alexandria: Mosaic Philosophy*, Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity, London – New York 2017.

57 Cf. *Strom.* II,4,13,4-14,1; VII,95,3-6; VIII,7,1-8; VIII,14, 3; VIII,II,3,1-8,3,6 (Aristotele, *Topica* 100a 30-100b 18; *Analytica posteriora* II,10,93b 30-33; *Topica* 131b 25-30; *Analytica posteriora* I,2,71b 27; *Topica* 100a 27-30; 71a 1-2; *Magna*

5. *La croce della salvezza universale*

L'anonimo autore dell'*Elenchos* (VI,31,5) e Clemente, in *Strom.* II,20,114,2-6, ci informano che per alcuni valentiniani l'anima umana assomiglia ad un albergo pieno di demòni.<sup>58</sup> L'autore dell'*Elenchos* e Clemente correlano questa idea sull'anima<sup>59</sup> con l'insegnamento dei pitagorici.<sup>60</sup> In contrasto con i valentiniani Clemente sostiene che l'anima umana non sia composta da una parte che è moralmente buona e da un'altra che è moralmente cattiva. Pertanto, la salvezza non proviene dalle separazioni delle parti dell'anima, né dalla separazione dell'anima dal corpo.<sup>61</sup> Allo stesso modo, come il corpo di per sé non è malvagio, così i desideri per sé non sono cattivi (cf. *Strom.* II,20,115,1–117,4), e per questo come il corpo così pure i desideri fanno parte dell'integrità della natura umana. Grazie alla reinterpretazione delle idee di Platone Clemente è riuscito a spiegare che l'uomo non deve eliminare i propri desideri, ma deve piuttosto conoscere e rispettare i limiti della propria natura. Per Clemente ciò significa “educare” i desideri mediante la croce di Cristo (cfr. *Strom.* II,20,109,1):

*moralia* I,34,1197a 22-23; *Ethica Nicomachea* VI,3,1140b 31-1141a 3 ). Silke-Petra Bergjan, “Logic and Theology in Clement of Alexandria: The Purpose of the 8th Book of the Stromata”, in *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 12 (2008), 396-413; 407-413; M. Havrda, *The So Called Eighth Stromateus by Clement of Alexandria. Early Christian Reception of Greek Scientific Methodology*, Brill, Leiden 2017.

58 Cf. *Strom.* II,20,114,2-6; Barnaba, *Epist.* 16,7.

59 Cf. *Strom.* II,20,108,4 (Gal 5,24); II,20,114,2-6 (*Ecl.* 45,1 – 46,2; *Ecl.* 7,1-3); *Exc.* 61,6-7; 73,3; Ireneo, *Adversus haereses* I,2,4; I,3,1; *Elenchos* VI,31,4-7; *Elenchos* VI,34,1-7 (con il riferimento alla dottrina di Plutarco).

60 Cf. *Strom.* II,20,114,1-2; IV,157,1-3; IV,26,165,3-4; Sul valore del pitagorismo cf. *Strom.* V,5,28,2; I,17,84,5. Uno studio profondo sul tema: E. Afonasin, *The Pythagorean Way of Life in Clement of Alexandria and Iamblichus*, in E. Afonasin – J. Dillon – J. Finamore (eds.), *Iamblichus and the Foundation of Late Platonism*, Brill, Leiden 2013, 13-36.

61 Per Clemente la salvezza dell'uomo non proviene dalla separazione dello pneuma dalla psiche.

E questo sarà la meditazione della morte: se cioè vorremo stare contenti ai desideri conformi alla natura, e che nulla di ciò che è secondo natura spingono oltre i suoi limiti, per ottenere di più, o contro natura, e di qui nasce la colpevolezza.<sup>62</sup>

Clemente afferma che la redenzione dell'umanità sboccia dalla crocifissione di Cristo e non dall'esecuzione del corpo, né dalle uccisioni dei desideri umani. Egli sottolinea che l'uomo non è a tal punto paralizzato dal peccato che non avrebbe la possibilità di approssimarsi al Salvatore per essere coinvolto in modo attivo nella battaglia contro il male. Infatti, egli considera questa battaglia fisica e psichica dell'uomo contro le passioni malvagie e contro le insidie del diavolo come l'autentica attività dei veri filosofi.<sup>63</sup>

La teologia della croce di Clemente, ispirata dalle idee paoline, insegna che i cristiani, grazie al mistero battesimale, partecipano della crocifissione di Cristo. In questa partecipazione mistica si realizza la restaurazione dell'uomo (corpo e anima), al fine di accogliere lo Spirito di Dio (l'elemento divino). Pertanto, è evidente che secondo la teologia di Clemente il mistero della salvezza è il mistero della restaurazione dell'umanità, e non del Pleroma. Il simbolo della croce rappresenta "lo strumento" salvifico, che scioglie e separa l'umanità intera dal peccato, e unisce l'umanità a Dio.

### *6. I chiodi e le spine della sofferenza e della salvezza*

Per Clemente, evidentemente, i chiodi e le spine di Cristo appeso sulla croce sono i mezzi allegorici della guarigione dell'umanità. Si tratta di una guarigione profonda: come i chiodi attraversano il corpo, così le sofferenze di Cristo profondamente guariscono l'unità

62 *Strom.* II,20,109,1 (SC 38, 117), Cf. Platone, *Resp.* VIII,559d – 561a. Inoltre, cf. *Strom.* II,20,126,1.

63 Cf. *Strom.* II,20,122,1-126,4.

del corpo con anima, quell'unità dissolta e frantumata a causa del peccato. In *Quis dives salvetur* Clemente descrive in modo espressivo il corpo trafitto di Cristo appeso sulla croce: il sangue di Cristo versato dalla vite di Davide guarisce molte ferite, paure, desideri, ire, dolori e piaceri. Inoltre, il sangue di Cristo non solo elimina i cattivi frutti, bensì taglia le radici delle passioni.<sup>64</sup> Chiaramente sullo sfondo dottrinale di *Strom.* II,20,109,3-4 si trova la parabola del buon samaritano cui l'Alessandrino ricorre per esprimere: a) la teologia del corpo sofferente del Salvatore che guarisce le ferite delle passioni; b) l'esempio educativo della sofferenza del Salvatore, attraverso cui l'umanità impara ad affrontare le passioni:

Abbiamo insomma bisogno di un uomo che sappia servirsi, senza lasciarsene avvincere o confondere, delle cose da cui sorgono le passioni, come ricchezza e povertà, gloria e disordine, salute e malattia, vita e morte, sofferenza e piacere. Per far uso con indifferenza di queste cose che sono indifferenti, dobbiamo possedere una grande superiorità, perché già ci troviamo menomati da gravi debolezze e risentiamo già degli effetti di una precedente perversione dovuta ad una pessima forma di educazione<sup>65</sup>, congiunta a ignoranza.

Bisogna menzionare che in *Prot.* l'allegoria della croce di Cristo collegata alla immagine della fuga dalle passioni di Platone<sup>66</sup> è rappresentata dal legno della nave di Odisseo, alla quale si legano tutti coloro che vogliono salvarsi dagli agguati dei demòni.<sup>67</sup> Dunque,

64 Cf. *Quis dives salvetur* 29,1-30,5 (commento alla parabola del Buon Samaritano, Lc 10, 25-37; SC 537, 176-179). Qui Clemente riporta un classico elenco delle passioni (cf. Platone, *Lach.* 191d-e; *Symp.* 207e; *Theaet.* 156b; Stoa: SVF I,221,370; III,385; 391-394 in SC 537, 176-179, P. Descourtieux; C. Nardi); *Quis dives salvetur* 37,6; *Paed.* I,15,2; II,19,3-20,1. Inoltre, come già menzionato precedentemente: Ireneo, *Adversus haereses* I,2,4; I,2,8,2; Ps. Ippolito, *Elenchos* VI,32,2-5.

65 ἀγωγή: pubblica educazione della gioventù a Sparta.

66 Platone, *Theaet.* 176ab in *Prot.* XII,118,1,2.

67 *Odys.*, XII,178 in *Prot.* XII,118,4.

il legno, la croce, i chiodi, le spine e il sangue di Cristo sono allegoria della tenace battaglia contro le passioni malvagie e della salvezza: “Infatti è impossibile senza sangue accostarsi al Logos”.<sup>68</sup> Con la stessa logica teologica Clemente ribadisce che la testa del vincitore incoronato (il ragionamento) deve attraversare le spine di Cristo.<sup>69</sup> Infatti, le spine della corona sono sempre verdi, poiché per l’Alessandrino sono i segni della vittoria del Signore che con la sua passione ha liberato l’uomo dalle insidie del diavolo.<sup>70</sup>

Da queste eloquenti allegorie si ricava che, secondo la visione teologica di Clemente, il Salvatore combatte e guarisce l’umanità con una certa “omeopatia”: le ferite dei chiodi dei piaceri della umanità vengono guarite con la sofferenza dei chiodi della croce di Cristo; il pungiglione della morte è disinnescato dalle cicatrici causate dalle spine della corona di Cristo (*Paed.* II,74,1-4). Questa visione conferma il mistero delle spine del Logos eterno: il Logos divino si è rivelato a Mosè una prima volta attraverso il rovetto ardente, tra le spine (Es 3,2 in *Paed.* II,75,1), e poi alla fine della sua rivelazione è stato elevato sulla croce. Nella prospettiva cristologica di Clemente il Salvatore ha iniziato e ha compiuto la sua opera terrena tra le spine e i chiodi, per insegnare l’umanità e per combattere per la salvezza dell’umanità. Nel sistema teologico di Clemente la cornice “spinosa” del nostro Signore è la prova della unica potenza e della unica identità del Logos divino. Quindi, le spine di Cristo, per Clemente, sono anche le armi contro la cristologia dei valentiniani, i quali dividono non solo il corpo dall’anima e l’anima dallo spirito, ma anche la croce dal Salvatore, e Cristo dal Logos.<sup>71</sup>

68 *Paed.* II,73,3.

69 *Paed.* II,73,4-5; cf. *Strom.* VIII,14,4; V,94,3-4; IV,63,5.

