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**THEME**

**Eastern Christian Theology**

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## INTRODUCTION

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The 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea is being celebrated across the Christian world, renewing theological debate on controversies and ecclesiastical issues that affect the entire oikoumene. This context naturally brings the theme of theological interconfessional dialogue into focus.

The present thematic issue of *AUC Theologica*, devoted to Eastern Christian theology, is published in cooperation with the Portuguese theological journal *Ephata*. It follows the earlier *AUC Theologica* issue dedicated to Iberian theology (vol. 14, no. 2), which mirrored *Ephata*'s issue *Teologia na Europa Centro-Oriental no século XXI* (vol. 6, no. 2).

Both the current *AUC Theologica* issue and the previous *Ephata* issue include thematic sections comprising selected contributions from the conference *Eastern Catholic Theology on the Way of Unification*<sup>1</sup>, held at Charles University in Prague on 21–22 September. The Hussite and Catholic faculties jointly organised the event, which concentrated on theological dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The conference and its context carried a distinctly interconfessional and international character, not only through its topics (cultural sections on Coptic, Armenian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Indian, and Balkan traditions, and thematic sections on dogmatic and practical theology),

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<sup>1</sup> Rac, Ondrej. 'Eastern Catholic Theology on the Way of Unification Motto: "People All over the World Are Talking about Your Faith."' (Rom 1, 8).' *Ephata* 6, no. 2 (2024): 193–198. DOI: 10.34632/ephata.2024.17761.

but also through its collaborative framework between the Hussite and Catholic faculties and, of course, the Portuguese partners too.

The opportunity to publish conference contributions as articles in thematic issues of reputable journals has strengthened cooperation and enhanced the academic impact and scholarly value of the results—an approach we consider promising.

Three papers were selected to be included in the thematic section.

The first, ‘The Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro as Guardians and Propagators of the Legacies of SS. Gregory of Narek and Nersēs of Klay: An Outline’ by Haig Utidjian, employs methods from primary-source research, musicology, theology, cultural anthropology, and Armenian studies. It examines the Mekhitarist Congregation and prominent figures such as Malachia Ormanian, Mekhitar of Sebaste, Gregory of Narek – proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by the Catholic Church – and Nersēs of Klay, whose work exemplifies medieval theological dialogue among Eastern and Oriental Orthodox and the Catholic communion. The article highlights the Armenian cultural and theological heritage, which is often inaccessible to scholars due to linguistic barriers. Utidjian’s contribution is valuable not only for religious studies and theology but also for Armenian philology and musicology, enriching the ongoing theological dialogue between the Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches.

The second article, ‘Orthodox Spiritual Resistance Through the Eucharist in Romanian Communist Prisons’ by Mihail Khalid Qaramah, draws on primary sources, Balkan casuistic studies, Eastern Orthodox theology, and liturgical scholarship. It offers essential testimonies and theological reflections on Eucharistic celebrations among prisoners under the Romanian communist regime. By presenting methods of dissent and practical inspiration for contexts in which Christianity remains oppressed, the article discusses the limits and possibilities of Byzantine-rite liturgical practice under extreme conditions. It illustrates principles of liturgical *oikonomia* and provides source material for both theoretical liturgical theology and practical pastoral application in environments where improvisation is essential.

The third article, ‘The 1848 Encyclical of Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs as a Still Relevant Position on Catholic Theology’ by Ondrej Rác, utilises primary sources of Eastern Orthodox theology and approaches from theological dialogue, incorporating suggestions from digital humanities. It addresses a key issue in contemporary dialogue: the

fragmentation of positions within the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The unified voice expressed by the Eastern Patriarchs in the 1848 Encyclical stands as a historical testimony of 19th-century theological dialogue with lasting significance. The article analyses persistent theological divergences and suggests possible ways for future reflection on dogmatic questions without claiming definitive conclusions. It also considers whether a consistent, pan-Orthodox perspective can be articulated despite practical fragmentation and enduring schism.

The first and third articles were presented at the conference and subsequently discussed; their thematic overlaps include political and theological dimensions that remain highly relevant.

We express our thanks to the conference organisers, especially the colleagues responsible for coordinating the event, and to the editorial staff of *Ephata* and B. Šmejdová for facilitating cooperation between the journals and enabling publication of these thematic issues.

The results presented here will be of interest not only to theologians but also to musicologists, cultural anthropologists, and scholars of religious studies with a focus on the Caucasus and the Balkans, given the rich intersections of musicology, Armenian philology, and theology.

*Ondrej Rác*

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**THEME**

**Eastern Christian Theology**

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# THE MEKHITARIST CONGREGATION OF SAN LAZZARO AS GUARDIANS AND PROPAGATORS OF THE LEGACIES OF SS. GREGORY OF NAREK AND NERSĒS OF KLAY: AN OUTLINE

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HAIG UTIDJIAN

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## ABSTRACT

The present article is a survey of the contributions made by the Mekhitarist Fathers of San Lazzaro, Venice to the preservation, study and propagation of the legacies of two major Armenian Saints (and arguably greatest Armenian mediaeval writers), Gregory of Narek (c. 945–1005) and Nersēs of Klay (the ‘Gracious’, 1102–1173). This work has been very much in keeping with the principles and aspirations of the Founder of the Congregation, Mxit’ar of Sebaste (1676–1749). I therefore start with an outline of the history of the Mekhitarist Congregation from its inception, with due regard to its strong emphasis on scholarship and on a rich liturgical life (embracing a venerable and unique musical tradition – which I discuss in a separate section), as well as its very special role as a cultural and ecclesiological bridge between East and West. It was therefore natural that much effort was bestowed by the Congregation on the *oeuvres* of those two Saints, who were especially noteworthy for their sacred poetry and music, as well as for their strong Ecumenical inclinations; I argue that both these aspects were very much in harmony with the ideals and aims of the Congregation. I provide succinct introductions to the two Saints individually, and then proceed to discuss the special contributions of the Mekhitarist Fathers in either instance – as scholars, editors, exegetes, translators and publishers, as well as musical and liturgical practitioners of a tradition kept alive to this day, in which the prayers, hymns and odes of the Saints continue to play a vital role.

## Keywords

Mekhitarist Congregation; San Lazzaro; St. Gregory of Narek; St. Nersēs the Gracious; Theology; Philology; Musicology

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Situated strategically between East and West, the Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro (which was founded in Constantinople in 1701 and soon moved to Venice) sought to serve as a cross-cultural and spiritual bridge – reviving, preserving and propagating the best of Armenian heritage, sharing it with an eager European audience and reinvigorating ancient traditions with Western scholarship and art. It also provided a vital connection between the Roman Catholic Church and the Armenian Orthodox Church. San Lazzaro was and remains a unique crucible – an island yet far from insular, sacred yet also humanist, patriotic as well as spiritual, Armenian as well as European. Moreover, due to its unique position in Venice, San Lazzaro was spared ransacking or destruction, boasting an uninterrupted liturgical and musical tradition of over three centuries.

In this contribution, I seek to present an account of the enormous endeavour the Congregation undertook in the preservation, publication and propagation of the legacies of the two greatest Armenian mediaeval poet-musician Saints, namely Gregory of Narek (declared in 2015 as a Doctor of the Universal Church by Pope Francis) and Nersēs ‘the Gracious’ of Klay (who was honoured in December 2023 at the Vatican with a conference and the issue of a special postage stamp, to mark 850 years from the Saint’s passing). Both Saints had precocious ecumenical visions; St. Gregory eschewed Christological controversies, composing his prayers for the whole of Christendom – all nations, men and women of all stations, and for his contemporaries as well as for future generations; and St. Nersēs was unsparing in his efforts to achieve unity between Eastern and Western Christendom, and sought renewal within the Armenian Church. It is thus unsurprising that these Saints were of major importance to the Mekhitarist Fathers and to their own mission. I shall briefly refer to their work in gathering and collating manuscript sources; publishing *editiones principes*, translations and exegeses; keeping the compositions of the Saints vital within their liturgical practice; and preserving to this day melodies of old unattested elsewhere.

Accordingly, the present article is organised as follows. I shall first briefly refer to the inspiration behind and circumstances underlying the foundation and ideological positioning of the Mekhitarist

Congregation.<sup>2</sup> To do this, I shall have recourse to the great Armenian Church historian and churchman, Abp. Malachia Ormanian, as well as to more modern accounts. I shall then provide a short (and necessarily subjective) assessment of the contribution of the Congregation in general to scholarship and music over the centuries, through the prism of my own research interests. Following brief introductions to SS. Gregory of Narek and Nersēs of Klay (the ‘Gracious’),<sup>5</sup> I shall indicate some of the ways in which the Congregation helped preserve and disseminate the spiritual, literary and musical legacies associated with the two Saints.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. The foundation of the Mekhitarist Congregation

The founder and first abbot of the order was Mekhitar of Sebaste (Mxit’ar Sebastac’i, 1676–1749). A youth of remarkable intelligence, diligence, intellectual ambition, and profound spirituality, yet also a gifted and highly practical organiser, he travelled extensively within the Ottoman Empire and beyond, as a young man with a passionate yearning for learning and scholarship, and possessed of a sense of mission to share that knowledge amongst the Armenians of his time, a high proportion of whom were uneducated or even illiterate. Viewed from a modern angle, one could say that he was a sort of enlightened, Christian humanist. Well aware of the intellectual heights achieved by Western scholarship, evident from his contacts with Catholic clergy, he became a Catholic himself. In 1701 in Constantinople, he founded what came to be known as the Mekhitarist Congregation, consisting

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<sup>2</sup> I realise that many readers of this journal will not necessarily be familiar with the Mekhitarist Congregation – which is a unique brotherhood in many ways, and one that has been self-effacingly and quietly performing its work over more than three centuries. I trust this introductory material may thus prove helpful in enabling the reader to position the core of this article in its proper perspective.

<sup>5</sup> I include this material to render the present article self-sufficient for readers who may not hitherto have had cause to encounter those Saints – whom, after all, many Armenians deem to be their greatest mediaeval Christian writers.

<sup>4</sup> The musical element is appropriate, not merely because my own research endeavour of the last decade and more has been centred on aspects of it, but also because both Saints are of pivotal importance in this respect: St. Gregory of Narek is the first major composer of sacred odes (a musical genre) in the Armenian tradition, and St. Nersēs the Gracious is the most prolific contributor to the Armenian Hymnal.

of a handful of like-minded young monks. The Congregation was to settle on the island of San Lazzaro in Venice in 1717. An indefatigable teacher, Mekhitar also wrote a number of theological and philological works, including a ground-breaking and monumental dictionary. Subsequent to his passing, a split arose within members of the Congregation, resulting in a group of monks leaving San Lazzaro in 1773,<sup>5</sup> proceeding initially to Trieste and eventually settling in Vienna in 1810. The two branches of the Congregation – those of Venice and Vienna – were reunited in 2000, but both monasteries remain active; and they remain places of calm, palpable spirituality, scholarship and learning. A case for the beatification of the founder is currently in progress.<sup>6</sup>

The achievements of the Mekhitarist Congregation are varied and profound. In the sphere of education, they opened around thirty schools all over the world, including Europe, the Middle East and the New World.<sup>7</sup> They produced the leading scholarly editions of their time, and often the very first editions, of major works by Armenian authors, often translating these to Latin or other European languages, whilst at the same time publishing Armenian (modern or ancient) translations of major Western classics, sacred as well as secular (from Homer onwards).<sup>8</sup> The aim was thus to introduce Armenian culture to Europe as well as the finest Western literature to Armenians; but also to introduce Armenians to their own culture, and to use it as a powerful unifying force, creating a common consciousness amongst Armenians in the Ottoman realm and dispersed further afield. Important translated and original exegetical works were published, along with dictionaries and textbooks in both language and the natural sciences.<sup>9</sup> The journals *Bazmavēp* and *Handēs amsōreay* were founded by the Congregation

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<sup>5</sup> For a full treatment of the circumstances and causes, see Sebouh Aslanian, ‘The “Great Schism” of 1773: Venice and the Founding of the Armenian Community in Trieste,’ in *Reflections of Armenian Identity in History and Historiography*, ed. H. Berberian and T. Daryae (UCI Jordan Center for Persian Studies), 85–132.

<sup>6</sup> I attended a service followed by a ceremony, on Sunday, 8 September 2022 in San Lazzaro, celebrating the successful completion of the diocesan stage of the pertinent process.

<sup>7</sup> See Baykar Sivazliyan, ‘The Mekhitarist Order: Notes on Their History and Work,’ in *Armenia: Imprints of a Civilization*, eds. Gabriella Uluhogian, Boghos Levon Zekiyian, and Vartan Karapetian (Milan: Skira, 2011), 309–313.

<sup>8</sup> For an interesting discussion see Sona Haroutyunian, ‘Translations by the Mekhitarists,’ in Gabriella Uluhogian, Boghos Levon Zekiyian, Vartan Karapetian (eds.), *Armenia: Imprints of a Civilization* (Skira: Milan, 2011), 323–333.

<sup>9</sup> The so-called Three Archimandrites’ Dictionary of ancient Armenian, published in 1836, has not been surpassed to this day, and may now be conveniently referred to online

(in Venice and in Vienna, respectively) in the nineteenth century, and continue to be published today.

## 2. Ormanian and the Mekhitarists

Abp. Malachia Ormanian (1841–1918), born a Catholic but who converted to Orthodoxy, and became Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, is a writer critical of Catholicism. Yet he too acknowledged the valuable contributions made by the Congregation, and in view of their importance, in his massive *History of the Armenian Church Azgapatum – Ազգասպատում* (‘National History’)<sup>10</sup> he devoted no fewer than sixteen full-length articles to the Congregation, its founder, its move to Venice, its activities, and the succession to the founder.<sup>11</sup>

An examination of the narrative found within these articles, which Ormanian carefully interspersed among concurrent events in the Armenian nation and the Armenian Orthodox Church, demonstrates a number of points of interest. First, the account is centred around the person and career of the founder and first abbot, since it was very much his personality and his own vision that was to determine the characteristics of the Brotherhood that bears his name. Accordingly, Ormanian has meticulously recorded the most crucial stages in Mekhitar’s career, starting with early influences and contacts – particularly

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on the Nayiri.com website – see <http://www.nayiri.com/imagedDictionaryBrowser.jsp?dictionaryId=26> (accessed on 4 July, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> The edition available to me is the following reprint: Մաղաքիա Արքեպիսկոպոս Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպատում. Հայ Ուղղափառ Եկեղեցւոյ անցքերը սկիզբէն մինչև մեր օրերը յարակից ազգային պարագաներով պատմուած* [*National History: the history of the Armenian Orthodox Church from the beginning to our days narrated with related national circumstances*], Vol. II (Antelias: Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> The articles are the following (where we have placed English translations following each title in the original Armenian); the first article starts in col. 2677. §1837 Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, Mxit’ar of Sebaste; §1839 Մխիթարի պտոյտները, Mxit’ar’s peregrinations; §1842 Մխիթար ի Կ. Պոլիս, Mxit’ar in Constantinople; §1850 Մխիթար ի Կարին, Mxit’ar in Karin; §1854 Մխիթար ի Կ. Պոլիս, Mxit’ar in Constantinople; §1860 Մխիթարի փախուստը, Mxit’ar’s escape; §1892 Մխիթար ի Մեթոն, Mxit’ar in Methone; §1893 Մխիթարի գործերը, Mxit’ar’s labours; §1936 Մխիթար ի Վենետիկ, Mxit’ar in Constantinople; §1937 Սուրբ Դազար վանքը, The San Lazzaro monastery; §1958 Մխիթարի ուղղութիւնը, Mxit’ar’s (adopted) direction; §1987 Մխիթարի ընթացքը – Mxit’ar’s progress; §2011 Անտոնեանք եւ Մխիթարեանք, The Antonians and the Mekhitarists; §2012 Մխիթարի [Անտոնեանց հետ միանալու առաջարկին] մերժումը: Mxit’ar’s refusal [of the offer to join the Antonians]; §2030 Մխիթարի մահը, Mxit’ar’s death; §2031 Մխիթարի յաջորդը, Mxit’ar’s successor.

those with Roman Catholic clergy whom he met or sought out in his travels. However, it also reveals that Ormanian seeks to go beyond the surface and ‘reads between the lines’, adopting a critical view, and in particular seeking to understand the various choices available to Mekhitar’s at various junctures – especially in terms of the confessional positioning of the Mekhitarist Congregation. I have chosen four particular instances of this, and have summarised and paraphrased Ormanian’s treatment below:

- There is a careful discussion of the manner in which the Brotherhood was pressed to move from the ‘Order of St. Anthony’ to a formal acceptance (to which Mekhitar consented) of the Rule of St. Benedict, in September 1712 – which Ormanian considers the formal date of the foundation of the Congregation, although the Brotherhood was already formed, albeit without official recognition, in Constantinople in 1701 (see col. 2764).
- One of many aspects that needed to be negotiated with the Vatican concerned a practical problem. Ormanian points out that Armenian Catholics had no physical churches to attend, as there were no Armenian Catholic churches in existence. Mekhitar succeeded in persuading the Vatican to permit Armenian Catholics to attend Armenian (Orthodox) churches – approved on 12 January 1719 (col. 2833).
- Mekhitar was far from a fanatic. His objective was to explain that the Armenian Church was not ‘foreign’ to the Roman Catholic Church and Catholicism, and indeed was fundamentally identical to it. There were merely various misunderstandings which gave rise to criticism from Rome; addressing those points and effecting the necessary corrections not only did not compromise the essence of Armenian theological doctrine, but on the contrary, would benefit Armenians by dint of securing the mighty protection of the Papacy and the support of European powers. Above all, the abject condition of the Armenian nation would be improved, and the nation revitalised through intellectual development and material prosperity (col. 2907).
- Though Mekhitar’s work did conceivably benefit those who wished to impose Roman Catholic doctrine on Armenians, by spreading amongst Armenians an awareness of aspects of Catholic theology through his publications, yet above all, he was possessed of the desire

to be a reconciler. And such was his desire for learning and scholarship that, impressed by the intellectual achievements of Europe in general and the Catholic Church in particular, he was prepared even to sacrifice something of Armenian doctrine, for the sake of being able to obtain elements of Catholic learning and bestow them on the Armenian nation. One proof of his position is the fact that Mekhitar's Catholicism was sometimes questioned, both by the Roman Church and by Roman-inclined Armenians, and the same cautious attitude was maintained over the Congregation that he founded in the longer term (col. 2970).

In sum, though a firmly anti-Catholic writer, Ormanian is able to take a nuanced and even sympathetic view, and in his final evaluation, in no way does he under-estimate Mekhitar's achievements.

Interestingly, far more recent scholarship seems very much in harmony with Ormanian's conclusions. In particular, Paolo Lucca states that

Mekhitar's look West, towards the Church of Rome, did not have a primarily confessional connotation: he was firmly convinced that the Armenian Church's doctrine, as passed down by its best doctors, was fully orthodox, and thus its principles of faith overlapped with those of the Catholic Church.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise,

it was this last aspect, that of ecumenism that best describes the concept and mission of the founder, whose intention was to underline the motives of union rather than division, stressing the convergences and skipping over what was not required by the unity of faith. This was a spirit that, at least from a religious point of view, made Mekhitar a figure who was misunderstood: he was obstructed by fellow Armenians against the idea of

<sup>12</sup> See Paolo Lucca, 'The Religious and Humanist Inspiration of Abbot Mekhitar and His School,' in *Armenia: Imprints of a Civilization*, eds. Gabriella Uluhogian, Boghos Levon Zekiyian, and Vartan Karapetian (Milan: Skira, 2011), 317–321, esp. 317. Here Lucca refers to Claudio Gugerotti, 'La figura e l'opera di Mechitar nella cultura armena e nel contesto della cultura europea e cristiana,' in *Gli Armeni a Venezia. Dagli Sceriman a Mechitar: il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria*, ed. Boghos L. Zekiyian and Aldo Ferrari (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti, 2004), 165–175, esp. 171–174.

union, and by ‘Latinophile’ Armenians who accepted the Roman requests for change and liturgical and doctrinal adjustments, as well as by some figures within the Roman Curia.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, ‘This ecumenical impetus within the order lasted beyond Mekhitar’s death.’<sup>14</sup> It is highly significant that early publications from the Mekhitarist Press in San Lazzaro still acknowledged the Armenian Orthodox Catholicos on the title page. The desire of the Mekhitarist Fathers to demonstrate the Catholicity of the Armenian Apostolic Church was given a blow with the creation in 1829 of the Armenian Catholic Primate in Constantinople.<sup>15</sup>

In sum, the Mekhitarists are Catholic but at the same time have remained close to the Armenian Orthodox Church. They were formally acknowledged by Rome upon accepting the Rule of St. Benedict in September 1712 (although, as we have seen, the widely accepted date for the foundation of the Congregation is 1701). Mekhitar succeeded in persuading the Vatican to permit Armenian Catholics to attend Armenian (Orthodox) Churches. Mekhitar was a passionate conciliator and one who strove to demonstrate that Armenian doctrine was not incompatible with Catholic doctrine. He therefore became a bridge between the Roman Catholic and Armenian Orthodox Churches – performing a service that the Congregation continues to perform at present.

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<sup>15</sup> Lucca, *op. cit.*, p. 317. Lucca in turn refers to Zekiyani, *op. cit.*, 194, and to Gugerotti, *op. cit.*, 172.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

### 3. A note on the musical traditions of the Mekhitarist Congregation and its protagonists<sup>16</sup>

The Mekhitarists were able to maintain an enviable liturgical tradition, and their splendid musical tradition<sup>17</sup> (with two distinct branches in the case of the latter, corresponding to the San Lazzaro and Vienna monasteries) closely related to their liturgical practice. Their musical endeavours entail published and unpublished transcriptions of various sorts, archival recordings,<sup>18</sup> and, above all, an oral tradition.<sup>19</sup> Relatively unmolested by the cataclysms and catastrophes that caused the large-scale discontinuities in, if not wholesale destruction of, the Armenian monastic tradition in the Modern period, the Mekhitarists were perhaps uniquely able to maintain transmission of liturgical and musical practices from generation to generation. Accordingly, they have been regarded by all Armenians – Orthodox as well as Catholic – as faithful keepers and cultivators of the authentic traditions of Armenian liturgy, sacred music, language and literature. Excellence, creativity as well as meticulousness in the realm of sacred music too were initiated by the founder himself – namely Mekhitar, who composed hymns<sup>20</sup> and odes,

<sup>16</sup> The musical traditions of the Mekhitarists are of crucial relevance to the transmission and dissemination of music associated with St. Gregory of Narek, deemed to be the first major composer of Armenian sacred odes, and with St. Nersēs the Gracious – who himself was a prolific composer of odes but who also contributed more than any other known writer to the Armenian Hymnal. The work of the eminent personages I shall introduce has touched upon the *oeuvre* of one or other of those Saints, and very often that of both – given their centrality to the musical and liturgical traditions of the Armenian Church.

<sup>17</sup> For a succinct overview, see Haig Utidjian, ‘Les Pères mékhitaristes vénitiens et la musique sacrée arménienne: les grandes figures et leur héritage,’ in *Jubilé de l’Ordre des Pères mékhitaristes – Tricentenaire de la maison mère, l’Abbaye de Saint-Lazare 1717–2017*, ed. B. Outtier and M. K. Yevadian (Lyon: Sources d’Arménie, 2017), 145–155.

<sup>18</sup> See Utidjian, Haig, ‘In Communion with the Infinite and the Mysterious through Song: Melismatic Hymns from the Recorded Corpus of Recordings by Archimandrite Vrtanes Uluhogian of San Lazzaro, Venice,’ *Proceedings of the Symposium of the International Musicological Society Study Group on the Music of the Christian East and Orient*, ‘Melismatic Chant Repertories,’ 14 June 2020, Thessaloniki/Studies in the Music of the Christian East and Orient (forthcoming).

<sup>19</sup> Recordings of a number of sung services from Holy Week 2022 may be found on my own YouTube channel, on the playlist [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6AkLTr1WSkdPhLTNkhwXZFOEtLMP\\_hN4&si=5Hw3SM28Yc-XbBPJ](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6AkLTr1WSkdPhLTNkhwXZFOEtLMP_hN4&si=5Hw3SM28Yc-XbBPJ) (accessed on 8 October, 2024).

<sup>20</sup> The hymns were composed as *prosomoia* or near-contrafacta, modelled on already existing neumatized melodies; for a discussion, see Utidjian, ‘Les Pères mékhitaristes,’ 145–155.

a number of which are still sung today. There followed a veritable chain of exceptionally gifted men who preserved and developed the musical traditions of the Congregation. Their achievements were monumental, involving insight, talent, as well as dedication; and they were motivated by the desire to preserve their vast musical heritage as a vital and living tradition for future generations.<sup>21</sup> There was an element of conservatism in desiring to preserve the tradition faithfully, but originality and inventiveness were brought to bear in devising appropriate tools in a bid to achieve this.

- Fr. Antōn Iwč'gartašean (1730–1804) was a brilliant polymath. Iwč'gartašean may well have been a pupil of Mekhitar of Sebaste, and he was one of the first to break away from Venice for Trieste. He has left us a brilliant monograph on music, including important and original insights on the ill-understood Armenian neumatic system of notation.<sup>22</sup>
- Fr. Minas Bžškean too was a versatile scholar (1777–1861); he has left us with a monograph on music, completed in 1815, as well as some transcriptions in the then novel, Limōnčean system of musical notation, of which he may well have been a co-inventor.
- Pietro Bianchini (1828–1905), a gifted Venetian musician, was enamoured of the chants of the Mekhitarist Fathers and meticulously transcribed numerous old melodies into Western staff notation, arranging and publishing some of them (although a number of important transcriptions remain unpublished), and thereby saving them from oblivion. His surviving letters also reveal much about the aesthetic and theological arguments that were used to persuade the Fathers to permit and employ transcription into Western notation (and the fixity attendant thereon) and harmonisation: essentially, it would behove us to offer up hymns to God according to the most

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<sup>21</sup> For an up-to-date overview see Haig Utidjian, «Թռուցիկ ակնարկ մը Վենետկոյ Մխիթարեան Ս. Հարց երաժշտական վաստակին վրայ [A fleeting glance at the musical legacy of the Mekhitarist Fathers in Venice]», *Bazmavēp – Բազմավայր* [*Journal of the San Lazzaro Academy*] 3–4 (2017): 192–220.

<sup>22</sup> See Haig Utidjian, *Treasures of the earliest Christian nation: Spirituality, Art and Music in Mediaeval Armenian Manuscripts / Z pokladu nejstarších Křestanů: spiritualita, umění a hudba v rukopisech středověké Arménie* (Royal Canonry of the Premonstratensians at Strahov in Prague, 2018), 296–298 and 325–326 (footnotes 14–18).

advanced, orderly and perfected form of the musical art available to each generation.<sup>23</sup>

- The Vienna Abbot and Archbishop Arsēn Aydinian (1825–1902), who is known as a linguist and musical transcriber and arranger of the Divine Liturgy, no less valuably transcribed the melodies of the Divine Liturgy in accordance with the oldest traditions available to him, often notating more than a single variant; this little known but highly valuable work was published in Vienna, in 1877 – coincidentally, the same year in which his Venetian fellows published their own version, transcribed and arranged by Pietro Bianchini, in San Lazzaro.
- Abp. Ignatios Kiwrelean (Abbot General 1876–1920) was a formidable intellect and towering personality. He encouraged Bianchini in his work, and was profoundly interested in the Armenian mediaeval neumes, as is evidenced by his articles and his towering achievement – a combined Breviary-Hymnal-Lectionary volume with meticulous neumations, which sought to emulate as closely as possible various nuances found in manuscript sources, entailing the creation of many new types and constituting a major scholarly as well as typographical achievement.<sup>24</sup>
- Fr. Movsēs Srapean (1886–1965), based in Vienna, published his own harmonisation of the Divine Liturgy, using melodies that he describes as being Constantinopolitan; in addition, during the second World War he meticulously transcribed in staff notation the greater part of the hymnal as well as many of the Breviary chants, in their versions peculiar to the Vienna monastery.
- The Venetian Fr. Léonce Dayan (1884–1968) published the complete hymnal of the Armenian Church in staff notation<sup>25</sup> and has left us

<sup>23</sup> See Haig Utidjian, «Պետրոս Պիանչինի եւ Սյիիթարեան Ս. Հարր. սի քանի նկատողութիւններ [Pietro Bianchini and the Mekhitarist Fathers: some observations]», *Erazštakan Hayastan – Երաժշտական Հայաստան* [Journal of the Komitas Conservatoire, Yerevan] 2, no. 61 (2021): 51–59; and the forthcoming monograph, Haig Utidjian, *Pietro Bianchini and an ode for the Patriarch*.

<sup>24</sup> The Archbishop had contacts with Lorenzo Perosi and was aware of the musicological activities of the Benedictines of Solesmes, and this may in part explain his desire for precision in the reproduction of neumes. See Utidjian, *Treasures*, 316–317 and 328 (footnotes 33–37).

<sup>25</sup> For a thorough discussion that positions this work in the context of the Mekhitarist tradition as well as its sister traditions, see Haig Utidjian, «Ս. Ղազարու եկեղեցական երգեցողութեան աւանդութիւնը եւ Հ. Ղեւոնդ Տայեանի շարակնոցի ձայնագրութիւնը [The San Lazzaro tradition of ecclesiastical chant and Fr. Léonce Dayan's hymnal

with monumental transcriptions of the chants of the Offices and of the Divine Liturgy that remain unpublished.<sup>26</sup> He attempted to systematise his transcriptions (which are, thus, also redactions), devising a notational system that incorporated quarter-tones. A small number of extremely interesting recordings have emerged of his own singing, which significantly differ from his own transcriptions and provide valuable clues about aspects of musical performance practice.

- At the instigation of the musicologist Minas Lourian, the Venetian Fr. Vrtanes Uluhogian (1939–2010) recorded under studio conditions the entire Armenian Hymnal, as well as the greater part of the chants of the Offices. His recordings are of great importance – for their inherent artistic value, but also because they present variants that are often subtly different from the Dayan transcriptions, and above all because (especially in the case of melismatic chants) they demonstrate the kind of freedom and almost improvisatory spirit with which the chants ought to be performed. They thus provide an essential complement, or even correction, to what we might have understood were we to rely on the transcriptions alone.
- Fr. Sahak Čemčemean (1939–1996) has left us an outstanding legacy of scholarly articles, tracing the evolution of aspects of the Armenian Euchologion as well as that of the Armenian Hymnal, on the basis of a detailed examination of the codices in San Lazzaro; he also devised a very careful methodology to help establish the authorship of St. Nersēs the Gracious for many items in the Hymnal (in the face of numerous inconsistencies and obscurities in early sources). None of this work has been superseded. He was also the author of several volumes of the Master Catalogue of the Manuscripts of the San Lazzaro Monastery – not least those devoted to Odes, Litanies and Hymns, and has thus produced an exceedingly useful research tool of the highest quality, replete with profound insights and rigorous scholarship.<sup>27</sup>

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transcription]», *Bazmavēp – Fuqufuuł[ıı] [Journal of the San Lazzaro Academy]* 1–2 (2018): 331–371.

<sup>26</sup> I have been graciously asked by the Mekhitarist Fathers to edit this material and prepare it for publication.

<sup>27</sup> St. Gregory of Narek is the first acknowledged writer of odes, and St. Nersēs the Gracious contributed to all three genres extensively.

- The Viennese Mekhitarist, Fr. Augustine Szekula (1921–2014), in the early 1970s, recorded on audio cassette tapes the hymns for the greater part of the liturgical year, thereby preserving a valuable oral testimony for the sacred musical tradition of the Vienna monastery.

Both branches of the Congregation were involved in the study of Armenian sacred music and its ancient (and still undeciphered) notational system of mediaeval neumes. Fr. Antōn Iwč‘gartašean in Trieste and Abp. Ignatios Kivrelean in Venice were the most notable figures in this. It is also noteworthy that the respective musical variants of the two Mekhitarist monasteries do differ from each other, although there are also common points, bespeaking their common origins.

In the sections below discussing the contributions of the Mekhitarists concerning the respective *oeuvres* of the SS. Gregory of Narek and Nersēs the Gracious, we shall have cause to refer to some specific examples of their musical legacy associated with their works.

#### 4. Introduction to St. Gregory of Narek

International interest in the Saint has developed particularly since his declaration by Pope Francis as a Doctor of the Universal Church, on 12 April 2015, and his Feast is on 27 February (following early Armenian manuscript Synaxaria). Within the Armenian Orthodox Church, he is, in addition, remembered in early October, together with the Holy Translators of the Church. The Saint composed a Commentary on the Song of Songs, a number of encomia and litanies, and he is the first acknowledged Armenian writer and composer of odes. However, his *magnum opus* is the *Book of Lamentation* – a very extensive penitential prayer book; and this work has served somewhat to overshadow his other writings.<sup>28</sup>

The *Book of Lamentation* does indeed include lamentations, but its sombre mood ought not to be mistaken for one of despondency. The author sheds tears of regret and thereby hopes to assist the reader in doing the same. The Saint assumes upon himself almost every imaginable sin, often identifying himself with an array of sinners from the

<sup>28</sup> Salient characteristics of the Saint's *oeuvre* are discussed in Utidjian, *Treasures*, 56–59. A contextual introductory discussion of the Saint's life and works is given in Abraham Terian, 'Gregory of Narek,' in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, ed. K. Parry (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 278–292.

Old Testament – indeed, the book is full of latent and explicit Biblical allusions. He is thus able to reach out to any reader, however deep the reader’s despair.<sup>29</sup> The author is profoundly aware of the tragedy of the human condition: man has allowed the beautiful divine gifts to be spoiled by sin – an idea particularly reminiscent of, for instance, passages by St. Gregory of Nyssa (cf. *De virginitate*, 12). And God is omniscient and a just judge. However, He is also infinitely merciful. Tears of genuine contrition and repentance are thus exceedingly potent: through them not only are sins washed away, but the sinner can even attain to a vision of God Himself. Penitential prayer is a ladder that raises us up to God. The aim is thus nothing less than unification with God – indeed, divinisation. For, as he writes in his Commentary to the Song of Songs, ‘just as he who approaches fragrance becomes fragrant himself, so too he who approaches God becomes God himself.’<sup>30</sup> There is thus a constant tension between grief and hope, and addressing God, the Saint says: ‘If we founder and sink into the lowermost depths of the abyss, you point to heaven.’<sup>31</sup>

The author displays a rich armoury of rhetorical devices, sliding almost imperceptibly from verse into prose, and deploying all manner of techniques. He is acutely aware of rhythm, and also of alliteration, onomatopoeia and phonaesthesia. He delights in long lists and deploys an almost Homeric wealth of epithets and synonyms. A further point of interest is the highly original and at times even witty manner in which the author achieves a balance between apophaticism and revealed theology. Thus, the Armenian *an-* (the equivalent to the Greek ‘privative alpha’) can be used to negate, but here and there there are words that start similarly but do not negate – or else, it is not God’s attributes that are negated; (an example is when he refers to God’s ‘un-misty knowledge’ or wisdom – անշամանդալ գիտութիւն (3a).<sup>32</sup>

The Saint wished (as he notes in the *Book of Lamentation* itself) his work to serve the whole of Christendom, both in his own time and

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<sup>29</sup> It is thus hardly surprising that the book has even been used to help with the rehabilitation of drug addicts.

<sup>30</sup> Զի որպէս որ յանուշահոտ մերձենայ, անուշահոտի, նոյնպէս էւ որ առ Աստուած մերձենայ, աստուածանայ (section 6, p. 506 the Millennial Edition).