70 “Dov’è, o morte, il tuo pungiglione?” (1Cor 15,15 in *Paed.* II,74,3). Noi “raccolgiamo uva dai rovi e fichi dalle spine” (Mt 7,16 in *Paed.* II,73,3).

71 Cf. Ireneo, *Adversus haereses* I,3,1; Ps.-Ippolito, *Elenchos* VI,31,4-7; *Paed.* II,75,1-2.

## 7. Conclusioni

Il segno della croce per Clemente rappresenta una complessa allegoria che è fortemente legata alla identità propria della teologia e dell'antropologia dell'insegnamento della Grande Chiesa. Detto in estrema sintesi: per Clemente la croce è il simbolo dell'identità cristiana. Come già gli gnostici valentiniani, così anche Clemente basa la sua teologia della croce sulle lettere paoline; tuttavia, grazie alle interpretazioni filosofiche, le stesse citazioni bibliche nelle opere del maestro alessandrino hanno una funzione anti-gnostica. Pertanto, la croce di Cristo diventa l'arma potente non solo contro le passioni, e contro i demòni, ma anche contro le eresie. Con l'allegoria della croce Clemente armonizza la filosofia pagana con la teologia di Paolo per consolidare la teologia del Nuovo Testamento contro le eccessive interpretazioni dei maestri gnostici. Gli gnostici conosciuti da Clemente consideravano il segno della croce come l'allegoria della separazione: del corpo dall'anima, dei salvati dal cosmo, della divinità dall'umanità. Al contrario, secondo Clemente la croce, che è soprattutto il simbolo del corpo realmente sofferente di Cristo, pacifica e guarisce:

- 1) la disarmonia tra l'uomo e Dio;
- 2) la disarmonia tra corpo e anima;
- 3) la disarmonia tra Antico e Nuovo Testamento;
- 4) la disarmonia tra filosofia e teologia.

Alla luce del confronto dottrinale dei testi gnostici con la logica teologica espressa in *Strom.* possiamo ipotizzare che Clemente, durante la composizione degli *Strom.*, abbia avuto "sotto la mano" *Exc.* come una raccolta di appunti attraverso i quali avrebbe sviluppato la sua teologia anti-gnostica. Quindi, le conclusioni della presente ricerca che riguardano la natura di *Exc.* sono vicini ai risultati di V. Černušková che ha esaminato i problemi intorno alla composizione di

*Ecl.* e ha ipotizzato che *Ecl.* provenga dall'inizio dell'attività letteraria di Clemente.<sup>72</sup>

72 V. Černušková, *The Eclogae Propheticae on the Value of Suffering: A Copyist's Excerpts or Clement's Preparatory Notes?* Inoltre Černušková ha esaminato la croce e la sofferenza di Cristo nella teologia di Clemente in rapporto con la eucaristia (*Strom.* VII,79,2; IV,161,3; V,66,3-5; V,70; *Paed.* I,21,3-22,1; 22,2-23,1; *Paed.* II,19,3-20,1; 36,2). Černušková conferma che la passione corporea di Cristo sulla croce per Clemente è una sofferenza reale, come anche nella eucaristia Cristo ci offre il suo corpo e il suo sangue in modo reale. Cf. Klement Alexandrijský, *Vychovatel*, Oikoymenh, Praha 2019, 61, 64-66, 72-73; 81-82; 94; Ead., "The Mystery of the Eucharist and Childhood in Clement of Alexandria", 225; Ead., "Klement Alexandrijský o smyslu utrpení věřícího", in *Studia Theologica* 18/2 (2016), 59-74, 70-72.

# Western Religious Practices in Byzantine Letters: Demetrios Chomatenos, Ioannes Apokaukos, Azymes and Papal Primacy

Zoltán SZEGVÁRI

1. Introduction; 2. Epistolarity in Byzantium: a very short introduction; 3. Demetrios Chomatenos, metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist; 4. Ioannes Apokaukos, another metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist; 5. Azymes; 6. Papal primacy; 7. Conclusion

## *I. Introduction*

The events of the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204) led to profound changes in the Balkans and Asia Minor. The disintegration of the Byzantine Empire and the establishment of the Latin Empire and Byzantine successor-states created a radically different situation for the Byzantine Church, which, among other challenges, faced Catholic domination and pressure for integration into the Catholic Church in the Latin Empire. The new circumstances fostered animosity against Roman Catholicism in the ranks of the Orthodox clergy, both in the Byzantine successor-states and the Latin Empire.

The spread of attitudes that were strongly hostile to the Catholic faith caused the entrenchment of the division between the two churches and a rise in anti-Catholic polemics. This study will analyse five letters of two influential Byzantine metropolitan archbishops of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, Demetrios Chomatenos and Ioannes Apokaukos, on two points of controversy between Catholic and Orthodox theologians of the time. These are the practice of azymes, that is, the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist and the concept

of papal primacy, both of which were accepted by Catholic theology and were fiercely condemned by Orthodox theology then. Following a short introduction to the main characteristics of Byzantine epistolography and a summary of the lives and works of Chomatenos and Apokaukos, the study will discuss two of letters of Chomatenos and one of Apokaukos on azymes, then it will analyse two other ones in which Chomatenos dealt with the subject of papal primacy. Finally, a conclusion will close the analysis.

2. *Epistolarity in Byzantium: a very short introduction*

Epistolography was a peculiar genre of Byzantine literature with strong roots in Classical Antiquity. Gregorios Nazianzenos (ca. 329–390), one of the so-called Cappadocian Fathers proved to be perhaps its most influential theoretician. Gregorios provided a brief and easily understandable guide to letter-writing, aptly doing that in a letter, written with the intent of giving advice to his grand-nephew, Nikoboulos. Gregorios expounded that a letter-writer must keep three very important rules: συντομία (brevity/conciseness), σαφήνεια (clarity), and χάρις (grace).<sup>1</sup> These guidelines proved to be remarkably persistent in their effect: they determined Byzantine letter-writing until the very fall of the Empire and even beyond.<sup>2</sup>

1 S. *Gregoire de Nazianze. Lettres*, vol 1, P. Galloway (ed.), Budé, Paris 1964-1967, 66-68; see also H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner I. Philosophie–Rhetorik–Epistolographie–Geschichtsschreibung–Geographie*, C. H. Beck, München 1978, 199-200.

2 G.T. Dennis, *The Byzantines as Revealed in Their Letters*, in J. Duffy–J. Peradotto (eds.), *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*. Buffalo, New York, Arethousa 1988, 155-165, esp. 156-159; A. Rhoby, *Aspekte des Fortlebens von Gregory von Nazianz in byzantinischer und postbyzantinischer Zeit*, in M. Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter Rhetorical Culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2007, 409-418.

Byzantine epistolography was also characterised by the relative publicity with which letters were created; authors very often wrote their works keeping in mind that their writings had an audience beyond the addressee, both in their own times and in their posteriority, as it was also common in pre-Christian Greco-Roman and early Christian letter-writing.<sup>3</sup> It was due to this characteristic that Anthony Littlewood, a scholar of Byzantine epistolography, stressed the nature of Byzantine letters as artistic products, which thereby could be, and should be, examined as literary works. Demonstrations of the erudition of the author in Byzantine letters,<sup>4</sup> and the representations of the personality of the authors within them proved fruitful paths of research indeed,<sup>5</sup> just like the research of networks and the representations of friendship,<sup>6</sup> the patronage networks working behind certain authors,<sup>7</sup> and the use

- 3 See, for instance R. Gibson, “On the Nature of Ancient Letter Collections”, in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 102 (2012), 56-78, 70-77 and L. Hartman, “On Reading Others’ Letters”, in *Harvard Theological Review* 79/1-3 (1986), 137-146, 137 and 144-145.
- 4 A. Littlewood, *A Statistical Survey of the Incidence of Repeated Quotations in Selected Byzantine Letter-writers*, in J. Duffy – J. Peradotto (eds.), *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*. Arethousa, Buffalo, New York 1988, 137-154.
- 5 A. Littlewood, “An ‘Ikon of the Soul’: the Byzantine Letter”, in *Visible Language* 10 (1976), 197-226.
- 6 M. Mullett, *The Detection of Relationship in Middle Byzantine Literary Texts: The Case of Letters and Letter-Networks*, in Paolo Odorico (ed.), *Épistolographie et la Poésie Épigrammatique. Actes de la 16e Table ronde du XX Congrès international des Études Byzantines. Paris 2001*, Centre d’Études Byzantines, Néo-helléniques et Sud-est Européennes, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris 2003, 63-74; M. Mullett, *Friendship in Byzantium: Genre, Topos and Network*, in J. Haseldine (ed.), *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, Sutton Publishing Limited, Phoenix Mill 1999, 166-184.
- 7 M. Mullett, *Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople*, in M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries. Papers of the Sixteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies (Edinburg, March 1982)*. BAR, Oxford 1984, 173-201.

of traditional literary elements.<sup>8</sup> These aspects are all intertwined with the distinctively performative nature of Byzantine epistolography<sup>9</sup>, very often counting with an audience considerably wider than the exact addressee, which aspect should be kept in mind when reading Byzantine epistolography.

3. *Demetrios Chomatenos, metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist*

Demetrios Chomatenos was born into a wealthy Byzantine family, date and place unknown. He began an ecclesiastical career early on and was already the *apokrisiarios*<sup>10</sup> delegated by the archbishopric of Ochrid to the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. He also held the office of *chartophylax*<sup>11</sup> at Ochrid, and, in 1216/17, he was appointed metropolitan archbishop of Ochrid by Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230), the ruler of Epiros.

As the archbishop of this autocephalous see, he was also the head of the Bulgarian Church. As the highest-ranking Orthodox cleric in the State of Epiros, he crowned Theodoros I emperor, which action can

8 M. Mullett, *The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter*, in M. Mullett – R. Scott (eds.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition. University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, Centre of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, Birmingham 1979, 75–93.