<sup>31</sup> Եթէ յանդունդս ներքինս սուգեալ գլորիցիմք / Յերկիհս ցուցանես (51b).

<sup>32</sup> See the discussion in Utidjian, *Treasures*, 160–186, esp. 171–173; also Haig Utidjian, ‘Stručný přehled zdrojů apofatismu v arménské patrologii [A Brief Overview of Apophaticism in Armenian Patrology],’ *Parrésia* 12 (2018): 171–189, esp. 182–185.

for future generations, old and young, and men and women from all stations in life. Perhaps to make it suitable for other nations, he seems carefully to eschew any Christological controversy. This fact, together with the author's explicit wish to write a work that would be universal, serving believers from all nations, reaching out to them and inducing in them cleansing tears of sincere repentance, may justifiably be deemed precociously to bespeak ecumenism in its aspiration. Increasing international interest in his writings has stimulated translations into a growing number of languages, thereby bringing the author's desire to serve the whole of Christendom substantially closer to its fulfilment.<sup>53</sup>

His odes are a counter-weight to the rather sombre and penitential *Book of Lamentation*, being jubilant and ecstatic sacred songs; they thus display a rather different aspect of the author's personality.<sup>54</sup> However, in common with the *Book of Lamentation*, these miniatures are permeated with a peculiar sort of mysticism through their poetry. They too deploy metaphor, analogy, allegory, and imagery replete with multivalent symbolism; and we find a dazzlingly rich and diverse array of context and meaning in all his writings.<sup>55</sup> His juxtapositions are often rather striking, verging on the surreal, and there is an astonishing sense of modernity about them. The author seeks to harness the reader's (or listener's) own imagination and spirituality. Moreover, in my

<sup>53</sup> The finest complete English translation of the *Book of Lamentation* was published recently: Abraham Terian, *From the Depths of the Heart: Annotated Translation of the Prayers of St. Gregory of Narek* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2021); for a detailed review, see Haig Utidjian, 'Abraham Terian – *From the Depths of the Heart: Annotated Translation of the Prayers of St. Gregory of Narek*,' *Ecclesia orans* XL, no. 2 (2023): 406–411.

<sup>54</sup> For fully annotated Czech translations of particular odes and discussions, see Haig Utidjian and Evžen Kindler, 'Ukázky z díla sv. Řehoře z Nareku [Samples from the Writings of St. Gregory of Narek],' *Parrésia* 4 (2010): 255–273; Haig Utidjian, Martina Pičmanová, and Luděk Liška, 'Písní podivuhodná [Wondrous Song],' *Plav* no. 4 (2015): 21–25; and Haig Utidjian and Martina Pičmanová, 'Óda na sv. Bohorodičku Řehoře z Nareku [The Ode for the Holy Mother-of-God by St. Gregory of Narek],' *Parrésia* 8 (2014): 523–530. The complete odes have recently been translated into English, with rich annotations and commentary, together with other festal works by the Saint: Abraham Terian, *The Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek: Annotated Translations of the Odes, Litanies, and Encomia* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016); for a review, see Haig Utidjian, 'Abraham Terian – *The Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek: Annotated Translation of the Odes, Litanies, and Encomia*,' *Ecclesia orans* XXXIV, no. 1 (2017): 298–301.

<sup>55</sup> See the discussion in Haig Utidjian and Evžen Kindler, 'Svatý Řehoř z Nareku. Teologie, motivy a obrazy v díle [St. Gregory of Narek: Theology, Motifs and Imagery in His Work],' *Parrésia* 4 (2010): 135–182.

experience, it is particularly helpful to take the corpus of his works as a whole, as different elements of it serve to elucidate and shed light on each other.

## 5. St. Gregory of Narek and the Mekhitarists

The Mekhitarists have a particularly distinguished record of publication, of both scholarly editions of the Saint's *oeuvre* and exegetical works seeking to elucidate it. A brief outline will suffice here.<sup>56</sup>

Although the first complete edition of the *Book of Lamentation* is a Constantinopolitan publication (1701–1702),<sup>57</sup> the Mekhitarists' *Atōt'amatoyc' patkerazardeal* – Աղօթամատոյց զսասկերսագարդևայ [Illustrated prayer book] published in 1804 may be regarded as the *editio princeps* for the Saint's odes, including as it does some eight of them. The Mekhitarist editions of the Saint's collected works of 1827 and of 1840 were increasingly complete – both in terms of a greater number of odes and larger numbers of stanzas included therein. The latter publication continued to be the basis for modern editions such as the Millennial Edition edited by Abp. Zareh Aznaworean of blessed memory (Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, Antelias, 2003).

In the course of my own research, I have collated codices acquired by the Congregation at different times (the year of acquisition is generally given in Fr. Sahak Čmčėmean's Master Catalogue) and the texts in their various publications. It is noticeable that the publications do not always take account of fuller variants extant in manuscripts already in their possession.<sup>58</sup> And, even more intriguingly, in the published editions we find readings not attested in any of the manuscripts in the Congregation's possession. A sheet of paper tucked inside a bound codex (V638) exemplifies the *modus operandi* of the editors of the Congregation and may provide an explanation.<sup>59</sup> The Fathers sent members of

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<sup>56</sup> For fuller descriptions, bibliographical details and reproductions of specimen pages, see Haig Utidjian, *The Art of the Armenian Book through the Ages / Armėnské knižní umění v průběhu staletí* (Mervart, 2016), 107–117.

<sup>57</sup> We are obliged to discount an abortive attempt made in Marseille in 1673, consisting of merely forty-eight pages.

<sup>58</sup> In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Fathers were gaining access to manuscripts at an unprecedented rate, many of which were mixed anthologies; and not every source could be taken into account in preparing their editions.

<sup>59</sup> For particulars, see Haig Utidjian, «Դէպի Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացոյ տաղից նոր հրատարակութիւն [Towards a new edition of the odes of St. Gregory of Narek],»

the Congregation, or sometimes agents, to various parishes and monasteries in historical Armenia. Whenever it was impossible to acquire an important source (through purchase or as a gift), relevant folios were evidently copied by hand, and the copies sent to San Lazzaro. In this way, the editors had access to material attested in manuscripts that have since perished. This accentuates the value of these publications, embodying as they do textual variants that would not have otherwise survived.<sup>40</sup> However, the manuscripts kept at the San Lazzaro scriptorium still have much valuable information, with potential for new discoveries. I was able to publish hitherto unknown stanzas of the Ode of the Little Cart by St. Gregory of Narek<sup>41</sup> by dint of availing myself of the recensions found in San Lazzaro manuscripts V159 (C15–16), V234 (C16–17) and V1330 (*anno* 1563).

Commentaries by Fr. Gabriël Awetik'ean proved no less influential:<sup>42</sup> a fine edition of the *Book of Lamentation* with extensive explanatory footnotes and points of textual criticism at the end of each chapter, was first published in 1801, with a fuller second version appearing in 1827; and a second volume, devoted to the encomia and litanies was also published in 1827.

The Mekhitarists have also preserved a unique melody for the Saint's ode *Hawun*, in the *acem aşiran* makam; such a melody was referred to by the Mekhitarist Fr. Minas Bžškean in his 1815 monograph on music, but was assumed lost; I was fortunate to discover

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*Banber Matenadarani Fwłpłr Uuwnkńuqurpułłh* [*Bulletin of the Matenadaran Institute*] no. 24 (2018): 30–82, esp. 34–36.

<sup>40</sup> See Haig Utidjian, '*Sweet in Melody and Voice*': *Words, Neumes and Music in the Odes of St. Gregory of Narek*, Armenian Texts and Studies series (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). Naturally, some apparent textual variations may also be due to editorial interventions *ope ingenii* (I am indebted to one of my anonymous reviewers for a reminder of this possibility); yet there is little doubt that they enjoyed indirect access to sources that have since perished.

<sup>41</sup> See Haig Utidjian, 'On the Printed Sources of the "Ode of the Little Cart",' *Parrésia* 7 (2013): 185–203; Haig Utidjian, 'On the Early Venetian Manuscripts of the "Ode of the Little Cart",' *Parrésia* 7 (2013): 205–228; and Haig Utidjian, 'Textual observations on St. Gregory of Narek's "Ode of the Little Cart",' *Banber Matenadarani Fwłpłr Uuwnkńuqurpułłh* [*Bulletin of the Matenadaran Institute*] no. 21 (2014): 487–502.

<sup>42</sup> Even so, occasional controversies did arise, with some Armenian Orthodox suspecting Mekhitarist Fathers of interpreting texts in a tendentious manner to provide support for aspects of Catholic doctrine not accepted by the Armenian Orthodox Church. For an example, see Haig Utidjian, 'Poezie a hudba sv. Řehoře z Nareku jako zrcadlo arménskė historie v druhém tisíciletí [The Poetry and Music of St. Gregory of Narek as Mirroring Armenian History over the Second Millennium],' *Parrésia* 8 (2014): 331–370.

a manuscript transcription in Western staff notation in San Lazzaro that precisely corresponds to Fr. Minas' description.<sup>43</sup>

## 6. Introduction to St. Nersēs the Gracious

St. Nersēs of Klay (1102–1173), known as *Šnorhali* (the 'Gracious'), and in office as Catholicos 1166–1173, was a theologian, poet, composer, great revitaliser of tradition, and passionate and sincere ecumenist. He sought unity within the Armenian Church, and with the Catholic as well as Greek Orthodox Churches – an ecumenist *par excellence*.<sup>44</sup> In 1141, he attended the Council of Antioch of the Roman Catholic Church as an observer (it has to be remembered that there were very close contacts with the Catholic Church in the Cilician period, due to the Crusades, as well as much intermarriage, especially at the levels of nobility and royalty). He is recognised as a Saint by the Roman Catholic Church<sup>45</sup> as well as the Armenian Orthodox Church. He also conducted an ecumenical dialogue with the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus and with the Greek Orthodox Church – impressing the Emperor's representative by his Christological explanations, which demonstrated that the Armenian church was not 'Monophysite' (a more accurate term, in current use, is 'Miaphysite'). Though the passing of the Emperor resulted in a less favourable atmosphere, and the Saint

<sup>43</sup> Haig Utidjian, «Անոյշ եղանակաւ եւ ձայնիւ՝ Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացոյ տաղերը եւ խօսք, խազ ու երաժշտութիւն դարերու ընթացքէն [Sweet in melody and voice': The odes of St. Gregory of Narek through the centuries], *Banber Matenadaranı – Բանբեր Մատենադարանի* [*Bulletin of the Matenadaran Institute*] 30 (2020): 109–126, esp. 119–120.

<sup>44</sup> The reader is referred to Boghos Levon Zekian, 'St Nersēs Šnorhali en dialogue avec les Grecs: un prophète de l'œcumenisme au XIIe siècle,' in *Armenian Studies/Études arméniennes in Memoriam Haïg Berbérian*, ed. Dickran Kouymjian (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986), 861–883; Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, *Saint Nersēs the Gracious and Church Unity: Armeno-Greek Church Relations (1165–1173)* (Antelias, 2010); Abp. Anushavan Tanielian, 'Saint Nersēs's Theology and His Ecumenical Endeavour,' *Հասկ Հայագիտական Տարեգիրք [Hask Armenological Annual]*, Նոր Հրջան, ԺԳ. տարի (2024): 151–158; and Michael Papazian, 'The Ecumenism of St. Nersēs Shnorhali's Letter on the Profession of Faith,' *St. Nersēs Theological Review* 1, no. 15 (2024): 25–42.

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, Istituto Giovanni XXIII nella Pontificia Università Lateranense, Rome, 1961, under the entry 'Narsete' (cols. 742–746), authored by Fr. Paolo Ananian; for a more recent authoritative entry, see 'Nersēs IV Šnorhali,' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. XI, fascs. 72–73, cols. 134–150, authored by Fr. Levon Boghos Zekian. Another Catholic source is Catholic Online, 'Saints and Angels,' 'St. Nersēs Glaietsi,' [https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=4822](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=4822) (accessed 10 July 2025).

was almost certainly well ahead of his time, nonetheless, his writings can serve as a useful guide for inter-denominational dialogue today. Moreover, in a most encouraging example of ecumenical endeavour, in late 2023 a joint committee consisting of representatives of the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Catholic Church and the Vatican organised celebrations at the highest level, marking 850 years since the Saint's passing. These would have culminated in an ecumenical service in the presence of Pope Francis and the Armenian Catholicos and a concert at the Sistine Chapel (the music for both of which the present writer was invited to organise and conduct).<sup>46</sup>

Yet no less important were his endeavours at home to revitalise the faith of his flock and devoutness of the clergy entrusted with their care. An important part of his reform entailed composing memorable hymns and odes, employing simple rhymes, endowed with new melodies or recycling already popular tunes, yet beneath the surface rich with theological meaning.<sup>47</sup>

## 7. St. Nersēs the Gracious and the Mekhitarists

Now the *editiones principes* of the Saint's most popular works had already appeared well before the foundation of the Mekhitarist Congregation. Thus, for instance, his condensed Biblical narrative known as *Yisus ordi* – 'Jesus, the Son' was already published (albeit in Venice) in 1643. However, again the Mekhitarist Fathers excelled in scholarship on the Saint. As far as the Saint's hymns were concerned, Fr. Gabriēl Awetik'ean's *Bac'atrut'iwn Šarakanac' – Բացատրութիւն Շարականաց* [*Explanation of Hymns*] (Venice, 1814), a magisterial commentary on the Armenian canonical hymnal (of which a sizeable proportion may be attributed to the Saint), remains unsurpassed to this day – for both its theological and textual analytic insights. Fr. Łewond Ališan

<sup>46</sup> The rationale behind these plans is discussed in Haig Utidjian, 'Some Personal Reflections on the Musical Legacy of St. Nersēs the Gracious and on Its Relevance in Our Time,' *St. Nersess Theological Review* 1, no. 15 (2024): 125–136. In the event, the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh (Karabagh) resulted in the indefinite postponement of these plans; nevertheless, a conference did take place in Rome at the Pontifical Institute.

<sup>47</sup> See the discussion in Utidjian, 'Some Personal Reflections'. For a musicological treatment of his legacy in various genres, see Haig Utidjian, «Սուրբ Ներսէս Շնորհալոյ ժառանգի հետ առնչուած երաժշտական հարցեր [Musical Questions Associated with the Legacy of St. Nersēs the Gracious]», *Հասկ Հայագիտական Տարեգիրք [Hask Armenological Annual]*, Լոր Շրջան, ԺԳ. տարի (2024): 221–264.

(1820–1901) published a major study on the Saint, his life and times and his work: *Šnorhali ew paragay iwr – Շնորհալի եւ պարագայ իւր*, [*Šnorhali and his circumstances*] in 1873, whilst Vol. XIV of the Mekhitarists' series *Sop'erk' Haykakank' – Սովերք Հայկականք* [*Armenian writings*], published in Venice in 1854, included an anonymous biography of the Saint.<sup>48</sup> Both sources remain useful to this day, and are frequently referred to. More recently, Fr. Sahak Čemčemean published a pair of highly insightful articles, presenting an innovative methodology to divide hymns commonly attributed to the Saint into two categories: those that may reliably be attributed to his pen on the strength of evidence accruing from manuscript witnesses, and those whose authenticity cannot be established on such grounds.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the most celebrated is a set of twenty-four prayers known as *Hawatov xostovanim* – 'Fide Confiteor' in Latin, usually translated as 'I confess with faith'. It was intended to be used by all Armenians, with the possibility of one prayer being used for each hour of the day.<sup>50</sup> Until recently, all Diasporan Armenians memorised it, or at the very least several of the prayers, from early childhood. Naturally, the Mekhitarists sought to translate this well-loved work into a number of European and world languages. Editions were published in 1810, 1811, 1812, 1815, 1818, 1823, 1837, 1862, 1872, 1882, 2012, in growing numbers of languages (reaching thirty-six). In 2023, a new edition appeared, with now almost fifty languages, and for the first time including Czech (translated by the late Prof. Evžen Kindler at my request).

Finally, credit is due to the Mekhitarist Fathers for the preservation and transmission of a very rich legacy of melodies associated with the Saint's hymns and for a number of his odes – often markedly different from other extant versions (and, in the case of one of the odes, the only melody now available to us).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> No editor is specified but it is believed that Fr. Lewond assumed that role anonymously.

<sup>49</sup> Fr. Sahak Čemčemean, «Շնորհալի շարականներու հարազատութեան հարցը ձեռագիրներու լոյսին տակ [The Question of the Authenticity of Hymns by Šnorhali in the Light of Manuscript Witnesses]», Part I, *Bazmavēp – Բազմավէպ* [*Journal of the San Lazzaro Academy*] 3–4 (1973): 362–393; Part II, 1–2 (1974): 86–105.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion and English and Czech translations of the Saint's own preface to the prayers, see Utidjian, *Treasures*, 86–92.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the latter, see Haig Utidjian, «Ս. Ներսէս Շնորհալու երեք սաղերու եղանակներն՝ ըստ Ս. Ղազարու Աստղութեան [The melodies for three of the odes of St. Nersēs the Gracious according to the tradition of San Lazzaro]», *Bazmavēp – Բազմավէպ* [*Journal of the San Lazzaro Academy*] (accepted for publication).

## 8. A note on other art forms

Paoletti's paintings of the two Saints – which were later made into mosaics to prevent water damage – continue to grace the interior of the Church of San Lazzaro as if they were gazing upon the Fathers and all the faithful attending services from either end of the church. They have both been reproduced in many places, indeed acquiring a truly 'iconic' status. These, as well as other visual representations, were commissioned by the Fathers by other artists also, and will have been familiar to many Armenians – including schoolchildren – from their reproductions in various books and other educational literature, published by the Mekhitarists but also by others throughout the Armenian diaspora over the decades. And the Fathers themselves have inspired art at the highest level. A famous instance is a magnificent painting (on permanent display at the National Gallery of the Republic of Armenia) in which the painter Ivan Aivazovsky portrayed a re-imagining of Lord Byron's first arrival on the island of San Lazzaro. A number of eminent Italian painters were also commissioned to prepare paintings of eminent Mekhitarists, producing work of striking quality.

## Epilogue

In this paper, we have stressed the scholarly and musical attainments of the Mekhitarist Fathers. It is however worth stressing that the Fathers, though situated on an island, were far from insular in their mentality, and their sense of mission embraced a very strong pastoral element. Thus, in addition to scholarly and authoritative reference volumes, they published works by St. Gregory of Narek, St. Nersēs the Gracious (as well as others) in convenient, attractive and affordable pocket editions (without commentary). I myself am in possession of such volumes, acquired from the San Lazzaro monastery bookshop over the years – most importantly of the *Book of Lamentation* by St. Gregory of Narek (1926), and of the works in verse – *Bank' ĉ'ap'aw* – by St. Nersēs the Gracious (1928), both of which have remained in print over the span of almost a century.

Allied to their sense of mission and service, the Fathers also possessed a strong sense of humility, though being by far the best educated and most formidable Armenian theologians and philologists of their time. It is highly characteristic that Fr. Gabriël Awetikean, in the preface

to his monumental Commentary to the *Book of Lamentation* reminded the reader as well as himself and his fellows: ‘... the height as well as depth of this admirable artistic volume ever exceed the length of cord of any seeking to measure it.’

Finally, and perhaps almost uniquely, the Fathers pursued their scholarly activities in a devout environment where a very rich liturgical life endued their endeavours with meaning. In his General Encyclical of 1166, which St. Nersēs issued shortly upon assuming office as Catholicos, he had urged his readers: ‘Let not the mysterious words of prayer that you offer mindlessly pass as water through a pipe – be they psalmodies, a reading of Holy Scripture... but in a highly mindful manner, and if possible in tears and great fear – as if you make them newly flow from your heart and mind’. The Mekhitarist Congregation, whether on the island of San Lazzaro or in their veritable oasis in the centre of Vienna, appear to have succeeded in heeding St. Nersēs’ advice to this day, through their unhurried services of great beauty – in which the works of both Saints are deployed with sincere devoutness, decorum and piety.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> For a description and discussion on the deployment of prayers from the *Book of Lamentation* in the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church, see Utidjian, *Treasures*, 244–255 and Haig Utidjian, “‘Imploring the Spirit with tearful sighs from the depths of our souls’: a confluence of music, theology and iconography within the Armenian Divine Liturgy,” in *Art and Liturgy*, ed. Grant White and Rossitza Schroeder (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, forthcoming). For the deployment of prayers from the *Book of Lamentation* at Compline, see Haig Utidjian, «Դէպի Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացոյ տաղից նոր հրատարակութիւն [Towards a new edition of the odes of St. Gregory of Narek]», *Banber Matenadarani – Բանբեր Մատենադարանի [Bulletin of the Matenadaran Insititute]* 24 (2018): 30–82, esp. 38–39 (footnote 30), where I have also discussed the (para-)liturgical use of odes in the Armenian Church (applicable to examples by either Saint).

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## ORTHODOX SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE THROUGH THE EUCHARIST IN ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PRISONS

MIHAIL KHALID QARAMAH

### ABSTRACT

The paper explores how Holy Communion was administered and the Eucharist was celebrated among political prisoners of the Orthodox faith in Romanian communist prisons. The main information is taken from memoirs of those who survived the Romanian gulag, but some informative notes found in the funds of the National Council for the Study of the *Securitate* Archive also contain interesting details that complete the picture of the liturgical act in detention. Priests had to face several practical and liturgical constraints, such as the lack of Eucharistic elements in accordance with Orthodox practice, the absence of liturgical vestments and objects that had to be improvised, and the difficulty of preserving and distributing the Holy Gifts, which had to be protected from profanation. The harsh conditions also led some ministers to step back from certain liturgical rigors that are usually obligatory. Moreover, given the state of shared suffering, on a few occasions confessional barriers were ignored and inter-communion celebrations took place.

### Keywords

Romanian gulag; Divine liturgy; Communion; Ecumenism; Political detainees

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A defining aspect of the communist ideology was militant atheism, which sought to nullify or minimize religious dimensions in the life of the ‘new man’ and to remove the Church from social life.<sup>1</sup> The communist regime in Romania, however, did not explicitly repress

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Paul Froese, ‘Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed,’ *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43.1 (2004): 35–50.

the faith, but justified the imprisonment of clergy, monks and theologians on the grounds of ‘counter-revolutionary’ activity, a loosely defined concept.<sup>2</sup> The *Securitate* (i.e., the secret police agency in communist Romania) understood any expression of authentic Christian life as legionary propaganda<sup>3</sup> – even though many of those who were condemned were not followers of the Legionary Movement<sup>4</sup> –, since some inmates with a legionary past practiced ‘religious mysticism’.<sup>5</sup> The prisons and forced labour camps in Romania, modelled on the Soviet gulag,<sup>6</sup> involved, in addition to the repression of the inter-war political class and the elimination of the intellectual elite, the extermination of a significant number of Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Roman-Catholic and Protestant clerics and theologians. The communist prisons were intended to be places of ‘re-education’ for the moral restructuring of political detainees in accordance with communist ideology. The *Securitate* also undermined the spiritual life of political prisoners, which they claimed was preparation for the organized continuation of counter-revolutionary activity once released.<sup>7</sup> Paradoxically, the communist

<sup>2</sup> Dragoș Ursu, ‘Ortodoxia și comunismul. Memoria unei istorii traumatice,’ in *Biserica și Statul: perspective diacronice asupra unei relații polivalente*, ed. R. Brudiu, M. Qaramah (Iasi: Doxologia, 2023), 280; Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965–1989* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 23.

<sup>3</sup> For the Legionary Movement in Romania, see, for example: L. Volovici, *Nationalism Ideology and Antisemitism. The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991); S. Fischer-Galati, ‘Codreanu, Romanian National Traditions and Charisma,’ in *Charisma and Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. A. Costa Pinto, R. Eatwell and S. U. Larsen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 107–112; R. Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2015). For the ideological conflict between communists and the Legionary Movement, see: Tiberiu Tănase, *Legionarism vs. Comunism. Considerații privind raporturile dintre mișcarea legionară și Partidul Comunist Român în perioada 1941–1948* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> A striking example is the accusation made against the theologian and professor Teodor M. Popescu during his investigation in 1959: ‘You are a legionary because you are a theologian and being a theologian you are anti-communist, and being anti-communist means being a legionary’; George Enache, Adrian Nicolae Petcu, ‘Biserica Ortodoxă Română și Securitatea. Note de lectură,’ in *Totalitarism și rezistență, teroare și represiune în România comunistă* (București: Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, 2001), 112.

<sup>5</sup> Dragoș Ursu, *Reeducare și represiune în comunism. O istorie politică a închisorii Aiud* (București: Corint, 2024), 265.

<sup>6</sup> Antoanela Paula Mureșan, ‘The Gulag Archipelago model in the experience of Romanian communist prisons,’ *Analele Universității din Oradea. Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene* 5 (2013): 197–208.

<sup>7</sup> Ursu, *Reeducare*, 277. A report of the Aiud prison task force, written in 1964, is very instructive in this respect: ‘The first category, which we consider the most dangerous, is made up of legionaries who, under the pretext of renouncing legionary activity,

prisons became places of rediscovering the authentic experience of the Christian faith, of assuming a martyric conscience and freedom of the spirit. The spiritual resistance in communist prisons also manifested itself in the liturgy, which was adapted to the harsh conditions. Priests had an essential role in animating liturgical life in prison, through the celebration of the daily Hours, the recitation of psalms and various prayers or hymns, Bible readings and catechesis, but above all through the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist.

In a report from 1959, Colonel Gheorghe Crăciun, commander of Aiud prison, affirmed the role of the clergy in initiating and intensifying the liturgical life in detention: ‘Priests and students of theology – not all of them, but some and, I could say, most of them – maintain a bad state of mind as priests on the eve of feasts ask “Who wants to confess?” or “Who desires to take Communion?” or announce that a fast is beginning and so on.’<sup>8</sup>

This paper explores how Holy Communion was administered and the Eucharist celebrated among political prisoners of the Orthodox faith in Romanian communist prisons.<sup>9</sup> There are several studies dedicated to religious life in the Romanian communist prisons, which illustrate how Christian faith and spirituality offered strength and resilience to political prisoners.<sup>10</sup> Although previous studies highlighted the

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claim that they cannot renounce Christian practices and faith.’ See: ACNSAS, Documentary fund, file 12609, vol. 6, f. 78.

<sup>8</sup> ACNSAS, Documentary fund, file 13484, vol. 13, f. 189.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that ministers and believers of other Christian confessions also realized clandestine liturgical practices in communist prisons both in Romania and other Eastern European communist countries; see, for example: Richard Wurmbbrand, *Christ in the communist prisons* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968), who shares some information of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant religious services in communist prisons in Romania; Jan Synek, *Svobodni v nesvobodě. Náboženský život ve věznicích v období komunistického režimu* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2013), 102–158, where the author explores the liturgical life of Catholics and other confession in communists prisons in Czechoslovakia; Pavol Minarik, ‘Official and Underground: The Survival Strategy of the Catholic Church in Communist Czechoslovakia,’ *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 24.3 (2023): 332–351; Andriy Oliynyk, ‘Liturgical and Pastoral Activity as a Crime in Soviet Ukraine: The Case of Greek Catholic Priest, Roman Bakhtalovskyy, CSsR (1897–1985),’ *Religions* 12.3 (2021): 174. DOI: 10.3390/rel12030174.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Marius Alin Teican, ‘From Revolt to Spiritual Consciousness: The Understanding of Suffering in Romanian Communist Prisons,’ *Ortodoksia* 64 (2024): 81–95; Dragoș Ursu, ‘Resistance through Faith inside the Romanian Gulag. Case study: the Aiud re-education,’ *Altarul Reintegrării* suppl. 2 (2017): 135–149; Ruxandra Cesereanu, ‘Resistance Solutions in the Communist Prisons and Concentration Camps of Romania Memoirist Writings of the Romanian Gulag,’ *Transylvanian Review* 25, suppl. 2 (2016): 203–215; George Enache, ‘Christian Life in Communist

presence of the Eucharist as a significant expression of the martyric conscience of faithful detainees,<sup>11</sup> less attention was given to analysing the Eucharistic sacramental event per se in the repressive detention environment. Here, the primary source of information is taken from the memoirs of those who survived Romanian gulags, with additional material drawn from the National Council for the Study of the *Securitate* Archive [ACNSAS]. The aim was not a quantitative inventory of information on the celebration of the Eucharist in the communist prisons, but a qualitative presentation of those descriptions concerning the sacramental act, starting with the preparation/procurement of the items needed to celebrate the Eucharist, the manner of celebration, and realization of the sacramental event through Communion. Descriptions of Eucharistic celebrations in the memorial literature are extremely disparate and often only provide a brief summary. The majority of the accounts concern the period 1949–1964, during which the Romanian communist regime adopted a totalitarian stance of political repression and religious suppression. Most accounts regard sacramental events that took place in the prisons of Pitești, Aiud, and Gherla. The Pitești penitentiary is renowned for its brutal ‘re-education’ program, involving psychological and physical torture aimed at breaking the faith and moral values of the detainees. This program was later implemented in Aiud and Gherla prisons, where religious practices were strictly forbidden under threat of harsh punishment.<sup>12</sup> Another important site, however, is the Târgu-Ocna sanatorium prison which became a place of intense spiritual resistance, with prisoners engaging in clandestine prayer and religious services, due to the presence of the ‘group of mystics’– political prisoners, who through prayer and hesychasm

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Prisons in Romania. Case Study: Valeriu Gafencu,’ *Analele Universității Dunărea de Jos din Galați. Seria Istorie* 11 (2012): 207–222.

<sup>11</sup> See: George Daniel Achim, ‘Euharistia – viețuire în Hristos în temnițele comuniste,’ *Altarul Reîntregirii* 19, suppl. 2 (2014): 79–90; Dragoș Ursu, ‘Euharistia ca fundament al martiriului în închisorile comuniste,’ *Altarul Reîntregirii* 19, suppl. 2 (2014): 429–434; Jan Nicolae, ‘Potirul este viața mea.’ Părintele Ioan Iovan cuminecătorul. Euharistie și martiriu în viața unui preot român în închisorile comuniste,’ *Altarul Reîntregirii* 19, suppl. 1 (2014): 327–358.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example: Alin Mureșan, Dumitru Lăcătușu, *Casa Terorii: documente privind penitenciarul Pitești (1947–1977)* (Iași: Polirom, 2009); Mircea Stănescu, *Reeducarea în România comunistă (1945–1952). Aiud, Suceava, Pitești, Brașov* (Iași: Polirom, 2010); Ursu, *Reeducare*.

underwent intense spiritual transformation and mystical experiences while enduring persecution.<sup>15</sup>

## 1. The Eucharistic reserve and the distribution of the Holy Gifts

Celebration of the Eucharist was discouraged. Lack of access to bread and wine and other items necessary for its celebration, as well as significant risks to the clergy who participated made it very challenging. However, there was no shortage of opportunities, and prominent ministers in prisons succeeded in creating a minimal liturgical context for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Sometimes, for example, they were able to engage in this ministry by applying the principle of *oikonomia* to overcome the more typical canonical or liturgical rigors. Still, frequency of Communion was generally sporadic. However, there were a few emblematic priestly figures who managed to administer the Sacrament daily. For example, an note by *Bucur Dumitru* (conspiratorial name), on December 2, 1959 at Gherla penitentiary, about his cell-mate, Fr. Ioan Iovan, one of the most renowned clerics in the Romanian communist prisons,<sup>14</sup> is very revealing:

[Ioan Iovan] constantly maintains a mystical and uplifting religious atmosphere through liturgical services twice a day, daily communion and confession and daily talks on the lives of saints. Every morning 30–40 prisoners receive Holy Communion, and last Sunday the number reached 45 out of the 55 in the room. At any hour of the day or night he is ready to hear someone’s confession, or to give Communion to someone. For this, he is credited with a saintly life that places him above all the priests in the prison. Even believers of other denominations have a sense of awe for this man, which is why his word carries great weight among the inmates. Among the most ardent followers of Fr. Iovan are the following: Mussat Radu, Berdena S. Mihai, Barbu Stan, Chelșoiu Nicanor and Rociu. They take daily communion and fully approve of the mystical aspect of Fr. Iovan’s activities.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Dragoș Ursu, ‘Viața spirituală și ethosul misionar în închisorile comuniste. Studiu de caz: Închisoarea Târgu-Ocna între anii 1950–1953,’ *Altarul Reîntregirii* 3 (2015): 307–317.

<sup>14</sup> Vasile Manea, *Preoți ortodocși în închisorile comuniste* (Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea, 2004), 143–145.

<sup>15</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 211014, vol. 1, ff. 234–236.

Similarly, Nicu Cucoli, who was imprisoned in 1959 in Jilava penitentiary (a transit and sorting penitentiary for counter-revolutionary adherents<sup>16</sup>) for legionary activity, remembers how Fr. Chiriac, who was imprisoned the same year, used to celebrate the Eucharist and give Communion to inmates almost every day. Cucoli recounts that: '[Fr. Chiriac] would impart [the Holy Gifts] to us with such faith and joy as I have never seen. He lived so intensely the moment of the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion that it is hard for me to relate.'<sup>17</sup>

At times, Eucharistic reserve procured from outside prison walls was used. For example, Fr. Justin Pârnu, another renowned priest who was incarcerated at Aiud penitentiary in 1949, and from 1955 to 1959,<sup>18</sup> tells of how clerics who knew they were about to be arrested by the communists would prepare the Eucharist so that they could take it with them before imprisonment:

Holy Communion was brought from outside, mostly by prisoners who had been condemned once before. ... They would take a little piece of bread, white or black, and they would make pea-shaped lumps into which they would put the Sacrament. They would make two, three, four, five hundred such pieces. They would take the coat or the cloak in which they were to be imprisoned, and they stuffed the Holy Communion all over the coat. Thus, the Eucharist was brought inside prisons.<sup>19</sup>

Sometimes, humane wardens discreetly brought the Holy Gifts to imprisoned priests. Fr. Dimitrie Bejan, who was imprisoned at Aiud penitentiary in 1959,<sup>20</sup> testified that a priest from the city sent him the dried Holy Gifts (the Eucharistic reserve) through a guard.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Dictionarul penitenciarelor din România comunistă*, ed. Andrei Muraru (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 555–563.

<sup>17</sup> Manu Ionuț Dragoș, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist. Clerici ortodocși în închisorile comuniste (1945–1964)* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 'Lucian Blaga' University of Sibiu, 2017), 192.

<sup>18</sup> See: Nicolae Cătălin Luchian, Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Clerici și mireni mărturisitori din Arhiepiscopia Iașilor, în închisorile comuniste (1945–1964)* (Iași: Doxologia, 2017), 123–124.

<sup>19</sup> 'Părintele Justin Pârnu: Împărtășania și Sf. Liturghie în temniță,' *Atitudini*, December 13, 2023, <https://atitudini.com/2023/12/parintele-justin-parvu-impartasania-si-sf-liturghie-in-temnita>.

<sup>20</sup> See: Luchian, Petcu, *Clerici*, 37–40; Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Dictionarul clericilor și mirenilor ortodocși români mărturisitori în detenția comunistă [1945–1964]* (București: Basilica, 2017), 40–43.

<sup>21</sup> Dimitrie Bejan, *Vifornița cea mare* (București: Editura Tehnică, 1996), 88.