9 M. Mullett, *Rhetoric, Theory and the Imperative of Performance: Byzantium and Now*, in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium. Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College (University of Oxford, March 2001)*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2003, 151–170.

10 The *apokrisiarios* was the official messenger of a bishop or metropolitan archbishop, applied in the communication of the see with higher authorities. P. Magdalino, *Apokrisiarios*, in A. Kazhdan – A. M. Talbot (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991, 136.

11 The *cartophylax* was a Byzantine ecclesiastical official from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, with important archival and notarial duties. R.J. Macrides, *Cartophylax*, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 415–416.

be dated to 29<sup>th</sup> May 1227, underlining his ‘quasi-patriarchal’ status in Epiros. After the defeat of Theodoros I in the battle of Klokotnitsa against the Bulgarians in 1230, which resulted in his blinding and dethronement, and in grave territorial losses for Epiros, Chomatenos kept his position, although his influence was diminished. He died in 1236.

Besides his involvement in politics and ecclesiastical governance, Chomatenos was a renowned Orthodox canon jurist of his era. He created a collection of 152 advisory letters, all dealing with the proper solutions of actual cases according to the canon law, known as the *Ponemata diaphora* (including the two letters concerning papal primacy, which are discussed in this study).<sup>12</sup> He was also an author of further letters (including the two letters on *azymes* analysed in this study)<sup>13</sup> and other minor writings advising others regarding Orthodox canon law and a *vita* of Saint Kliment of Ochrid. These writings, especially the *Ponemata diaphora*, remained influential in the Orthodox Church long after the demise of their author.<sup>14</sup>

12 For the analysis of these two letters, the exemplary edition of Prinzing: *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*, G. Prinzing (ed.), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2002 (Henceforth Prinzing, 2002) was used.

13 Unfortunately, these two letters do not have a modern critical edition. The newest edition of these texts is the one edited by Cardinal Pitra: J. Pitra (ed.), *Analecta sacra e classica spicilegio Solesmensi parata VI, Juris ecclesiastici graecorum*, Paris 1891, 625-630 (Henceforth Pitra, 1891), which was published posthumously, and has its limitations. In this situation, the edition of Cardinal Pitra was used for the aims of this study.

14 On the life and works of Demetrios Chomatenos, see Prinzing, 2002 1-45\*; G. Prinzing, “A Quasi Patriarch in the State of Epiros: The Autocephalous Archbishop of „Boulgaria” (Ohrid): Demetrios Chomatenos”, in *Zbornik radova Vizantologog Instituta* 64 (2004), 165-182; A. Laiou, *Contribution à l'étude de l'institution familiale en Épire au XIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Fontes Minores, Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte VI (1984), 275-323; Diether Simon, “Byzantinische Provinzialjustiz”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 79 (1986), 310-343.

4. *Ioannes Apokaukos, another metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist*

Ioannes Apokaukos was born around 1155. He studied with the later patriarch of Constantinople in Nicaean exile, Manuel I Sarantenos (1216–1222), then began his ecclesiastic career as a deacon of the metropolitan archbishop of Naupaktos, thus working under his uncle, Konstantinos Manasses. In 1186, he appears as a notary at the side of Patriarch Niketas II Mountanes (1186–1189) and is also mentioned as a notary at the Patriarchate in 1193. He became metropolitan archbishop of Naupaktos around 1199/1200. Under Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas, he was also one of the leading policymakers of the State of Epiros. As 1230 saw the defeat and blinding of his ruler and patron, Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas in the battle of Klokotnica, the influence of Apokaukos waned and in 1232 he retired to become a monk. He died the next year at Kozyle. His legal opinions are considered indispensable sources of law and family in the Byzantine world of his times. He was well-known for his anti-Latin sentiment.<sup>15</sup>

5. *Azymes*

The first of the Catholic religious practices mentioned in the letters of Chomatenos analysed by this study is the use of unleavened bread, that is, *azymes*, in the Eucharist. Chomatenos comments on this Catholic practice in his letter addressed to Konstantinos Kabasilas,

15 Ruth J. Macrides, John Apokaukos, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 135; M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, 213-231, 419-425 (Henceforth Angold, 1995); D.M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epirus*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1957, 217-221 (Henceforth Nicol, 1957).

the metropolitan of Dyrrachium (nowadays Durrës, Albania).<sup>16</sup> The opinion of Chomatenos on the validity of the use of azymes is rather clear:

The 70<sup>th</sup> canon of the Holy Apostles, the 37<sup>th</sup> and the 38<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Laodicea<sup>17</sup> and the 60<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Carthage<sup>18</sup> remember the Jewish and festive azyma, sent to the believers by heretics and dissuade from the taking of these and from the believers celebrating together with those [the heretics]. Not any canon remembers the Latin azyma anywhere, like the ones above, so it seems that the practice of the azyma has entered the Church of the Romans later.<sup>19</sup>

However, he also states that

if somebody claims that the azyma of the Latins are not profane and we [the Orthodox] will not be punished [by God] if we adapt this practice, it will be heard that, as it was told above, that the habit connected to the azyma, came into the Western Churches in conjunction with other

16 Kabasilas was archbishop of Strumica until 1235, when he became metropolitan of Dyrrhachion. He was imprisoned (the exact date of which event is unknown) by Theodoros II Laskaris (1254–1258) because his brother, Ioannes, was a member of the government of the Epirot ruler, Michael II Angelos Komnenos Doukas (1237–1266), and their brother, Theodoros, was a known supporter of Michael II. In 1259, Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259–1282) set him free and Kabasilas returned to his metropolitan see of Ochrid, which suggests that he became metropolitan of Ochrid before his imprisonment. E. Trapp – W. Rainer – V. Beyer (eds.), *Prosopographisches Lexikon Der Palaiologenzeit*. CD-ROM Version, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 2001, voice 10097.

17 A. D. 363–364.

18 A. D. 419.

19 “Ο μέν ὁ τῶν ἀγίων ἀποστόλων κανὼν ὁ ὀλζ΄ καὶ ὀλη΄ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ συνόδου, καὶ ὁ ξ΄ τῆς ἐν Καρθαγένῃ, ἀζύμων μέμνηται τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν καὶ ἐορταστικῶν, πεμπομένων τοῖς πιστοῖς παρὰ τῶν αἰρετικῶν καὶ ἀποτρέπουσι καὶ τὸ λαμβάνειν ταῦτα, καὶ τὸ συνεορτάζειν αὐτοῖς τοὺς πιστοῦς. Λατινικῶν δὲ ἀζύμων οὐδεὶς οὐδαμοῦ κανὼν μέμνηται, οἷα ὕστερον, ὡς ἔοικε, τοῦ τῶν ἀζύμων ἔθους ἐν τῇ τῶν Ρωμαίων Ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐπεισκωμάσαντος” Pitra, 1891, 625.

ones [habits], just as the application and worship of the *enzyma* [came into the Church] by us, the transgression of the ancestral habits will be impossible for both sides.<sup>20</sup>

Chomatenos argues that the use of *azymes* has to be a later development in the Western Churches, as the ancient canons do not mention it as a Christian practice at all but identify it with Judaism. It implicitly suggests that the Orthodox practice is the Ancient Christian and therefore the ‘authentic’ one, while the Catholic practice emulates a Judaist one, constituting an, in fact, heretic behaviour. This establishes a hierarchy between the Catholic and the Orthodox liturgy, clearly favouring the latter. But it also creates a hierarchy between Latins and Byzantines, as the Byzantines are logically adherents of the ‘authentic’, ‘valid’ and ‘truly Christian’ liturgical practice, while the Latins follow an ‘inauthentic’, ‘wrong’ and ‘heretic’ one. These rather clear implications had to be reassuring in the eyes of a theologically literate Byzantine audience.

This part of the representation also shows the influence of Orthodox tradition. Many Orthodox clerics, supposedly including a strong majority of the lower clergy, understood *azymes* as a heresy even before 1204.<sup>21</sup> It is also important, that the Orthodox Church had a clear tendency to brand any non-Orthodox Christian practice not only a heresy, but also ‘Judaism’, using both terms as tools to invalidate it.<sup>22</sup>

20 “Εἰ δέ τις ἐρεῖ, ὡς εἶπερ κοινὰ τὰ τῶν Λατίνων ἀζύμα οὐκ εἰσὶν, οὐ προκριματιθώμεθα καὶ ἡμεῖς τούτων μεταλαμβάνοντες ἀλλ’ ἀκούσεται ὡς ἐπειδὴ, καθὼς ἄνωθεν εἴρηται, μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ταῖς δυτικαῖς Ἐκκλησίαις καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀζύμοις ἔθος ἐμπέπηκται, καθὰ καὶ ἡμῖν τὸ προσφέρειν καὶ ἱεουργεῖν ἐνζυμα, ἀδύνατος ἐφ’ ἐκάτεροις ἔσται ἢ τῶν οἰκείων ἐθῶν παράβασις” Pitra, 1891, 629-630.

21 Ch. Schabel, *The Quarrel over Unleavened Bread in Western Theology 1234-1439*, in M. Hirtenberger – Ch. Schabel (eds.), *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204-1500*, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA 2011, 85-127, 91.

22 S. B. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204-1453*, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa 1985, 29-30.

As the Catholic practice of using azymes in the Eucharist was clearly rooted in the Old Testament, the 'Judaising' argument was one of the most important Orthodox arguments against it, often accompanied by harshly Antisemitic language.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, there are certain problems about the argumentation of Chomatenos. The texts of the sources which he refers to, without citing their respective texts, do not exactly contain what he claims they do. The *Apostolic Canons* (Κανόνες τῶν Ἀποστόλων) consist of 85 canons, forming an appendix of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Διαταγαὶ τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων διὰ Κλήμεντος). The first 50 canons were translated to Latin by Dionysius Exiguus around the end of the fifth century, as part of a collection of translations of Greek canons. This collection was later included into the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals and excerpts of the *Canons* even entered the Decretum of Gratian. As a result of these developments, the Catholic Church accepted the first 50 canons as authentic sources, but not the other 35.