Occasionally, trustworthy guards even distributed the Holy Gifts among certain inmates, putting themselves at high risk. *Târâianu*, an informant and cellmate of Fr. Ioan Iovan at Brăila penitentiary, reported that on the evening of July 13, 1955, after 10 p.m., Fr. Iovan asked Sergeant Gheorghe to take Communion to Fr. Gherasim who was sick.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, it was extremely difficult to preserve the Holy Gifts and offer Communion to inmates who did not have a priest in their cells. One place where the Holy Gifts were left to be taken by other prisoners was the toilet, as Fr. Justin Pârveu testifies:

In the morning, the bedpans were taken by the inmates to be emptied at the stone closet. There, by Morse code, we would announce to the neighboring cell: ‘Look, we have something up there...’ We had a certain place where Communion, holy water and antidoron were placed. Whoever went there first ran there, because the guardian was following him, went in, grabbed it, put it in his pocket and took it to the cell.<sup>25</sup>

Fr. Constantin Voicescu, who was imprisoned in Târgu-Ocna sanatorium-penitentiary from 1950 to 1954,<sup>24</sup> recounts how Fr. Viorel Todea, who was hospitalized there between 1953–1954,<sup>25</sup> distributed the Holy Gifts: ‘[Fr. Todea] was keeping the Holy Communion. We would confess and partake like in the catacombs, in a bathroom somewhere. Or we would go for a walk and confess, and in a corner, we would receive Communion.’<sup>26</sup>

Fr. Ioan Giurgiu, who was in detention between 1959 and 1964 at Aiud, Pitești and Salcia labor camp,<sup>27</sup> used to keep the Eucharistic

<sup>22</sup> Andrei Andreicut, *Mărturisitori pentru Hristos* (Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea, 2005), 61–62; ACNSAS, file P. 160, vol. 11, f. 5.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Părintele Justin Pârveu: Împărtășania și Sf. Liturghie în temniță,’ *Atitudini*, December 13, 2023, <https://atitudini.com/2023/12/parintele-justin-parveu-impartasania-si-sf-liturghie-in-temnita>.

<sup>24</sup> Constantin I. Stan, ‘Părintele Constantin Voicescu și reeducările de la Târgu Ocna și Aiud,’ *Analele Buzăului* 2 (2010): 199–208; Petcu, *Dicționarul*, 358–360.

<sup>25</sup> Petcu, *Dicționarul*, 343–345.

<sup>26</sup> Mihai Rădulescu, *Rugul Aprins: duhovnicii ortodoxiei, sub lespezi, în gherlele comuniste* (București: Ramida, 2013), 234.

<sup>27</sup> Salcia was situated in the Danube Delta, where inmates (including political detainees, intellectuals and members of the clergy) were subjected to gruelling labor, often working long hours in extreme weather conditions; *Dicționarul penitenciarelor*, 141–145.

reserve in a toothpaste tube, which was passed between inmates who partook at certain critical moments.<sup>28</sup>

Most often, the Holy Gifts were hidden by prisoners in their clothing, as Fr. Dimitrie Bejan testified: ‘I kept [the Holy Communion] hidden in the collar of my shirt, and when I was prepared, I would partake. And if one of the prisoners was sick or dying, I heard his confession and gave him Communion on the sly, and so he would depart to Christ.’<sup>29</sup> Likewise, Grigorie Caraza relates that when he was in detention late in the fall of 1955 in Aiud prison, he believed that he would die soon, and asked the priest in his cell, who had the Holy Gifts hidden in his cloth, to hear his confession:

The priest asked the other two companions to retreat to the corner of the bed near the door and even to stand and talk, thus blocking the prying eyes of the guard who was watching us from the door. ... After performing this Sacrament [i.e., Confession, A/N], he unfastened with a nail the hem of his linen cloth in a certain place, from which he took out – wrapped in a piece of clean cloth – a crumb of Bread that had been soaked in Wine. It was the Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of the Savior.<sup>30</sup>

After partaking, Caraza smelled a powerful odor of basil, which overwhelmed him. Asking the priest where he was keeping basil, the priest replied that he did not have any, assuring him that he had had an experience of divine grace.

According to the testimony of Emanoil Paraschivaș, Fr. Ilie Lăcătușu kept the Holy Gifts hidden in the hem of his shirt sleeve at Periprava labor camp,<sup>31</sup> where they met sometime between 1961 and 1964.<sup>32</sup> The two were in separate cells. Paraschivaș relates how he received Communion:

On Saturday, when the bells started ringing at the church near the prison, I heard, through Morse code through the ceiling of my cell: ‘Ready.’ I went

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<sup>28</sup> Dumitru Bogdan Bădiță, *Martiri și mărturie creștină în temnițele comuniste din România* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bucharest, 2020), 194.

<sup>29</sup> Bejan, *Vișornia*, 88.

<sup>30</sup> Grigore Caraza, *Aiud însângerat* (Iași: TipoMoldova, 2015), 77.

<sup>31</sup> Situated in the Danube Delta, as Salcia, this labor camp was renowned for its extermination regime; *Dicționarul penitenciarelor*, 136–140.

<sup>32</sup> For Fr. Ilie Lăcătușu (1909–1985), see: Petcu, *Dicționarul*, 185–188

to the window and in a hole made by someone in the shutter that was stopping the sun from shining on me, I saw a string hanging from the window, which brought me the true Light.<sup>35</sup>

Fr. Zosim Oancea recounts that, during his detention in Aiud penitentiary where he was imprisoned from 1949 until 1957,<sup>34</sup> the Eucharist was distributed among prisoners through faithful detainees called ‘parachutes,’ who sent the Holy Gifts to all the floors of the prison. Fr. Zosim recounts:

The Eucharist was put in a little bag, from which the person who received it, on each floor, distributed it across the floor. Every day pills of kneaded bread were made, in which a crumb of Holy Communion was put, thus allowing more people to receive it. The communion followed a ritual signaled through beating in the pipe. At the first beating the prayer was said; at the next beating everyone swallowed the pill; and at the last beating everyone knew that, as a priest, I said the prayers after Holy Communion.<sup>35</sup>

If there were no priests, lay inmates would partake of the Holy Gifts by themselves, in solitude. This practice was permitted given the extreme circumstances. However, from a liturgical point of view this was significant, since the Byzantine rite does not accept the practice of the faithful administering the Eucharist to themselves, not even in the case of hermits. Yet, in such case, lay detainees partook of the Holy Gifts with great reverence, after previously receiving a priest’s permission, thus maintaining as much of the Church’s liturgical order as possible. For example, Ioan Ianolide, who was considered by the *Securitate* as one of the vectors of ‘religious mysticism’ in communist prisons,<sup>36</sup> recounts how he partook from the Eucharistic reserve during Christmas in Pitești penitentiary in 1949. After he confessed to a priest who was in another cell, using Morse code through the pipe of the radiator, he partook of the Presanctified Gifts, which were concealed in a fold of his coat:

<sup>35</sup> Emanoil Paraschivaș, *Jocul destinului* (București: Editura Brad, 2000), 135.

<sup>34</sup> Petcu, *Dicționarul*, 251–252.

<sup>35</sup> Zosim Oancea, *Datoria de a mărturisi. Închisorile unui preot ortodox* (București: Harisma, 1995), 183–184.

<sup>36</sup> See: Adrian Nicolae Petcu, ‘Spiritualitate creștină versus legionarism în detenția comunistă. Studiu de caz: Ioan Ianolide,’ *Tabor* 10 (2015): 47–49.

The preparatory prayers for Communion had been said by the priest [from another cell; A/N]. I searched in a fold of my coat with dozens of patches layered one on top of the other, and from a tiny silk bag I took out a particle of the Holy Sacraments, hidden in a millet grain, which I kept as my most precious possession. The Holy Sacraments were brought into the dungeon by a devious and dangerous way, through a monk who had been arrested about two years before, and who had entrusted the Bread and Wine to the inmates who wished to commune. So, as I was about to take the crumb of Communion, I do not know how I dropped it. I began to look for it feverishly, but I could not find it. Then, I decided to wipe with my tongue a portion of the floorboard where I thought it had fallen, but I still could not find it. I assumed the Communion had taken place. I brightened and returned to the bedside in prayer.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, Nicolae Steinhardt – a jew who was baptized into the Orthodox faith in Jilava penitentiary in 1960<sup>38</sup> – recounts how he and his cell companions took Communion in Gherla prison on Pascha in 1961:

A long time ago, Marinică P. told Sile Cătălinoiu and me that he has, perfectly sewn in a corner of a handkerchief, some crumbs of Communion, given to him about three years ago by Fr. Ioan Iovan, the confessor of Vladimirești Monastery. We decided, however, in the absence of a priest in the cell, to partake on our own. We fasted on Saturday and Sunday mornings and we kept some of Saturday's food ... Marinică knew perfectly all the prayers before Communion. ... We fasted, we prayed. At noon on Sunday, we went up to the fourth floor where Sile's bed was. Marinică recited at length the whole series of prayers. Then we each said: 'I believe, O Lord, and I confess...' <sup>39</sup> and 'Take, eat...' <sup>40</sup> From the bridge of our palms, carefully washed, we each swallowed a crumb of Communion; the crumbs were unbelievably small, almost invisible. ... Marinică then said the thanksgiving prayers.<sup>41</sup>

As shown in the quotation above, even under the starvation conditions of the extermination regime imposed in some prisons, inmates

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<sup>37</sup> Ioan Ianolide, *Întoarcerea la Hristos* (București: Christiana, 2006), 263–264.

<sup>38</sup> Petcu, *Dicționarul*, 321–324.

<sup>39</sup> A preparatory prayer for Communion.

<sup>40</sup> The words of institution.

<sup>41</sup> Nicolae Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericirii* (Rohia: Editura Mănăstirii Rohia, 2005), 209–210.

prepared themselves by prayer and fasting prior to receiving the Holy Gifts. Virgil Maxim also attests to such an ascetic practice describing Pascha night at Jilava prison in 1951. Throughout Holy Week, the faithful detainees imposed a program of silence, meditation and prayer. On Pascha, they woke up at midnight: ‘Some of whom I had revealed that I had the Holy Communion, received a crumb and they were very pleased. Most did not think themselves worthy to receive it.’<sup>42</sup>

According to Steinhardt a Communion ritual was improvised. Prayers of the usual Office of Holy Communion, which is found in the Horologion,<sup>43</sup> were recited from memory and formed the main part of the ‘ritual.’ Other elements were added, depending on the piety and memory of the detainees. Steinhardt, for example, recounts the recitation of the institution narrative, which is a part of the Byzantine anaphora.

## 2. The celebration of the Eucharist

The difficulty of obtaining the Eucharist in the hostile and discouraging atmosphere of religious prohibition in detention encouraged liturgical aberrations. One such case took place in 1957 at Râmnicu Sărat penitentiary – a prison recognized for its isolation and starvation of political prisoners –<sup>44</sup>, as recalled by the former politician Ion Diaconescu:

[I]n one year, engineer Puiu, our friend who was with us, after we confessed to Fr. Balica, asked the confessor, through Morse, if he could also give us Communion through Morse code. ... He proposed that we each would keep a piece of cornbread, the priest would say the necessary prayers, we would concentrate on his signal, and he would bless our corn! The priest replied that he could not imagine such a thing. He told him that wine was needed, that corn flour was not suitable, and that other things were also required.<sup>45</sup>

The priest’s opposition was understandable. The *Hieratikon* clearly stipulated the use of leavened bread, made of pure wheat flour, with

<sup>42</sup> Virgil Maxim, *Imn pentru crucea purtată* (București: Editura Antim, 2002), 242–244.

<sup>43</sup> *The Unabbreviated Horologion or Book of the Hours* (Holy Trinity Publications, 1997), 377–395.

<sup>44</sup> *Dicționarul penitenciarelor*, 440–451.

<sup>45</sup> Mihai Rădulescu, Irineu Slătineanu, *Preoți în cătușe* (București: Ramida, 1997), 22.

clean water and a little salt. If the minister dares to use bread made from other seeds or to which other foods have been added (milk, egg, etc.), the Sacrament is not valid and the minister is deprived of the grace of priesthood.<sup>46</sup> Bread for celebrating the Divine Liturgy would usually have been procured from the daily ration of the detainees. However, the lack of pure liturgical wine was also a major issue. Again, the *Hieratikon* was very specific about the necessity of using a pure and quality wine: 'And if anyone dares to celebrate the Sacrament with other juices, apart from the wine of the vine itself, or with vinegary wine, or mixed with anything else, he will not celebrate the Sacrament at all, rather the priest will be in grave sin and will be deprived of the priesthood.'<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, when the Eucharistic reserve was consumed, to ensure the continuation of the Holy Gifts, priests had to improvise, relying on the theological justification of *oikonomia*, given the extreme pastoral need, while expressing concern for the validity of the Sacrament. A common solution was the use of medicinal wine.

For example, in Aiud prison, Fr. Zosim used therapeutic tonic wine from the prison infirmary and a loaf of bread from his daily ration.<sup>48</sup> Fr. Viorel Todea remembers how in Târgu-Ocna penitentiary, where he was in detention from 1951 until 1954, the sick political prisoners in danger of death asked him to receive their confession and to give them Communion. For this, he used tonic wine and his own chest as altar for the celebration of the Eucharist:

[W]ith God's will, with the bread and tonic wine strained through the wadding, and my chest as altar, we celebrated the Eucharist and so we had Holy Communion all the time for those who wanted it, and they left the world with a peaceful heart. The less sick came to partake also. When body searches were carried out to find the Holy Communion, a guard found the box in which Fr. Todea kept the Holy Sacrament. However, he said to the priest: 'Don't worry! May God watch over you!'<sup>49</sup>

Some priests managed to produce a sort of wine substitute from fermented marmalade. Fr. Constantin Voicescu recounts that in

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<sup>46</sup> *Liturghier* (București: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1937), 359–360.

<sup>47</sup> *Liturghier*, 354.

<sup>48</sup> Oancea, *Datoria de a mărturisi*, 183.

<sup>49</sup> Viorel Todea, 'Amintiri din gulagul comunist,' in *Noi nu am avut tinerețe. Cronica rezistenței anticomuniste, 1945–1989* (Alba Iulia: Altip, 2005), 153.

Târgu-Ocna penitentiary he used to prepare his wine from the marmalade he received in his food ration or he used the tonic wine he obtained among his medicines.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Fr. Dumitru Bălașa recalls how the Eucharistic elements were prepared for the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord in Aiud penitentiary (where he was imprisoned in 1960):

Occasionally, instead of cornbread or polenta, we would get a slice of bread, about the size of two boxes of matches. Rarely in the morning we were given two acorns of marmalade. ... One man's slice of bread was the 'artos.' I would put a cup of water in a canteen – we did not have enough water – and mixed it with the marmalade. In three days, it fermented and we would make a kind of wine.<sup>51</sup>

In 1963, Fr. Dumitru Bălașa was transferred from Aiud to the Salcia forced labor colony where he was able to celebrate the Eucharist, preparing the liturgical wine from the raisins he received as a packet:

[O]n Sundays, we had cleaning day ..., but still found time to celebrate the Eucharist. Those sentenced to many years in prison were the martyrs on whose chests we, the 'Bandits,' namely 3–4 priests, celebrated the Divine Liturgy. ... [S]ome of us who were entitled to a package were given raisins from home. We made wine from them. Here, we weren't staked out by the guards. We celebrated the Eucharist, which lasted an hour, and literally everyone took Communion. Among us, there were also some cowards who did not take part in the celebration, fearing the snitches who had begun to believe that if they serve the devil, they would get home faster.<sup>52</sup>

Occasionally, guards with conscience would smuggle wine inside prisons and give it to priests. Fr. Justin Pârveu recounts that when he was in the mine in Baia Sprie (1950), a few humane guards brought him wine and bread for the Eucharist.<sup>53</sup> A similar case is remembered by Fr. Ioan Vladovici, who was imprisoned in Borzești labor camp. Because he helped a guard take a quantity of flour from the camp for his family

<sup>50</sup> Rădulescu, *Rugul aprins*, 234.

<sup>51</sup> Dumitru Bălașa, 'Sfânta Liturghie în celulă,' *Porunca iubirii* 3 (2001): 34.

<sup>52</sup> Bălașa, 'Sfânta Liturghie,' 35.

<sup>53</sup> Ieromonahul Teognost, *Părintele Justin Pârveu și bogăția unei vieți dăruită lui Hristos*, vol. 1 (Iași: Credința Strămoșească, 2006), 125.

displaced near the prison, the guard gave him a return a small bottle of penicillin with wine and some thin finger-thick ampoules in which he was later able to keep Holy Communion.<sup>54</sup> Fr. Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, an emblematic figure of the anti-communist resistance,<sup>55</sup> also recounted how, after his second imprisonment in 1979 in Aiud penitentiary, a guard brought him bread to celebrate the Eucharist.<sup>56</sup>

However, in extreme situations, some priests celebrated the Eucharist with water instead of wine. One of the outstanding spiritual figures in Romanian communist prisons was Fr. Arsenie Papacioc.<sup>57</sup> According to an informative note given on February 8, 1960 at Aiud penitentiary by a cellmate, *Andreescu Teodor* (conspiratorial name),<sup>58</sup> the hieromonk used water instead of wine for the Eucharist:

By 7 o'clock, when the call is made, the Liturgy is over. At the moment of communion, everyone in the room takes a piece of bread and a sip of water. The priest was trying to excuse the shortages in which he was obliged to officiate the Liturgy, saying: 'I do the Liturgy as in church and if the good Lord sees our need and wills it, this bread and water is his very Body and Blood.' Because this practice is officiated daily, now each one, in turn, gives from his bread the piece that is used the next day as Eucharist.

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<sup>54</sup> Dragoș, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, 189.

<sup>55</sup> See: Manea, *Preoți ortodocși*, 66; also: Lavinia Stan, 'Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, the Forgotten Anticommunist Dissident,' in *Liberals, Conservatives, and Mavericks: On Christian Churches of Eastern Europe since 1980. A Festschrift for Sabrina P. Ramet*, ed. Frank Cibulka and Zachary T. Irwin (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2024), 205–221.

<sup>56</sup> '[W]ith that bread I think I celebrated the most beautiful Liturgy, the most uplifting. At the end, the guard came, opened the door and said to me: 'Father – it was the first time he had ever called me 'Father', until then he had called me 'popă'[in Romanian, this is a pejorative term for 'priest', A/N] – wherever you go, don't tell anyone that I gave you bread, for they'll kick me out!' He said 'them' as if he belonged to my side, not theirs. I replied: 'No, Mr. Warden! What can I say? Well, you served with me here; you were the angel who brought me the body of Jesus! How can I talk about it and hurt you?' ... Well, God inspired him, no doubt; it was not his good thought. However, since then he became gentler. He stopped insulting me, he stopped kicking me. That gesture changed him;' 'Cea mai frumoasă Liturghie a părintelui Gheorghe Calciu din temnița Aiudului,' *Fericiți cei prigonți pentru dreptate*, March 3, 2011, <https://fericiteicprigoniti.net/cea-mai-frumoasa-liturghie-a-parintelui-gheorghe-calcu-din-temnita-aiudului>.

<sup>57</sup> Petcu, *Dicționarul*, 261–266.

<sup>58</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 185003, vol. 3, ff. 183–193.

Fr. Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa<sup>59</sup> also recounted how he celebrated the Eucharist with bread and water during his second imprisonment in 1979 in Aiud penitentiary: ‘I had no wine, but only bread, and I used water as wine, because the Savior had turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana, and I thought that here too, in my suffering, it would be sanctified. I celebrated [the Eucharist] every Sunday.’<sup>60</sup>

The use of water instead of wine in the Eucharist presented a significant theological and canonical dilemma, since the Orthodox Church does not accept consecration without wine as valid. Using water was however an act of profound faith. The priests trusted that God’s grace would compensate for their deprivation, acknowledging his ability to work outside normal means and make their offering acceptable.

The lack of suitable liturgical objects, vestments and of the antimimension, which serves as a ‘movable’ altar and in which holy martyr relics are sewn, was another serious reason for the inner turmoil for priests who wished to celebrate the Eucharist according to liturgical and canonical norms.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Fr. Arsenie Papacioc illustrates how such shortcomings were overcome. This is what his cellmate in Aiud penitentiary recalls in the note already mentioned above:

He easily overcame all the difficulties he encountered and simply and practically improvised all the utensils he needed ... Instead of the epitrachelion, without which the Divine Liturgy could not be celebrated, he made a string chain, which he very piously passed around his neck in the morning, after blessing it first, and then, after the Liturgy, he wrapped it around a button on his coat. The stove takes the place of the Holy Table and the Holy Cross

<sup>59</sup> Manea, *Preoți ortodocși*, 66; see also: Lavinia Stan, ‘Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, the Forgotten Anticommunist Dissident,’ in *Liberals, Conservatives, and Mavericks: On Christian Churches of Eastern Europe since 1980. A Festschrift for Sabrina P. Ramet*, ed. Frank Cibulka and Zachary T. Irwin (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2024), 203–221.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Cea mai frumoasă Liturghie a părintelui Gheorghe Calciu din temnița Aiudului,’ *Fericiți cei prizoniți pentru dreptate*, March 3, 2011, <https://fericiteiceiprizoniti.net/cea-mai-frumoasa-liturghie-a-parintelui-gheorghe-calcu-din-temnita-aiudului>.

<sup>61</sup> The liturgical handbooks of the time prevented the priest from performing any liturgical act unless he had the epitrachelion and prohibited the celebration of the Eucharist in the absence of the antimimension; Vasile Mitrofanovici, Teodor Tarnavski, Nectarie Nicolae Cotlarciuc, *Liturgica Bisericii Ortodoxe. Cursuri universitare* (Cernăuți: Editura Consiliului Eparhial Ortodox Român din Bucovina, 1929), 248, 257; Ilie Teodorescu, *Îndrumări liturgice pentru preoți și popor* (București: Editura Librăriei Socec & Co, 1923), 26, 54; Badea Cireșanu, *Tezaurul liturgic al Sfintei Biserici Creștine Ortodoxe de Răsărit*, vol. 3 (București: Tipografia Gutenberg, 1912), 100.

is made of two tiny sticks kept loose, in the back pocket of his coat, in order to avoid suspicion. He fits these carefully on the stove before morning prayer begins, and puts a thicker piece of wood in front of them, so as not to be seen through the peephole. The holy diskos is a piece of wood that he carries very carefully in the back pocket of his pants. The water-cup takes the place of the holy chalice, in which he puts water instead of wine. He withholds bread from the ration he receives in the morning, cutting with a certain ritual only from the top, as the holy Lamb. The only thing he misses is the antimimension, which he can no longer improvise, for it requires a martyr's bone. Initially, he had a piece of the relics of St. Mercurius, but he lost it with great sorrow in a search in Jilava prison.<sup>62</sup>

Sometimes clerics or monks managed to bring holy relics into prisons, as Fr. Constantin Voicescu testifies: 'In Aiud, there was someone who had holy relics with him. The Eucharist could be celebrated.'<sup>63</sup> In his turn, at Galați penitentiary, where he was imprisoned in 1955, Fr. Ioan Iovan had sewn on the back of his tank top the antimimension, and as a chalice he used an ebonite medicine box, which he had consecrated.<sup>64</sup> Fr. Zosim Oancea, during his detention in Aiud penitentiary, improvised an antimimension, sewing a sliver of the Holy Body in a corner of a handkerchief: 'As if by a miracle I found on me, sewn in a corner of my coat, a crumb of Holy Communion. I sewed it in the corner of a handkerchief, and in this way, I also had an antimimension, thinking that this particle of Holy Communion replaced the holy relics.'<sup>65</sup>

To substitute the antimimension, there were cases in which priests celebrated the Eucharist on the chest of either dying prisoners or of senior condemned inmates, who were considered true martyrs. Fr. Justin Pârvu relates one such case. There were eight sick people in the infirmary of Gherla penitentiary, where he was imprisoned in 1954. One of them was dying. Fr. Justin heard his confession. The next night, Fr. Justin, together with other two priests, celebrated the Eucharist on the body of the dying man. Fr. Justin confesses: 'I have never celebrated a [Divine] Liturgy, a more fervent prayer, in all vestments, according to all liturgical rules, as I have done it on this body.' Everyone

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<sup>62</sup> ACNSAS, Informative fund, file 185003, vol. 3, ff. 183–193.

<sup>63</sup> Rădulescu, *Rugul Aprins*, 234.

<sup>64</sup> Cristina Chichernea, *Părintele Ioan Iovan de la Mănăstirea Nașterii Maicii Domnului – Recea de Mureș* (Târgu Mureș: s.n., 2010), 42.

<sup>65</sup> Oancea, *Datoria de a mărturisi*, 183.

took Communion. The one on whose body they had celebrated the Eucharist died within two hours. Three other sick people who had communed died within a week.<sup>66</sup> Fr. Ioan Vladovici used to celebrate the Divina Liturgy in a similar manner during his detention in Borzești labor camp:

[F]inding ourselves ... with the minimum necessary for the celebration of the Holy Sacrament, we retreated somewhere in a sheltered pit on the site. ... [U]sually, a priest would sit down on his back, and we would celebrate the Eucharist on his chest. We were inspired in this by the fact that the Divine Liturgy is usually celebrated only on the antimimension, which symbolizes the shroud of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in it are sewn parts of a martyr's relics. During this time, one of us stood on watch while the rest prayed, saying the appropriate prayers, which we knew by heart. ... [W]e whispered the prayers and the formulas: 'Take, eat...' and 'Drink from this, all of you...'. We did not have much time, but at least for the consecration there was always time.<sup>67</sup>

Fr. Dumitru Bălașa recalls how he celebrated the Eucharist in Aiud penitentiary, serving in a similar manner on the chest of a prisoner for the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord, but offers more details on the form of the rite which was celebrated:

The prisoner with the longest sentence would lay on the floor, while the oldest priest – for, thank God, there were enough of us – placed the slice of bread and the wine in the canteen on the chest of the one lying face up. With a towel on his shoulder,<sup>68</sup> instead of an epitachelion, he gave the blessing with his palms crossed: 'Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' It was answered: 'Amen.' Then followed the great synapte – all from memory. Readings from the Apostle and Gospels were said from memory, the [Eucharistic] gifts were consecrated, while all seven of us knelt. ... We blessed them both, sang the 'Lord's Prayer,' and the elder priest gave to each one a little piece of the Lord's Body and each

<sup>66</sup> Adrian Alui Gheorghe, *Părintele Justin Pârnu și morală unei vieți castigate* (Iași: Credința Strămoșească, 2007), 94.

<sup>67</sup> Dragoș, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, 189.

<sup>68</sup> According to St. Symeon of Thessalonica, in case of necessity, if a priest does not have an epitachelion, he may use a towel or even a piece of rope; *Responsiones ad Gabrielem Pentapolitanum*, PG 155, 868–869.

one tasted from the canteen three times, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The ‘lifer’ would then rise and make three prostrations, saying: ‘Bless and forgive me, a sinner,’ and he would be given a particle and the Holy Blood from the canteen. There were discussions, whether our sacrifice is received or not? ‘Where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them’ [Matt. 18:20]. We all began to believe that the Divine Liturgy celebrated on a martyr, an innocent condemned man, instead of an altar or antimension, ... was accepted. Prayers were said with tears, thinking of those at home, thinking of our dead. The heavens opened, and we saw the light surrounding the Divinity. Hope in the Almighty’s help strengthened us in suffering, in pain, and even if we died, we died in God, in eternity.<sup>69</sup>

The celebration of the full Divine Liturgy was obviously impossible, so priests had to focus only on the essential parts of the rite – which has the Anaphora as its heart –, maintaining however as much as possible of its normal sequence. Litanies and readings were said from memory and sometimes hymns were whispered. Another important part of the precommunion rites was the Lord’s prayer, which fostered the unity of the faithful prisoners as sons of God, who forgive those who trespass against them. Priests and their lay companions were not only worried about the guards, but also the informers among them. In such cases, priests would celebrate the Divine Liturgy on their own, in great secrecy. Fr. Zosim recounts that in Aiud penitentiary, if he had an informer in his cell, he would perform the consecration of the Eucharistic gifts at night, lying on his back in bed, covered with a blanket and with the antimension and the elements on his chest.<sup>70</sup>

Fr. Calciu-Dumitreasa recounts how deacon Tudor Bej,<sup>71</sup> whom he met in Aiud prison in 1961, officiated the Liturgy:

He rarely celebrated the Liturgy. He was sitting on the bed and we were sitting in our places or walking around, to make it appear to the supervisor that we were doing the usual cell duties. Meanwhile, we were listening to him saying what he knew by heart from the Divine Liturgy. We listened, walked around and responded in a low voice ‘Lord have mercy’

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<sup>69</sup> Bălașa, ‘Sfânta Liturghie,’ 35.

<sup>70</sup> Oancea, *Datoria de a mărturisi*, 183.

<sup>71</sup> Petcu, *Dicționarul*, 38–39.

or whatever. Then, gave us Communion with what he had in the folds of his shirt. He took out a very small sliver, and he crumble it up even more so we could all partake. Beyond the encouragement he gave us, the grace of Holy Communion strengthened our souls very much.<sup>72</sup>

That testimony exposes an interesting practice. As a deacon, Bej could not properly celebrate the Eucharist: he could not say the anaphora, nor the prayers attributed to the priest. However, he integrated communion from the Eucharistic reserve into an improvised rite on the structure of an ordinary celebration. Most likely, he was saying the diaconal litanies of the Divine Liturgy, and certain hymns or liturgical responses specific to it were sung. It is curious why deacon Bej would have resorted to such a practice when the *Typika Office*<sup>73</sup> was more adequate. It is possible, however, that the function of this service as a communion rite was not known to most Romanian clergy at the time.

It should be noted that the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church has never contested the validity of the Eucharist celebrated in communist prisons under the conditions described above.

### 3. Liturgy and ecumenism

The Orthodox Church prohibits participation in inter-confessional Eucharistic celebrations. However, despite confessional differences, prisoners of various Christian traditions (Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Roman-Catholic, Protestant), showed unity in suffering. An extraordinary moment was the inter-confessional Eucharistic celebration (Orthodox and Catholic) in Văcărești prison,<sup>74</sup> on Pascha of 1956, about which Fr. Iovan testifies:

[I]n Văcărești, in the harsh conditions of detention, I experienced a moment of great spiritual elevation. I managed to convince, not without difficulty, the Roman-Catholic vicar, Fr. Xaveriu from Iași<sup>75</sup> (he died in prison), and

<sup>72</sup> *Viața părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după mărturiile sale și ale altora* (București: Christiana, 2007), 70–71.

<sup>73</sup> For this service, see: *The Unabbreviated Holorogion*, 135–144.

<sup>74</sup> This was a transit prison for political detainees and also served as hospital of the General Directorate of Penitentiaries; *Dicționarul penitenciarelor*, 525–530.

<sup>75</sup> In fact, Egon Xaveriu Haider (1920–1956) was the vicar of the Roman-Catholic parish of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Brăila. He was arrested by the communist

the Greek-Catholic priest Nicolae Opreș,<sup>76</sup> former parish priest at Bonțida near Cluj, to celebrate the Paschal Liturgy together. With only one moment of hesitation on the part of the vicar, that of the consecration, when the descent of the Holy Spirit was invoked for the transformation of the gifts,<sup>77</sup> everything took place in a communion in which we all found ourselves, regardless of our confession, as sons of God, united in Christ. This was followed by the communion of all the prisoners in an atmosphere of spiritual exultation.<sup>78</sup>

From this account it is not clear how the inter-confessional celebration took place and what was the exact role of the Catholic ministers in the liturgical act or if Fr. Iovan was the only one who recited the Anaphora, while the others ministers participated just in silent prayer. What is clear is that all shared the same Communion.

This was not the only moment of inter-confessional communion in which Fr. Iovan was involved. The Greek-Catholic writer Nicolae Balotă testifies about inter-confessional communion in Jilava penitentiary in the same year:

The Catholic priests recited the words of the Mass every day [in prison], but this was not a Eucharist, not having the necessary liturgical wine. I myself had learned the entire text of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (including the priest's silent prayers), as well as the text of the Latin Mass. ... However, Fr. Iovan ... in Jilava celebrated the Eucharist daily; his service was not only the recitation of the liturgical text, valuable in itself as a chain of prayers, but it contained the essential liturgical mystery: the

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authorities in 1952 on charges of spying for the Vatican and died in 1956 in the Văcărești hospital prison.

<sup>76</sup> Not much is known about the Greek-Catholic priest Nicolae Opreș. According to his criminal records, he was born in 1901 in Armeni near Cluj and spent 16 years in the communist prisons of Aiud, Jilava, Văcărești, Gherla and Galați.

<sup>77</sup> The reluctance of the Catholic minister was due to the traditional theological view of the Catholic Church that transubstantiation takes place at the moment of the words of institution, while the teaching of the Orthodox Church emphasises that the consecration occurs during the invocation of the Holy Spirit, or epiclesis. Today, however, the doctrine of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on this subject is that the words of institution and the invocation of the Holy Spirit form an indivisible whole and both are necessary for a valid celebration of the Eucharist; see: Josef Krupa, 'The role of the epiclesis in transubstantiation,' *Colloquia Theologica Ottaviana* 37 (2021): 115–128.

<sup>78</sup> Cornel Nistea [interview with Fr. Ioan Iovan], 'În căutarea sensului suferinței,' Părintele Ioan Iovan, accessed August 1, 2024, <https://ioaniovann.ro/12-interviuri/9-in-cautarea-sensului-suferintei>.

transubstantiation. From him I was able to take Communion, and when we were separated he entrusted to me, in a tiny little bag with several little crumbs barely bigger than the needle's thread, the Holy Communion. ... Catholics and Orthodox alike partook of this Communion. I would be happy if this ecumenism from the communist prisons could bind us as brothers in a free world.<sup>79</sup>

On another occasion, when he was in Gherla penitentiary, Fr. Ioan celebrated the Eucharist with the Greek-Catholic priest Nicolae Opreș, with whom he celebrated Pascha at Văcărești, who offered him the liturgical answers of the psalter.<sup>80</sup> It is worth mentioning that the Holy Synod of the Romanian Patriarchate has not formulated an official point of view on Fr. Ioan Ioan's inter-confessional Eucharistic celebrations.

## Conclusions

Although under prohibition, the celebration of the Eucharist and the distribution of the Eucharistic Gifts in communist prisons was a reality that nourished the life of the Church in a detention environment that sought to annihilate any form of Christian spirituality. The Eucharist affirmed the detainees' faith and spiritual identity, directly defying the 're-education' sought by the atheistic communist regime. By being in a state of martyrdom, faithful prisoners experienced more intensely the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist. Priests had a central role in the dynamics of the liturgical life of those imprisoned, assuming the repressive measures of the prison apparatus. Their ministry had to face several practical and liturgical constraints, such as the lack of Eucharistic elements in accordance with Orthodox practice, the absence of liturgical objects that had to be improvised and the difficulty of preserving and distributing the Holy Gifts, which had to be protected from profanation. The harsh conditions also led some ministers to step back from certain liturgical rigors that would normally have been obligatory. Thus, instead of liturgical wine made from grapes, tonic wine

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<sup>79</sup> Nicolae Balotă, *Peregrin prin patria cuvintelor* (București: EuroPress, 2015), 80–81. On another occasion, Balotă recounts about Fr. Ioan: 'He, the Orthodox, gave us Communion and made me, the Catholic, the bearer of the crumbs of Communion for others, in the prison cells where I was to end up;' Cosmin Ciotloș [interview with Nicolae Balotă], 'Nu eu am ales Abisul luminat...', *România literară* 4 (2010): 10–11.

<sup>80</sup> Chichernea, *Părintele Ioan Ioan*, 54.

(which could be made from various fruits) or water was sometimes used. Moreover, in cases of isolation, the Eucharist was celebrated by the priest alone, without assistance.