However, the Orthodox Church regards all of them as authentic canons since the Council of Trullo (691), their importance mirrored by the fact that they were mentioned before the canons of the Council of Nicaea (325) in the list of authorities.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, canon 70 failed to serve as a common authority for the two churches. It is similarly important, that even this canon does not condemn *azymes* explicitly, nor its use in the Eucharist. It merely forbids Christians to fast with

23 Y.G. Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens. Die lateinische Theologie des Hochmittelalters in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Ritus der Ostkirche*, Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und Philosophie 47, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2002, 103-107 (Henceforth Avvakumov, 2002).

24 H. Ohme, *Sources of the Greek Canon Law to the Quinisext Council (691/2): Councils and Church Fathers*, in W. Hartmann – K. Pennington (eds.), *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 2012. Accessed March 2, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt28524j.6. 24-114, 33 (Henceforth Ohme, 2012).

Jews, participate their festivals or accept gifts from Jewish feasts, like *azymes*.<sup>25</sup>

The other sources referred by the metropolitan archbishop similarly do not forbid the use of *azymes* in the Eucharist, even less condemning it in general. Canon 37 of the Council of Laodicea only forbids accepting portions from the feasts of either Jews or heretics just like feasting together with them,<sup>26</sup> while canon 38 of the very same council forbids accepting *azymes* from Jews or taking part in their alleged ‘impiety’.<sup>27</sup> Talking about these two canons of the Council of Laodicea, it is also worth to mention that probably they were the sources of canon 71 of the Apostles,<sup>28</sup> explaining their similar ordinations.

Continuing with canon 60 of the Council of Carthage (419), it does not contain any reference to the *azymes* but merely condemns ‘heathen’ feasts being hold in cities and certain other places where Christians could take part in them, also claiming that they were forced to do so during persecutions and bans these feasts from the mentioned

25 “If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any one of the list of clergy, keeps fast or festival with the Jews, or receives from them any of the gifts of their feasts, as unleavened bread, any such things, let him be deposed. If he be a layman, let him be excommunicated.” H. Percival (transl.), *Canons of the Apostles*, in Ph. Schaff – H. Wace (eds.), *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series 14, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1900. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3820.htm>>.

26 “It is not lawful to receive portions sent from the feasts of Jews or heretics, nor to feast together with them.”, H. Percival (transl.), *Canons of the Council of Laodicea*, in Ph. Schaff – H. Wace (eds.), *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series 14, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1900. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3806.htm>>.

27 “It is not lawful to receive unleavened bread from the Jews, nor to be partakers of their impiety”. H. Percival (transl.), *Canons of the Council of Laodicea*.

28 Ohme, 2012, 29-30

places.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the authoritative texts which Chomatenos refers to do not support his arguments. Regarding his reputation as a canon jurist, that is hardly the consequence of him knowing the canons wrong but suggests a conscious distortion on his part.

Nonetheless, his relatively tolerant approach towards the Latin practice is more surprising than these inconsistencies. Unlike most Orthodox theologians after the Schism of 1054, when he mentions the possible opinion of the *azyma* of the Latins not being profane, he does not dismiss it as a false idea. Instead, he states that eliminating this liturgical difference would be impossible for both sides, as many other habits are connected to it both in the Catholic and in the Orthodox Church.

Chomatenos applies an authoritative approach here, appealing to the authority of earlier pious Christians. Ancestral habits of both sides are treated as valid reasons for not changing their respective liturgical practices and even preventing such a change on either side. This presentation suggests that the theological difference regarding azymes is important, yet not tantamount to a validation of confrontation between Orthodox and Catholic believers. Acceptance of the other

29 “This also must be sought, that (since contrary to the divine precepts feasts are held in many places, which have been induced by the heathen error, so that now Christians are forced to celebrate these by heathens, from which state of things it happens that in the times of the Christian Emperors a new persecution seems to have secretly arisen) they order such things to be forbidden and prohibit them from cities and possessions under pain of punishment; especially should this be done since they do not fear to commit such iniquities in some cities even upon the natal days of the most blessed martyrs, and in the very sacred places themselves. For upon these days, shame to say, they perform the most wicked leaping throughout the fields and open places, so that matronal honour and the modesty of innumerable women who have come out of devotion for the most holy day are assaulted by lascivious injuries, so that all approach to holy religion itself is almost fled from.” H. Percival (transl.): *Canons of the Council of Carthage*.

type of the Eucharist for either side is made impossible by the fact that other important habits are intimately connected to it. The logical conclusion is the need for a level of toleration in this respect. This opinion was a surprisingly open-minded one considering other extant Medieval Orthodox sources for the *azymes*-debate, which tended to be condemning.<sup>30</sup>

This is not the only letter by Chomatenos to Konstantinos Kabasilas, which discusses the Latin practice of *azymes*. In another letter to him, the metropolitan archbishop draws an interesting inference about certain Latin behaviours. Chomatenos invoked the question of Mark, patriarch of Alexandria, ‘whose memory is holy’ (τοῦ τῆς ὁσίας μνήμης). The question was originally addressed to Theodoros Balsamon, ‘the blessed’ (τοῦ μακαρίτου) patriarch of Antioch:

To which [other questions] was added a question concerning Latin mercenaries [in Egypt], whether they should be accepted manifestly favourably [by the Orthodox clergy of the Patriarchate of Alexandria] when they come into the Catholic churches and seek to receive the divine sacraments.<sup>31</sup>

The context is important to understand the opinion voiced by the author. He expresses this view commenting on a case that occurred in 1190. Mark III (1180–1209), patriarch of Alexandria, addressed 66 questions to Theodoros IV Balsamon (1185–1199), patriarch of Antioch. Among these he asked whether his Church could allow any further for Catholics in Egypt to receive Orthodox Eucharists. The answer of Theodoros IV Balsamon was fiercely rejective, but Mark III refused to follow his verdict. The disobedient behaviour of Mark III led to strictures on the Church of Alexandria, but he proved adamant,

30 Avvakumov, 2002, 114–116.

31 “αἷς συντεταγμένη ἦν καὶ περὶ Λατίνων αἰχμαλώτων ἐρώτησις, εἰ χρὴ δηλαδὴ τούτους προσδέχεσθαι παρουσιάζοντας εἰς τὰς καθολικὰς ἐκκλησίας καὶ ζητοῦντας μεταλαμβάνειν τῶν θεῶν ἁγιασμάτων.” Pitra, 1891, 729–730.

and maintained relationships with the Papacy until his death in 1209.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore the epithet ‘Catholic’ here refers to the Orthodox Church, as it regarded itself as the ‘universal’ (καθολικός) church.

As Chomatenos also states

And that exactly for this, the coming of the Latins to us [to the Orthodox clergy] and that [they] seek to receive the holy gift of the enzymes from us makes it evident that if they would not despise the azyma and if they would not set a high value on loving those [the enzyma], they would not come to the sacrifice of the holy mysteries, which happens at us.<sup>33</sup>

Assessing the claims of the metropolitan archbishop, they prove to be an interesting reading. The practice of the *azymes* is implicitly presented as wrong, unlike the *enzymes*, which is considered valid. The resulting contrast between Catholicism and Orthodoxy also influences the image of the Byzantines, who are logically adherents of a ‘valid’ practice, and most of the Latins, who are adherents of an ‘invalid’ practice, favouring the Byzantines. However, this difference is not a simple matter of ethnicity, as there are Latins who want to participate in an Orthodox Eucharist. These Latins are also presented as people who reject the *azymes* and embrace the practice of *enzymes*.

There are certain problems with such a presentation of the behaviour of the Latins in question. The Catholic Church regarded Eucharists performed either with leavened or unleavened bread as valid, because the Bible only stated that Jesus used bread (ἄρτος) for the Last Supper,

32 S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism. A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches During the XIth and XIIth Centuries*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1955, 99.

33 “Καὶ ὅτι αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ προσέρχεσθαι Λατίνους ἡμῖν, καὶ ζητεῖν τῆς ἐνζύμου μεταλαμβάνειν ἁγίας προσφορᾶς ἐξ ἡμῶν, δῆλον ποιεῖ ὡς εἰ μὴ περιεφρόνου τὰ ἄζυμα, καὶ ὡς οὐ περι πολλοῦ ποιοῦνται τὸ στέργειν αὐτοῖς, οὐκ ἂν προσήρχοντο τῇ παρ’ ἡμῶν γενομένῃ τῶν θείων μυστηρίων ἱερουργίᾳ.” Pitra, 1891, 729.

which could refer to both types of it.<sup>34</sup> So some Catholics could have regarded an Orthodox Eucharist as a perfectly acceptable sacrifice if a Catholic one was beyond their reach. Chomatenos, a renowned Orthodox canon jurist, had to be aware of this circumstance.

What could be then the reason behind the argumentation of the author? Latins attempting to receive Orthodox Eucharists was probably a phenomenon not unheard of in the early years of the Latin Empire, as the Catholic clergy was not present in every part of the officially Catholic state, which had a predominantly Orthodox population. Rejecting such Westerner requests could easily lead to clashes between the Byzantines and the Latins, probably causing unnecessary suffering for the local Byzantines.

Therefore, providing an explanation which allowed Latins to participate Orthodox Eucharists, yet comforted the Byzantines could seem a logical and valid application of *oikonomia*. This situation had to be rather similar to the one experienced by Mark III of Alexandria and his clergy in early Ayyubid Egypt, where ignoring the wishes of Latin mercenaries in service of the Muslim state could have had detrimental consequences for the Orthodox minority in Egypt.

And such examples of *oikonomia* regarding azymes would not be isolated ones. As Kolbaba pointed to it, following the conquest of large territories with sizeable Armenian and Syrian populations in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, Byzantium displayed a remarkable level of tolerance towards the practices of these Monophysite populations, including their use of *azymes* in the Eucharist, although their version of Christianity was considered a heretical one by the Orthodox Church.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Avvakumov, 2002, 146-148.

<sup>35</sup> T.M. Kolbaba, *Byzantines, Armenians, and Latins: Unleavened Bread and Heresy in the Tenth Century*, in G.E. Demacopoulos – A. Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, Fordham University Press, New York 2013, 45-57, 51.

This tolerance only began to crumble soon after the 1045 capture of Ani, the last independent Armenian centre, by the armies of Konstantinos IX Monomakhos (1042–1055). In 1048, the emperor and patriarch Michael I Keroularios began a campaign to convert the Monophysite populace of their empire, and Orthodox polemics against *azymes* began to flourish. These changes of imperial policy demonstrated all too well that the earlier tolerance of the Byzantine authorities was merely *oikonomia* dictated by necessity, and not a result of a commitment to religious tolerance.<sup>36</sup>

The limited mentions of *azymes* in the corpus of Chomatenos and the strongly representative role of Byzantine epistolography make the interpretation of his claims difficult and exclude absolute certainty. But, regarding that both of his letters discussed above present elements of rejection and tolerance, the fact that Byzantine letters were intended to reach a certain publicity and the circumstance that Chomatenos was a talented politician, make the explanations provided above possible. Given the religious and political conflicts between the two communities, the unpopularity of the Latins among Byzantines was understandable. However, they could still be seen as fellow Christians and openly confronting them could do more harm than good for those Byzantines risking it. As a result, it can be supposed that both letters present the reader with ‘balancing acts’ between these points of view.

A contemporary and close associate of Chomatenos, Ioannes Apokaukos, archbishop of Naupaktos, also commented on *azymes* in a piece of his epistolary corpus. This letter was addressed to an Orthodox priest in Patras in the Peloponnese, and in it Apokaukos informs his addressee that “*nobody among the Fathers accepts either*

36 T.M. Kolbaba, *Byzantine Perceptions of Latin Religious “Errors”: Themes and Changes from 850 to 1350*, in A.E. Laiou – R. Parviz Mottahedeh, *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, 117–143, 122–123.

*the religion or the sacrifice of the Latins*”.<sup>37</sup> This statement proves to be concrete and elusive at the very same time. First of all, the author spares the reader from a definition of the term “Fathers”. It could refer either to the Church Fathers, or to the Orthodox Fathers or to the Latin Fathers.

As Apokaukos was an Orthodox metropolitan writing after 1204 and famous of his strong anti-Latin sentiment, the third option can be excluded. Continuing with the possibility of him referring to the Church Fathers, it may seem a convincing solution due to their immense authority, which could serve as a powerful support for the argument of the archbishop. Yet, as Byzantines showed a tendency to refer to all the respected Orthodox theologians as ‘Fathers’ Apokaukos most probably meant the Orthodox Fathers in this very broad meaning.<sup>38</sup>

Continuing with this definition, Apokaukos envisions a strict border between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Respectable Christian theological authorities are understood as pillars of the former, having nothing to do with the latter. This circumstance in itself positions Orthodoxy highly above Catholicism. But the archbishop continues, seeing further differences between the two denominations. He discovers these differences in the fields of ‘religion’ (θρησκεία) and ‘sacrifice’ (θυσία). These two concepts are rather wide, but one can identify their probable meanings in this context.

37 “οὐδεὶς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων τὴν τῶν Λατίνων θρησκείαν ἢ τὴν θυσίαν ἀποδέχεται.” N. A. Bees (ed.), *Unedierte Schriftstücke aus der Kanzlei des Johannes Apokaukos des Metropoliten von Naupaktos (in Aetolien)*, *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 21 (1971-1974), 57-160, 112.

38 A good example for this practice is the *Panoplia dogmatike* of Euthymios Zigabenos, in which he considers each Orthodox theologian invoked by him as a member of the group of the ‘fathers’. See M. Jugie, *La vie et les oeuvres d’Euthyme Zigabène*, in *Échos d’Orient*, tome 15, N°94 (1912), 215-225, esp. 218-223.

On the first hand, θρησκεία can not only mean ‘religion’, but ‘religious formalism’ and ‘superstition’ too, both in a pejorative sense.<sup>39</sup> All three would express serious criticism from the side of Apokaukos. Taking the meaning ‘religion’ would suggest that the faith of the Latins is so different from Christianity (understood as Orthodox Christianity), that it is tantamount to being another religion. The meaning ‘religious formalism’ would suggest that it is a spiritually empty obedience to ritual prescriptions. Finally, ‘superstition’ would simply dismiss it as a set of nonsensical, false beliefs.

On the other hand, θυσία with its core meaning ‘sacrifice’ can also mean ‘mode of sacrifice’.<sup>40</sup> Both meanings invoke the vehement Orthodox opposition to the Catholic use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist, the infamous *azymes*-controversy. It is not possible to decide with certainty in either of the two cases, which meanings were used by Apokaukos. But Catholicism is presented as an ‘erroneous’ religion in at least two of its core aspects, while Orthodoxy as ‘the true’ one.

The characteristics and implied strict dichotomy of the two Christian denominations are extended by Apokaukos even to their adherents. As he writes not about Catholicism, but religion of the Latins, that is, Westerners, and the one of the Orthodox nations too, whose characteristics are supposedly resemble the ones of their respective faiths. As the text of the letter ends with this analysed cohort, all other details that were possibly added by Apokaukos are lost. Thus, the use of words with more possible meanings and the damaged condition of the text limits the possible results of the analysis. What is clear, is that the metropolitan archbishop expressed

39 See θρησκεία in H.G. Liddel – R. Scott – H.S. Jones – R. McKenzie (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon*, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, 806.

40 See θυσία in H.G. Liddel – R. Scott – H.S. Jones – R. McKenzie (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon*, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement, 812.

views in the extant part of his letter that fit well to his fiercely anti-Latin reputation, leaving little doubt in the reader about what a pious Orthodox should think about the Latins and their religion.

### 6. *Papal primacy*

Another crucial difference between Catholic and Orthodox teachings, the Catholic acceptance of papal primacy, is also discussed in the epistolary corpus of Chomatenos. Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230), the ruler of Epiros, reconquered considerable territories from the Bulgarians in the first years of his reign and Chomatenos, the archbishop of Ochrid appointed by Theodoros I and a key member of the Epirote ruling elite, was accepted as head of the Bulgarian Church. Between the Fall of Constantinople and the return of Macedonia and parts of Thrace under the jurisdiction of the autocephalous metropolitan see of Ochrid, independent Bulgarian ordinances of clergymen took place in these territories, which constituted a serious problem for the Epirote ecclesiastical authorities after their state took over these areas. The question was that whether these ordinances can be accepted as canonical by the Orthodox Church in Epiros?

Finally, an Epirote synod accepted most of these ordinances as if they were performed by a Byzantine-appointed bishop. The exceptions were the bishops of the reconquered areas, who were removed from their positions, while the lesser clergymen appointed by them were required to hold a four-month period of penitence.<sup>41</sup> The date of this synod, of which the *actio synodica* was penned by Chomatenos himself, is uncertain. Earlier it was dated to 1219, but, regarding that a

41 D.M. Nicol, *Refugees, Mixed Populations and Local Patriotism in Epiros and Western Macedonia after the Fourth Crusade*, in *XVe congrès international d'études byzantines*, Athens 1976, 1-33, 22.

letter of Chomatenos to Basileios Pediadites, metropolitan archbishop of Kerkyra, discusses that very synod, and Pediadites passed away in 1218, Prinzing proposed that the synod must have taken place in 1217/1218.<sup>42</sup>

The *actio synodica* penned by Chomatenos is interesting for the representation of Byzantine attitudes towards papal primacy, because the author mentions a rather important event tied to this Catholic teaching in the text:

Moreover, [The Bulgarian leaders] lead forward a certain priest (he was among the ordained), [installed] to the episcopal dignity by the hand of a Roman [Byzantine] archbishop, plainly the blessed one of Vidin, then, drawing the hand of the pope of the Old Rome from there [from Rome] through the dispatching of a cardinal, honouring this [priest] with patriarchal appellation through that [the hand of the pope].<sup>43</sup>

It is important, that a cardinal legate of Innocent III (1198–1216) promoted the head of the newly established Bulgarian Church indeed, but he was consecrated to be a primate of his church and was not created a patriarch by any means.<sup>44</sup> It also has to be mentioned, that the person in question, archbishop Vasilij of Tirnovo, was not the only one elevated by Innocent III through his legate. Kalojan (1196–1207), the Bulgarian ruler, was officially made a king by the pope, which act is similarly overstated by Chomatenos, who claims that the Bulgarian ruler was made an emperor by the pope.<sup>45</sup>

42 Prinzing, 2002, 262\*.

43 “Καὶ τοῖνυν ἱερέα τινὰ (τῶν ἐννόμων δὲ οὗτος ἦν) εἰς ἐπισκοπικὸν ἀξίωμα διὰ χειρὸς Ῥωμαίου ἀρχιερέως, τοῦ μακαρίτου δηλονότι Βιδίνης, προαγαγόντες, ἔπειτα καὶ τὴν τοῦ πάππα τῆς πρεσβυτέρας Ῥώμης χεῖρα δι’ ἀποστολῆς καρδινάλιου ἐκείθεν ἐλκύσαντες, πατριαρχικῆ ἢ προσηγορίᾳ δι’ ἐκείνης τοῦτον ἐτίμησαν.” Prinzing, 2002, 424.

44 Angold, 1995, 534.

45 G. Prinzing, *Die Bedeutung Bulgariens und Serbiens in den Jahren 1204–1219 im Zusammenhang mit der Entstehung und Entwicklung der byzantinischen Teilstaaten nach der Einnahme Konstantinopels infolge des 4. Kreuzzuges*, in H.G.

But the key detail for the current analyse is the Bulgarian acceptance of papal primacy through their ask for a confirmation by the pope. Chomatenos mentions this case among the various ‘wrongdoings’ of the Bulgarian Church during its independence of the Byzantine Church, which makes it rather clear, how one should interpret his depiction of the events. The acceptance of papal primacy is one item in the list of numerous, theologically ‘questionable’ decisions of which the Bulgarian Church is accused. Furthermore, it does not require any further comment, being ‘obviously wrong’ for any faithful Orthodox reader.