The moments of Eucharistic communion in communist prisons were authentic and intense Christian experiences for those who participated with a sincere conscience. The *Securitate* sought through violence, isolation, informants and psychological warfare to disassociate political prisoners from each other; to break their trust in one another and prevent collective resistance both in prison and especially after release. However, the communal aspect of the Eucharist played a crucial role in fostering solidarity among inmates and reinforced their conscience that they are part of a suffering but living Church. Prisoners participated actively in the sacramental event both through prayer and their efforts to provide the Eucharistic matters, to maintain the secrecy of the Sacrament, to preserve the Holy Gifts and to impart them to other prisoners. Moreover, even some guards expressed solidarity with the faithful detainees, by providing materials necessary for the Eucharist, allowing moments for prayer, or even distributing the Holy Gifts to prisoners. These apparently small acts of humanity were in fact significant gestures of moral consciousness and even faith in an oppressive system that promoted atheistic ideology.

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## THE 1848 ENCYCLICAL OF EASTERN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHS AS A STILL RELEVANT POSITION ON CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

ONDREJ RÁČ

### ABSTRACT

This article investigates whether the Eastern Orthodox Church has articulated a common and official position toward the Catholic Church. A dynamic and contextual framework is applied, treating conciliar acts, patriarchal encyclicals, and synodal letters as an open corpus ordered by representativeness and reception. The method combines qualitative and quantitative approaches: qualitative analysis assesses clarity, coherence, diachronic continuity, and theological significance, while quantitative indicators – signatures, translations, and the absence or presence of opposition – serve as positive and negative signs of acceptance. Among nineteenth-century encyclicals (1836, 1838, 1848, 1895, 1902/1904), the 1848 Encyclical (E48) emerges as the most representative. Signed by four patriarchs and 33 hierarchs, it directly responded to a papal appeal, achieved wide acceptance, and has never been formally opposed. Though not the outcome of an ecumenical council, E48 demonstrates the strongest contextual authority. E48 stands as the most viable candidate for further study as a potential expression of a common EOC official position vis-à-vis the Catholic church, while highlighting the need for continued interdisciplinary analysis of doctrinal texts.

### Keywords

Ecumenism; Interchurch dialogue; Papal primacy; Autocephaly; Ecumenical council; Orthodox-Catholic relations; Orthodoxy in the modern world; Council of Crete

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The anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea highlights the deep and persistent division between the Catholic Church (hereafter CC) and the Eastern Orthodox Church (hereafter EOC). Since

the present theological dialogue affirms communication<sup>1</sup> but not *communio*.<sup>2</sup>

To evaluate the progress or regression in the dialogue, it is necessary to compare the current statements and positions of the CC on the one hand and of the EOC on the other. It is easier to find the official position of the CC towards the EOC than *vice versa*<sup>3</sup> due to the CC's centralisation.<sup>4</sup> 'It is not uncommon today to hear Orthodox theologians and clerics teach that Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have never been formally declared by the Church.'<sup>5</sup>

The current situation, in which there exists both a *horizontal*<sup>6</sup> and a *vertical*<sup>7</sup> schism presents a highly fragmented image of the EOC. This fragmentation is reflected in the varied approaches of local EOC

<sup>1</sup> This dialogue has produced various declarations: Munich (1982), Balamand (1993), Ravenna (2007), Chieti (2016) and Alexandria (2023). (See: 'Dialogue documents,' *Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity. Roma*, Acc. Aug. 21, 2025. <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo.html>.)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Vatican Council II. *Unitatis Redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism)*. Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1964, §15–18, John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint (On Commitment to Ecumenism)*. Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1995, §58 CCEO: can. 35

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), §838, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P29.HTM#-143](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P29.HTM#-143).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 'Synodality and Primacy in the Second Millennium and Today,' Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Alexandria, June 7, 2023. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/document-d-alexandrie---synodalite-et-primaute-au-deuxieme-mille.html>. §1.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. CCEO: can. 41–48.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Barnes, *The Non-Orthodox: The Orthodox Teaching on Christians Outside of the Church* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Between Moscow and Constantinople. (Cf. 'On the Invalidity of Episcopal Ordinations of Ukrainian Schismatics and Non-canonically of the "Orthodox Church of Ukraine",' Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church – Secretariat of the Synodal Biblical-Theological Commission, October 9, 2019. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://mospat.ru/en/news/46039>.)

<sup>7</sup> The phenomenon involves various groups, which exist within nearly every autocephalous church. (Cf. 'Communiqué – Paderborn 2024,' Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group, Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institut für Ökumenik, September 29, 2024. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [https://moehlerinstitut.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2024/10/Communiqu\\_e\\_Paderborn-2024\\_EN.pdf](https://moehlerinstitut.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2024/10/Communiqu_e_Paderborn-2024_EN.pdf). § 9–11.)

See A. V. Slesarev, *Starostilnyj raskol v istorii Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi (1924–2008)* (Moskva: Izd. Krutickogo podvor'á Obšestvo lûbitelej cerkovnoj istorii, 2009), 520.

churches towards the CC, which may differ across levels of organisation.<sup>8</sup> Such discrepancies indicate disagreement on many crucial issues and reinforce the biased perception that there is no consensus within the EOC. The lack of clarity regarding when, where, and how the schism took hold further complicates the matter.<sup>9</sup> ‘While there exists a substantial body of “anti-Latin” polemical literature within the Eastern Orthodox Church, official documents remain few.’<sup>10</sup>

Is it possible to identify a common EOC position from which to evaluate the variations in opinion, including actual statements issued by local church authorities?

## 1. Identifying the most recent common official position of the Eastern Orthodox Church

A useful starting point in the search for the official position is to turn to doctrinal documents. These documents have been systematised into a *corpus* of symbolic monuments/documents (*symbolikā mnēmēina*). At present, however, there is no consensus on which documents truly belong to this *corpus*,<sup>11</sup> For this reason, the term *symbolic texts* will not be employed further. Nevertheless, the existing collections of symbolic texts<sup>12</sup> may serve as an initial body of material from which we shall select sources for further consideration. The systematisation of doctrinal texts according to their binding authority, which is characteristic

<sup>8</sup> For instance, certain parishes have accepted and declared the possibility of admitting members of the CC to communion without requiring baptism, whereas others within various local EOC do not. See: Matthew D. Brown, *Rebaptism: A Study in Orthodox Ecclesiology*. Master’s thesis (South Canaan, Pennsylvania: St. Tikhon’s Theological Seminary, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kallistos T. Ware, ‘Orthodox and catholics in the seventeenth century: schism or intercommunion?’, *Studies in Church History* 9 (1972): 259–276.

<sup>10</sup> Valentin Asmus, ‘Poslanie Vostočnyh Patriarhov,’ in *Pravoslavnaâ ênciklopediâ*, vol. 57, ed. Patriarh Moskovskij i vseâ Rusi Kirill (Moscow: Cerkovno-naučnyj centr «Pravoslavnaâ Ênciklopediâ», 2024), 568–573. <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2581226.html>. All translations from original languages are by the author unless otherwise stated.

<sup>11</sup> Should only confessions of faith be included, or should other texts, such as letters, also be considered? Similarly, the question of whether later documents should be accorded the same significance as ancient ones depends on the chosen interpretative paradigm. (Cf. Vasilij Krivošein, ‘Simvoličeskie teksty v Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi,’ in *Bogoslovskie trudy*, ed. Aleksandr Musin (Nižnij Novgorod: Hristianskaâ biblioteka, 2011), 450–481, [https://azbyka.org/otechnik/Vasilij\\_Krivoshein/simvolicheskie-teksty-v-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi](https://azbyka.org/otechnik/Vasilij_Krivoshein/simvolicheskie-teksty-v-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi) §. IV)

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Ioánnis N. Karmírīs, *Ta dogmatiká kai symvoliká mnīmēta tis orthódoxoy katholikēs Ekklistias*, 2nd ed. (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1968).

of the CC, is not fully justified in the EOC.<sup>15</sup> Instead of rigidly establishing criteria, we propose a dynamic approach. First is the ordering of the material, in which each record is assigned a place according to its representativeness, that is, the significance attributed to it by the EOC itself. We are not dependent on heuristic methods but may proceed systematically: from context to content. Quantitative analysis must always be preceded by the qualitative selection. Subsequently, quantitative findings are interpreted within qualitative methods,<sup>14</sup> and quantitative methods could be reapplied, in the form of a hermeneutical circle.

The first step entails qualitative content analysis of the documents. If an explicit mention of the CC is present, the document is placed before those that mention it only implicitly, which in turn precede those that do not mention it at all.

The next step of selection focuses on the external indicators of reception. This can be negatively expressed as the ratio between the strength of propagation of a given position and the explicit opposition to it.<sup>15</sup> The character of eventual opposition, as a qualitative aspect, is evaluated only in the subsequent step. Primacy is given to well-known documents without explicit opposition. Another indicator is explicit positive acceptance, the most concrete sign of which is the attachment of signatures (*scriptio/hypographē*) by specific ecclesiastical representatives.<sup>16</sup>

A thorough and rigorous systematic undertaking, the outcome of which would be the unequivocal determination of what constitutes the representative view of the EOC, far exceeds the scope of a single article. Here, therefore, we shall provide only a narrative review offering a basic selection of the most representative material on the basis of contextual analysis.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Krivošein, 'Simboličeskie teksty,' §. VII

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, 'From quantitative to qualitative and back again. The interplay between structure and culture and the analysis of networks in pre-modern societies,' in *Multiplying Middle Ages. New methods and approaches for the study of the multiplicity of the Middle Ages in a global perspective*, eds. E. Mitsiou et al. (Vienna: 2014), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. David Vopřada, 'Autorita koncilů starověké církve [Authority of the Councils of the Ancient Church],' *Salve* 23, no. 4 (2013): 23.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Thomas Graumann, *The Acts of the Early Church Councils, Production and Character* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 156.

## 2. The search for a representative council: evaluating contextual signs

The common official position of the EOC on the CC ought to be formulated as the conclusion of a council possessing the highest level of authority – namely, an ecumenical or universal council.<sup>17</sup> The CC and the EOC are in agreement on nearly all the necessary conditions for such a Universal Council.

Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea II, 787) gave a detailed description of the criteria as then understood: the agreement (*symphonia*) of the heads of the churches, the cooperation (*synergeia*) of the bishop of Rome, and the agreement of the other patriarchs (*symphronountes*). An ecumenical council must have its own proper number in the sequence of ecumenical councils, and its teaching must accord with that of previous councils. Reception by the Church as a whole has always been the ultimate criterion for the ecumenicity of a council.<sup>18</sup>

The last council that fulfilled the above criteria could be the Eighth Ecumenical Council. However, the CC and EOC recognise the different councils as an eighth ecumenical council.<sup>19</sup> The CC accepts the Fourth Council of Constantinople, which finished in 870, and the EOC accepts the council held in the same city, and which finished in 880 (to be discussed later). Moreover, those two councils are in mutual opposition in their conclusions about dogmatic issues, which constitutes the theological aspect of the Great Schism.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we cannot proceed in

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Joseph Wilhelm, 'General Councils,' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04423f.htm>.

Cf. N. V. Kvlividze, 'Vselenskij Sobor,' in *Pravoslavnaâ ênciklopediâ*, vol. 9, ed. Patriarh Moskovskij i vseâ Rusi Kirill (Moscow: Cerkovno-naučnyj centr «Pravoslavnaâ Ênciklopediâ», 2005), 566–571. <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/155488.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. 'Chieti Document: Synodality and Primacy During the First Millennium – Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church,' Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Chieti, September 21, 2016. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese1.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. V. Laurent, 'Constantinople IV, Council of,' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/constantinople-iv-council>.

<sup>20</sup> Concepts such as papal plenitudo potestatis and the Filioque emerged, becoming critical theological issues for the subsequent millennium. This occasion marked the first time these matters were discussed at the level of the universal Church. Cf. George

our search from the past towards the present but must work from the present towards the past.

Since the papacy constitutes a crucial formal-theological-pastoral issue between the CC and the EOC,<sup>21</sup> the papal cooperation as a criterion must be set aside for now; the matter will be addressed later. The remaining essential criteria are the synods and the reception by the whole Church.

An example of the lack of universal acceptance is the *Pan-Orthodox* Council of Crete in 2016 (hereafter C2016). In addition to the absence of recognition by the EOC, the organisers diverged from a well proven and established methodology of traditional Councils.<sup>22</sup> The first issue relates to other councils or meetings of the 20th century, almost all of which served as precursors to C2016.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the documents of the C2016 do not contain any statements explicitly addressed to the CC.<sup>24</sup>

A specific form of the EOC's official position may be seen in its participation in the World Council of Churches (hereafter WCC). However, several problems arise. Firstly, participation has fluctuated over time.<sup>25</sup>

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Dion Dragas, 'The Eighth Ecumenical Council (879-880) and the Condemnation of the Filioque,' *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 44, no. 1-4 (1999): part b.)

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority*, (Ravenna, 15 October 2007), § 45.

<sup>22</sup> 'There has never been a council in church history in which only the heads of autocephalous churches could vote.' See: Doru Marcu, 'Orthodoxy and Ecumenical Dialogue after Crete Synod (2016) and Social Ethos Document (2020): History, Critical Positions and Reception,' *Religions* 14, no. 7 (2023): 936. DOI: 10.3390/rel14070936, 5. D. I. Tseleggidis, *Ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ Καθιγούμενου Δ. Τσελεγγίδου πρὸς τὸν Διμερές Θεολογικὸν Διάλογο Ὁρθόδοξων καὶ Ρωμαϊκοκαθολικῶν στὸ Ἀμμὼν τῆς Ἰορδανίας (15.-19. 9. 2014)* (Thessaloníkī: Ἀριστοτελεῖο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Θεολογικὴ Σχολὴ Τμήμα Θεολογίας Τομέας Δογματικῆς Θεολογίας, 2014), <https://www.imoph.org/pdfs/2014/11/20/20141120aEpistoliTsellegidi-PanorthodoxoSynodo2016.pdf>.

Brandon Gallaher, 'The Orthodox Moment: The Holy and Great Council in Crete and Orthodoxy's Encounter with the West: On Learning to Love the Church,' *Sobornost incorporating Eastern Churches Review* 39, no. 2 (2017): 26-71, 67.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Tadeusz Kałużny, 'Prawosławie i ekumenizm. Kontrowersyjny dokument Soboru na Krecie (2016),' *Studia Oecumenica* 18 (2018): 147-160. DOI: 10.25167/Soe/18/2018/147-160, 148-149.

<sup>24</sup> Only general statements in: 'Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World,' *Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church*, 2016, acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://www.holycouncil.org/rest-of-christian-world>.

<sup>25</sup> Between 1982 and 1997, all autocephalous churches were members of WCC (Cf. 'Member Churches,' *World Council of Churches*, acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [https://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches?search\\_api\\_fulltext=&location\\_filter\\_2=All&field\\_wcc\\_n\\_church\\_family\\_single=2028&glossaryaz\\_title](https://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches?search_api_fulltext=&location_filter_2=All&field_wcc_n_church_family_single=2028&glossaryaz_title)). On the other hand, the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR) anathematised ecumenism as a heresy

Secondly, the WCC does not issue explicit and comprehensive dogmatic statements addressing the full range of theological controversies.<sup>26</sup> In general, even if all local EOCs were members of the WCC, it would remain impossible to draw a specific dogmatic conclusion regarding the CC.

The Council of Constantinople of 1872, which addressed the issue of phyletism, is the most recent EOC council to have received broad acceptance within the EOC.<sup>27</sup>

It was signed by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Anthimus VI; the Patriarch of Alexandria, Sophronius IV; the Patriarch of Antioch, Hierotheos; the Archbishop of Cyprus, Sophronios III; and the twenty-seven other metropolitans and bishops. Cyril II, Patriarch of Jerusalem, concerned by the Russian government's reaction, deserted the Council after the first session, where the 'Bulgarian schism' was condemned.<sup>28</sup>

However, although the topics of this Council continue to exert significant influence within the EOC; there is no specific position regarding the CC.

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(Cf. Archbishop Vitaly of Montreal, 'The ROCOR's Anathema Against Ecumenism (1983),' *Orthodox Observer*, no. 58 (1984). Also available at [http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/ecum\\_anath.aspx](http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/ecum_anath.aspx).) It regarded itself as a canonical part of the Russian Orthodox Church and was reunified with the Moscow patriarchate in 2007 without revoking this anathema (B. Knorre and A. Zas'ad'ko, 'Pravoslavnyj antiëkumenizm 2.0: mobilizacionnaâ model', sek'ûritizaciâ i revanšizm,' *Gosudarstvo, religiâ, cerkov' v Rossii i za rubežom* 39, no. 2 (2021): 277–317.). The Georgian Church withdrew the WCC in 1997 ('Country Profile: Georgia,' *World Council of Churches*, acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://oikoumene.org/resources/documents/country-profile-georgia>.) and the Bulgarian Church followed in 1998. ('The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches,' *Orthodox Research Institute*, acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/ecumenical/wcc\\_bulgarian\\_church.html](http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/ecumenical/wcc_bulgarian_church.html).)

<sup>26</sup> 'The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' ('Constitution and Rules of the WCC,' *World Council of Churches*, June 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/Constitution-and-Rules-of-the-WCC-June-2022.pdf>.)

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Stéphane Bigham, 'The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism,' *Orthodox Christian Laily*, (February 23, 2012), acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://ocl.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism>, § IV.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Alberto Melloni and Davide Dainese, eds. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta: editio critica. IV/1, The great councils of the Orthodox churches: decisions and synodika: from Constantinople 861 to Constantinople 1872* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2017), 365.

A different situation arises in the case of the so-called *Constantinople Synod of 1755*,<sup>29</sup> which addressed the issue of sacramental validity among heterodox Christians, namely Catholics. A decree from 1756, signed by the three Patriarchs – Cyril V of Constantinople, Matthew of Alexandria, and Parthenius of Jerusalem – was not the result of a synod.<sup>30</sup>

The existence of a document signed by the patriarchs led us to change the inclusion criteria to account for a case (document) that is not a product of a council but was signed by a Patriarchs. Rather than evaluating councils and their legitimacy as a basis for assessing their outcomes, we shift our focus to the outcomes themselves – statements and documents – regardless of the process that produced them.

### 3. Tracing the representative dogmatic statements of the Eastern Orthodox Church

The most recent official statements addressing dogmatic issues are the outputs of a mixed theological commission for inter-church dialogue. These cannot be included here, as they are themselves subject to evaluation by other statements, not interpretive frameworks. A second reason is their character: ‘the texts produced by ecumenical dialogues do not constitute official teaching documents of the churches involved.’<sup>31</sup>

Finally the most contextually quantitative representative statement, the *Ravenna document* (2007), was drawn up in an assembly in Belgrade attended by a delegation of all EOC churches.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. ‘Synod of Constantinople, Turkey [1755],’ in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Synod-of-Constantinople>.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Melloni and Dainese, eds. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta*, 350.

<sup>31</sup> Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 2020), 27. <https://www.christianunity.va/content/dam/unitacristiani/Documentazione%20generale/2020Vademecum/Vademecum-EN-GARAMOND.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> This was the only meeting attended by delegations from all autocephalous churches, with the exception of ROCOR. Cf. Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, ‘Ninth Plenary Session, Belgrade, Serbia, 18–25 September 2006,’ *Information Service* 122, no. 2 (2006): 69–71. <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/sessioni-plenarie/2006-Sessione-Plenaria.html>.

All of them (except the Bulgarian and Moscow patriarchates)<sup>53</sup> attended the meeting in Ravenna, where the document was promulgated. The document's self-referential preamble claims: 'The document represents the outcome of the work of a Commission and should not be understood as an official declaration of the Church's teaching,'<sup>54</sup> but 'after it has now been referred to the Churches themselves for assessment and criticism. It must be "received"; and this process of reception, in the case of the Orthodox Church at any rate, may take considerable time.'<sup>55</sup>

Documents from the 20th century – framed by the C2016 and the paradigmatic shift in encyclical letters from the beginning of the 20th century, particularly that of Germanus V in 1920<sup>56</sup> – must be treated as objects rather than subjects of evaluation.

Numerous issues are associated with the preparation of these documents: the expansion of modern autocephalous practice with its accompanying controversies and the resulting uncertainty regarding the representativeness of individual church leaders;<sup>57</sup> the strong ideological influence of the state, marked by rapid and turbulent transitions between markedly different ideological regimes within Orthodox countries; and the still unresolved debate concerning the nature of the

<sup>53</sup> Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, 'Tenth Plenary Session, Ravenna, Italy, 8–14 October 2007,' *Information Service* 125, no. 5 (2007): 109. <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/sessioni-plenarie/2007-Sessione-Plenaria.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, *Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority (Ravenna Document, Ravenna, 13 October 2007)*. <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Kallistos Ware, 'The Ravenna Document and the Future of Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue,' *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 69, no. 2 (2009): 787. DOI: 10.1353/jur.2009.0034.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Jiří Ján, *Journey to the 'Holy and Great Synod': An Unceasing Estrangement from Genuine Patristic Orthodoxy* (Athens: Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle, 2015), 11, <https://dep.church/downloads/JourneyGreatSynod.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Andrzej Borkowski, 'Autocephaly in the Light of the Preparations to the Pan-Orthodox Council,' *Elpis* 18 (2016): 165–170. DOI: 10.15290/elpis.2016.18.23.

EOC's participation in the ecumenical movement.<sup>38</sup> Finally, these documents constitute the corpus of materials related to the preparatory process of the C2016,<sup>39</sup> the reception of which remains in process.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, in seeking a more profound EOC consensus statement about CC teaching, we must return to the 19th-century, when the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (hereafter EP) issued four encyclicals concerning Christians outside EOC *communio*. These documents were generally the outcome of local councils in Constantinople, attended by patriarchs of other sees or, at the very least, incorporating their submitted comments. At that time, this form of expression was typical.

*The Admonition to All Orthodox Christians Worldwide to Avoid the Spread of Foreign Doctrines*<sup>41</sup> (hereinafter E36) resulted from a council convened in Constantinople in December 1836.<sup>42</sup> It was signed by EP Gregory VI, 17 members of the EP Synod, and Jerusalem Patriarch Athanasius V. The document, structured into 12 chapters, denounces the teachings of Protestant reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) and Unitarians (Socinians), which were being spread to EOC believers through Western missionaries. E36 was intended for both the clergy and the laity.

*The Patriarchal and Synodal Circular Letter, an Admonition to All Orthodox Christians Worldwide, and Especially to Those in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, to Avoid the Growing 'Papist Delusion'*<sup>43</sup> (hereinafter E39), was the outcome of a council convened in Constantinople

<sup>38</sup> See Theodoros A. Meimaris, *The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church & the Ecumenical Movement* (Thessaloniki: Ant. Stamoulis Publications, 2013): 123–143.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Tadeusz Kaluźny, 'The History and the Present Stage of the Preparations for the Pan-Orthodox Council,' *Studia Oecumenica* 12 (2012): 153–160. <https://theo-logos.pl/server/api/core/bitstreams/2374fd21-5544-4c10-aead-03c553f00357/content>.

<sup>40</sup> Răzvan Perşa, 'The Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church and the Holy and Great Council: Between Reception and Rejection,' *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Theologia Orthodoxa* 62, no. 1 (2017): 39–72. DOI: 10.24193/subbto.2017.1.04.

<sup>41</sup> *Egkýklios ekklesiastikḗ kai synodikḗ epistolḗ: Parainetikḗ pros toys apantachóy Ordodóxoys, eis apofygḗn tōn epipolazoysōn eterodidaskaliōn* (Kōnstantinoypólos: A. Argyrámmos, 1836), <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/9/f/7/metadata-39-0000220.tkl>.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Cossart, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio. Tomus 40*, ed. Gian Domenico Mansi, with contributions by Jean-Baptiste Martin, and Louis Petit (Parisii: H. Welter, 1909), 245. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k51627x/f154.item.zoom>.

<sup>43</sup> *Patriarchikḗ kai synodikḗ egkýklios epistolḗ, parainetikḗ pros toys apantachóy Orthodóxoys, kai pollḗ pléon pros toys en Aigýptō, Syriá te kai Palaistinḗ, pros apofygḗn tīs epipolazoysīs Pappikḗs Plánis* (Kōnstantinoypólos: A. Argyrámmos, 1839). <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/7/5/8/metadata-39-0000164.tkl>.

in September 1838.<sup>44</sup> It was signed by EP Gregory VI, Patriarch Hierotheus I of Alexandria, Patriarch Methodius of Antioch, Patriarch Athanasius V of Jerusalem, and 11 members of the Constantinopolitan Synod. Additionally, the Churches of Antioch and Alexandria participated in its preparation through correspondence. The intended recipients were all Eastern Orthodox Christians, particularly clergy and believers in the Middle East. E39, which was to be translated into Arabic,<sup>45</sup> systematically refutes CC teachings on the papacy and other elements of Latin theology,<sup>46</sup> arguing from the standpoint of EOC tradition.

*The Circular Letter of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to All Orthodox Christians Worldwide*<sup>47</sup> (hereinafter E48) was signed on 5 May 1848, as a direct response to Pope Pius IX's call for union, issued in *In suprema apostoli Petri sede* on 6 January 1848.<sup>48</sup> E48 addressed to all 'Orthodox Christians,' provides a comprehensive discussion of doctrinal disagreements with the CC, particularly regarding papal primacy and the *Filioque*. 'Unfortunately, there is limited historical information concerning the 1848 Synod of Constantinople, which approved the text drafted by Stephanos Karatheodoris.'<sup>49</sup> However, E48 was signed by Patriarch Anthimus VI of Constantinople, Patriarch Hierotheus I of Alexandria, Patriarch Methodius of Antioch, and Patriarch Cyril II of Jerusalem, along with members of their respective synods – 18 from Constantinople, seven from Antioch, and four from Jerusalem, totalling 33 hierarchs.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. È. P. B., 'Konstantinopol'skie sobory: Sobor 1838 g.,' in *Pravoslavnaâ ènciklopediâ*, vol. 37 (2019), 299–343, accessed March 11, 2025. [https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2057126.html#part\\_74](https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2057126.html#part_74).

<sup>45</sup> Kallínikos Delikanēs, *Ta en tois kódimi toy Patriarchikoy Archeiolylakeioy sōzόμεna epísima ekklesiastiká éggrafa*, vol. 2. (Kōnstantinoypólos: Patriarchiké Typografia, 1902), 71. <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/9/7/c/metadata-240-0000075.tkl>.

<sup>46</sup> *Filioque* (α'), baptism by infusion or aspersion (β'), liturgical use of unleavened bread (γ'), consumption of strangled animals (δ' Πνεκτά), fasting on Saturdays (ε' Νηστεία τὸ Σάββατον), priest celibacy (στ' Ἀγαμία), purgatory (ζ' Καθάρτηρον πῦρ), papal primacy and infallibility (η' Πρωτεύων και ἀλάθητον), and indulgences (θ' Συγχωροχάρτια).

<sup>47</sup> *Egkýklios tis mías Agías Katholikēs kai Apostolikēs Ekklesiás epistolē pros toys apantachoy Orthodóxoys* (Kōnstantinoypólos: Patriarchiké toy Génoys Typografia, 1848). <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/7/1/e/metadata-585-0000020.tkl>.

<sup>48</sup> Pius IX, 'In Suprema Petri Apostoli Sede: Litterae ad Orientales,' in *Pii IX Pontificis Maximii Acta 1* (Roma: Typographia Bonarum Artium, 1854), 78–91. <https://archive.org/details/atti-del-sommo-pontefice-pio-ix-feliceme/page/77/mode/2up>.

<sup>49</sup> Nikoloz Gkongkantzé, 'É egkýklios epistolē toy pápa Píoy Th' pros tin Anatolē kai i synodikē apantitikē egkýklios epistolē tōn Patriarchōn tis Anatolēs (1848)' (Diplōmatiké ergasia, Ethnikó kai Kapodistriakó Panepistémio Athinōn, 2021), 66. <https://pergamos.lib.uoa.gr/uoa/dl/object/2973207/file.pdf>.

*The Patriarchal and Synodal Circular Letter to the Most Reverend and Blessed Brothers in Christ – Metropolitans and Bishops, to Their Sacred Clergy; and All Orthodox Believers*<sup>50</sup> (hereinafter E95), was issued in August 1895 as a direct response to Pope Leo XIII's call for union, formulated in the apostolic letter *Praeclara gratulationis publicae* on 20 June 1894.<sup>51</sup> It was signed only by EP Anthimus VII and 12 members of his synod. The document expands upon themes already addressed in E48 while also engaging with new dogmatic statements issued in the latter half of the 19th century.

In 1904, a series of documents were issued under the collective title *The Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical of 1902 on Relations with Schismatics and Other General Ecclesiastical Issues*, along with the Responses of Five Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and the Subsequent Reply of the Ecumenical Patriarchate<sup>52</sup> (hereinafter E04). This collection of correspondence was initiated in 1902 by the EP, inviting other EOC to respond to issues such as the possibility and means of reunification with Christian denominations (especially Old Catholics and Anglicans), proselytism by Catholics and Protestants, calendar reform, and the need for strengthened communication and cooperation among autocephalous EOC. These texts provide evidence of the EOC's official (or at least representative) theological and pastoral stance toward *Western Christianity*. They illustrate the process of drafting and approving documents that, while not produced at a single 'ecumenical' council, attained a degree of general (or broad) authority within the EOC community. Although E04 chronologically belongs to the 20th century, it thematically continues the concerns of earlier encyclicals. At the same time, it reflects the first signs of a paradigmatic shift in the EOC's

<sup>50</sup> *Egklyklios patriarchikē kai synodikē epistolē pros toys Ierōtatoys kai Theofilestatoys en Christō adelfoys mitropolitās kai episkōpōys kai ton perī aytoys ierōn kai eyagē klēron kai āpan to eysevēs kai orthōdoxon plērōma toy agiōtātōy apostolikōy kai patriarchikōy thrōnoy Kōnstantinoypōleōs* (Kōnstantinoypōlos: Patriarchikē toy Gēnoys Typografia, 1895). <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/6/8/9/metadata-181-0000285.tkl>.

<sup>51</sup> Leo XIII, 'Epistola Apostolica Ssmi D. N. Leonis XIII Ad Principes Populosque Universos, Occasione Sui Iubilaei Episcopalis,' *Acta Apostolica Sedis* 26, (1893–94): 705–717. [https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/1a/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_1-xiii\\_apl\\_18940620\\_praeclara-gratulationis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/1a/apost_letters/documents/hf_1-xiii_apl_18940620_praeclara-gratulationis.html).

<sup>52</sup> *Epistolē tis toy Christoy M. Ekkliasis pros toys makariōtatoys patriarchas Alexandreas kai Ierosolymōn kai toys panierōtatoys proēdroys tōn panagiōtātōn ekklesiōn Kyproy, Rōssias, Ellados, Roymantas, Servias kai Mayrovoyniōy perī tōn en Anatolikē Rōmyliā kai Voylgaria tolmithētōn kat' orthodōxōn*. (Kōnstantinoypōlos: Patriarchikē toy Gēnoys Typografia, 1906). Available also: <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/e/f/b/metadata-451-0000002.tkl>.

attitude toward other Christians.<sup>53</sup> This period can be seen as the end of the EOC's 'era of encyclicals.'<sup>54</sup>

#### 4. Encyclical and the question of ecclesial consensus: signatures, doctrinal weight, and reception

Basil Krivochéine wrote about those documents:

All these messages, accepted at best by four Eastern patriarchs – even with the participation of their synods, as was the case in 1848, and by the Church of Constantinople alone in most cases – without the participation of the Russian Church and other autocephalous Churches, do not possess in themselves a general church authority, as precise and complete expositions of Orthodox doctrine, but enjoy general respect as historical monuments of a dogmatic nature.<sup>55</sup>

E48 and E95 respond directly to appeals from Roman Popes, thereby acquiring a formal dimension of equal communication within the former Pentarchy. The absence of univocal output from this *synergy* of Eastern patriarchates and the Roman Popes is rooted primarily in the issue of papal doctrines.<sup>56</sup>

The more ancient official documents – responses to proposals from the Roman Pope, signed by multiple Eastern Orthodox patriarchs – are known only from the period in which the EOC rejected the Gregorian calendar reform, particularly through synods held at the end of the 16th century.<sup>57</sup>

From those documents only E39 and E48 were signed by the so-called Tetrarchy.<sup>58</sup> The more recent document which 'has been

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ján, *Journey to the 'Holy and Great Synod,'* 7.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Teodor M. Popescu, 'Studiu introductiv la fel de actual la Enciclica Patriarhilor Ortodocși de la 184,' adapted from *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 53, no. 11–12 (1935): 545–623. [https://theodosie.ro/2019/06/14/teodor-popescu-studiu-introductiv-enciclica-patriarhilor-1848/#\\_ftn229](https://theodosie.ro/2019/06/14/teodor-popescu-studiu-introductiv-enciclica-patriarhilor-1848/#_ftn229).

<sup>55</sup> Krivošein, 'Simboličeskie teksty,' §. IV.

<sup>56</sup> Popescu, 'Studiu introductiv'.

<sup>57</sup> M. M. Bernackij, 'Konstantinopolskie sobory: Sobor 1583 g.,' in *Pravoslavná enciklopediá*, vol. 37 (2019), 299–343, acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2057126.html#part\\_61](https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2057126.html#part_61).

<sup>58</sup> Patriarchate of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

ratified by all of the autocephalous Churches.<sup>59</sup> from an earlier era is, for example, the *Confessio Dosithei*.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, certain other texts – though not always endorsed by the full Tetrarchy – are considered official statements.

In the case of E95 and E48, one may observe a form of synergy, and in the case of E48, even *symphronountes*. By contrast, patriarchs appointed by Rome – both Latin and Eastern Catholic – were subordinated to papal jurisdiction.<sup>61</sup> They could never assume a counterpart role in dialogue with the Pope, the kind we know from the ethos of the ancient councils. This may be viewed as a manifestation of the conflict between the principles of *conciliarism* and *papal centralism*. Here, one encounters a clear limitation in defining an ecumenical council as one recognized by the Roman Pontiff.

E39 was primarily directed to EOC believers in the Middle East, constituting a more regional focus. In contrast, E48 achieved widespread dissemination and was received across the EOC. For this reason, E48, which directly and explicitly responds to the papal appeal, can be considered the most official and binding EOC statement of its time.

Nevertheless, E48 was drafted with the participation of all synods of the autocephalous Churches, except Alexandria, which lacked a functioning synod at that time.<sup>62</sup> However, the Patriarch of Alexandria personally signed it.

What of the other autocephalous Churches? This remains a problematic issue as even today, a specialist may remark: ‘What’s still missing is the notion of what an Autocephalous Church is.’<sup>65</sup> At the

<sup>59</sup> ‘The Confession of Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem (1672),’ *Ubi Petrus Ibi Ecclesia*, June 21, 2022. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220714013144/https://ubipetrusibiecclesia.com/2022/06/21/the-confession-of-patriarch-dositheos-of-jerusalem-1672>.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Dogmaticeskie poslanija pravoslavnyh ierarhov XVII–XIX vekov o pravoslavnoj vere,’ *Azbuka very*. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/bogoslovie/dogmaticeskie-poslanija-pravoslavnyh-ierarhov-17-19-vekov-o-pravoslavnoj-vere/1>.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Edward Farrugia, ‘The Patriarchate at Vatican II,’ *Analecta of the UCU: Theology* 8 (2021): 227–242. DOI: 10.47632/2075-4817-2021-227-242, 228.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Chrysóstomos Papadópylos, *Istoria tés E’kklísias tés A’lexandrias*, (Athéna: [s.n.], 1985) 819, cited from Gkongkantze, ‘Ī egkýklios epistolē toy pápa Píoý Th,’ 65.