However, as it becomes clear from the already mentioned letter of Chomatenos addressed to Basileios Padiadites, the Bulgarians were not seen as heretics, but as fully Orthodox by the Epirote synod, while their Union with Rome was understood as a mere church-political decision by the Bulgarian leaders of the time.<sup>46</sup> Maybe these are the reasons why Chomatenos does not comment on the subject in any further detail in the *actio synodica*.

The problem of papal primacy is elaborated in greater detail in another letter of Chomatenos, which considers the acceptability of

Beck (ed.), *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia* 12, Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität, München 1972, 141 (Henceforth Prinzing, 1972).

<sup>46</sup> Prinzing, 1972, 143-144. The union was indeed mainly a political decision for the Bulgarian side. It is well-demonstrated by the circumstance that, following the battle of Klokotnitsa in 1230, which resulted in large conquests in Orthodox territories and heightened imperial ambitions for Bulgaria, the religious ties between Rome and the Bulgarian state soon began to loosen. Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologische Literatur des Mittelalters in Bulgarien und Serbien (865–1459)*, C. H. Beck, München 2000, 79. By 1235, Bulgaria has accepted the religious authority of the Constantinopolitan patriarch-in-exile of the Nicæan Empire. The price of this decision by the Bulgarians was that the ecumenical patriarchate recognised the see of Tirnovo as a patriarchate. A. Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy. The Church 1071–1453*, Crestwood, New York 1994, 215 (Henceforth Papadakis, 1994).

Western religious teachings when someone faces serious hardship.<sup>47</sup> The story he uses to examine this problem considers the behaviour of a group of early 13<sup>th</sup>-century monks of an Athonite monastery, which, as it is claimed to be inhabited by Greek and Georgian monks, can be identified with the famous Iviron Monastery.<sup>48</sup>

As Chomatenos states,

Many violent acts were committed by the agents of the Italian Church to make all the priests and monks by us to come under the power of the Roman pope, and, consequently, to mention his name on the occasions, when the memory of the archbishops is used to be remembered at the altar, and to follow the habits of the Roman Church.<sup>49</sup>

Chomatenos here accuses the representatives (most probably both secular and ecclesiastical ones) of the Holy See with an agenda to force the Orthodox priests and monks living in the Latin Empire to accept full communion with the Catholic Church. Furthermore, they are portrayed as ones willing to resort to violence to achieve their goal. It is also notable that the Catholic Church is designated by the author as the Italian Church (Ἰταλικὴ ἱερατεία).

This appellation denies the universalist claims of the Catholic Church, associating it closely with Westerners ('Italian' was a general term for Westerners in the contemporary Greek-speaking world). In sharp contrast with its self-definition, the Catholic Church is suggested to be nothing more than a particular church by Chomatenos, which is closely associated with certain ethnic groups and geographical

47 Περὶ τοῦ, εἰ χρὴ συγκοινωνεῖν τοῖς περιτραπεῖσιν ἐν καιρῷ δυσχερείας καὶ προσελθοῦσιν Λατίνοις καὶ τοῖς τούτων ἔθεσι κοινωγήσασιν. Prinzing, 2002, 198.

48 Nicol, 1957, 81.

49 “Πολλὴν μὲν γὰρ προέθεντο βίαν οἱ τῆς Ἰταλικῆς ἱερατείας προϊστάμενοι, ἵνα τὸ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἅπαν ἱερατικὸν τε καὶ τὸ μοναχικὸν ὑποκλίνωσι τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ πάππα τῆς Ῥώμης, ὥστε καὶ ἀναφέρειν ἐκεῖνον ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς, καθ’ οὓς εἰώθασι μνήμην τῶν ἀρχιερέων οἱ τοῦ βήματος τίθεσθαι, καὶ τοῖς ἔθεσι τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίας ἀκολουθεῖν.” Prinzing, 2002, 198.

regions, far from being universal and representing the sole valid form of Christianity. Logically, the own faith of the author, Orthodoxy is implicitly understood as the ‘valid’ form of the Christian faith.

It is also important to mention that this depiction echoes certain well-entrenched, traditional representations of the behaviours displayed by persecutors of ‘true’ Christianity in Byzantine literature. The persecutors are usually preoccupied with coercing true Christians into accepting false teachings and answering resistance with violence and treating the Orthodox clergy and monks as special targets.<sup>50</sup> It is also important, that this part of the source, just like its entire text, is concerned with one particular Catholic dogma, the primacy of the Pope, which is characteristic for this letter in general, and which teaching is intimately bound to religious power relations. Accepting papal primacy meant the acceptance of the supreme religious authority of the Roman Pope, while the Latin agents of the ‘Italian Church’ used their very real secular power over the Orthodox priests and monks to coerce them into the acceptance of this primacy.

As the author continues, coercion was not without results:

50 See, for instance, Paul J. Alexander, “Religious Persecution and Resistance in the Byzantine Empire of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Methods and Justifications”, in *Speculum* 52/2 (1977), 238-264, esp. 242-246, for depictions of Iconoclast persecutions of Iconophiles; Papadakis, 1994, 203-207, on the call for tolerance towards the conquered Orthodox of the Latin Empire by the 4<sup>th</sup> canon of the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Lateran and the Byzantine depictions of actual intolerance and persecution; Martin Hinterberger, *A Neglected Tool of Orthodox Propaganda? The Image of The Latins in Byzantine Hagiography*, in M. Hinterberger – Ch. Schabel (eds.), *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204-1500*, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA 2011, 129-149, esp. 138-148, on hagiographical stories of priests and monks martyred for their loyalty to the Orthodox faith by the Latins.

The Georgian monks did not withstand force, as due, but, caring little, disgracefully went to Thessalonica, to the cardinal<sup>51</sup> of the Roman pope and subjected themselves to the will of the Pope, following the Latin habits. They immediately showed the sign of communion, voluntarily putting their hands into the hands of those ones [the Latins], thus blurring the common life with the Greek monks and making it turbid.<sup>52</sup>

The narrative above echoes a clear disappointment about the behaviour of the Georgian Monks of Iviron. They did not resist the coercive measures of the Latins, but made communion with the Catholic Church, even visiting the cardinal legate of the pope in Thessalonica to accept papal primacy, which is defined as subjecting themselves to the will of the pope. This presentation suggests papal primacy to be not about the legitimate ecclesiastical authority of the see of Rome, but about obedience to the arbitrary will of the holder of that see, which undermines the legitimacy of the papal pretensions in a few words.

The gestures with which the Georgian monks expressed their submission also deserve interest, just like their evaluation by Chomatenos. These gestures are showing the sign of communion, putting their hands into the hands of the Latin clerics by their own free will. The claim of voluntary submission to the Holy See is an interesting claim, as it seems to be in clear contradiction with the earlier statement of Chomatenos, that is, that the Georgians ‘did not

51 The cardinal in question is most probably Benedict of S. Susanna, who participated in the debates about the Union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches that were held in the Latin Empire between 1205–1207 and visited Thessalonike in autumn 1205 and at the end of 1206. Prinzing, 2002, 134.

52 “Ἄλλ’ οἱ γε Ἱβηρες μοναχοί, τῆ βία μὴ ἀντιστάντες, ὡς θέμις, μηδὲ μικρόν τι μελήσαντες, εἷξαντες δὲ ἀγεννῶς τῷ τῶν Ἰταλῶν ἐπιτάγματι καὶ τῷ τοῦ πάππα καρδινάλιῳ προσελθόντες ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ διάγοντι, ὅλους ἑαυτοῦς τῷ θελήματι τοῦ πάππα παρέδωκαν καὶ τοῖς Λατινικοῖς ἠκολούθησαν ἔθεςιν· αὐτίκα δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς κοινωνίας σημεῖον ἔφηναν, τὴν τῶν χειρῶν ἑαυτῶν δηλαδὴ πρὸς τὰς ἐκείνων χεῖρας ἐκούσιον ἐμβολήν, καὶ οὕτω τὴν μετὰ τῶν Γραικῶν μοναχῶν διαγωγὴν συνέχεάν τε καὶ συνεθόλωσαν.” Prinzing, 2002, 199.

withstand force' (τῆ βία μὴ ἀντιστάντες), although it can be explained with the Georgian monks deciding with their own free will to allow to coercion and accept communion with the Catholic Church.

An even more negative light is cast on the deeds of the Georgian monks involved in the following part of the letter, as their behaviour is claimed to be in clear contrast with the behaviour of many persecuted Orthodox believers:

Persons blessed and worthy of numerous encomia did not obey the lawless violence of the Latin rule to change their holy habits. But, giving up their bodies to ill-treatment and spitting upon what was inflicted to them, to avoid becoming traitors of the habits of their fathers, [these] brilliant martyrs brilliantly shined with their preference. And, as we know it well, for the ones who fight in a way pleasing to God, for the ones who kept the faith, the wreath of righteousness will be weaved.<sup>53</sup>

The description of the problem seemingly echoes a peculiar effect, that is, of Byzantine heresiology, which means that first a belief or practice is condemned by a source, after which its erroneousness is argued on the basis of arguments often based on authority.<sup>54</sup> Such an effect is also suggested by the background of Chomatenos as a canon jurist and the fact that he wanted to educate his audience with his text on a theological issue. It is also worth to notice how the physical suffering of the martyrs is tied with their spiritual integrity, while, from the point of view of Chomatenos, the opposite can be told about the Georgian monks who accepted papal primacy.

53 “Ὅθεν φαμέν, ὡς μακαριστοὶ καὶ πολλῶν ἄξιοι ἐγκωμίων, οἱ τῆ ἀθέσμφ βία τῆς Λατινικῆς ἐξουσίας εἰς γε τὴν μετάθεσιν τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἱερῶν ἐθῶν οὐδαμῶς ὑπετάγησαν, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐαυτῶν προδόντες εἰς κάκωσιν σώματα καὶ τὰ αὐτοῖς ὑπάρχοντα διαπύσαντες, ἵνα τῶν πατρίων ἐθῶν προδοταὶ μὴ γένωνται, μάρτυρες τῆ προαιρέσει λαμπροὶ λαμπρῶς ἀνεφάνησαν, οἷς, εὖ οἶδαμεν, οὕτω θεαρέστως ἠγωνισμένοις καὶ τὴν πίστιν τετηρηκόσιν ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης πλακίσηται στέφανος.” Prinzing, 2002, 200.