<sup>65</sup> Konstantinos G. Pitsakés, ‘Autocephalie et autonomie: à propos du développement historique de deux catégories principales dans la structure actuelle de l’Église orthodoxe,’ *Kanon* 21 (2010): 21–42, 41, cited from: Gabriel Frédéric, ‘Difficiles autocéphalies: entre politique et ecclésiologie,’ in *Autocéphalies: L’exercice de l’indépendance dans les Églises slaves orientales (IX<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2021), 1–19, Accessed March 11, 2025. <https://books.openedition.org/efr/11557>, note 5.

time, St Nikodim Milaš identified five autocephalous EOCs outside the Tetrarchy.<sup>64</sup>

Unquestionably autocephalous was the Church of Cyprus (*Εκκλησία τῆς Κύπρου*), which does not bear a patriarchal title. Its autocephaly is guaranteed by the 3rd Ecumenical Council.<sup>65</sup> The bishop of Cyprus played a significant role in earlier councils, and their signatures appear in the results of the 4th<sup>66</sup> and 7th<sup>67</sup> Ecumenical Councils. It is confirmed that the Church of Cyprus was made aware of the contents of E48 during its preparation. On 19 January 1848, EP Anthimos VI sent a letter to Patriarch Cyril II of Jerusalem.<sup>68</sup> He sent six copies of I. Tantalidis' polemical books,<sup>69</sup> written in the context of a dispute with Western missionaries. Tantalidis is a possible co-author of E48.<sup>70</sup>

The most significant in terms of numbers is the Russian Orthodox Church (*Русская православная церковь*), which, at the time, lacked a patriarch and was subordinate to the absolutist imperial government.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, acquiring the patriarch's signature in such circumstances was impossible. Signatures by bishops in the manner of E04, could have been achieved, but this was not the case.

A more complex situation existed in the region of the present-day Serbian Orthodox Church (*Српска православна црква*). Autocephaly was acquired in 1219 but abandoned in 1788, then fully re-established

<sup>64</sup> 1. Constantinople, 2. Alexandria, 3. Antioch, 4. Jerusalem, 5. Cyprus, 6. Russia, 7. Karlovci, 8. Sinai, 9. Montenegro and 10. Church in the Kingdom of Greece. (Nikodim Milaš, *Pravoslavno crkveno pravo* (Beograd-Šibenik: [s.n.], 2004; Mostar: Izdavačka knjižarnica Pahera i Kisidja, 1902), 139 or §20.)

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Richard Price, *The Council of Ephesus of 431: Documents and Proceedings* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 524–531.

<sup>66</sup> See: Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, trans. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 334.

<sup>67</sup> See: Richard Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 360.

<sup>68</sup> Ἀνθίμου τοῦ ΣΤ' τῷ Ἱεροσολύμων Κυρίλλῳ – σὶ τῶν πολεμίῳν τῆς Ὀρθοδόξιας ἀντιδανοσίουσάντων βιβλίον κατὰ τῆς Ἐπιστολιμαίας Διατριβῆς (, Πλ. Τανταλίδου), ὁ αὐτὸς ἐξεδωκεν εἰς ἀπάντησιν ἐπίμετρον, οὐ δεκα ἀντίτυπα ἀποστέλλονται. „Ὁμοιοὶ τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρειας μετὰ οκτῶ ἀντίτυπων, τῷ Ἀντοχείας μετὰ εἰς καὶ τῷ Κύπρου μετὰ ἰσαριθμῶν, αἰμη' Ἰανουαρ. ἰθ'. Κώδιξ ΚΣΤ'. 188.' (Kallinikos Delikanēs, *Ta en tois kōdixi toy Patriarchikoy Archeiofylakeioy sōzόμενα epísima ekklesiastiká éggrafa*, vol. 2. (Kōnstantinoypólos: Patriarchiké Typografía, 1904), 531. <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/9/7/c/metadata-240-0000075.tkl>.)

<sup>69</sup> Ἰλίας Τανταλίδης, *Epímetron eis tīn Epíkrisin* (Kōnstantinoypólos: Týpos I. Lazarídy, 1847), <https://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/1/9/1/metadata-291-0000001.tkl>.

<sup>70</sup> Gkongkantzé, 'Ἡ egkýklios epistolé toy pápa Píoy Th,' 64.

<sup>71</sup> James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971), 225.

in 1879.<sup>72</sup> ‘The tradition of the Peć “patriarchate” was, however, claimed in the Military Confines of Croatia by the metropolis of Karlowitz (Sremski Karlovci), which proclaimed itself a “patriarchate”<sup>73</sup> during the Assembly (Majсka скупштина) held on 1–3 May 1848.<sup>74</sup> For this reason, this church could not participate in or sign E48 as an autocephalous subject.

In the 19th century, an independent Montenegrin Church (Μητρόπολη Μαυροβουνίου) existed. Although its later status led to schism, in the 19th century it was recognised as autocephalous.<sup>75</sup> The Montenegrin Archbishop did not sign E48. Both of the aforementioned churches were incorporated into the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 20th century.<sup>76</sup>

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which had acquired autocephaly, as *Archbishopric of Ohrid (Ohridska arhiepiskopiá)* in the medieval era – was under the jurisdiction of the EP at the time.<sup>77</sup> However, as a member of the EP Synod, the Metropolitan of Sofia, Paisios, signed E48.<sup>78</sup>

The Church of Sinai (*Αυτόνομος Αρχιεπισκοπή Σινά, Φαράν και Ραϊθώ/ Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία του Όρους Σινά*) ‘is sometimes reckoned as autocephalous, but is more correctly classified as autonomous.’<sup>79</sup> Its head in 1848

<sup>72</sup> ‘Serbian Orthodox Church,’ in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 19, 2024, Acc. Mar. 11, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Serbian-Orthodox-Church>.

<sup>73</sup> Philippe Gelez, ‘La négociation politique du statut canonique de l’Église orthodoxe en Bosnie-Herzégovine, 1878–1918,’ in *Autocéphalies: L’exercice de l’indépendance dans les Églises slaves orientales (IX<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2021): 373–589. <https://books.openedition.org/efr/12078>, 373.

<sup>74</sup> Vladimir Dedijer and Ivan Božić and Sima M. Ćirković, *History of Yugoslavia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), 314.

<sup>75</sup> The Montenegrin constitution of 1905 still referred to the Montenegrin OC as an autocephalous. See: *Ustav za Knjaževinu Crnu Goru od 1905 godine* (Cetinje: K. C. Državna štamparija: 1907), 12.

<sup>76</sup> By ‘Tomoš Vaselenskog patrijarha Melentija IV i Svetog Sinoda Vaselenske patrijaršije u Carigradu od 19. februara 1922. godine,’ (no. prot. 1148.), <https://web.archive.org/web/20220808102054/https://www.cpc.org.me>.

<sup>77</sup> The autocephaly of the Ohrid Archbishopric was abolished in 1767. (D. Češme-džiev, ‘Ohridska arhiepiskopiá,’ in *Pravoslavnaâ ênciklopediá*, vol. 53 (2025), 600–607. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025, <https://pravenc.ru/text/2581773.html>.)

V. I. Kosik and Hr. Temelski and A. A. Turilov, ‘Bolgarskaâ Pravoslavnaâ Cerkov’,’ in *Pravoslavnaâ ênciklopediá*, vol. 5 (2009), 615–643, Acc. Mar. 11 2025, <https://pravenc.ru/text/149675.html>.

<sup>78</sup> ‘O Panierôtatos Mitropolitís prôin Efésou kyrós Paísios,’ *Diokitíké diárthrōsī tīs Orthódoxīs Ekklisías Ī Orthódoxos Ekklisía to étos 1848*, last mod. Sep. 18, 2023, Arch. July 23, 2024. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [https://web.archive.org/web/20240723231851/https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1871\\_1900/1877/koim/paisios\\_efesou.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20240723231851/https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1871_1900/1877/koim/paisios_efesou.htm).

<sup>79</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church, reprinted* (London: Penguin books, 1997), 286–287. ‘The monastery was recognized as autocephalous by a Synod at

was the former EP Constantius I,<sup>80</sup> who is mentioned as a possible co-author of E48.<sup>81</sup>

An Orthodox church in Georgia, was under the jurisdiction of the Russian Church (as *‘Грузинский экзархат Святейшего Правительствующего Синода Православной Российской Церкви’*, *‘საქართველოსა და იმერეთის ეგზარქოსო’*) and, for that reason, could not operate as an independent ecclesiastical body.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, the Church of Greece (*Εκκλησία της Ελλάδος*), Romania (*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*),<sup>83</sup> Poland (*Polski Autokefaliczny Kościół Prawosławny*),<sup>84</sup> the Czech Lands and Slovakia (*Pravoslávna cirkev v českých krajinách a na Slovensku*),<sup>85</sup> and Albania (*Kisha Ortodokse Autoqefale e Shqipërisë*)<sup>86</sup> did not yet exist at the time, although the Bishop of Dreinopolis (now part of Albania) was present as a member of the EP Synod.<sup>87</sup>

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Constantinople in 1575, and by the four Eastern Patriarchs in 1782.’ (Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin books, 1963), 151.). Tomos: Gavriël toŷ D’, ‘Sigíllion perì tôn pronomíōn kai tēs dioikēseōs toŷ Siná (1782),’ *Sinaitika analekta*, <https://www.sinaimonastery.com>.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Ī Aytoŷ Theiotáti Panagiōtīs o Archiepískopos prōin Kōnstantinoupóleōs kai Próedros Sinaioŷ kyrós Kōnstantíos o A. (1770–1859),’ Dioikītikē diárthrosī tīs Orthódox-īs Ekklesiās Ī Orthódoxos Ekklesiá to étos 1848, last modified September 18, 2023. [https://web.archive.org/web/20241215073617/https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1853\\_1870/1859/koim/konstantios\\_konstantinoupoleos.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20241215073617/https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1853_1870/1859/koim/konstantios_konstantinoupoleos.htm).

<sup>81</sup> Gkongkante, ‘Ī egkýklios epistolē toy pápa Pfoŷ Th,’ 65.

<sup>82</sup> From 1811. Cf. Carsten-Michael Walbiner, ‘Die Beziehungen zwischen dem griechisch-orthodoxen Patriarchat von Antiochia und der Kirche von Georgien vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert,’ *Le Muséon* 114, no. 3 (2001): 437–455, 455.

<sup>83</sup> The Romanian Patriarchate was established in 1925. (‘Romanian Orthodox Church,’ in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Apr. 29, 2024, Acc. Mar. 29, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Romanian-Orthodox-Church>.)

<sup>84</sup> In 1924, the EP issued a tomos granting autocephaly to the Polish Orthodox Church, followed by a tomos from the MP in 1948. Cf. A. V. Mironovič, ‘Polskaā Avtokefalnaā Pravoslavnaā Cerkov’, in *Pravoslavnaā enciklopediā*, vol. 57 (2024), 273–279, Acc. 11 Mar. 2025. <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2581064.html>.

<sup>85</sup> In 1951, the MP issued a tomos granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia, followed by a tomos from the EP in 1998. Cf. Zdeněk Vojtíšek, ‘Pravoslavná církev,’ in *Religionistická encyklopedie*, ed. Zdeněk R. Nešpor (Sociologický ústav AV ČR), acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [https://rg-encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/index.php/Pravoslavna%C3%A1\\_c%C3%ADrkev](https://rg-encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/index.php/Pravoslavna%C3%A1_c%C3%ADrkev).

<sup>86</sup> In 1957, the EP issued a tomos granting autocephaly to the Albanian Orthodox Church. Cf. K. E. Skurat, ‘Albanskaā Pravoslavnaā Cerkov’, in *Pravoslavnaā enciklopediā*, vol. 1, (2007), 465–470, acc. Mar. 11 2025. <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/64036.html>.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Panteleēmōn Dryinoupóleōs,’ Dioikītikē diárthrosī tīs Orthódoxīs Ekklesiās Ī Orthódoxos Ekklesiá to étos 1848, last modified Oct. 12, 2021, acc. Mar. 11 2025. [https://web.archive.org/web/20241203213413/https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1871\\_1900](https://web.archive.org/web/20241203213413/https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1871_1900)

In contrast to E48, the Russian, Montenegrin, Serbian and The Church of Cyprus contributed to E04, on which we conclude that they operated in an autocephalous manner. If the EP sought their signatures for E04 to confer official authority, it stands to reason that the same would have been necessary for E48 to attain such authority.

The Council from which E48 emerged commands the strongest qualitative and quantitative attention among all previous and subsequent gatherings within our scope of interest. Quantitatively, with 33 signatures from the hierarchy – including four patriarchs – it surpasses the Council of 1872 (29 signatures),<sup>88</sup> the Council of E39 (with only one full synod present), and the decree of 1756 (signed by only three autocephalous hierarchies). By contrast, C2016, although attended by more hierarchies (162),<sup>89</sup> explicitly does not mention the CC in its decrees, and voting rights were restricted to the heads of autocephalous Churches (10 were present).<sup>90</sup>

Qualitatively, E48 was the output of a council (unlike the decree of 1756), similar to E39, but with stronger hierarchical support. Of course, we have to take into account, ‘the number of bishops participating in ecumenical councils is not a true criterion of their ecumenicity. Some local councils have gathered more bishops than those recognized as ecumenical councils.’<sup>91</sup>

Based on the foregoing evidence, we may conclude that E48 is the most representative document among those previously discussed, although the others must not be omitted.

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/1875/koim/panteleimon\_drynoupoleos.htm. Signature in Egkýklios tis mías Agías Katholikés kai Apostolikés Ekklesiás, 50 or v.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Cossart, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio. Tomus 45*, ed. Joannes Dominicus Mansi (Parisiis: H. Welter, 1911), 535. <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb37252744r>.

<sup>89</sup> E.g. ‘Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, Crete 2016,’ *official website of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church*, (2016), Acc. Sep 2, 2025. <https://www.holycouncil.org/encyclical-holy-council>.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Peter Heers, ‘The “Council” of Crete and the New Emerging Ecclesiology: An Orthodox Examination,’ (2017), Acc. June 28, 2023. [https://www.academia.edu/52142808/The\\_Council\\_of\\_Crete\\_and\\_the\\_New\\_Emerging\\_Ecclesiology\\_An\\_Orthodox\\_Examination\\_2](https://www.academia.edu/52142808/The_Council_of_Crete_and_the_New_Emerging_Ecclesiology_An_Orthodox_Examination_2).

<sup>91</sup> Tadeusz Kałużny, ‘Pravoslavie na raspúte. Problemy prinátia Svätogo i Velikogo Sobora Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi na Krite (2016),’ *Symposium 2* (2016): 151–172, 162.

## 5. Reception of the Encyclical letter of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848

Contextual analysis has previously been offered in two extensive studies.<sup>92</sup> The authors examine the political context of E48, situating it within a period of profound ecclesiastical and political transformation.<sup>93</sup> This context was shaped by the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the concurrent rise of Russian power, as Pius IX exploited the precarious position of both the Turks and the Orthodox to expand Roman influence. Sultan Abdülmecid I's concessions and the first official papal-Ottoman contact in 1847 inaugurated a new phase in diplomatic relations.<sup>94</sup> Rome's aspirations for a protectorate over Ottoman Christians intersected with Russian pan-Slavic and pan-Orthodox ambitions under Nicholas I, provoking Anglo-French opposition and culminating in the Crimean War – framed in contemporary Eastern Orthodox rhetoric as a Latin-Protestant-Muslim coalition against Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>95</sup> Against this backdrop of papal centralism, unionist projects, and rivalry with Protestant missions, Pius IX issued the 1848 encyclical *Ad Orientales* as part of a broader proselytising programme.<sup>96</sup>

The response reportedly took Pope Pius IX by surprise<sup>97</sup> and intensified subsequent theological disputes.<sup>98</sup> It also played a significant role

<sup>92</sup> Popescu, 'Studiul introductiv' and Gkongkantzé, 'Ἰ ἐγκύκλιος ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ πάπα Πίου Θ'.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Popescu, 'Studiul introductiv'.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> It should be noted that further responses were given by the Orthodox to the papal encyclical, such as by the: Constantius I of Sinai: 'pántisis tês 'Orthodoxoy 'Anatolikês E'kklísias ei's tèn a'rtíōs pemftheisan pròs toÿs 'Anatolikoÿs e'gkÿklion e'pistolèn toÿ Megáloy Pápa tês Rhômīs Píoy toÿ Th,' (Constantinople: Patriarchal Press of the Nation, 1848), republished also in his own *Biography and Minor Writings*, p. 209ff.), and likewise in French: *Réponse de l'Église Grecque Orthodoxe d'Orient à l'encyclique de Pie IX adressée aux Orientaux en Janvier 1848. Traduite du grec par M.A.P.* (Paris: 1850). *Apántisis pròs tèn «pròs toÿs 'Anatolikoÿs» e'pistolèn toÿ Megáloy Píoy Th', òpò tinòs klirikoy' orthodoxoy* (Smyrna: 1848). *G. Markoranos, E'pistolimaía a'pántisis ei's tèn «pròs toÿs 'Anatolikoÿs» e'pistolèn toÿ Pápa (Constantinople: 1848) in Greek and Italian. Apókrisis ei's tèn e'gkÿklion, ñn ó E'nátos Píos tês Rhômīs pròs tà 'Orthodoxa tékna diekinopolÿse katà tòn Panoyáron toÿ 1848 (Corfu: 1848) in Greek and Italian* (Karmírīs, *Tà dogmatiká*, 984.)

<sup>97</sup> 'In Apostolicae Sedis Fastigio: Pio IX e la Cura per le Chiese d'Oriente,' *Radio Spada*, December 2021, Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220828160939/https://www.radiospada.org/2021/12/in-apostolicae-sedis-fastigio-pio-ix-e-la-cura-per-le-chiese-doriente>.

<sup>98</sup> E.g. Matteo Liberatore, *Confutazione di Antimo patriarca scismatico costantinopolitano* (Parisiis: Tipografia della Civiltà Cattolica, 1854), 'to which A. Móschos,

in communications between Rome and the EOC during the preparatory phase of the First Vatican Council. Consequently, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory VI, declined the invitation to participate, because the Pope remained committed to the principles articulated in 1848.<sup>99</sup>

Subsequent developments, such as the First Vatican Council's confirmation of papal primacy at the highest doctrinal level<sup>100</sup> and the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception, further reinforced the doctrinal divide. 'The dogmatic definition of that doctrine by the Pope had indubitably as its purpose to prepare for the definition of papal infallibility itself,'<sup>101</sup> confirming that the alienation between the CC and the EOC continued to deepen.<sup>102</sup>

Of particular importance is the acceptance of E48 across the EOC. Although the Russian Orthodox Church did not participate in its drafting it fully accepted the document,<sup>103</sup> recognising it as a symbolic text by officially translating and publishing it<sup>104</sup> through the Russian Synod.<sup>105</sup> Given 'the strict spiritual and general censorship in place at the time,

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countered with 'O Koyrialistēs e'n palinōdīa, ἤτοι Ἀπάντισις εἰς τὸν κατὰ τῆς εἰσῆλθούσης τοῦ Ἀνθίμου Πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως γράψαντα μεταίωσχολον Ἰταλόν (Athēnai: 1859).' (Karmírīs, *Ta dogmatiká*, 984.)

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Karmírīs, *Ta dogmatiká*, 1008.

<sup>100</sup> See: Dogmatic constitution 'Pastor Aeternus'.

<sup>101</sup> Gerard Mitchell, 'The Definition of the Immaculate Conception,' *Irish Theological Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1954): 1–15, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Expressed by EOC in E95.

<sup>103</sup> 'It was likely accepted before its promulgation by Saint Metropolitan Philaret Drozdov of Moscow,' (Henryk Paprocki, 'Zarys prawosławnej nauki o Duchu Świętym,' *Elpis* 14 (2012): 14. [https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/11320/211/1/2012\\_02\\_-\\_Elpis\\_-\\_Paprocki.pdf](https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/11320/211/1/2012_02_-_Elpis_-_Paprocki.pdf)). The eminent Russian theologian Khomyakov described this document as expressing the voice of the entire Church. (Aleksej Stepanovič Homákov, 'Pis'ma A.S. Homákova k A.I. Košelevu,' in *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij b 8-i tomah*, vol. 8 (Moskva: Universitetskáa tipografiá, 1900), 480. [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Aleksej\\_Homyakov/polnoe-sobranie-sochinenij-tom-8/11#note159\\_return](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Aleksej_Homyakov/polnoe-sobranie-sochinenij-tom-8/11#note159_return). Letter from 1854. More about his view in the commentary in vol. 8, 9 and vol. 10, no. 2 of Aleksej Stepanovič Homákov, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij i pism v 12 tomah*, ed. A. P. Dmitrev (Sankt-Peterburg: Rostok, 2021). It has been recognised as a source in official Orthodox theology, see e.g.: Nikolaj Malinovskij, 'Vvedenie. Učenie o Boge edinom v sušestve i troičnom v lich,' in *Pravoslavnoe dogmatičeskoe bogoslovie*, vol. 1 (Sergiev Posad: Tip. Sv.-Tr. Sergievoj Lavry, 1910). [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Nikolaj\\_Malinovskij/pravoslavnoe-dogmaticheskoe-bogoslovie-tom-1/1\\_§\\_4.I](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Nikolaj_Malinovskij/pravoslavnoe-dogmaticheskoe-bogoslovie-tom-1/1_§_4.I).

<sup>104</sup> 'Poslanie vostočnyh patriarhov 1848 g.,' *Hristianskoe čtenie* 2 (1849): 163–202.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Aleksandr Ivancov-Platonov, 'Očerok istorii razdeleniá cerkvej, i otnošeníá zapadnoj cerkvi k vostočnym cerkvam posle razdeleniá,' in *O rimskom katolicizme i ego otnošeníáh k Pravoslaviú*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Pečatná S.P. Ákovleva, 1869), § VII. note 8. [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Aleksandr\\_Ivancov\\_Platonov/o-rimskom-katolitsizme-i-ego-otnoshenijah-k-pravoslaviyu/1](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Aleksandr_Ivancov_Platonov/o-rimskom-katolitsizme-i-ego-otnoshenijah-k-pravoslaviyu/1).

this constituted unconditional approval by the Synod.<sup>106</sup> The objection that E48 was not included in the *Synodikon* of the Russian Orthodox Church is not persuasive; in the 19th century, the *Synodikon* was more often abbreviated than expanded.<sup>107</sup>

There is a lack of information regarding the reception of the document in other autocephalous EOCs at the time of its issuance, although it is known to have been sent to Serbia.<sup>108</sup> The text was translated into the languages of predominantly Eastern Orthodox nations: Romanian,<sup>109</sup> Bulgarian,<sup>110</sup> and Serbian.<sup>111</sup> Full-text translations also exist in English,<sup>112</sup> French,<sup>113</sup> Italian,<sup>114</sup> Spanish<sup>115</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Valentin Asmus, 'Poslanie Vostočnyh Patriarhov,' in *Pravoslavnaâ ênciklopediâ*, vol. 57, ed. Patriarh Moskovskij i vseâ Rusi Kirill (Moscow: Cerkovno-naučnyj centr «Pravoslavnaâ Ênciklopediâ», 2024), 568–573. <https://wwwpravenc.ru/text/2581226.html>.

<sup>107</sup> 'Sinodik,' *Azbyka*, very. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [https://azbyka.ru/sinodik#ch\\_0\\_2](https://azbyka.ru/sinodik#ch_0_2).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Σερβίας Πέτροφ: ὅτι τῶ στέλλονται ἀντίτυπα τῆς ἄρτι ἐκδοθείσης ἀπαντήσεως πρὸς τὸν πάπαν Πιον Θ' ἐχ μέρους τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἀνατολικῆς Εκκλησίας πρὸς διανομὴν παρὰ τῶ ποιμνίῳ του. αὐμη. Ἰουλίου ζ'. ΚΣΤ'. 337. (Kallinikos Delikanēs, *Ta en tois kōdixi toy Patriarchikoy Archeiofylakeioy sōzomena episima ekkliasiastiká êggrafa*, vol. 3. (Kōnstantinoypólos: Patriarchiké Typografia, 1905), 761.)

<sup>109</sup> Teodor Popescu (tran.), 'Epistolă enciclică a Bisericii una, sfinte, catolice și apostolice către ortodocșii de pretutindenii (1848),' *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 53, nos. 11–12 (1935), 649–684. Online: Acc. Sep. 2, 2025, <https://theodosie.ro/2019/06/25/epistola-enciclica-a-bisericii-una-sfinte-catolice-si-apostolice-catre-ortodocsii-de-pretutindenii>.

<sup>110</sup> Okračno poslanie na Ednata, Svata, Săborna i Apostolska Cărkyva do vsički pravoslavni hristiâni *Poslanie na Iztočnite patriarsi ot 1848 g.* (Sofiâ: Sajt 'Vsemirnoto pravoslavie,' n.d.), 44.

<sup>111</sup> 'Okružna poslanica pravoslavnih iskopnika patrijaraha protiv poslanice pape piya IX upućene istočnim hrišćanima 6. januara 1848. godine,' in Srpski Wikisource, Acc. Sep. 2, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20241006020723/https://sr.wikisource.org>.

<sup>112</sup> 'Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, a Reply to the Epistle of Pope Pius IX "To the Easterns," May 1848,' *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*, ed. Paul Halsall (Fordham University), Acc. September 6, 2025, [https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1848\\_orthodoxencyclical.asp](https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1848_orthodoxencyclical.asp).

<sup>113</sup> *Lettre encyclique de S. S. le Pape Pie IX aux Orientaux, et réponse des Patriarches et des Synodes de l'Eglise d'Orient. Traduites du grec par le docteur Dem. Oeconomus. (Paris: 1850).* 'Encyclique des patriarches orientaux, en réponse à une lettre encyclique du pape Pie IX aux chrétiens d'Orient,' *Pravoslavie.fr*, Acc. Sep. 2 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250115191012/https://www.pravoslavie.fr/blog/41/encyclique-des-patriarches-orthodoxes>.

<sup>114</sup> Giorgio Marcoran (tr.), *Enciclica dell'una Santa, Cattolica ed Apostolica Chiesa agli Ortodossi di ogni regione* (Constantinople: Nazionale Tipografia del Patriarcato, 1848).

<sup>115</sup> P.A.B (tr.) 'Encíclica de la Iglesia Una, Santa Católica y Apostólica, a todos los cristianos ortodoxos (1848),' *Sacra Arquidiocèse Ortodoxa de Buenos Aires – Exarcado Da America Do Sul – Patriarcado Ecumênico* (2016), Acc. Sep. 2, 2025, [https://web.archive.org/web/20170428201104/http://www.ecclesia.com.br:80/biblioteca/documentos\\_da\\_igreja/enciclica-1848.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20170428201104/http://www.ecclesia.com.br:80/biblioteca/documentos_da_igreja/enciclica-1848.html).

and Polish.<sup>116</sup> However, in Georgian,<sup>117</sup> and in Portuguese,<sup>118</sup> only fragments are available; no complete translation exists in Slovak or Czech.

The *diachronic continuity* of E48 may be demonstrated by examining the legal outputs of subsequent synods addressing similar topics, and by tracing the incorporation of full or partial positions from E48 into local EOC legislative frameworks. Although E48 explicitly affirmed the authority of the Fourth Council of Constantinople (879),<sup>119</sup> no subsequent universal council formally confirmed E48. The Council of Constantinople in 1872 could have done so, but did not – primarily due to its distinct thematic focus. Only E95 reaffirmed the same doctrinal position as E48. Of course, E95 was recognised as accepted *ex silencio*, with a dubious exception in the form of subsequent explicit support.<sup>120</sup> Further qualitative research in this area is warranted.

Moreover, no hierarchical or lay opposition to E48 has emerged to date. This constitutes a significant supporting argument – particularly in light of the strong tradition of rejecting, annulling,<sup>121</sup> and revising

<sup>116</sup> Henryk Paprocki (tr.), ‘Encyklika czterech Patriarchów z 1848 roku (tomos). List okrężny jedyne go świętego katolickiego i apostoł skiego Kościoła do wszystkich prawosław nych chrześc ijan,’ *Wiadomości Polskiego Autokefalicznego Kościoła Prawosław nego*, no. 1–2 (1981): 3–24.

<sup>117</sup> ‘mrgvliivosavleli epistole ert’i, cmida, saqovell’ao da samoc’ik’ulo eklesiisa qve-la mart’lmadidebel k’risteant’admi (1848 c.) [Circular Encyclical of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to All Orthodox Christians (1848)],’ sak’art’velos jvelmar’lmadidebluri eklesia op’ic’ialuri saiti, Acc. Sep. 2, 2025. [https://web.archive.org/web/20250515160749/https://oldorthodox.ge/natloba\\_konstantinopolis\\_sapatriarqos\\_epistole\\_1848.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20250515160749/https://oldorthodox.ge/natloba_konstantinopolis_sapatriarqos_epistole_1848.html).

<sup>118</sup> Rebeca Pereira (tr.), ‘Encíclica da Santa Igreja, una, católica e apostólica aos cristãos ortodoxos de todos os países,’ *Igreja Ortodoxa Russa na Europa Ocidental, Vicariato de Portugal*, (July 4, 2019), Acc. Sep. 6, 2025. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250715230743/https://www.ortodoxia.pt/a-enciclica-patriarcal-de-1848>.

<sup>119</sup> See E48: § 5. XI. and § 6.

<sup>120</sup> Issued at the Conference convened in Moscow in 1948, the documents aimed to reinforce the position of the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow patriarchate amid prevailing political circumstances and motivations, under the supervision of the Soviet government. They were signed by representatives of all seven autocephalous churches from the Eastern Bloc, as well as delegates from the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch. (See: Karmírīs, *Ta dogmatiká*, 1044–1048.)

<sup>121</sup> For example, the Second Council of Ephesus (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘councils of Ephesus,’ in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 25 Jul. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/councils-of-Ephesus>. Accessed 12 March 2025.), the Council of Hieria (L. V. Luhovickij, ‘Ierijskij sobor,’ in *Pravoslavnaâ ênciklopediâ*, vol. 21 (2014), 301–304, Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/293668.html>), and the Councils of Lyon and Florence (M. M. Bernackij, ‘Konstantinopolskie sobory: Sobor 1484 g.’ in *Pravoslavnaâ ênciklopediâ*, vol. 37 (2019), 299–345, Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. [https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2057126.html#part\\_60](https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2057126.html#part_60)).

councils (*emendatio concilium*).<sup>122</sup> For example, local Churches did not accept the 1923 Synod (Congress) of Constantinople, which sought to introduce reforms.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, C2016 faced explicit rejection from high-ranking authorities of several autocephalous Churches.<sup>124</sup> Even documents with considerable inter-church impact – such as the aforementioned decree of 1756 – were not universally accepted and were subject to criticism.<sup>125</sup> In contrast, the absence of rejection of E36, E39, and E95, together with the various signs of acceptance of E48, supports the conclusion that E48 should be included among the leading candidate documents for further examination as a potential expression of the common EOC official position.

## 6. Draft of qualitative content analysis of E48

We have discussed the contextual attributes that support the significance of E48. The content we now need to analyse is equally significant.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Vopřada, 'Authority of the Councils,' 25.

<sup>123</sup> At this Synod the decisions of the 1923 Congress were to be ratified at a truly pan-Orthodox level, since it was only representatives of the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Serbia, and Romania that took part in the 1923 Congress, the Churches of Greece and Cyprus having authorized those already in attendance to represent them. It should be noted that the 1923 Congress began its proceedings as a 'Commission of Orthodox Churches'; only subsequently, at its third session on May 18, 1923, did it proclaim itself to be a 'Pan-Orthodox Congress.' (Ján, *Journey to the 'Holy and Great Synod'*, 11.) I. Z. Ākimčuk, 'Vsepravoslavnyj kongress,' in *Pravoslavnā ěnciklopediā*, vol. 9 (2010), 680–685, Acc. Mar. 11, 2025, <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/155528.html>.

<sup>124</sup> 'cmida sinodis sxdomis ok'mi 22 [Protocol of the Holy Synod Meeting 22],' *Patriarchate of Georgia*. Arch. June 11, 2018. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180611021949/http://patriarchate.ge/geo/wmida-sinodis-sxdomis-oqmi-22>. 'Statement of the Secretariat of the Antiochian Holy Synod on the 6th of June 2016,' *Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East*. Arch. Nov. 8, 2017. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://web.archive.org/web/20171108093844/http://antiochpatriarchate.org/en/page/statement-of-the-secretariat-of-the-antiochian-holy-synod-on-the-6th-of-june-2016/1436>.

'Stanoviše na Sv. Sinod odnosno Sābora v Krit (2016) i teksta 'Otošeniāta na Pravoslavnata Cārkva s ostanaliā hristiānski svāt' [Position of the Holy Synod Regarding the Council of Crete (2016) and the Text 'Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World'],' *Bulgarian Patriarchate*. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://bg-patriarshia.bg/news/stanovishte-na-sv-sinod-otnosno-sabora-v-krit-2016-i-teksta>.

'Arhierejskij Sobor Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi vyskažet otnošenje k dokumentam prošedšego na Krite Sobora [The Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Will Express Its Position on the Documents of the Council of Crete],' *Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church*, Published June 2016. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/47947>.

<sup>125</sup> Melloni and Dainese, eds. *Conciliarum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta*, 351.

The letter of the Eastern Patriarchs represents the full triumph of the historical approach to dogmatic controversy ... References are made not only to the Dogmatic Fathers but also to Church archaeology and historical liturgies. This, of course, does not imply that all historical arguments presented in the letter are flawless or infallible. Numerous errors, as well as conscious, pastorally motivated distortions and exaggerations, are present. Nevertheless, the general trajectory and methodological framework – still foundational to comparative and polemical theology – are correctly identified.<sup>126</sup>

For example, the cases of Pope Honorius,<sup>127</sup> Pope Leo III, John VIII, and the Moravian Archbishop Methodius,<sup>128</sup> are all interpreted within E48. The ghostwriter of E48<sup>129</sup> uses these interpretations as a basis for formulating narrative that supports the contemporary position, which the synod endorsed with its authority. An examination of these interpretations, grounded in factual evidence and current scholarship, in the context of CC responses to E48 and E95, could yield insights into the accuracy of the factual claims and, conversely, allow for an evaluation of the interpretation of those facts.

While we have not conducted a detailed theological analysis of the E48, certain topics are salient. E48 summarises dogmatic statements concerning both new and long-standing issues discussed in previous eras.<sup>150</sup> The terminology follows traditional ecclesiological exclusivism and non-EOC Christians are called communities (christianikās koinónias)<sup>151</sup> rather than churches. The originator of heresy is identified as the devil, while heretics are portrayed as his victims rather than as individuals of bad will.<sup>152</sup>

The absence of mentions of the year 1054 is unsurprising.<sup>153</sup> The inception of the Great Schism is situated in the era of *saeculum*

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<sup>126</sup> Asmus, ‘*Poslanie Vostočnyh Patriarhov*’. Translated by the author.

<sup>127</sup> E48: § 11.

<sup>128</sup> E48: § 6.

<sup>129</sup> The main ghostwriter was probably Stephanos Karatheodoros. (Cf. Gkongkantez, ‘*Ἡ egkýklios epistolē toy pápa Pfoy Th*,’ 65.)

<sup>150</sup> Popescu, ‘*Studiu introductiv*’ and Gkongkantez, ‘*Ἡ egkýklios epistolē toy pápa Pfoy Th*’.

<sup>151</sup> E48: § 5.XIV and § 9.

<sup>152</sup> E48: § 1.

<sup>153</sup> See: Nick Kamas, ‘*Why 1054? Dating the Schism for the Church of Constantinople*,’ *Medieval Studies Research Blog: Meet us at the Crossroads of Everything*, University of Notre Dame, Cr. Oct. 18, 2023. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://sites.nd.edu/manuscript-studies/2023/10/18/why-1054-dating-the-schism-for-the-church-of-constantinople>.

*obscurum*. The culminating point is a refutation of the Cyrilomethodian mission and the last Orthodox Pope John VIII, alongside Leo III, both referred to as *beatitudo*.<sup>154</sup> The pontificate of John VIII is linked to the *Photian Schism* and the Fourth Council of Constantinople in 879. This Council is counted as the eighth ecumenical council,<sup>155</sup> in contrast to the prevailing view.<sup>156</sup>

However, papal honour in the sense of *primus inter partes* is accepted,<sup>157</sup> but the papal *plenitudo potestatis* concept is refuted,<sup>158</sup> and associated with Babylon from the Revelation to John.<sup>159</sup> The papal throne is described as vacant, as are other Western episcopal sees.<sup>140</sup> The document also explains why the EOC never attempted to occupy these vacant seats or appoint an *EOC Pope of ancient Rome*. Rather than citing historical reasons, the theological rationale is a posture of waiting for repentance and the return of the entire CC to Orthodoxy,<sup>141</sup> with an expression of hope that Pope Pius IX will lead this process.<sup>142</sup>

Moreover, E48 offers conditions and suggestions that may be interpreted as a brief programme for reunification.<sup>145</sup> No positive demands are made for the CC to accept new doctrines or perform additional acts. The essential requirements for this process include the abandonment of proselytism<sup>144</sup> and a thorough examination of CC history by papal

<sup>154</sup> E48: § 8. Although it is not a proclamation of sainthood (the title *makarios* is also attributed to the living pope), it could serve as a basis for canonisation due to its clear affirmation of their steadfast adherence to Orthodox positions.

<sup>155</sup> E48: § 5. XI. and § 6.

<sup>156</sup> E.g.: Hanuš Nykl, *Náboženství v ruské kultuře* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2013), 27. ‘The Eastern church for the most part denied its ecumenicity and continues to recognize *only* the first seven ecumenical councils.’ (‘Fourth Council of Constantinople,’ in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Nov. 23, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Fourth-Council-of-Constantinople-869-870>. Accessed 28 January 2025.) ‘Today Roman Catholics accept twenty ecumenical councils; the Orthodox and some Protestants *only* seven.’ (Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology*. (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), chap. 9. (Italics added by the author of this study.)

<sup>157</sup> E48: §12.

<sup>158</sup> E48: §4 and §7 and §17.

<sup>159</sup> E48: §4.

<sup>140</sup> E48: §16.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> E48: §12.

<sup>145</sup> There are significant overlap between the Catholic approach to true reform and the perspectives articulated by Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group in ‘Communiqué,’ §13.

<sup>144</sup> The EOC anathematised CC missionaries, identifying them with the wolves referenced in Holy Scripture (E48: §18 and § 21).

theologians<sup>145</sup> to identify the point of deviation from Orthodoxy.<sup>146</sup> Upon doing so, the Pope will recognise that the *Filioque* and other mentioned doctrines are *innovations* that should be removed.<sup>147</sup> This will restore *diachronic unity* with his predecessors. As a result, *synchronous unity* with the EOC will be achieved, and in this renewed unity, the Eastern Patriarchs will recognise the Pope as *primus inter pares*.<sup>148</sup>

## 7. Discussion

The official position of the EOC must be authentic in matters of faith.<sup>149</sup> In academic theology, however, the capacity to test such authenticity is limited, and there remain doubts regarding the adequacy of rational, *dianoia*-based methodologies in reaching definitive theological judgments.<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, truthfulness remains a constitutive attribute of official theological statements.<sup>151</sup> The epistemological authority of the Church, as an expression of its teaching role, uncovers theological truth but does not establish it.<sup>152</sup> Through the methodologies of the humanities (on a natural level), this quality is only partially accessible.

There is no scope here to describe, analyse, or interpret all the potential inaccuracies in E48, nor to evaluate their impact on its

<sup>145</sup> Their abundance in the West is described as a work of Providence (E48: §12).

<sup>146</sup> E48: §16.

<sup>147</sup> The *Filioque* is described as a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and is regarded as the source of various ‘Western innovations’, including the adoption of baptism by infusion or aspersion as the ordinary form, the withholding of the Lord’s blood from the laity, the denial of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation to children, the omission of the epiclesis from the liturgy, and the enforcement of mandatory priestly celibacy (E48: § 5. XII).

<sup>148</sup> E48: §15.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Alexandru Roșu, ‘Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae’s View on Laymen’s Participation in the Infallibility of the Church,’ *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 6, no. 1 (2014): 28–46. DOI: 10.2478/ress-2014-0103.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Metallinos, George, *Faith and Science in Orthodox Gnosiology and Methodology*, University of Athens, Department of Theology. Acc. Mar. 11, 2025. <https://www.romanity.org/mir/me01en.htm>.

Cf. John S. Romanides, ‘Empirical Theology versus Speculative Theology,’ in Franks, Romans, *Feudalism and Doctrine*, romanity.org, [https://www.romanity.org/html/rom.03.en.franks\\_romans\\_feudalism\\_and\\_doctrine.02.htm](https://www.romanity.org/html/rom.03.en.franks_romans_feudalism_and_doctrine.02.htm) Acc. Sep. 2, 2025. part 2.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Davit Akelyan, ‘Epistemological and Methodological Aspects and Problems of Conceptual Debate of Fallibilism and Infallibilism,’ *Region i Mir*, no. 6 (2023): 74–83. DOI: 10.58587/18292437-2023.6-74, 76.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Irina Deretić, ‘The Question of Authority in the Eastern Orthodox Church: Aspects, Perspectives and Problems,’ in *Incarnating Authority: A Critical Account of Authority in the Church*, eds. Paul Avis et al. (Munich: utzverlag GmbH, 2019).

theological veracity. This paper merely proposes directions for future research, which should be conducted under specific thematic categories – rhetorical, logical, philosophical, sociocultural, historical, and anthropological. A qualitative content analysis should first identify the statements themselves, assessing their clarity, intelligibility, testability, and internal logical consistency. These aspects are prerequisites for any subsequent quantitative content analysis, which may include evaluating the ratio of information to misinformation and disinformation, as well as the forms of narrative employed. Such analysis should consider whether the document accurately interprets the position of the *other side*, whether it describes it correctly, and whether its proposed solutions remain consistent with EOC teaching.

If E48 misinterprets historical or anthropological aspects, such errors may be overlooked, as the Church does not claim authority in these domains. However, misinterpretation of the theological significance of historical events or erroneous exposition of the theological conclusions of its opponents would constitute a serious challenge to the document's truthfulness.

A more profound theological analysis is therefore required, one that integrates insights from the humanities and proceeds systematically across the major theological disciplines. Such an approach would begin with biblical theology, assessing the accuracy of E48's use of Scripture to support its claims. It would then consider canonical law, evaluating the document both as an object and a subject of canon law, including its interpretation of ancient canons and judicatures. Spiritual theology would offer a lens through which to examine the spirituality and *theoria* underpinning the document within its historical and ecclesial context. Eschatological reflection would be necessary to analyse the predictions made in E48 and E95.<sup>155</sup> Finally, dogmatic theology would investigate the doctrinal coherence of the document and its consistency with Orthodox teaching.

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<sup>155</sup> E48 also contains prophetic statements that merit exegetical and eschatological examination, such as predictions regarding the future of Eastern Orthodoxy and the decline of the papacy (E48: § 2 and § 4).

## Conclusion

We have identified promising candidate texts that may reflect the EOC official position towards the CC, based on contextual qualitative indicators. At the level of this initial research, E48 emerges as the most prominent and potentially still valid expression of a common EOC position, followed – according to the degree of explicit contextual support – by E39, E95, E36, and E04. The main gap at this stage concerns the explicit forms of contemporary reception within local churches, with particular attention to the Churches of Cyprus and Serbia. A secondary gap is the absence of the conciliar acts that led to E48, which are now considered lost.

Preliminary content analysis suggests that E48 summarises the core themes of previous EOC–CC polemics and articulates them at a more academically rigorous level. There appear to be no EOC objections to the theological diachronic unity expressed in E48. Nonetheless, qualitative and quantitative content analysis should be employed to examine this claim with greater precision and certainty.

Should future research confirm which of these candidate texts may be considered the official EOC position towards the CC, it would represent a valuable contribution to the ongoing theological dialogue – particularly in assessing the degree of consensus achieved within that dialogue.

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**VARIA**

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## HOLY YEAR 1925 AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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MAREK ŠMÍD

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### ABSTRACT

The Holy Year of 1925, proclaimed by Pope Pius XI, was a milestone in 20th-century church history, influencing not only Italy but also Central Europe, including Czechoslovakia. It sought to inspire spiritual renewal and reconciliation in a post-war world struggling with economic crises and political instability. This study examines the impact of the Holy Year on the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, focusing on its role in religious discourse and its relationship with political power. Using Czech and Vatican sources, contemporary newspapers, and ecclesiastical documents, it explores the impact of this event on Catholic identity in interwar Czechoslovakia.

Despite political and economic challenges, the Holy Year saw peaceful expressions of faith, with 582 000 pilgrims travelling to Rome. Although Czechoslovak participation was limited, it still demonstrated the commitment of local Catholics to their faith. The event also underscored the Church's broader international role, as Pope Pius XI strengthened Catholicism's global presence in both religious and social spheres. For Czechoslovakia, the Holy Year provided an opportunity to strengthen Catholic influence nationally while fostering solidarity with the wider Catholic world.

### Keywords

Holy Year; 1925; Pius XI; Catholic church; Czechoslovakia; Vatican

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**T**he Holy Year of 1925, proclaimed by Pope Pius XI in the bull *Infinita Dei Misericordia* on 29 May 1924, marked a significant milestone in the history of the Catholic Church in the 20th century. Its influence extended beyond Italy, leaving a profound impact on the

ecclesiastical, political, social, and cultural spheres of Central European countries, including Czechoslovakia. The Holy Year was intended to foster spiritual renewal and mutual reconciliation. This objective was particularly pertinent in the context of post-war Europe, which was still grappling with the trauma of World War I, economic reconstruction, and political instability, rendering the Holy Year's message both timely and comprehensible to contemporaries.

The Holy Year of 1925 found Catholicism in Czechoslovakia during a period when the Church faced challenges due to the new political and social conditions brought about by the founding of the republic in 1918. After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Church had to adapt to a new political reality, transitioning to a democratic and pluralistic society, which was vastly different from the monarchy. The Czechoslovak state had secular tendencies, leading to some tension between the Church and the state. Nonetheless, the Catholic Church remained a significant force in the lives of the faithful.

The Church's relationship with the national question, particularly in the Czech and Slovak regions, was also strong during this period. Catholics were deeply connected to the national movement, which manifested not only in politics but also in religious life. In 1925, significant Catholic national movements were in full swing, as evidenced by participation in pilgrimages and religious events. The Church was also working on internal reforms aimed at strengthening its influence among the faithful, especially in light of the economic challenges of the early 1920s.

Thus, the Holy Year of 1925 provided an opportunity for Catholics to experience spiritual renewal and reinforce their religious identity. Despite the challenging political and economic conditions, the Church was able to mobilize the faithful and offer them space to deepen their faith, thereby strengthening its role in society.

It is also important to note that the Holy Year of 1925 marked a key moment with a significant impact on the relationship between the State and the Church. The study further examines the impact of these events on the development of Catholicism and its position within Czechoslovak or Czech society. The research is based on an analysis of Czech and Vatican sources, contemporary newspaper articles, important Church documents, and literature, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon that was of considerable significance to the spiritual identity of Czechoslovakia during the interwar period.

The aim of this study is to analyze the impact of the Holy Year of 1925 on the Czechoslovak ecclesiastical environment. Special attention will be given to the role of the Catholic Church in religious discourse and its relationship with political power, both in the context of domestic politics and within the broader European framework.

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As early as December 1922, in his first encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei*, at a time when Europe was still grappling with the consequences of World War I, Pope Pius XI emphasized the need for spiritual renewal and unity among nations, which became one of the key ideological pillars of the Holy Year of 1925. This Holy Year, the first in a quarter of a century, was marked by an emphasis on the Church's missionary activity, understood as a living expression of faith and charity. At the same time, Pius XI linked the Jubilee Year to a call for prayer for peace and unity, and, for the first time, for the just ordering of affairs in the Holy Land. In this context, he urged all the bishops of the world to actively participate in the Jubilee Year and its spiritual mission.<sup>1</sup>

One of the highlights of the Holy Year was the Great Missionary Exhibition, carefully coordinated by Pope Pius XI. Officially opened on 21 December 1924, it was not accessible to the general public until the following year, as part of the Jubilee celebrations. It took place in various parts of the Vatican, including the gardens, courtyards, and select museums. This exhibition aimed to showcase the extensive missionary activity of the Catholic Church across continents. Visitors were able to view a rich collection of ethnographic, cultural, and religious artifacts that documented the interaction between the Catholic Church and local cultures in mission areas. The exhibition was designed to deepen the faithful's interest in the Church's universal mission and encourage them to support missionary work both spiritually and materially.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy: Religion, Society and Politics since 1861* (Abingdon – New York: Routledge, 2008), 93–94; John Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism 1914–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 134–135.

<sup>2</sup> Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter referred to as AMZV), fund Political reports – Vatican, 1924, Pallier 31. 12. 1924; Marek Šmíd, Eva Hajdinová and Daniel Atanáz Mandzák (eds.), *Svatý stolec a Československo II. Edice dokumentů z let 1923–1925* [The Holy See and Czechoslovakia II. Edition of documents from 1923–1925] (Prague: Karolinum, 2023), 283 (summary policy report no. 25); Josef

The promotion of the Holy Year of 1925 introduced unprecedented innovations. Colour posters were produced in six languages, a novelty in the promotion of the Jubilee Year, and the Italian Post Office issued a series of commemorative stamps for the Vatican City State. This visual and promotional element significantly contributed to the international character of the Holy Year and helped forge closer links between the Holy See and the general faithful. A symbolic gesture confirming the return to traditional Catholic values was the re-erection of the cross on the Roman Capitol, which had been removed during the secularisation processes in Italy.<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Year of 1925 not only emphasized the importance of the Church's missionary work but also stimulated an international debate on peace, spiritual unity, and the moral renewal of society. Pius XI used this Jubilee Year to reaffirm the universal mission of the Church in an increasingly complex political and cultural environment, while also reinforcing the perception of the Catholic Church as a unifying element in a divided and politically unstable Europe. In the *Bull Infinita Dei Misericordia*, the Pope further emphasized his commitment to seeking the reunification of separated Christian communities with the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup>

On the eve of the Holy Year of 1925, Pope Pius XI emphasized the close connection between this Jubilee period and the missionary activity of the Church as an authentic expression of faith and Christian charity. During a meeting with the members of the Preparatory Committee on 1 March 1924, the Pope reiterated that the Church's spiritual mission should not be limited to her own faithful but must be directed towards spreading the Gospel to all peoples. This emphasis on missionary activity was all the more urgent because of the difficult challenges the Church faced, particularly in regions where it was subjected to severe persecution. In the Soviet Union, the Bolshevik regime systematically suppressed religious life, and in the Middle East, political and

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Gelmi, *Papežové: Od svatého Petra po Jana Pavla II.* [Popes: From St. Peter to John Paul II] (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1994), 271.

<sup>5</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1924, Pallier 31. 5. 1924; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 225 (summary policy report no. 17); Jaroslav V. Polc, *Svaté roky: 1300–1983* [Holy Years: 1300–1983] (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 2000), 94.

<sup>4</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1924, Pallier 31. 5. 1924; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 226 (summary policy report no. 17).

social conflicts were escalating, threatening the stability of Christian communities.<sup>5</sup>

To obtain indulgences during the Holy Year, pilgrims were advised to pray not only for their own spiritual renewal but also for peace among nations, for the unity of Christians, and, in light of the events of the time, for the stabilization of the situation in Palestine. This last intention added a new dimension to the Holy Year, as it reflected the political situation in the region, particularly the growing tensions in Mandatory Palestine under British administration. It also highlighted the Church's broader involvement in international dialogue, particularly in efforts to protect Christian holy sites and secure the rights of Catholic communities.<sup>6</sup>

By adding a specific intention concerning Palestine to the traditional prayers, the Pope urged the faithful to view the Church's missionary work as a response to the current challenges of their time. In doing so, Pius XI demonstrated that the Church could adapt flexibly to the changing times and reflect geopolitical shifts. At the same time, this step reinforced the Church's image as a moral arbiter of peace and reconciliation. Linking the missionary focus with contemporary world events gave the Holy Year a new dynamic and underscored the universal character of the Church, which transcends geographical and cultural boundaries while striving for harmony in the world.<sup>7</sup>

On the morning of 25 December 1924, Pope Pius XI inaugurated the Holy Year by opening the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica, symbolically beginning the entire Jubilee period. Although significant, the ceremony was adapted to the specific circumstances of the time. Due to ongoing tensions between the Holy See and the Italian State, the Pope, confined to Vatican City, was unable to participate in the solemn procession to the square. His absence from the public square not only

<sup>5</sup> Jolanta Babiuchová and Jonathan Luxmoore, *Vatikán a rudý prapor: Zápas o duši východní Evropy: Studie o vztahu římskokatolické církve a komunistických států* [The Vatican and the Red Banner: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe: A Study of the Relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Communist States] (Prague: Volvox Globator, 2003), 29–30; Rita Tolomeo, 'Le Iniziative di Pio XI per difendere la Chiesa in URSS (1922–1939)', in *La Chiesa cattolica in Unione Sovietica. Dalla Rivoluzione del 1917 alla Perestrojka*, ed. Jan Mikrut (Verona: Gabrielli Editori, 2017), 113.

<sup>6</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1924, Pallier 31. 5. 1924; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 226–227 (summary policy report no. 17).

<sup>7</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1924, Pallier 31. 5. 1924; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 226–227 (summary policy report no. 17).

reflected the dispute between the Vatican and the Kingdom of Italy but also underscored the broader political and social tensions affecting the position of the Catholic Church in Europe and the world at the time.<sup>8</sup>

In the other three papal basilicas, the Holy Gates were opened by cardinal-legates, who performed the ceremony according to the traditional ritual. This ritual, last performed in full in 1825 during the pontificate of Pope Leo XII, held profound symbolic meaning. It not only represented a renewal of the Church's mission but also a spiritual connection with the past. The opening of the Holy Gates was traditionally seen as an act of grace, allowing the faithful to obtain indulgences and strengthening their spiritual life.<sup>9</sup>

The cardinal-legates entrusted with the ceremony of opening the Holy Gates not only renewed this historic ritual but also created an important link between the Church's past and present. Through this act, the Church demonstrated its resilience and unity in the face of challenges, particularly the tensions between the State and the Vatican, the pressures of modernization, and the political upheavals across Europe. Emphasizing tradition, connecting with historical events, and continuing the spiritual guidance of the faithful strengthened the Church's authority and prestige in a world confronted with major political and social challenges.

During the Holy Year of 1925, Pius XI beatified several individuals who were of fundamental importance to the Catholic faith and its missionary activity. Among them was Bernadette Soubirous, known as the visionary of Lourdes, whose 1858 apparition of the Virgin Mary had a profound impact on Catholicism and led to the establishment of a pilgrimage site that continues to attract millions of believers worldwide. Her beatification, proclaimed just in 1925, was not only a recognition of her holiness but also a celebration of her life, which inspired countless people to spiritual renewal and a deeper search for faith.<sup>10</sup>

Other notable figures who were declared saints included the Jesuit theologian Peter Canisius, recognized as a teacher of the Church, and

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<sup>8</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1924, Pallier 31. 12. 1924; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 283–284 (summary policy report no. 25); Polc, *Svaté roky*, 94.

<sup>9</sup> Polc, *Svaté roky*, 94.

<sup>10</sup> On the apparition of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes in more detail: Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Penguin, 1999); Henri Lasserre, *Our Lady of Lourdes* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1906).

the parish priest John Maria Vianney, known for his tireless pastoral work and devotion to the spiritual care of the faithful. Often called the Priest of Ars, Vianney became a symbol of deep faith and missionary zeal, which was evident not only in his personal life but also in his service to the local Church. The importance of these figures remained relevant in 1925.<sup>11</sup>

These declarations of blessedness and holiness during the Holy Year underscored Pius XI's efforts to encourage the faithful to actively engage in missionary work and spiritual renewal. The eminent saints and blessed were presented as models to inspire the faithful to follow their example in daily life and to strengthen the Church's mission, which was particularly crucial at the time.

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The Archbishop of Prague and Primate of Bohemia František Kordač issued his pastoral letter on the Year of Grace 1925 on 12 April of the same year. He urged the faithful to take advantage of this Year of Grace to obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal punishment through the Sacrament of Penance, as well as to gain indulgences for temporal punishment. He also viewed the Pope's actions as a political effort aimed at reconciling peoples divided by schism and heresy, as well as those divided by nationalism, and at bringing them back to the single source of their revival and reconciliation – the one Church of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

During the Holy Year of 1925, thousands of faithful from all over Europe and other parts of the world, including numerous delegations from Czechoslovakia, came to Rome, where the words of the Pope and the Archbishop also resonated. This fact testified to the strong desire of Czech, Moravian, Slovak, as well as German, Polish, Hungarian, and Ruthenian Catholics to live this jubilee moment intensely and to strengthen their faith. The bishops in Czechoslovakia actively encouraged their parishioners to participate in the pilgrimage to Rome, which led to the formation of a special committee responsible for organizing the pilgrimage and ensuring the comfort of the pilgrims.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1925, annus XVII, volumen XVII, no. 6, 169, resp. no. 7, 209, resp. no. 10, 349; Pollard, *The Papacy*, 189.

<sup>12</sup> Jakub Formánek and Marek Šmíd (eds.), *Pastýřské listy 1918–1945* [Pastoral letters 1918–1945] (Prague: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2017), 186–189.

<sup>13</sup> Polc, *Svaté roky*, 95.

The first organized group, led by Archdeacon Antonín Havelka, set out from Pilsen and arrived in Rome in March. In April, the Marian retreats followed, bringing with them an atmosphere of joy and spiritual renewal. A month later, Bishop Karel Kašpar of Hradec Králové arrived in the Eternal City. In July, German Catholics from the Diocese of Litoměřice, led by Emil Bobek, Senator of the German Christian Social People's Party, Bishop Ján Vojtaššák of Spiš, and the Lourdes Pilgrimage Society, led by the military bishop Josef Bombera, gathered believers seeking spiritual healing and renewal.<sup>14</sup>

In August, a Slovak pilgrimage arrived in Rome, attended by 1200 Catholics. In September, the international youth pilgrimage was joined by Catholic youth from Bohemia and Moravia, led by Benedictine Karel Methodius Klement, highlighting the role of the young generation in the Church community. Notably, Czech and German Catholic youth travelled to the Eternal City together.<sup>15</sup> The participation of this group was seen as a symbol of the hope and dynamism of the young generation in the life of the Church.

At the end of September, a Moravian pilgrimage arrived in Rome, once again emphasizing the diversity and unity of Czechoslovak Catholics. In October, Czech Catholics from Vienna, organized through expatriate associations, also joined the pilgrimage. This series of pilgrimages testified to the importance of faith in Czechoslovak society and reflected the Church's efforts to strengthen cohesion among different ethnic groups. During the autumn, pilgrimage expeditions led by Bishop Josef Gross of Litoměřice, Archbishop Leopold Prečan of Olomouc, Archbishop František Kordač of Prague, Bishop Šimon Bárta of České Budějovice, Bishop Norbert Klein of Brno, and University Professor Alois Kolísek arrived in the Eternal City. The participation of pilgrims from Europe and overseas was exceptionally high, exceeding the expectations of the Holy See representatives.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1925, Pallier 1. 4. 1925, resp. Pallier 24. 4. 1925, resp. Jelen 3. 8. 1925; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 311–312 (summary policy report no. 28), resp. 317 (summary policy report no. 29), resp. 348 (summary policy report no. 32); Polc, *Svaté roky*, 95; *Lidové listy*, 23. 5. 1925.

<sup>15</sup> *Osservatore Romano*, 21. 9. 1925; Jaroslav Šebek, *Mezi křížem a národem: Politické prostředí sudetoněmeckého katolicismu v meziválečném Československu* [Between the Cross and the Nation: The Political Context of Sudeten German Catholicism in Inter-war Czechoslovakia] (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2006), 65.

<sup>16</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1925, Pallier 1. 4. 1925, resp. Pallier 2. 5. 1925, resp. Jelen 3. 10. 1925, resp. Jelen 7. 11. 1925; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý*

The total number of Czechoslovak pilgrims was estimated at approximately 4000. Although this number was lower than in some other countries, it testified to the strong interest and determination of the Czechoslovak faithful to participate in the spiritual life of the Church at an international level. Participation in the Holy Year not only provided the pilgrims with profound spiritual experiences but also contributed to the consolidation of their religious identity within the global Catholic community.<sup>17</sup>

Official publications issued in Rome after the Holy Year 1925 listed the main reasons for the participation of Czechoslovak pilgrims. One of the key factors was the economic difficulties of the first half of the 1920s, which negatively affected both the standard of living and the overall economic situation of the population. This unfavorable situation led to an increase in travel costs, which, according to the Holy See's assessment, made it impossible for many families to participate in the pilgrimage to Rome.<sup>18</sup>

Another significant factor was the ongoing parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia in November 1925, which required citizens to actively participate in political events, diverting their attention and energy from spiritual activities such as pilgrimages. The political tension and the effort to ensure stability in the country thus diminished the focus on these spiritual events. However, the elections did bring electoral success to Christian parties in Czechoslovakia – the Czech and Slovak People's Parties won nearly 1 200 000 votes, securing 54 mandates, or 18%, in the three-hundred-member Chamber of Deputies.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, in 1925, a gathering of the Catholic sports organization Orel was held in Brno, which became a significant event in the cultural and sports movement in Czechoslovakia. The event had strong religious

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*stolec a Československo*, 317 (summary policy report no. 29), resp. 384 (summary policy report no. 34), resp. 399 (summary policy report no. 35).

<sup>17</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1926, Jelen 11. 1. 1926; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 439 (summary policy report no. 37).

<sup>18</sup> Polc, *Svaté roky*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Marek Šmíd, 'Obtížné zakotvení lidovců v politickém systému první ČSR: Parlamentní volby v roce 1925 a Československá strana lidová' [The Difficult Position of the People's Party in the Political System of Early Czechoslovakia: The 1925 Parliamentary Elections and the Czechoslovak People's Party], *Soudobé dějiny* 20, no. 4 (2013): 570; Miloš Kouřil, 'Katoličtí kněží v politice Československa v meziválečném období' [Catholic Priests in Czechoslovak Politics During the Interwar Period], in *Jan Šrámek a jeho doba*, eds. Pavel Marek et al. (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2011), 315–317.

and cultural overtones, promoting a healthy lifestyle and the values of Catholic morality. Beyond its focus on physical education, it attracted the attention of believers and organizers interested in physical culture within the Catholic community. This gathering had a significant impact on the cultural and social life of the Church and required considerable effort and resources. In a broader political context, it represented an expression of resistance to socialist ideologies and supported Christian values in interwar Czechoslovakia.

Last but not least, an event that disrupted relations between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See during the Holy Year played a significant role. On 6 July, lavish celebrations were held in memory of Master Jan Hus, with President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Prime Minister Antonín Švehla serving as honorary chairmen. Although not an extraordinary jubilee, these celebrations caused tension due to the controversial connotations of Jan Hus's legacy for the Catholic Church. As prominent representatives of the Czechoslovak state, Masaryk and Švehla emphasized freedom of religion and national identity, contributing to a cooling of relations with the Vatican. The Holy See viewed this as a provocative gesture signaling anti-Catholic tendencies, which sparked opposition among some segments of the Catholic public. In response, Apostolic Nuncio Francesco Marmaggi filled a formal protest, which was sent to Rome and later recalled to the Vatican. This action underscored the Holy See's disagreement with Czechoslovakia's stance on religious issues, particularly regarding the legacy of Jan Hus in Catholic tradition.<sup>20</sup>

The Czechoslovak government responded to this development by recalling its envoy to the Holy See, further cooling mutual relations. This diplomatic rift, known as the Marmaggi affair,<sup>21</sup> was reflected in the public debate, where parts of the Czechoslovak press sharply

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<sup>20</sup> Historical Archives of Secretariat of State (hereafter referred to as AA. EE. SS.), fondo Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 57, f. 11, Gasparri to Marmaggi 4. 7. 1925; National Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Collection – Clippings Archive, box 1596; Marek Šmíd, 'Postava Jana Husa jako předmět sporu mezi Československem a Svatým stolicem v období první republiky' [The figure of Jan Hus as a subject of dispute between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See during the First Republic], in *Hus a Masaryk: Hledání národní tradice a identity: Sborník projevů pronesených na slavnostním setkání u příležitosti 163. výročí narození Tomáše Garrigua Masaryka v budově Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu České republiky a dalších příspěvků*, eds. Tomáš Butta et al. (Prague: Církev československá husitská, 2015), 32–43.

<sup>21</sup> For more details on the Marmaggi affair see for example Marek Šmíd, 'The Marmaggi Affair: The most important diplomatic conflict between Czechoslovakia and the Holy

criticized the Vatican. The anti-clerical tone of the campaign, primarily led by left-wing and nationalist media, mirrored the broader secularization tendencies of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Some newspaper articles depicted the Holy See as an institution hostile to Czechoslovak statehood and cultural identity, deepening the mutual tensions.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, the Italian press, including newspapers such as *Corriere della Sera* and *Il Messaggero*, emphasized that although Master Jan Hus contributed to the formation of Czech national identity, he had been condemned by the Catholic Church as a heretic. The glorification of Hus in a country with deep Catholic traditions raised questions in Italy about the ideological direction of Czechoslovak politics and its relationship with the Church's heritage. This situation reflected broader European tensions between secular states like Czechoslovakia and France, and the Catholic Church, where issues of national identity, faith, and political order were in conflict.<sup>25</sup>

The mentioned conflict illustrates the complexity of the relationship between the formation of Czechoslovak national identity and church institutions in post-war Europe. The celebrations of Master Jan Hus were thus not only an internal political matter but also significantly influenced the relations between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See. At the same time, they revealed the tension between the modern concept of national identity and traditional church values.

On 1 August 1925, the Czechoslovak bishops issued a collective pastoral letter in which they commented on the celebrations of Master

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See in the interwar period,' *Studia Humanitatis Journal* 5, no. 1 (2025), 83–99. DOI: 10.53701/shj.v5i1.148.

<sup>22</sup> For more detailed analyses of the Czech and Slovak press see Pavel Večeřa, 'Marmaggiho aféra. Úloha katolicismu optikou dobových tištěných médií levice' [The Marmaggi Affair: The Role of Catholicism Through the Lens of Contemporary Left-Wing Printed Media], in *Teorie v praxe politického katolicismu 1870–2007*, ed. Pavel Marek (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2008), 205–225; Peter Zmátlo, 'Ohlas Marmaggiho aféry na stránkách dvoch slovenských stranických denníkov' [Coverage of the Marmaggi Affair in the pages of two Slovak party newspapers], in *Církev 19. a 20. století v slovenské a české historiografii*, eds. Pavol Mačala, Pavel Marek and Jiří Hanuš (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2010), 493–521; Peter Zmátlo, 'Marmaggiho aféra v dobovej straníckej tlači na Slovensku' [The Marmaggi Affair in the Contemporary Party Press of Slovakia], in *Ružomberský historický zborník vydaný pri príležitosti životného jubilea prof. PaedDr. PhDr. Pavla Marka, Dr.*, eds. Jaroslav Nemeš and David Papajík (Ružomberok: Filozofická fakulta, 2009), 173–204.

<sup>25</sup> AA. EE. SS., fondo Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 59; AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1925, Jelen 3. 8. 1925; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 344 (summary policy reports no. 32).

Jan Hus and critically reflected on some aspects that could be perceived as directed against the Catholic Church. In the letter, the bishops expressed loyalty to the Czechoslovak state but simultaneously emphasized that the Catholic Church plays an important role in the spiritual life of society and that its traditions should not be weakened. This document reflected the position of the Catholic hierarchy, which sought to protect religious values while responding to the political and social changes of the First Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>24</sup>

It was therefore primarily a combination of economic, political, and cultural factors that led to lower participation of Czechoslovak believers in the Holy Year than originally expected. Nevertheless, this important spiritual undertaking demonstrated the devotion and desire of Czechoslovak Catholics for spiritual renewal, which was a key element of their faith and identity within the international Catholic community.

In the context of these events, Pope Pius XI met with Czech pilgrims in Rome, to whom he expressed his concern about the deteriorating relations between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See. This meeting was not only an expression of pastoral concern but also a call to strengthen fidelity to the Catholic Church and its unity during a period of increasing secularization. The Pope's words reflected his efforts to consolidate the position of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia and respond to the political pressures it faced. The Apostolic Nuncio Francesco Marmaggi, who was then in Rome, also participated in some of these meetings.<sup>25</sup>

Pius XI strongly warned against the danger that Catholic identity and religious convictions could become subject to political pressures and instrumentalization, which could lead to further weakening of the unity of the Catholic community. His speech reflected the concern that growing nationalism in interwar Europe could undermine religious values and the authority of Church teaching. The Pope appealed to the faithful to unite in defense of the faith and to persevere in their beliefs even in the face of political pressures.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> AA. EE. SS., fondo Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 59, f. 50, Arata to Gasparri 6. 8. 1925; *Čech*, 19. 8. 1925, resp. *České slovo*, 18. 8. 1925, resp. *Národní listy*, 19. 8. 1925; Formánek and Šmíd, *Pastýřské listy 1918–1945*, 190–195.

<sup>25</sup> AA. EE. SS., fondo Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 67, ff. 3–6; AMZV, fond Politické zprávy – Vatikán, 1925, Pallier 20. 7. 1925, resp. Jelen 3. 8. 1925; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 348 (summary policy report no. 32).

<sup>26</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1925, Jelen 3. 8. 1925.

This appeal was particularly significant in the context of the celebration of Master Jan Hus, which was perceived as a provocation by part of the Catholic hierarchy. Pius XI emphasized the role of the Church as a stable moral authority, whose task is to protect spiritual values and provide support to the faithful in times of crisis. His statement also aimed to show that the Church remains a support for Catholic believers even in times of political tension, and that believers should face challenges together, in a spirit of solidarity and Christian unity.<sup>27</sup>

The Pope's speech was a pivotal moment that underscored the importance of church communion during times of national conflict, demonstrating how the Church can respond to political challenges by emphasizing faith and spiritual unity. The Pope's efforts to strengthen the Church's identity amidst political pressures reflected broader European trends and contributed to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between faith and politics in interwar Europe.<sup>28</sup>

During this tense period, when anti-Catholic sentiments emerged in Czech public discourse, the stance of the bishops and Pope Pius XI played a key role in preserving Catholic identity in Czechoslovakia and strengthening the church community. The reflection on the mutual relationship between faith and state politics thus became a significant factor that influenced the further development of both Czechoslovak society and the Catholic Church as a whole.