54 A. Cameron, *How to Read Heresiology?*, in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33/3 (2003), 471-492.

The effect is made stronger by the solution of paraphrasing 2 Timothy at the end of the section in question.<sup>55</sup> The paraphrased part of the Biblical text presents a believer assessing his life facing death, and Chomatenos designates the Orthodox believers suffering for their faith as martyrs. These circumstances suggest the worst possible outcome for their resistance, that is, that they were murdered for it, which makes the dichotomy between them and the monks of Iviron even more pronounced. The reference to the Biblical text was most probably recognised by the audience of Chomatenos, supposedly consisting of relatively erudite Byzantines, pointing to a deliberate solution by him, probably with the aim of achieving the above-mentioned effect.

These circumstances make a harsh judgment understandable and even expected:

It is impossible for the Greek monks to commune in anything with the Georgian ones, and with all of those, who share their opinion, as they had intercourse with the Italian habits and dogmas, that were rejected by their Holy Church [the Orthodox one]. Except if once (as it has to be added due to the philanthropic habit of the Church) those who transgressed in this way [the Georgians] repent their sins with fasts and tears and the entreaties to the Divinity, rightly purifying themselves from the defilements thence [their communion with the Catholic Church] and excluding those from their hearts with whom they committed defilement, they go back to the habits and teachings of our Holy Church.<sup>56</sup>

55 2Tim 4,6-8: “As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

56 “Καὶ τοίνυν ἀποφαινόμεθα, ὡς οὐκ ἐξόν ἐστιν ἐν οὐδενὶ κοινῶνεῖν τοὺς Γραικοὺς τοῖς Ἰβηρσι μοναχοῖς, καὶ ὅσοι τούτοις ὁμόφρονες, ὡς ἀναμαζαμένοις τῶν Ἰταλικῶν ἐθῶν τε καὶ θρησκευμάτων, ὅσα τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας γεγόνασιν ἐκβλητα... εἰ μὴ ποτε (δεῖ γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο προσθεῖναι διὰ τὸ φιλόανθρωπον ἔθος τῆς

It is worth to mention that their acceptance of papal primacy is possibly not the only reason behind the severity of the verdict of Chomatenos delivered on the monks of Iviron.<sup>57</sup> In Byzantium, religious dissent and lack of loyalty to the Empire were traditionally understood as closely related. The case of the Georgian monks could easily be used as an example justifying this view. They accepted papal primacy, thus expressed their loyalty towards the Latin Empire instead of a successor-state of the Byzantine Empire, which could be interpreted as them becoming heterodox and politically disloyal at the same time. Their Georgian descent, although their home country was firmly Orthodox, could make this interpretation the easier for Byzantines, just like the fact that as monks they were expected to display an especially strong adherence to Orthodox dogmas and eminent morality in general.

The option of the Georgian monks receiving forgiveness as a result of their perfect repentance and the philanthropy of the Orthodox Church leaves less uncertainty. Medieval Orthodoxy preached that God felt pure love for mankind and all faithful Christians should try to imitate this love in their individual lives. Moreover, the Church itself had to display a strongly philanthropic attitude, which included it serving as a ‘hospital’ for human souls, offering remedies for every spiritual ailment. This function covered even heresy if its sin was confessed, and the needed repentance happened.<sup>58</sup>

ἐκκλησίας) μετανοήσαντες οἱ οὕτω παρανομήσαντες καὶ νηστείας καὶ δάκρυσι καὶ ταῖς εἰς τὸ θεῖον δεήσεσι τῶν ἐκεῖθεν κηλίδων καλῶς καθιράμενοι καὶ οἷς ἐμολύνθησαν ἀπὸ καρδίας ἀποταξάμενοι, πρὸς τὰ ἔθη τε καὶ διδάγματα τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας παλινδρομήσουσιν.” Prinzing, 2002, 200-201.

57 P. Magdalino, *Orthodoxy and Byzantine Cultural Identity*, in A. Rigo – P. Ermilov (eds.), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Byzantium. The Definition and the Notion of Orthodoxy and Some Other Studies on the Heresies and the Non-Christian Religions*, Università degli Studia di Roma “Tor Vergata”, Roma 2010, 21-40, 29.

58 D.J. Constantelos, *Poverty, Society and Philanthropy in the Late Medieval Greek World*, A. D. Charatzas, New Rochelle 1992, 40.

It means that the chance of reacceptance into the Orthodox Church for the ‘apostate’ monks is not a special treatment of them. Contrariwise, it is an important tenet of the Orthodox faith in practice, as Chomatenos himself underlines that this is the standard practice of their Church. Such a gesture, combined with the atrocities attributed to Catholics by Chomatenos, produces an impression of Orthodoxy being morally superior to Catholicism, which was possibly an effect intended by the author.

The judgment given by Chomatenos may be a carefully elaborated one, but it had little practical effect in its own time. From the Latin conquest of the Chalkidike-peninsula to its Epirot reconquest, the monasteries of Athos were officially under the jurisdiction of a Catholic bishop, whose see can be identified as Samaria or Sebastia. Most of the Athonite monasteries rejected the jurisdiction of the bishop and the Catholic Church, but not Iviron, which accepted the new *status quo*.<sup>59</sup>

### *7. Conclusion*

The five letters from Chomatenos and Apokaukos analysed above prove to be educational readings. They mirror the expertise of their authors as Orthodox canon jurists and their original presentations of the rules of Orthodox canon law regarding *azymes* and papal primacy to their addressees and wider audiences. The letters penned by them display both a certain capacity for tolerance towards Catholics and a strongly critical attitude towards them, mirroring the hardening stance of the Orthodox Church towards Catholicism in the era of turmoil following the Fourth Crusade. In this respect, the analysed theological letters of Demetrios Chomatenos and Ioannes Apokaukos are original in their solutions and still very characteristic of their period at the same time.

59 John Fine Jr., *The Late Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1987, 79.

**Abstract**

Westliche religiöse Praktiken in byzantinischen Briefen: Demetrios Chomatenos, Ioannes Apokaukos, Azymes und päpstliche Primat

Der Artikel beschäftigt sich mit den Repräsentationen des Azymes, das heißt, ungesäuertes Brot in der Eucharist, und päpstliche Primat in ausgewählten Briefen von Demetrios Chomatenos, Erzbischof von Ochrid (1216/17–1236) und Ioannes Apokaukos, Erzbischof von Naupaktos (1199/1200–1232), zwei einflussreiche Kleriker des Staats von Epiros im 13en Jahrhundert. Chomatenos und Apokaukos benutzten verschiedene Verfahren in diesen Repräsentationen und haben Kapazität für Nuancierung in ihren Urteilen gezeigt, obwohl Verurteilungen ihre Narrativen dominierten.

**Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of the Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, 384 pp.**

This book presents an important contribution to the early Christian studies: Johannes Zachhuber (henceforth Z.) offers an erudite overview and a comprehensive analysis of what we can define “Patristic” or “Christian Philosophy”. The history of this idea has its roots in the theological speculation developed in the period from the Cappadocian Fathers (IV century) until John of Damascus (VIII century). The pivotal objectives of this research are to explore the Patristic thought in light of the late antique background, with a focus on the philosophical nature of the Christian writers between the IV and VIII centuries, and to understand the Patristic theology as one of the most important philosophical schools in the late antiquity, with its own history, its own tradition, and its own contents. In this regard, the research takes into account the following two main issues: 1) the Trinitarian thought and the Cappadocian Father’s new ontology as the earliest and genuine version of the Christian philosophy, which Z. names as the “classical theory” in the course of the research; 2) the Christological debates about the meanings of individuality and human-divine nature of Christ after the IV century as the apex of the groundbreaking philosophical and Christian doctrine on the basis of the Cappadocians’ ontology. The fascinating interplay between the aforesaid issues expresses, according to Z., the heartbeat of the philosophical Patristic theory.

The book consists of 3 main parts and 10 chapters. The part I (chps. 1-3) deals with the historical context of the Cappadocians and their Christology; the part II (chps. 4-6) discusses the philosophical hints of the cases against the Chalcedonian philosophy; finally, the part III (chps. 7-10) has to do with the transformations of the Cappadocians’ theory in the period between the VI and VIII centuries, with a

particular attention to the main philosophical positions in defence of the Chalcedonian formula.

In the opening chapter (chp. 1) Z. outlines the plan and the originality of the research. First, he criticizes those studies which overestimate the dependence of the early Christianity upon the ancient pagan schools, e.g. Von Ivánka, especially upon Plato and Aristotle in antiquity, Plotinus and Proclus in late antiquity. Following the results of the recent scholarship, e.g. G. Karamanolis, Z. claims that the early Christian writers are to be included in the late antique cultural context and studied in the same way as we generally study the ancient philosophers. Secondly, Z. argues that the ambiguity concerning the philosophical or theological nature of the Patristic thought is eliminated by the historical contextualisation. Indeed, the disciplinary divide between philosophy and theology originates from the period of the Universities in the Middle Ages; on the contrary, during the imperial era, many pagan authors consider the Christian theology as a kind of philosophy, while the Christians themselves classify their inquiry as the highest and most authentic kind of philosophy.

The chps. 2 and 3 of the book are entirely devoted to the foundation of the Christian philosophy on the basis of the Cappadocian Fathers in the IV century (Basil of Cesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa) until the Christological controversies and the Council of Chalcedon.