It was heartening news for the Czechoslovak faithful that, during the Holy Year of 1925, Pope Pius XI decided to donate a significant amount of money toward the construction of a papal college in Rome (Nepomucenum), intended for the dioceses of Czechoslovakia. This project, the cornerstone of which was consecrated in May 1927, was completed in April 1929 with the participation of the Archbishop of Prague and Czech Primate František Kordač. The papal college was conceived, in accordance with the Primate's wishes, as a response to the growing need for theological education and spiritual formation in Czechoslovakia, especially in the context of political and social changes. Czech

<sup>27</sup> This message summarizes the report of the Czechoslovak diplomat to the Holy See Eduard Jelen, dated 8 September 1925. AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1925, Jelen 8. 9. 1925; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 359–367 (summary polity report no. 33).

<sup>28</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1925, Jelen 5. 8. 1925; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 348–349 (summary polity report no. 32).

Catholics in the USA also contributed significantly to this project, supporting the initiative with a substantial financial donation.<sup>29</sup>

The seminary in Rome aimed to become not only a center of Catholic culture and theological education but also a significant focal point for the cultural and spiritual development of the Czech nation. Its goal was to prepare a new generation of priests while also strengthening Catholic identity in Czechoslovakia, which at that time faced tensions between traditional church values and the rapidly evolving national and political environment, as mentioned earlier. While the bishops saw the Nepomucenum College as a key element in ensuring the continuity and vitality of church life in the young republic, the Pope viewed this initiative as a crucial step in strengthening the spiritual life and education of Catholic clergy in a country grappling with political and social challenges.

Pope Pius XI decided to set specific financial goals for the realization of this project. The bishops were tasked with securing the first million lire from benefactors in Czechoslovakia, the second million was to be raised through collections among the Czech diaspora in America, and the third million was promised by the Pope himself as a sign of paternal support. The Pope emphasized that the funds he was providing were not a loan but a gift.<sup>30</sup>

Overall, it can be stated that Pope Pius XI's decision in this regard represented a significant milestone in the renewal and strengthening of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. This step proved crucial in establishing a quality educational structure that would prepare future priests to respond to the needs of their community and contribute to the spiritual development of the nation.

During the Holy Year of 1925, several congresses and assemblies were held in Rome to revive and strengthen the Catholic faith. A significant moment of these events was the celebration at the Colosseum, where, on 29 November of that year, the pedestal for a new cross was consecrated. This symbol was intended to replace the cross that had been removed in 1870 following the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy and the unification of the country. The cross itself was not erected

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<sup>29</sup> Zlatuše Kukánová, 'Karel Kašpar a římské koleje' [Karel Kašpar and the Roman Colleges], in *Česká kolej v Římě: Od Bohemica k Nepomucenu: 130 let existence české kulturní a vzdělávací instituce*, ed. Tomáš Parma (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2014), 180–181.

<sup>30</sup> Polc, *Svaté roky*, 97.

until 24 October 1926, which was seen as a favorable sign for the renewal of Catholic identity in Italy.<sup>51</sup>

On Christmas Eve 1925, Pope Pius XI closed the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, a ceremonial gesture symbolizing the conclusion of the Holy Year. This event was accompanied by the publication of the encyclical *Quas primas*, in which the Pope established the feast of Jesus Christ the King as a permanent commemoration of this Holy Year. In this context, Christ was presented as the true leader of Christians, who is to guide the faithful toward a devoted and humble respect for the authority of the Church, while also forming them in a spirit of strict self-discipline and motivating them to influence the world around them. The feast of Christ the King was intended to serve as an expression of the Church's resistance to the growing departure of broad social classes from religion, while also representing a declaration of the Church's intention to act more actively within families, society, and its institutions.<sup>52</sup>

At the end of 1925, on 31 December, Pius XI celebrated the new feast with a Holy Mass in which he consecrated the whole world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This act of devotion was an expression of gratitude for the blessings God had granted during the Holy Year. During the celebration, a powerful *Te Deum* was also sung, resounding throughout St. Peter's Basilica, expressing the joy and gratitude of the faithful for the spiritual renewal.<sup>53</sup>

Despite all the uncertainties and fears that prevailed at the time, the manifestations of the Holy Year proceeded calmly and peacefully. They were a significant expression of faith, piety, and filial devotion to the See of Peter and its representative, Jesus Christ. It is estimated that 582 000 pilgrims from all over the world, including South America, Africa, and Australia, arrived in Rome during the Holy Year, many of whom

<sup>51</sup> Polc, *Svaté roky*, 97.

<sup>52</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1926, Jelen 11. 1. 1926; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 437 (summary political report no. 37); Emma Fattorini, *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini: La solitudine di un papa* (Torino: Einaudi, 2007), 33; Gerhard Besier and Francesca Piombo, *Svatý stolec a Hitlerovo Německo [The Holy See and Hitler's Germany]* (Brno: Větrné mlýny, 2008), 144; Jaroslav Šebek, *Papežové moderního věku: Vatikán od Pia IX. po Františka a jeho vztah k českým zemím [Popes of the Modern Age: The Vatican from Pius IX to Francis and Its Relationship with the Czech Lands]* (Řitka: Čas, 2014), 55.

<sup>53</sup> Polc, *Svaté roky*, 97.

travelled privately.<sup>54</sup> Although the German airline Aeroloyd offered air transport, pilgrims preferred trains and buses, which reflects a strong tradition and desire for a personal pilgrimage experience.<sup>55</sup>

The Holy Year of 1925 thus became not only an opportunity for spiritual renewal but also a platform for international solidarity and the strengthening of Catholic identity in a world undergoing turbulent changes at the time. It also had a concrete impact on religious and social life in interwar Czechoslovakia. For Catholics in Czechoslovakia, this Holy Year represented a significant spiritual event that strengthened their identity within the wider Catholic community. Despite lower participation than in other countries, it was clear that the faithful were willing to invest in their spiritual growth, as evidenced by the organization of pilgrimages and active participation in international church events.

However, it was economic and political factors, such as the economic crisis and parliamentary elections, that negatively affected the extent of participation of Czechoslovak pilgrims. This aspect highlights the strong connection between religious and political life and reminds us of how political tensions and economic problems can influence spiritual practice and collective church actions.

The significance of the Holy Year of 1925 for Czechoslovakia lay not only in its role as a call for spiritual renewal but also in its ability to reflect broader international church trends, such as missionary activity and the Church's engagement in global issues. Pope Pius XI used this event to confirm the position of the Catholic Church after World War I as a strong global actor, focused not only on religious life but also on political and social change in a broader context. For Czechoslovakia, a young state in Central Europe, the Holy Year represented an opportunity to strengthen Catholic influence at the national level while also expressing solidarity with the wider Catholic family.

Overall, the Holy Year of 1925 in Czechoslovakia can be interpreted as a significant moment when the Church sought to overcome the challenges of the post-war period, strengthen its presence in daily life, and present its rich heritage as a vital tool for both the spiritual and social renewal of the nation. In the aftermath of World War I, Czechoslovakia

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<sup>54</sup> AMZV, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1925, Pallier 1. 6. 1925; Šmíd, Hajdinová and Mandzák, *Svatý stolec a Československo*, 329 (summary policy report no. 30); Gelmi, *Papežové*, 270.

<sup>55</sup> Polc, *Svaté roky*, 94.

was still finding its footing as a young republic, facing political and economic uncertainties. The Holy Year served as an opportunity for the Church to reaffirm its role not only as a spiritual guide but also as a stabilizing force during a time of national reconstruction. By promoting a collective sense of faith and unity, the Church aimed to foster resilience and hope, aligning itself with broader social and political movements that sought to rebuild and rejuvenate post-war society.

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## THE EPISCOPAL MINOR SEMINARY IN BUDWEIS 1853–1868

RUDOLF SVOBODA

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### ABSTRACT

This study deals with the history of the minor seminary in Budweis (České Budějovice) between 1853 and 1868. The minor seminary in Budweis was one of the important formation and education centres founded by Bishop Jan Valerián Jirsík in 1853 with the financial support of the believers from the whole Diocese of Budweis. This text focuses on the life of the seminarians, their life and duties in the seminary, and the statutory as well as financial background of the seminary institution, all in the context of the life of the town of Budweis, the Diocese of Budweis, and the coexistence of the two language groups living in the diocese, i.e., Czechs and Germans.

### Keywords

Minor seminary; Diocese of Budweis; Budweis; České Budějovice; 19th Century; Spiritual formation; Christian education

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**M**inor or boys' seminaries were considered very important formative-educational Church institutions of which their establishment in dioceses was foreseen by the decrees of the Council of Trent. In the Diocese of Budweis, specifically in its centre, in the city of Budweis (today České Budějovice, Czech Republic), such a seminary was founded in 1853 by the then bishop Jan Valerián Jirsík. This minor seminary existed as an institution until 1950, when it was closed down by the communist totalitarian government that came to power after the coup d'état in 1948. The communists saw the Catholic Church as one of their main ideological enemies. The abolition of the Church's formative

and educational institutions was part of the persecution of the Catholic Church aimed at its total destruction.

In a previous study devoted to the intention of bishop Jan Valerián Jirsík (1851–1885) to establish a boys' seminary in 1852–1853, not only was the available literature on the history of the seminary mapped in more detail but also the lack of primary sources arising from the activities of the seminary itself was noted. These sources had been irretrievably destroyed during the communist totalitarianism.<sup>1</sup>

This study, which builds on the previous texts, seeks to right the historical wrong that has made the minor seminary in Budweis almost forgotten. It seeks to present to the academic community the first fifteen years of the existence of the minor seminary, from the time of its foundation at the beginning of the school year 1853/1854 to the end of the school year 1867/1868, based on secondary sources, mainly derived from the activities of the Bishop's Ordinariate of Diocese of Budweis, and with the help of other preserved sources. The study focuses on the internal life of this institution up to the turning point in the history of the minor seminary, which was the founding of the Episcopal Bohemian Gymnasium (Episcopal Bohemian Grammar School) and the beginning of the coexistence of the two institutions, formative and educational, in the same building.

## 1. Statutes of the Minor Seminary

The Budweis Minor Seminary, otherwise known as the 'Student', 'Boys' or 'Small' Seminary, started its activities at the beginning of the school year 1853/1854, namely on 1 October 1853, i.e., before the opening ceremony on 22 October 1853.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Rudolf Svoboda, 'The process of establishing a minor seminary in the Diocese of Budweis in 1852–1853,' *Theologos. Theological Revue* 25, no. 2 (2023): 92–103. This study contains a complete, up-to-date bibliography on the history of the Diocese of Budweis, the figure of Bishop Jan Valerián Jirsík and the history of the minor seminary itself. See [https://www.unipo.sk/public/media/31344/Theologos2023\\_2.pdf](https://www.unipo.sk/public/media/31344/Theologos2023_2.pdf).

The legal background of the establishment of the so-called minor seminaries after 1850 is elaborated in the study Rudolf Svoboda, 'The Founding of Minor Seminaries After 1850 Consequences of the Transformation of the Relationship Between Church and State in the Austrian Empire on the Example of Establishing a Minor Seminary in the Diocese of Budweis,' *Church Law Review* 29, no. 3 (2023): 111–125. See <https://scep.prf.cuni.cz/rcp/92/rcp92.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See the diocesan priestly bulletin *Erlauss des bischöfl. Ordinariates von Budweis an den Klerus der Diözese* (Regulations of the Episcopal Ordinariate in Budweis to the clergy

At the beginning of the seminary's existence, Bishop Jan Valerián Jirsík issued statutes regulating its operation, the duties of the seminarists (called 'students' because their primary duty was to study at the gymnasium) and the roles of their superiors.<sup>5</sup> The Statutes in force throughout its existence, i.e., until 1950, have proven to be timeless in terms of their content and functionality. However, it was also a kind of manifestation of Jirsík's ideas of the formation of young people, describing, alongside practical issues, the ideal towards which it was to be directed.

The Statutes are divided into three thematic sections and fifteen paragraphs.

The first section states, 'Conditions under which boys shall be admitted.' (§ 1–5). According to these, boys of matrimonial descent with an inclination to the clerical state, who were of exemplary manners, aptitude for study, and due diligence, were to be admitted to the seminary. At the same time, they had already graduated with good grades from the first or higher class of the gymnasium (§ 1). If possible, a boy seeking admission should present himself in person to the seminary leadership. If he was to be admitted, he must not have had a conspicuous defect of body, speech, or senses. Furthermore, an application for admission had to be made to the Episcopal Ordinariate, the Episcopal Consistory or the seminary directorate, which had to be signed by the applicant (future seminarist) himself. Along with this, the required certificates were sent.

In the same application, the parents also informed the leadership of the seminary whether they were able to pay the fee for their son's stay in the seminary. If they could pay, they committed to an annual payment of a specific amount to be paid monthly or quarterly. It was also emphasized that the parents' status and residence should be correctly stated to facilitate communication. The fee amount, referred to as a 'boarding fee', was determined 'according to circumstances', which meant according to the parent's financial situation, current prices, and

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of the diocese, henceforth *Erlass*), no. 8 (1853): 61–64; *Erlass*, nos. 11–16 (1853): 11–16, 21 and 23.

<sup>5</sup> The Statutes are preserved in the book of the first biographer of the Minor Seminary in Budweis. See Josef Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář v Českých Budějovicích* (České Budějovice, 1878), 28–35. On the character of Josef Hoffmann, see Svoboda, 'The process,' 93–94.

the state of the so-called Seminary Fund.<sup>4</sup> The statutes state an annual amount of 80 gulden of conventional currency for the whole school year.<sup>5</sup> If a seminarian left the seminary during the year without a recognized reason, he was not entitled to a refund of fees (§ 2). Lastly, it was stated that each seminarian was to bring his own clothes, bedding, blankets, straw and schoolbooks to the seminary. Each seminarian was to take care of the cleanliness of the linen himself. The seminary provided an empty bed, a physician and medicine in case of illness, and bore the cost of attendance and lighting (§ 3).

The second section, entitled ‘Daily Order’ (§ 4–6), dealt with the daily life of the seminarians. Before the series of regulations, Bishop Jirsík first explains their purpose:

Living together requires a certain daily routine. Such an order is almost the soul of every society, a guardian angel against many faults, and contributes not only to diligence but also to the development of a steady and firm character. By observing a well-ordered order of the day, we train ourselves in self-denial, we learn to subordinate our desires, our comforts, our various appetites to the higher purpose towards which the institution is directed, we learn early to make small sacrifices, and thus prepare ourselves to be able by degrees to make the sacrifices which, according to the example of Christ the Lord, the priest who is to live, not for himself, but for the salvation of the people, is to make.<sup>6</sup>

The seminarian was obliged to observe all the regulations given in the Daily Order. Waking up was to occur every morning at five o’clock with the sound of the bell. The seminarian was to greet others joyfully with the words ‘Laudetur Jesus Christus’ and to respond to the

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<sup>4</sup> The so-called Seminary Fund was established in 1853 after the official announcement of a collection for the purpose of establishing a minor seminary. All donations intended for the minor seminary came into the fund. The Episcopal Consistory controlled it, and the state of the fund’s management was regularly communicated to the public through the diocesan priestly bulletin.

<sup>5</sup> This amount rose over the duration of the seminary’s existence, taking into account the rising prices of basic necessities, so that, for example, in 1878, a quarter of a century after the seminary’s opening, the full amount of the fee was 150 gulden per year. It was common for some seminarians to pay an even higher amount of money, which happened already in the first year of its existence, but the vast majority of seminarians had their “meal allowance” reduced or even paid nothing at all. The financial provision of the seminary as an institution will be discussed later in this study.

<sup>6</sup> Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*; 29–30.

greetings of others with ‘In saecula saeculorum’. Then he was to dress carefully, wash himself in a designated place and proceed to his museum, i.e., the gathering room, for common morning prayer under the guidance of the superior of the seminary. This prayer was followed by individual study, which lasted until 0700. From 0700 to 0715, a time was set to clean clothes and shoes. At 0715, breakfast was served. Then, seminarians went together to the gymnasium, where they first attended Holy Mass and classes were held.<sup>7</sup> After the morning class, all students were to return immediately to the seminary to study together from 1130 to 1200. At the ringing of the bell, they were to gather in the dining hall, where they ate together after the Angelus prayer and the prayer before the meal. The observance of order and decorum during the meal is emphasized. After lunch, there was free time until 1300. Then, from 1300 to 1335, there was preparation for school followed by afternoon classes. At 1600, there was a snack. At 1645, individual study began again, which lasted until 1900, when dinner was served. Dinner was followed by tutoring of the pupils in the lower classes. At 2030, there was evening prayer together in the seminary chapel. Every Saturday at this time, the seminarians prayed the rosary for the seminary’s benefactors. After the evening prayer, strict silence was to be observed, and the seminarians went to bed (§ 4). The above-mentioned daily schedule was valid for school days and free days, except that on free days, afternoon studies started at 1345 and ended at 1600. Afterwards, there was a common walk. At 1700, study began again (§ 5). On Sundays and feast days, after Mass in the gymnasium church, the students also went to study. The study lasted from 0930 to 1200. After lunch, there was free time until 1545. Then the litanies and blessings were said in the seminary chapel (§ 6).

The third section, ‘Additional Provisions on Reasonable Conduct’ (§§ 7–15), is the most extensive. It specifies the conduct of seminarians and the internal functioning of the seminary. The statutes emphasize that all boys must strictly observe the times for study and tutoring. Everyone must study in the place announced while maintaining strict silence and not disturbing others. No one was allowed to leave the study

<sup>7</sup> At that time, the only gymnasium in the town was state-run, German-language, and located in the very centre of the town, in the former Dominican monastery with the adjacent large Church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where the holding of Mass was no problem even for a large number of students. The gymnasium was about a quarter of an hour’s walk away from the minor seminary.

area without a valid reason. Similarly, it was forbidden to engage in other activities, such as reading literature, other than studying literature. In fact, a student was never supposed to finish his work because if he had mastered the current assignments, he was supposed to be preparing for future classes. It was also forbidden for a seminarian to teach others outside the seminary, but this was practically impossible due to the strict daily schedule. Jirsík especially pointed out the necessity and usefulness of well-managed and conducted correpetitions, the time and manner of which were to be determined by the seminary superintendent (§ 7).

The statutes also regulated the seminarian's aforementioned time outside of study. It was emphasized that on all days when there were no classes, there were to be group outings under the direction of the superior. Non-attendance was only possible for medical reasons, always announced in advance. During these, of course, decorum was to be maintained, and, in particular, it was strictly forbidden and understood as a violation of the statutes if anyone lagged behind the group.

Telling funny stories, singing polite songs, doing gymnastic exercises, or playing various games were permitted entertainment. The Order left latitude in this matter in that it was not wrong to make merry and move about as long as the rules of decorum were observed. On the other hand, smoking, card games, 'mischievous chasing and frolicking in the rooms', dangerous and noisy jumping up and down the stairs in the seminary, unnecessary lingering in the bedrooms and lying on the beds during the day were forbidden. In addition to drawing, reading valuable books, music, singing and recitation are listed as ennobling pastimes (§ 8).

The boys were also obliged by the Statutes to be respectful and obedient to their superiors, not only to the adults but also to those of their colleagues, the so-called invigilators, who were appointed to supervise the order and behaviour of their fellow boys. These, in turn, had the task of proving themselves worthy of the trust placed in them, of behaving kindly towards their classmates, and of setting a good example in every way (§ 9).

Seminarians were forbidden to leave the seminary without permission. After receiving permission, they had to be accompanied by another seminarian designated by the superior. They were to return at the appointed time. It was forbidden to visit the theatre, suspicious houses and especially taverns (§ 10).

Each seminarian was to preserve and love cleanliness, in which he was to keep not only himself but also his clothing and school belongings. He was to treat the things in the seminary so as not to damage them. Any arbitrary soiling of the house, toilets, walls or tables was forbidden, as was breaking windows, chairs, etc. Repairs of damaged items were to be made at the expense of the troublemaker (§ 11).

Similar care was also taken in the conduct of the students: ‘All the boys are to be governed by one spirit, the spirit of true, unfeigned piety and Christian love.’ Unkind, harsh words and curses, incompetent, untruthful, or even unclean speech should not come out of the mouth of any boy, and the most careful care should be taken to see that no offence is given in word or deed. Let everyone consider and remember the awful saying of Christ the Lord, ‘Woe unto that man by whom offence cometh.’ (§ 12). The boys, on the other hand, are to be distinguished by exemplary conduct, courtesy, diligence, obedience and orderly living so that they may set an example to others and also be living proof in public that they belong to the seminary, which ‘... is the seedbed of all good, the ornament of the diocese, the hope of the future and the apple orchard of our Most Reverend and Most Gracious Bishop.’ The honour of the whole seminary should be the honour of every seminarian, which each should defend and take care to make it even better (§ 13). Therefore, only such boys should remain in the seminary as those possessing the above qualities. Seminarians who did not observe the Statutes, those who did not improve after being admonished and those who had poor grades were to be expelled, for example, during the school year. In particular, those boys who had been maintained free of charge but had not made good progress in the first and second year of the gymnasium were to leave the seminary (§ 14). The last paragraph emphasizes that the seminarians should keep their goal in view. They are urged to pray, ask God and the Mother of God for protection and strength, and receive the sacraments frequently (§ 15).

It is evident that this minor seminary’s strict discipline was comparable to the demands placed on the students of the priestly seminaries. The tremendous emphasis on study ensured excellent preparation for further higher studies, and the emphasis on all-round spiritual formation, in turn, shaped the spirit of the boys in such a way that most of them naturally applied to enter the priestly seminary after passing the graduation exam (Matura).

## 2. Material Arrangements for the Seminary

Establishing the Episcopal Minor Seminary in Budweis was not only a one-time expense but also entailed the need for permanent and well-thought-out financing.

The Diocese of Budweis (České Budějovice) was very poor, so its leadership – in this case, Bishop Jirsík – relied heavily on the support of its inhabitants. Generally speaking, this seminary existence became a ‘project’ of the entire diocese and, as such, was steadfastly supported by the whole diocese. Although there are no annual budgets for the seminary, it is clear that budgets were kept in the ‘school years’ since the seminarians were also students, and their stay was limited to the completion of their studies at the gymnasium. At the end of the school years, reports were produced, which included a brief financial balance sheet – but even these have not always survived. However, there must have been at least an outline budget for each school year, which was covered by three primary sources: contributions, i.e., payments by seminarians, donations from benefactors, and money from the Seminary Fund. The amount of money generated by the contributions of the seminarians varied from year to year because the seminary was oriented pro-socially, so even boys whose parents, mainly for financial reasons, paid either a reduced amount or nothing at all entered. The amount of the full contribution also varied over time, taking into account the financial circumstances of the seminarians, their growing needs and, of course, the changing prices of the basic necessities of life. In any case, the annual contributions of the seminarians were not nearly enough to cover the entire operation of the seminary. Donations, the amount of which could not be estimated in advance, were also a source of uncertainty for the creation of a stable budget. This is why the aforementioned Seminary Fund was created from donors’ money from the beginning of the institution’s existence, to enable its greater stability and development. The continuous growth of the financial resources in this Fund enabled a gradual increase in the number of seminarians and their provision and the necessary investments in the seminary building and its equipment in the first years of the seminary’s existence. By the end of Jirsík’s episcopate, the Seminary Fund had reached such a size, and portions of it were invested or otherwise appreciated in such a way that its earnings in subsequent decades enabled the institution of the Minor Seminary to

exist almost entirely independently, with only the contributions of the seminarians.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The Seminary in its First Year of Existence 1853/1854

By its very nature, the Minor Seminary in Budweis was a student seminary. As shown above, in the seminary statutes, it was with the study of boys that its inner life was firmly intertwined. The extant reports on the activities of the seminary, therefore, describe the individual school years. New seminarians entered the seminary just at the beginning of each new school year, and before the beginning of each new school year, there were important personnel changes in its leadership positions.

The boys who entered the seminary were to begin their studies at the Budweis German Gymnasium, which was not without some difficulties from the beginning: this state-funded gymnasium was the only one in the city and had a fixed capacity for the number of students admitted. Naturally, boys came to study at this German gymnasium not only from the city of Budweis but also from the surrounding area.

<sup>8</sup> It should be stated that the financial management of the Minor Seminary in Budweis and the drawing from the so-called Seminary Fund, which was established to support it and was constantly replenished by incoming donations, was completely transparent. It is this transparency that may have had a positive effect on the continued support from donors, many of whom supported the Seminary regularly.

For the record, at the end of the calendar year 1853, the Seminary Fund stood at 21,451 guldens. Of this, 8,216 guldens were paid in the following year. This amount was used to purchase and furnish the seminary building. At the end of the school year 1865/1866, the Seminary Fund amounted to 75,599 guldens 5,540 francs – after deducting all the costs associated with the seminary operation, i.e., including the salaries of the seminary management. Interestingly, the aforementioned ‘tuition’ or ‘board’ fees were paid in kind by individual seminarians, some of them by parents-artisans through their work or through the purchase of items needed by the seminary. In the school year 1853/1854, only six students paid full tuition; the others had the amount reduced, and four paid nothing. In the 1864/1865 school year, only four of the 77 seminarians paid full tuition. On the other hand, eighteen paid no tuition, and the rest paid reduced tuition. Again, it can only be stated that support for poor students was considerable. See Oldřich Šeda, *Státní oblastní archiv Třeboň* (State Regional Archives in Třeboň, hereinafter SOA Třeboň) – *oddělení Třeboň, Biskupský diecézní chlapecký seminář České Budějovice*, (1853) 1867–1847, inventory, Ev. Nr. 512, pp. 1–20, here see the chapter ‘Dějiny původce fondu’ (‘The history of the archive fonds originator’), p. 5; Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 40; Erlass, no. 24 (1853); Erlass, no. 1 (1854): 8; see also ‘Kassa-Rechnung des Knabenseminärs am Ende ses Jahres 1853,’ Erlass, no. 5 (1854): 27; ‘Bericht des Direktors über das bischöfliche Studentenseminär am Schluße des Schuljahres 1865,’ Erlass, no. 24 (1865) 191–192.

With several dozen seminarians interested in studying, the situation arose that there was no room for some of the seminarians in the gymnasium. Therefore, some seminarians had to wait until a place became available for them to become full students. Until then, they were forced to study unofficially only as so-called privates. On 18 January 1854, Bishop Jirsík asked the Viennese government to solve this problem. By Ministerial Decree No. 1151 of 23 January 1854, it was allowed that the maximum number of 50 students in each gymnasium class of the Budweis German Gymnasium could be exceeded by 10–15 students just from the ranks of the seminarians and these could be admitted as full students.<sup>9</sup>

The Director František Pazourek gave a detailed report on the first school year in the summer of 1854. As ‘Erster Jahresbericht über das bischöfl. Diözesan-Knabenseminar’ (First Annual Report on the Bishop’s Boys’ Seminary) was published in the diocesan priestly bulletin.<sup>10</sup> He mentions that at the beginning of the school year 1853/1854, 28 boys entered the seminary and were well taken care of in every way. They were divided into two classes. Among them also lived two students of the higher classes of the gymnasium who served as invigilators, each of whom was in charge of one class. From the beginning, the seminarians were led to observe strict internal regulations. In particular, it is emphasized that every day of the school year, an everyday morning and evening prayer was held in the house chapel, and to encourage and deepen the seminarians’ piety, the biographies of the saints were always read on the eve of the feast days, the teaching material was repeated, school assignments were made, various practical activities were carried out, and private instruction in the Czech language and singing lessons were also given. The report also mentions that, as part of their recreation, the boys went for walks, played various physical games in the yard of the seminary, played various other games to sharpen their minds, or performed gymnastic exercises under the supervision of their superiors. The seminarians received food four times a day, and in addition, they had water for hygiene, light, maid services, heating, medicines, and the services of a doctor. The medical service was provided by Dr Karl

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Hohe Ministerial-Verordnung zu Gunsten des budweiser Diöcesan-Knabenseminars,’ Erlass, no. 7 (1854): 53; Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 36–37; Šeda, Šeda, ‘Dějiny původce fondu,’ in *Státní oblastní archiv*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Erlass, no. 22 (1854): 178–180.

Haas without charge.<sup>11</sup> The statement of academic results shows that although 28 boys entered at the beginning of the school year, there was some turnover due to some boys leaving the seminary during the school year and new ones entering again. The exit number before the holidays was 29, and with regard to the level of proficiency and language skills (it should be remembered that the Gymnasium was taught in German), 16 were promoted to a higher class, six remained in the same class, and seven even were dropped to a lower class. These facts also show that, although (apart from the two invigilators mentioned above) these boys belonged in age to the lower grammar school (i.e., to the first four classes of the eight-year gymnasium), their entry skills were different. Therefore, they were gradually redistributed during the first year of study according to their academic performance. The statement mentions five boys who failed due to lack of diligence or talent and, therefore, had to leave the seminary and one who left voluntarily. Therefore, 35 boys passed through the Minor Seminary in its first year. The friendly atmosphere prevailing in the seminary is illustrated by the fact that at the end of the school year, two boys (one from each class), chosen by most of their classmates, received a prayer book as a gift from their superiors.<sup>12</sup>

Looking at Pazourek's report, one more thing to note illustrates what is happening in the seminary. The mentioned teaching 'in the Czech language' must be understood in the context of the reality of the Diocese of Budweis, the seminary itself and Jirsík's intention. The Diocese of Budweis was a diocese in which two language groups – Czechs and Germans – lived together. Their political representatives from the middle of the nineteenth century became involved in more frequent disputes, which were transferred to the linguistic, cultural and religious

<sup>11</sup> Hoffmann states that this was the case until his death. See Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 36. This man's support was not just about health care; he was a prominent figure in Budweis. Karl Haas (1815–1871) was a general practitioner, the author of several medical writings, but above all, a member of the prominent Haas family of Budweis, which, among other things, owned extensive land in a Prague suburb and participated in the political and social life of the town. In 1850–1871, Karl Haas was a member of the Town Committee (from 1862 the Town Council), a position he was perennially elected to every three years. In this position, he pushed for replacing unhealthy drinking water sources with a newly established water supply after the cholera epidemic of 1866. See Daniel Kovář, 'Haasové,' in *Encyklopedie Českých Budějovic* (hereinafter referred to as the ECB), second supplemented edition (České Budějovice: Statutární město České Budějovice, 2006), 149.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 36.

levels in addition to the political area.<sup>15</sup> Students from both language groups were admitted to the seminary, but the teaching at the Budweis Gymnasium was only in German. Some students of Czech origin had to struggle with the interpretation of the school material. By repeating the material in Czech, Bishop Jirsík not only ensured a more profound knowledge of the material for those Czech students who might not have been proficient in German but also ensured the cultivation of the Czech language, which he had long perceived as necessary. On the other hand, the German-speaking seminarians were taught the Czech language, which Jirsík undoubtedly also found very useful, given that they could become priests serving the inhabitants of a linguistically mixed diocese. All in all, the first school year took place without much trouble, and the picture of the Minor Seminary in the report mirrors the ideal one given in the Seminary Statutes.

Applications for admission to the seminary for the following year were very numerous, so the only serious problem was the lack of capacity in the one-storey seminary building. In response to this, Jirsík decided to add a second floor. Construction took place in the summer of 1854, so by the beginning of the new school year, 1854/1855, there could already have been 50 boys in the seminary.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. The Minor Seminary in the School Years 1854/1855–1867/1868

In the school years under review, the ordinary events in the seminary had a fixed rhythm and order, and it cannot be said that anything extraordinary happened there. Even the Concordat concluded in 1855 between the Austrian Empire and the Holy See did not disturb the seminary's activities, which in general terms merely confirmed the validity of what had already been permitted in relation to the seminary following the Imperial Patents of 1850. Bishop Jirsík continued to support the seminary vigorously. He considered its existence a very important part of his pastoral work, as evidenced, among other things, by the report on

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<sup>15</sup> For details on Jirsík's episcopal work and the situation in the Diocese of Budweis, see the monograph Rudolf Svoboda, *Jan Valerián Jirsík. In the service of God, Church and Country* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Hoffmann mentions that Bishop Jirsík had announced his intention in advance, saying he was considering increasing the capacity to 50 boys. The preliminary budget was set at 6,000 gulden. The Seminary Fund covered the money for the building. See Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*; 37.

the state of the diocese of 1857, which was written before his departure on a visit *ad limina apostolorum*<sup>15</sup> and was subsequently forwarded to the Roman authorities. In this report, the bishop mentions the establishment of a boys' seminary in the context of his concern for the upliftment of the religious life of the diocese. He presents the seminary as an institution functioning according to the statutes given by the Council of Trent, praises the good discipline of its boys, and expresses the hope that most of them will embark on the path to priesthood.<sup>16</sup>

A letter arrived from Rome on 11 June 1858, containing a commendatory reaction not only to the report on the state of the diocese as such but also to Jirsík's concern for the boys' seminary. Jirsík was given permission to grant apostolic blessings and plenary indulgences to those faithful who merited its support.<sup>17</sup> The bishop thus gained significant support from Rome for the further development of the seminary, which he did not hesitate to use soon afterwards.

As already mentioned, by expanding the capacity of the seminary building, at the beginning of the school year 1854/1855, 50 students could already enrol in the three gymnasium classes. Nevertheless, the number did not remain at that number; the interest in entering the boys' seminary continued to grow steadily, as the following table shows the number of its boys in the years under review. It also takes into account the division of the seminarians in the surviving documents into 'Czech' and 'German', which is not so much a national distinction as a linguistic one:<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione del Consilio, Relationes Dioecesium (fine sec. XVI – 1890 circa), Budvicen., Ceske Budejovice – Budweis (Bohemia), sign. 153, fol. 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 18–21.

<sup>17</sup> See the certificate of the visit of the Congregationis Cassinensis of 6 April 1858, the certificate of the visit *ad limina*, and the delivery of the report on the state of the diocese of 1858. Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione del Consilio, Relationes Dioecesium (fine sec. XVI – 1890 circa), Budvicen., Ceske Budejovice – Budweis (Bohemia), sign. 153, fol. 24–27; Erlass, no. 12 (1858): 89–91; Erlass, no. 20 (1858): 153–160.

<sup>18</sup> This overview is based on Hoffman, *Studentský seminář*, 104–105 and individual reports in the priestly bulletin. The numbers of Czechs and Germans refer to the total number at the beginning of the school year.

	At the beginning of the school year			At the end of the school year
		Czech	German	
1853/1854	28	18	10	28
1854/1855	50	34	16	50
1855/1856	48	33	15	47
1856/1857	58	28	30	58
1857/1858	59	30	29	53
1858/1859	48	27	21	48
1859/1860	65	44	21	64
1860/1861	65	42	25	62
1861/1862	55	36	19	53
1862/1863	55	37	18	55
1863/1864	75	50	25	72
1864/1865	77	52	25	77
1865/1866	79	55	24	76
1866/1867	80	53	27	79
1867/1868	88	55	33	85

It can be stated that only in the school year 1856/1857 (and even for the last time in the entire history of the seminary) were there more German than Czech seminarians. Otherwise, the number of seminarians in the period under review gradually stabilized at approximately 2:1 in favour of Czechs, which also corresponded to the ratio of Czechs to Germans in the entire diocese. Gradually, the total number of seminarians increased so that in the school year 1867/1868, there were 88. The more significant increase is especially true for the years 1863/1864 to 1867/1868, which can be explained, among other things, by the existence of Czech parallel classes at the German Gymnasium in Budweis in 1862–1867, which were created as a solution to the growing number of Czech applicants for gymnasium studies.<sup>19</sup> Let us also emphasize,

<sup>19</sup> The Czech parallel classes at the four lower classes of the German Gymnasium in Budweis were in operation in the years 1862–1867. These parallel classes were transferred to Třeboň in 1867, which was one of the impulses for the establishment of the Czech Episcopal Gymnasium in 1868. See *Šedesát let Jirsíkova gymnasia v Českých*

however, that at the same time, the number of both Czech and German-speaking students of the seminary grew in absolute numbers, which shows, among other things, not only the continued interest of parents but also Jirsík's efforts to have boys of both language groups in the seminary. Gradually, the fruits of the formation of the Minor Seminary also began to show: the vast majority of graduates went on to the Episcopal Priestly Seminary after successfully passing the graduation exam.