The chp. 2 focuses on the theoretical bases of the Cappadocians' philosophy regarded as the most influential philosophical system in the history of the Eastern Christianity. These bases are found in some significant positions of the early Christianity, as the original contribution of Origen of Alexandria to the notion of hypostasis, Athanasius' and Apollinarius' strategy of harmonization between the Nicene terminology and the Origenist tradition, and ultimately the Cappadocians' struggle against Eunomius in respect to the ontological status of the second Person in the Trinitarian formula. Z. highlights that the core of the Cappadocians' philosophy is the conceptual

theorisation of “essence” (*ousia*) shared by many individuals or “hypostases” (*hypostaseis*) which explicates its existence through them – this is the theoretical heart of the Cappadocians’ Trinitarian ontology, which a new metaphysical paradigm originates from. The philosophical structure formulated by the Cappadocians is based on a new conception of the relationship between *ousia* and hypostasis, which Z. accurately illustrates with two different perspectives, called “abstract” and “concrete” accounts. The former corresponds to Basil’s logical and linguistic theories, whereas the latter corresponds to Gregory of Nyssa’s physical and metaphysical arguments concerning the concrete individual existence grounded upon the universal being.

The chp. 3 considers the philosophical extent of the Cappadocians’ theory in relation to the Christological questions arising in the course of the first half of the V century, until the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Here Z. refers mainly to Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus, two leading personalities of the theological debates at that time, and proves that the Cappadocians’ paradigm is not merely accepted in the Christological controversies, but it provides the very ontological foundation of the discussion about the human-divine nature of Christ. For Z., the Cappadocians’ philosophical doctrines, mainly the ontological coordination within the Trinity and the relation between the individual and the universal, both in the “abstract” and in the “concrete” accounts, became a “classical” benchmark in the Christian world in the V century.

The part II takes into account the theological voices in contrast with the Chalcedonian version of the Christian dogma. This part also aims to shed light on the philosophical nature of those theological systems which are antagonistic to the Chalcedonism and, consequently, give room to them in the history of the Patristic philosophy. The first case which is studied by Z. is Severus of Antioch, especially his “Myaphisitism” (chp. 4) – an expression which Z. prefers in spite of the canonical “Monophysitism”, that assumes the sole presence of the divine nature in Christ –, significant example of the

philosophical transformations occurred in the Patristic tradition after the doctrinal debates about the symbol of Chalcedon. The key idea of Myaphisitism is a new understanding of “nature” (*physis*), which is identified with hypostasis and, therefore, is intended to denote the concrete individuality. As Z. stresses out, the Myaphisitism is not a breakthrough moment in the Christian philosophical tradition opened by the Cappadocians’ thought, but a case of great change within this tradition. Thus, Z. offers a reason for the multiple quotations made by Severus on the authority of the writings of the Cappadocians to which the Myaphisite attempts to accord his own view, not without difficulty.

John Philoponus, analysed by Z. in the chp. 5, is an additional and impressive example of reassessment of the classical theory within the history of Patristics. The revision of the classical model is carried out by Philoponus’ use of the Aristotelian philosophy, namely, a Neoplatonic reading of Aristotle’s *Categories* and the Stagirite’s view about the relation between individuals, species and genera. Following the Aristotelian assumption that only the individuals exist, the Christian philosopher accepts the Myaphisitism in line with the Christological approach of Severus and, as concerns the Trinitarian issue, puts forward an anti-Nicene and anti-Chalcedonian theory, that is, the so called “Tritheism”.

Further, in the chp. 6 Z. explores the cases of Damian of Alexandria, whose original theories belong to the aforementioned myaphisite reassessment of the classical theory, according to which the hypostasis is a “bundle of properties”, inherent to a common “essence” (*ousia*), and of Peter of Callinicus, who defines the hypostasis as a “substrate of properties”. In light of these cases Z. states that Myaphisitism is challenging for the Chalcedonian doctrine and is a sign of that dynamism which characterizes the Christian philosophy in the V and VI centuries. Thanks to some relevant changes in the classical theory, the Miaphysite Christians shift the focus from the metaphysical meaning of the universal being to the significance of the individual existence.

The part III is dedicated to that expression of the Patristic philosophy which rises from the defence of the doctrines formulated in the course of the Council of Chalcedon and re-affirmed in the Council of Constantinople. In the reading of Z., the Christian theologians considered in this section put forward an important contribution to the Cappadocians' classical theory. In the chp. 7, Z. explores the cases of John the Grammarian of Cesarea and Leontius of Byzantium, two writers who carry the Chalcedonian flag against the opponents of the doctrine formulated in the Council of Chalcedon. Regards John the Grammarian, Z. highlights the significance of the classical theory in the field of Christology, particularly in its "abstract account". Thus, the human and divine natures of Christ are claimed as universal substances realised in a unique hypostasis, namely, that of the Logos. Concerning Leontius, Z. points out that he remains consistent with the classical paradigm in respect to the relation between universal (*ousia* and *physis*) and particular (*hypostasis* or *prosopon*), though his writings attest to a singular theory of Christological "hypostatization" (*enhypostaton*) according to which divinity and humanity participate in the totality of Christ.

A further development of the Christian philosophy about the subsequent reception of the Council of Chalcedon is examined by Z. in the chp. 8.: he evidences that in this period it is possible to acknowledge the most interesting evolutions in the Patristic philosophy as the result of a indepth reassessment of the Cappadocians' theories and, in addition, as the consequence of the widespread use of the Aristotelian logic in the Christological debates. In this context key roles are played by Pamphilus the Theologian, who speaks of the ontological duality of substance and accident instead of the Cappadocians' relation between *ousia* and hypostasis, of Theodore of Raithu, who admits the existence of an individual *ousia*, and of Leontius of Jerusalem, who defines the hypostasis in terms of individual property as the ontological basis of Christological argument. Z. includes these Christian writers in what he calls the "hidden revolution" of the VI and VII centuries.

As far as the chp. 9 is concerned, according to Z., the apex of the Patristic thought in the Chalcedonian version is found in the philosophical systems of Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus. Z. believes that these are the founders of a new stage in the history of Christian thought, whose legacy reaches up to the Modern Age, since they are responsible for an epoch-making synthesis between the Cappadocians' classical theory and the well-known *Corpus Dionysiacum*. On the one hand, Maximus suggests a throwback to the bases of the Cappadocians' Trinitarian ontology in light of the equivalence *ousia*/universal nature and hypostasis/individual existence. On the other hand, John emphasizes the classical difference between essence or being and individuality, and furthermore he suggests an anti-Aristotelian and anti-pagan "ontology of hypostasis", with reference to the great Patristic Cappadocian tradition in that multi-religious scenario such as Umayyad Caliphate at the turn of the VII and VIII centuries.

The final chp. 10 contains an overview of the major achievements of the research and an outlook of the historical-philosophical and historical-religious outcomes which the book intends to develop in the fields of Patristics and early Christian studies. As it is evident from the research of Z., the post-Chalcedonian Christological doctrines, which originate from the speculation of the Cappadocian Fathers, are an undoubted novelty in the history of the Western thought. At the very end of the book, Z. suggests four possible scenarios of the reception of the Patristic philosophy: Byzantium; the Islamic world; the Western Middle Ages; the Early Modernity, and underscores that the study of these issues would increase the significance of Patristics for the worldwide humanistic culture.

*Daniele Iezzi*

## **The Light of Thy Countenance. Exhibition & Catalogue**

In preparation for the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress, the Bishops and special committees of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate decided to introduce the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church – alongside numerous other events, as well as church, public and cultural activities – through a comprehensive ecclesiastical art and historical exhibition. Within a diverse Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church is a Church *sui iuris* with its own peculiarities, the history of which, along with the experience and lessons of its individual developmental path in the broader context of the Catholic Church, may be looked upon as important building blocks of the Church of the future. Presence at the Congress through an exhibition also represents an important opportunity for our Church.

Defining the concept of the Exhibition raised a number of professional, theological and identity-related questions. The aim was to present the approximately 400-year long historical journey travelled by communities of the Eastern Church after the proclamation of union with Rome.

Parallel to the planning of the Exhibition began the work of editing the Catalogue presenting the exhibits.

The nearly 250 items of church art, liturgical equipment and archival and bibliographical documentation in the Catalogue published recently tangibly demonstrate the process of change and its uniqueness. Far away from Eastern and Western ecclesiastical and cultural centres, the Greek Catholic Churches living in today's East-Central Europe – including Hungarian Greek Catholics – developed a peculiar, so-called 'Carpathian' church art and culture between the 17th and the 19th century. A local variant of an artistic tradition defined by the liturgical context of the Byzantine Rite evolved over the centuries. The specimens on display could be seen as the reflections of a series of social, ethnic and linguistic changes and a variety of cultural influences affecting Hungarian Greek Catholic communities.

In the Catalogue, this process, some related aspects, as well as the outcomes of the conservatory and exploratory efforts under way in preparation for the Exhibition are described in twenty-six studies written by sixteen authors. No material on the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church comparable in variety or magnitude in time and space has ever been published before. The book presents objects and documents found in Hungarian and foreign ecclesiastical and secular museums, libraries and archives, as well as in our parishes. The so-called union document discovered in the Prešov (*Eperjes*) State Archives some years ago is published in a Hungarian volume for the first time.

The title of the Catalogue – ‘The Light of Thy Countenance’ – is intended to be a reference to the source that has preserved and sustained the Greek Catholic Church at the crossroads of East and West to this day. The studies and the descriptions of nearly 250 items included in the book combine to reveal Eastern identity and a viable alternative historical direction between East and West, distinct from either.

The Exhibition envisaged for the Hall of Art/Kunsthalle in Budapest was cancelled due to the postponement of the International Eucharistic Congress. As a reflection of the original concept of the Exhibition, readers may now take the Exhibition Catalogue in their hands.

With modified content, the introductory exhibition ‘The Light of Thy Countenance’ will open at the Pest Vigadó Concert Hall in August 2021. It is hoped that visiting the Exhibition will be possible without restrictions.

The book has been published in 1000 Hungarian and 500 English copies. It is available in Greek Catholic religious items shops and online via the webshop ‘szentatanazbolt.hu’ at the following link: [https://szentatanazbolt.hu/konyv/4823-orcad-vilagossaga.html?search\\_query=orcad&results=2](https://szentatanazbolt.hu/konyv/4823-orcad-vilagossaga.html?search_query=orcad&results=2).

*Irén Szabó*