The increase in the number of seminarians resulted in, among other things, Director František Pazourek being unable to manage the care of the seminarians himself. Therefore, at the beginning of the third year of the seminary's existence, i.e., the school year 1855/1856, Kašpar Černý was appointed to assist him as a study prefect. In the school year 1856/1857, Emanuel Papír became the prefect instead. In the following school year of 1857/1858, after Pazourek's departure, he was appointed director of the seminary, and František Uhl became the new study prefect.

The first three study prefects had other priestly duties besides this ministry, which was not a very suitable arrangement. The solution came with the school year 1858/1859, at the beginning of which Antonín Skočdopole became the full-time study prefect so that the institute finally had two superiors who devoted themselves entirely to the care of the seminarians.<sup>20</sup>

Emanuel Papír, director until the end of the 1862/1863 school year, was an inspirational character for the boys. He particularly excelled in music and singing. He introduced the singing of hymns at evening prayers and other devotions, and this tradition continued after he left the seminary for another appointment. He also led the seminarians to reverence St Aloysius Gonzaga, the patron saint of studious youth. During his directorship, there was one change in the prefect's position. Antonín Skočdopole, who was appointed professor at the priestly

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*Budějovicích* (České Budějovice, 1928); *Sto let prvního českého gymnasia a Střední všeobecné vzdělávací školy v Českých Budějovicích* (České Budějovice, 1968); *Sto padesát let Gymnázia J. V. Jirsíka v Českých Budějovicích (1868–2018)* (České Budějovice, 2018); Miroslav Novotný et al., *Dějiny vyššího školství a vzdělanosti na jihu Čech od středověkých počátků do současnosti* (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích, 2006), 204–206.

<sup>20</sup> Skočdopole was appointed study prefect on 28 October 1858. See Erläss, no. 21 (1858): 168; *Ordinariátní listy Budějovické diecéze (Ordinariate Letter of Diocese Budweis; hereinafter as OL)*, no. 2 (1919): 8.

seminary,<sup>21</sup> was replaced by Václav Jiřík in the school year 1861/1862.<sup>22</sup> Jiřík succeeded Emanuel Papír as Director of the seminary two years later, but he served in that position for only one year, in the school year 1863/1864. At the end of the school year, Jiřík left the minor seminary because he was appointed as a spiritual director in the priestly seminary. Josef Hoffmann was appointed the new director as of the school year 1864/1865 and remained so for 11 long years.<sup>23</sup> The position of study prefect was held first by Šimon Kabát from 1863/1864<sup>24</sup> and then by Jan Raška from the school year 1865/1866.<sup>25</sup>

Extraordinary events rather avoided the seminary. In the school year 1863/1864, a disease manifested by high fevers spread among the students. Even the study prefect, Šimon Kabát, fell ill. Director Jiřík treated the sick, and with the help of Dr Haas, everything was managed without anyone passing away.

The running of the seminary was partly affected by the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War. At that time, Jiřík proposed to the government to use the seminary building for possible war wounded. The offer was accepted, and after the end of the school year 1865/1866, the seminary rooms were converted into a temporary hospital. However, no wounded were eventually brought in. The seminary building did, however, serve as a barracks for two hundred soldiers.<sup>26</sup> Just after the events of the Austro-Prussian War, a cholera epidemic broke out,

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<sup>21</sup> He was appointed professor at the priestly seminary on 1 October 1861. See OL, no. 2 (1919): 8; Jan Šanda, 'Msgr. Dr. Antonín Skočdopole,' in *Almanach česko-budějovických bohoslovců* (České Budějovice, 1913), 22–29, here p. 24. According to the priestly bulletin, he was first appointed as a substitute professor but had to wait for a full appointment. See Erlass, no. 20 (1861): 159.

<sup>22</sup> Jiřík's appointment was announced in the priestly bulletin of 19 October 1861. He is mentioned there as a chaplain from Budweis and a candidate for a doctorate in theology, who was also to lecture on general pedagogy in the priestly seminary, see Erlass, no. 20 (1861): 159.

<sup>23</sup> The then thirty-year-old Josef Hoffmann, who had just completed his doctoral studies at Augustanum in Vienna, was appointed professor of Church history at the priestly seminary on 1 September 1864 and from 1 October of the same year was also director of the minor seminary. His appointment as a full professor of Church history was not confirmed until a year later. See Erlass, no. 10 (1865): 80.

<sup>24</sup> Šimon Kabát was prefect of the minor seminary from 1 October 1863. After two years, he was appointed preacher at the seminary church of St Anne in Budweis. See Erlass, no. 22 (1865): 176; OL, no. 39 (1905): 148 (obituary); Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Raška, as a newly ordained priest, became prefect of the seminary on 1 October 1865, see OL, no. 19 (1905): 76 (obituary).

<sup>26</sup> Šeda, 'Dějiny,' 3; Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 40.

resulting in a one-month-delayed start of the 1866/1867 school year, but no one passing away was recorded among the seminarians, who were mostly on holiday outside Budweis at this time.<sup>27</sup>

We can conclude the period under review with Jirsík's achievement, which was essential for future seminar development. In 1867, he had the opportunity to purchase a relatively large plot of land adjacent to the seminary from the builder Josef Kneissl.<sup>28</sup> He took advantage of the opportunity and, on 3 May of the same year, purchased it for 3,350 gulden, with the prospect of expanding the premises for the seminary, especially the seminary garden, where the seminarians could spend their rest.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

The first fifteen years of the existence of the minor seminary in Budweis were marked by the gradual development of this institution and its growth, which was entirely in line with the intention of Bishop Jan Valerián Jirsík. This growth did not only concern the number of students. Gradually, the seminary building and its facilities were expanded to better suit the formation and education of seminarians. The financial stability of the minor seminary was crucial, and this was achieved thanks to the constant support of generous donors, the vast majority of whom were ordinary people from the entire Diocese of Budweis.

The image of the boys' seminary nevertheless appears rather static, which is primarily due to the nature of the sources – mostly official

<sup>27</sup> Šeda, 'Dějiny,' 3; Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 40.

Already during the cholera epidemic in 1855, 75 people died in the town. From the summer of 1866, cholera spread in Bohemia, introduced by Prussian soldiers. In September of that year, it reached Budweis, where by the end of 1866, it had claimed 286 lives. The epidemic subsided only in the first half of the following year. The experience with cholera in 1866 prompted the Budweis municipal administration, among other things, to speed up the construction of a new sewerage system and a modern water supply system with hygienically safe water. Josef Grulich, Karel Pletzer, 'Epidemie,' in ECB, 124.

<sup>28</sup> Josef Kneissl (1830–1910), a builder, was a town committee member (later the town council) from 1865. From 1876, he held the position of town councillor and police officer. In 1884, he became the deputy mayor to J. Stegmann. After his resignation, he became acting mayor in 1887. He was mayor-elect from 1891–1903. He was one of the founders of several local associations, such as the Deutsche Liedertafel and the Turnverein. He was a Knight of the Order of Franz Joseph I and a holder of the Papal Order Pro ecclesia et pontifice. See Pavel Koblasa, 'Kneissl Josef,' in ECB, 226.

<sup>29</sup> Šeda, 'Dějiny,' 3; Hoffmann, *Studentský seminář*, 40.

documents – that have survived to the present day. It should be noted that the seminary's own archive was almost completely destroyed during the communist regime, so we have relatively little information about the seminary's internal life. For the same reason, this study gives relatively little attention to the specific educational and formative methods, which are crucial in the context of seminary education. The fact is that during the observed period of the first fifteen years of the seminary's existence, the educational activity was carried out predominantly by another institution, namely the German gymnasium. The education of seminarians was still an unresolved area, and the problem of gymnasium studies for Czech-speaking boys was particularly pressing. Bishop Jirsík was to take care of this situation soon.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Jirsík decided to establish a Czech gymnasium, which eventually operated for several decades in the same building as the boys' seminary. This highly productive coexistence, which made it possible to better integrate the formative and educational aspects of the seminary training of boys, will be the subject of a subsequent study.

„KEIN INTERESSE MEHR AM CHRISTLICHEN  
LEBEN“: LITURGIE, SEELSORGE UND SAKRALE  
DENKMÄLER IM BISTUM LITOMĚŘICE  
GEMÄSS DEM FRAGEBOGEN VON 1973

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M I C H A L S K L E N Ā Ř

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**ABSTRACT**

**‘No Longer Any Interest in Christian Life’: Liturgy, Pastoral Care, and Sacred Monuments in the Diocese of Litoměřice According to the 1973 Questionnaire**

The paper analyses data contained in the questionnaire completed by the Roman Catholic priests of the Litoměřice diocese in 1973 when bishop Štěpán Trochta was once again its head. This source gives evidence of a strenuous pastoral activity in places stricken by the expulsion of German inhabitants including the clergy, the dismal state of sacred monuments, the contemporary state of the liturgical reform of Vatican II in individual churches and chapels, and the daily life of ecclesiastical administrators. The paper describes the transformation of the religious profile of the region after the Second World War, the relation of the largest religious organizations to the expulsion, and the efforts to resolve a pastoral crisis after 1945. It confirms the crucial role of the local ecclesiastical administrators concerning the access to the liturgical reform. Although there often occurred radical interventions into liturgical spaces, rarely was their course in accordance with conceptual and pre-approved procedures and in cooperation with the authorities of built heritage preservation.

**Keywords**

Roman Catholic Church; Diocese of Litomerice; Second Vatican Council – liturgical reform; Christian ministry; Liturgy; Monument care

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Mit dem Rundschreiben des Ordinariats vom 24. Oktober 1973 erhielten die Priester im Bistum Litoměřice auch einen vierseitigen Fragebogen. Dieser sollte für jeden Liturgiebereich gesondert ausgefüllt und im November an die Oberen zurück geschickt werden, die sich davon ein klareres Bild über die Umsetzung der Liturgiereform des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils versprachen.<sup>1</sup> Das umfangreiche Archivmaterial<sup>2</sup> erlaubt uns, einen detaillierten Blick auf die Kirchen und Kapellen der Diözese zu werfen, und ebenso wie die damalige nordböhmische Kirchenleitung deren Veränderungen in liturgischer, pastoraler und denkmalpflegerischer Hinsicht zu erkennen. Darüber hinaus handelt es sich um ein wertvolles Zeugnis, was den Stand der Seelsorge und die aktuellen Probleme der Gemeinden angeht. Der Fragebogen gibt also nicht nur Aufschluss über die Rezeption des Konzils unter lokalen Bedingungen, sondern auch über allgemeinere Themen der tschechischen Kirchengeschichte in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts und über die örtliche Denkmalpflege.<sup>3</sup> In der folgenden Studie werde ich mich auf Inhalt und Analyse der maschinenschriftlichen Antworten sowie der Begleitbriefe konzentrieren. Ich gebe dabei Einblicke in die drei genannten Bereiche – Liturgie, Seelsorge und Denkmalschutz.<sup>4</sup> Zuvor streife ich kurz die Folgen der Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen, einschließlich der Priester – eine wichtige Forschungsfrage in Bezug auf die tschechische Kirchengeschichte und die Besonderheit des Bistums Litoměřice nach 1945.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Siehe „Dotazník o postupu liturgické obnovy,“ [Fragebogen zum Prozess der liturgischen Erneuerung], *Oběžník Biskupského ordinariátu v Litoměřicích* [Rundschreiben des Bischöflichen Ordinariats in Litoměřice] no 11 (1973), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Das erhaltene Material ist im Archiv (Aktenraum) des Bistums Litoměřice zu wissenschaftlichen Zwecken zugänglich. Eine schriftlich formulierte Anfrage und die Zustimmung des Bistums sind erforderlich. Es handelt sich um ausgefüllte vorgedruckte Fragebögen, die die Priester offenbar über die Vikare an ihre Vorgesetzten gesandt haben; sie liefern Informationen über die meisten Pfarreien der Diözese und über die einzelnen betreuten Orte.

<sup>3</sup> Siehe Archiv (Aktenraum) des Bistums Litoměřice, f. Bischöfliches Konsistorium 1941–1990, V-28 (im Folgenden ABL, V-28 genannt). Der Autor dankt Mgr. Martin Barus, Archivar des Bistums Litoměřice.

<sup>4</sup> Zum Begriff siehe Eva Hahnová und Hans Henning Hahn, *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern: Legenden, Mythos, Geschichte* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Vgl. Martin Zückert, „Religion und Kirchen zwischen den Diktaturen (1945–1948),“ in *Handbuch der Religions- und Kirchengeschichte der böhmischen Länder und Tschechiens im 20. Jahrhundert*, Hgs. Martin Schulze Wessel, Martin Zückert (München: R. Oldenbourg 2009), 497–544. Martin Zückert, „Veränderungen kirchlichen Lebens in den tschechischen Grenzregionen nach 1945,“ in *Religion in den böhmischen Ländern*

Zunächst aber möchte ich einige Anmerkungen zur Methodologie und Methodik vorausschicken. Der folgende Text ist eine grundlegende historische Untersuchung über die praktische Umsetzung der liturgischen Reform des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils im tschechischen Kontext, konkret in der Diözese Leitmeritz. Er beleuchtet die relevanten Umstände der Ortskirche und verfolgt anhand des erwähnten Konvolutums drei ausgewählte Bereiche. Der Artikel verbleibt bewusst auf einer faktografischen, beschreibenden Ebene und widmet sich weder der theologischen Reflexion des Ökumenischen Konzils (also der Ideengeschichte im weiteren Sinne) noch den pastoralen Strategien an den jeweiligen Orten (steigt also nicht auf die mikrohistorische Ebene hinab). Die Studie versteht sich als Ergänzung allgemein ausgerichteter Texte zur tschechischen Kirchengeschichte und deren zentralen Schauplätzen um eine periphere, zudem stark veränderte Region.

Die sogenannte Normalisierung in der Tschechoslowakischen Sozialistischen Republik wird oft als eine Zeit der Bewegungs- und Perspektivlosigkeit, der Stagnation und Resignation nach der Besetzung 1968 durch die Truppen des Warschauer Pakts wahrgenommen. Unter der sehr starken Schicht gesellschaftlicher Lethargie lassen sich jedoch interessante und mitunter sehr dynamische Prozesse ausmachen. Die Rezeption und Reflexion des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils – wenn auch von den staatlichen Organen bewusst eingeschränkt und im Wesentlichen oder ausschließlich auf die liturgische Reform reduziert – gehören zweifellos dazu. Im Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit steht daher die Frage, wie sich die liturgische Reform des einundzwanzigsten ökumenischen Konzils (wenn auch nur vorübergehend) im sakralen Raum niederschlug, und zwar im Hinblick auf die praktische liturgische Feier und den Denkmalschutz bestimmter Objekte. Da die Diözesanleitung sich auch für weitere Informationen interessierte, können die Fragebögen zudem zur Beschreibung der pastoralen Situation dienen.

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*1938–1948: Diktatur, Krieg und Gesellschaftswandel als Herausforderungen für religiöses Leben und kirchliche Organisation*, Hgs. Martin Zückert, Laura Hölzlwimmer (München: R. Oldenbourg 2007), 253–281. Ivana Hrachová, „Litoměřická diecéze ve druhé polovině 20. století: Výsledky bádání a další možnosti výzkumu,“ *Církev 19. a 20. století ve slovenské a české historiografii*, eds. Pavol Mačala, Pavel Marek, Jiří Hanuš (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2010), 327–333.

## 1. Der Wandel des religiösen Profils in der Region nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg

### 1.1 Offizieller Diskurs und subversive Anschauungen

In seiner Weihnachtsansprache 1945 bezeichnete der Präsident der Tschechoslowakischen Republik Edvard Beneš die geplante „Abschiebung der Deutschen“<sup>6</sup> als großes und freudiges Ereignis, als historisch gerecht, und konstatierte: „Es ist dies eines unserer großen nationalen Ereignisse, das zumindest innenpolitisch die gesamte zukünftige Geschichte unserer Nation völlig verändern wird. Schätzen wir es und begrüßen es freudig, führen wir es würdig, human und in moralischer Hinsicht untadelig durch.“<sup>7</sup> Während die Aussage über die grundlegende Veränderung der Realität entspricht – wenn auch wohl anders, als Edvard Beneš es beabsichtigte – war die „Abschiebung“ oft weit davon entfernt, ein würdiger, menschlicher und moralisch vertretbarer Prozess zu sein.<sup>8</sup>

Über die Notwendigkeit dieser Abschiebung herrschte nach dem Krieg in Politik und Gesellschaft ein breiter Konsens;<sup>9</sup> ebenso im römisch-katholischen Umfeld, wo sich der Ruf nach Vergeltung mit versöhnlicheren Stimmen abwechselte.<sup>10</sup> Zugleich jedoch sprach sich der Episkopat gegen Gewalt und Exzesse aus, die die sogenannte „wilde

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<sup>6</sup> Zum Begriff siehe ausführlich Adrian von Arburg und Tomáš Staněk, *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951: Dokumenty z českých archivů I–II* (Středokluky: Zdeněk Susa 2010–2011).

<sup>7</sup> Edvard Beneš, „Budme tvořivými optimisty: Vánoční projev presidenta republiky, pronesený rozhlasem na Štědrý den 24. prosince 1945,“ *Národní obroda* 27. 12. 1945, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Vgl. z. B. Matěj Spurný, *Der lange Schatten der Vertreibung: Ethnizität und Aufbau des Sozialismus in tschechischen Grenzgebieten (1945–1960)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2019). Jaromír Mrňka, „The Moment between Occupation and Freedom: Forms of Collective Violence at the End of World War II in the Czech Lands,“ *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung/Journal of East Central European Studies* 69, no 4, (2020): 471–494.

<sup>9</sup> Vgl. Jiří Kocian, „České politické strany a řešení německé otázky v Československu v roce 1945,“ in *Konec soužití Čechů a Němců v Československu: Sborník k 60. výročí ukončení II. světové války*, eds. Hynek Fajmon, Kateřina Houšková (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2005), 32–46, hier 42–44. Siehe auch Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Vgl. Jaroslav Šebek, *Od konfliktu ke smíření: Česko-německé vztahy ve 20. století očima katolické církve* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2015), 75–80. Stanislava Vodičková, *Uzavírám vás do svého srdce: Životopis Josefa kardinála Berana* (Praha, Brno: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2018), 167–171. Vojtěch Novotný, *Maximální křesťanství: Adolf Kajpr SJ a list Katolík* (Praha: Karolinum, 2012), 150–155. Tomáš Staněk, „Odsun Němců a křesťané

Vertreibung“ aufgrund der „Kollektivschuld“ begleiteten. Nur einen Monat vor der Präsidentenrede hatten die Ordinarien einen Hirtenbrief über „die dringendsten Fragen der tschechoslowakischen Katholiken“ veröffentlicht, der entweder am vierten Adventssonntag oder fast zeitgleich mit der Ansprache von Edvard Beneš am Heiligabend verlesen wurde. Darin besprachen sie den Brief von Papst Pius XII. (der unter Verweis auf den heiligen Johannes von Nepomuk den Wiederaufbau nach dem Krieg auch mit Versöhnung verband) und zitierten ihn im Abschnitt „Wie umgehen mit Angehörigen anderer Nationalitäten“. Weiter heißt es:

Wenn wir selbst gelitten haben, ist es uns zur Ehre gereicht, und es ist uns ein Ruhm; wenn wir selbst Unrecht taten, wäre es eine Schuld vor Gott und ein Schandfleck vor den Menschen und würde vom Ausland nicht vergessen werden. Selbst ein Schatten der Gräueltaten der ehemaligen Konzentrationslager darf uns nicht beflecken, denn die Geschichte hat einen durchdringenden Blick und wird in späteren Jahren jeden Fehltritt anprangern, so wie man heute die Gräueltaten der Lager in Dachau, Auschwitz und anderswo anprangert.<sup>11</sup>

Gegen die anhaltende ethnisch motivierte Gewalt wandten sich die Bischöfe auch in einer Mahnschrift vom 16. November 1945 an die tschechoslowakische Regierung.<sup>12</sup>

Die Frage nach dem korrekten Vorgehen stellte sich freilich nicht nur im römisch-katholischen Umfeld. Auch im evangelischen Milieu stellten manche eine Verbindung zwischen „Abschiebung“ und „Sühne

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(1945–1948) [2],“ *Střední Evropa* 2, no 23 (1992): 37–46. Siehe auch Jaroslav Šebek, *Za Bohu, národ, pořádek* (Praha: Academia, Historický ústav Akademie věd ČR, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> „Společný pastýřský list episkopátu Republiky československé o současných nejnaléhavějších otázkách československých katolíků,“ in *Pastýřské listy 1945–2000: Arcidiecéze pražská*, ed. Aleš Opatrný et al. (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2003), 15–17, hier 15. Siehe auch die Aussage (1946) des Priesters Bedřich Hoffmann, *And who will kill you: the chronicle of the life and sufferings of priests in the concentration camps* (Poznaň: Pallottinum, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Siehe Jaroslav Šebek, *Od konfliktu*, 112–113. Siehe auch Marek Šmíd, *Mission: Apostolic Nuncio in Prague: Czechoslovakian-Vatican Diplomatic Relations between 1920 and 1950* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2020). Marek Šmíd, „The Catholic Church in the Czech Lands during the Nazi Occupation in 1939–1945 and After,“ *Studia Humanitatis Journal* 1, no 1 (2021): 192–208.

für den Krieg“ her.<sup>15</sup> So kam es 1945 zu einer Überführung von Einzelpersonen und ganzer Gemeinden der deutschen evangelischen Kirchengemeinschaft in die tschechische Konfession, was Kritik nach sich zog.<sup>14</sup> Die Botschaft der 1945 abgehaltenen Neunten Synode der Evangelischen Kirche der Böhmisches Brüder entsprach im Wesentlichen der Auffassung der römisch-katholischen Ordinarien:

Lassen wir uns nicht vom Geiste der Rachsucht und rohen Vergeltung hinreißen. Überwinden wir Habgier und rücksichtslosen Egoismus, die in diesem Jahr so oft das Gewissen und die Ehre unserer Nation befleckt haben. Nehmen wir uns die Schrecken, die der Menschheit und uns angetan wurden, nicht zum Beispiel, sondern zur Warnung. Lösen wir die schmerzlichsten Probleme des Zusammenlebens der Völker im Geiste der Menschlichkeit, im Geiste Christi, der nicht zulässt, dass selbst vor Gericht der Barmherzigkeit vergessen wird. Bitten wir Ihn um den Sieg über uns selbst und jeden Ansturm verderblicher Leidenschaften. Seien wir ein Volk von strenger moralischer Zucht. Nur so können wir die nationale Freiheit wirklich festigen.<sup>15</sup>

Die Zweite Synode der tschechoslowakischen Kirche befürwortete 1946 eindeutig die Vertreibung, wobei sie sich freilich weigerte, diesen Begriff mit Rache zu verbinden. Allerdings sprach sie von der „geistigen Gesundheit der Nation“ und nahm eine legalistische Haltung ein: „Wenn die deutsche Minderheit in ihrer Gesamtheit hier bliebe, kann unser Staat nach seinen Erfahrungen mit ihr den Deutschen keine politischen Rechte gewähren. Unseres Erachtens aber will unser Volk kein nationales Kollektiv von rechtlosen Menschen in seiner Mitte und kann es nicht wollen.“<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Vgl. Tomáš Staněk, „Odsun Němců a křesťané (1945–1948) [1],“ *Střední Evropa* 2, no 22 (1992): 121–131, hier 127. Vgl. auch Adrian von Arburg und Tomáš Staněk, *Výsídlení II/2. Srpen/září až prosinec 1945*, 92, 144, 165–166.

<sup>14</sup> Vgl. *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> Evangnet, *Československá církev evangelická a českoněmecké vztahy*, [https://www.evangelnet.cz/cee\\_pruvodce:ceskonemecke\\_vztahy](https://www.evangelnet.cz/cee_pruvodce:ceskonemecke_vztahy) [zit. 25. 6. 2024]. Siehe auch Ondřej Matějka, „The ‚Proton Pseudos‘ of Our Life After May 1945: Czech Protestants and the Expulsion of Sudeten Germans,“ in *Collective identities and post-war violence in Europe 1944–48: Reshaping the nation*, eds. Ota Konrád, Boris Barth, Jaromír Mrůka et al. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 165–194.

<sup>16</sup> Zit. von Tomáš Staněk, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945–1947* (Praha: Academia, Naše vojsko, 1991), 85.

## 1.2 Pastorale Krise

Was die von Deutschen entvölkerten Gebiete angeht, kann man zurecht von einer lang anhaltenden sozialen bzw. kulturellen Diskontinuität sprechen. Die Zugezogenen gestalteten ihre neue Heimat logischerweise um,<sup>17</sup> als Folge der groß angelegten Propagandakampagne, die auf die Wiederbesiedlung des Grenzgebiets abzielte.<sup>18</sup> Zu den grundlegenden Veränderungen gehörte eine Verschiebung in der Religiosität,<sup>19</sup> und zwar auf mehreren Ebenen. Während die deutschsprachige Bevölkerung überwiegend der römisch-katholischen Kirche angehört hatte, lockerte sich diese Anbindung durch die Ankunft von Tschechen, Slowaken, Roma und anderen ethnischen Gruppen oft erheblich. Damit einher ging der Verfall von sakralen Denkmälern, Friedhöfen und kleinen Sakralbauten.

Der Pariastatus,<sup>20</sup> mehrheitlich akzeptiert und später durch Präsidialdekrete und andere Bestimmungen zementiert, führte für Sudentendeutsche bald nach Mai 1945 zu Verfolgung und etlichen Widrigkeiten, meist auf Grundlage von Entscheidungen lokaler Akteure und Behörden. Die Ereignisse um die Vertreibungen, insbesondere Ende 1945, wirkten sich auch auf den religiösen Bereich aus. Im Umfeld strenger Internierung und teils langer Inhaftierung war eine geistliche Betreuung oft nicht gegeben; wenn die Teilnahme an Gottesdiensten außerhalb des Lagers ermöglicht wurde, begleiteten Wärter die Gläubigen. Das Eigentum dieser Personen und der noch von Deutschen verwalteten religiösen Einrichtungen war ebenfalls ein heikles Thema; laut einem Erlass des Ministeriums für Erziehung und Aufklärung vom Januar 1946 waren einige der Beschlagnahmungen unrechtmäßig. In den Schulen durfte der Religionsunterricht nur in tschechischer Sprache erteilt werden, den Deutschen verweigerte man die Sakramente und kirchliche Bestattungen und die Zahl der Geistlichen wurde trotz der Proteste des Episkopats radikal reduziert.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Vgl. z. B. Jiří Topinka, „Zapomenutý kraj: České pohraničí 1948–1960 a takzvaná akce dosídlení,“ *Soudobé dějiny* 12, no 3–4, (2005): 534–585. Siehe auch Čeněk Pýcha, *Knihy k prohlížení a procházení: Vizuální reprezentace prostoru severních Čech, Dějiny – teorie – kritika* 10, no 1 (2015): 61–87, hier 73–74.

<sup>18</sup> Vgl. Spurný, *Der lange Schatten*, 48–59.

<sup>19</sup> Vgl. Zückert, *Religion*, passim.

<sup>20</sup> Siehe z. B. Frommer, *National Cleansing*. Spurný, *Der lange Schatten*. Jaromír Mrůčka, *Limity lidskosti: Politika a sociální praxe kolektivního násilí v českých zemích 1944–1946* (Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Vgl. Staněk, *Odsun Němců* [1], 126–130.

Mit den Vertriebenen gingen auch ihre Priester (gezwungenermaßen oder freiwillig), was die Kirchenverwaltung in eine äußerst schwierige Lage brachte.<sup>22</sup> Die Situation betraf das Bistum Hradec Králové, verschlimmerte sich im Erzbistum Prag und im Bistum České Budějovice und wurde auch von tschechoslowakischen Ordinarien angesprochen.<sup>23</sup> Im Falle der Diözese Litoměřice handelte es sich jedoch angesichts der bestehenden nationalen Zusammensetzung um einen besonders radikalen Eingriff. Offen diskutiert wurde dies auf einer Versammlung des Klerus im Prager Gemeindehaus am 15. November 1945 vom Pilsener Vikar Josef Resl, der auch neue Formen der Seelsorge in den Missionsgebieten im Grenzland vorschlug und auf die Notwendigkeit einer ständigen Präsenz tschechischer Geistlicher hinwies.<sup>24</sup>

Das Grenzland ist die Peripherie unserer tschechischen Heimat. So wie es sich bitter rächen würde, nur das innere Prag seelsorgerisch zu betreuen und die Außenbezirke zu vernachlässigen, so wäre es heute ebenso falsch, das Grenzland zu vernachlässigen. Das Grenzland wird der Maßstab für die apostolische Fähigkeit, den Eifer und die Hingabe der tschechischen Priesterschaft sein. [...] Die deutschen Priester, wenn sie denn bleiben, haben kein Vertrauen zu den Tschechen. [...] Mancherorts gibt es nicht einmal deutsche Priester, sie wurden entweder vertrieben oder sind geflohen.<sup>25</sup>

Bischof Štěpán Trochta versuchte, die dramatische Situation durch eine regelrechte Anwerbeaktion zu lösen, indem er Geistliche aus religiös stabileren Regionen zur dauerhaften Mitarbeit oder zumindest Aushilfe ins Bistum Litoměřice einlud. Das Angebot war Teil einer umfassenderen Konsolidierungsmaßnahme und fand gewisse Resonanz. Langfristig sollte zur Aufwertung der Diözese und ihrer allgemeinen Stabilität die Errichtung eines Priesterseminars und eines Hauses für Spätberufene beitragen, sowie Begegnungsstätten

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<sup>22</sup> Vgl. Zlataše Kukánová, „Rád bych byl sloužil déle: K odsunu německého katolického kléru z českých zemí,“ *Securitas Imperii* 32/1 (2018): 98–129.

<sup>23</sup> Vgl. „Společný pastýřský list arcibiskupů a biskupů Československé republiky – listopad 1946,“ in *Pastýřské listy*, 20–26. „Společný pastýřský list všech ordinářů v Československu – listopad 1947,“ *ibidem*, 43–47.

<sup>24</sup> Vgl. [Josef Resl,] „Referát vikáře Resla o situaci v pohraničí,“ in *České katolické kněžstvo s národem a lidem v boji, utrpení a práci pro lepší zítřek: Dokumenty, projevy, směrnice*, ed. František Ludvík (Praha: Arcidiecéšní pastorační ústředí, 1946), 65–69.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, 65.

und Bildungseinrichtungen unter Leitung von Ordensleuten.<sup>26</sup> Die Kirchenpolitik der kommunistischen Tschechoslowakischen Republik machte diese Pläne jedoch zunichte: Der rechtmäßige Ordinarius und andere Kirchenführer wurden politisch verfolgt, die männlichen Gesellschaften des apostolischen Lebens aufgelöst und das einzig verbliebene Priesterseminar in Tschechien sowie die einzige theologische Fakultät – zuvor von der Karlsuniversität ausgeschlossen – befanden sich nun in Litoměřice, am Rande des Staatsgebiets unter staatlicher Aufsicht. Die Bemühungen der geistlichen Administratoren fanden also in einem schwierigen Kontext statt.

## 2. Der Fragebogen

### 2.1 Inhalt

Der Fragebogen stellte zeitlich und verwaltungstechnisch eine Belastung dar angesichts der Datenmenge und der kurzen Bearbeitungszeit. Das hatten die Verantwortlichen vorausgesehen:

Es ist sicherlich eine neue Bürde für die geistlichen Verwalter, insbesondere für Bezirke, in denen es mehrere regelmäßig genutzte liturgische Räume (Kirchen und Kapellen) gibt, da der Fragebogen für jeden einzelnen ausgefüllt werden muss. Es ist jedoch zu bedenken, dass es für die Leitung der Diözese notwendig ist, ein möglichst genaues Bild des liturgischen Lebens der Ortskirche zu erhalten.<sup>27</sup>

Der Fragebogen gliederte sich in drei Teile. Der erste mit der Überschrift *Ort des Gottesdienstes* enthielt zwölf Fragen, die sich sowohl auf die liturgische Reform im Sinne der Neuausstattung (Altar, Ambo, Vorläufigkeit oder Endgültigkeit von Änderungen und deren Genehmigung, Tabernakel) als auch auf Betriebsdaten (Tonanlage, Beleuchtung, Heizung) bezogen; die letzten Fragen galten der Verwendung von Musikinstrumenten und Glocken. Der zweite Teil mit dem Titel *Heilige Messe* befasste sich mit den verschiedenen liturgischen Diensten und der Akzeptanz der Änderungen an der Gottesdienstordnung (Konzelebration, Lesungen, Gesänge und Stille, Haltungen, Fürbitten,

<sup>26</sup> Siehe ausführlich Michal Sklenář, „Dávám se cele k dispozici k pastorační v pohraničí: Snahy o poválečnou obnovu a personální situace litoměřické diecéze po druhé světové válce,“ *Securitas Imperii* 52/1 (2018): 130–159.

<sup>27</sup> „Fortschrittsfragebogen.“

Kommunionsprozession, Heilige Kommunion). Der dritte Abschnitt *Weitere Gottesdienste* befasste sich mit der Spendung der Sakramente und der christlichen Bestattung, der Feier der Anbetung, den gesonderten Wortgottesdiensten, den Andachten und der geistlichen Erneuerung.<sup>28</sup> Mit dem Fragebogen verschaffte sich Štěpán Trochta, der das Bistum zum zweiten Mal übernahm, einen Überblick; nach seiner Rehabilitierung leitete er das Amt von August 1968 bis zu seinem Tod im April 1974.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.2 Liturgischer Raum, Variabilität der Liturgiefeier

Besonderen Wert legte das Konsistorium auf Informationen zur Liturgiefeier; tatsächlich wurden die Priester ausdrücklich aufgefordert, sich am Ende „zu liturgischen Fragen“ zu äußern.<sup>30</sup> Die Antworten bestätigen die positive oder zumindest gehorsame Annahme der Liturgiereform des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils – in dieser Hinsicht stimmen die Daten des Bistums Litoměřice mit denen anderer tschechischer Gebiete überein.<sup>31</sup> Vor allem bei der älteren Priestergeneration lösten einige der Veränderungen Besorgnis und Unsicherheit aus. So wandte sich der promovierte Theologe Josef Gospoš (1909–1995, Priesterweihe 1933) mit etlichen Fragen direkt an Bischof Štěpán Trochta und nannte Gründe, warum es ihm schwerfalle, *versus populum* zu zelebrieren.<sup>32</sup> Der Ordinarius antwortete in einem persönlichen Brief, wobei er die Liturgiereform erläuterte und eindeutig unterstützte, dem

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<sup>28</sup> Vgl. ABL, V-28.

<sup>29</sup> Siehe Barbora Řeřichová, „Poslední cesta kardinála Trochty. Pohřeb v režii ‚normalizační‘ moci?“, *Securitas Imperii* 29, no 2 (2016): 122–160.

<sup>30</sup> Siehe „Fortschrittsfragebogen.“

<sup>31</sup> Vgl. Michal Sklenář, *Postaveny navzdory: Vznik nových římskokatolických sakrálních staveb v českých zemích v letech 1948–1989* (Praha, Brno: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2022), 187–200. Michal Sklenář, „Malé sošky z porcelánu: Očista liturgického prostoru a počátky realizace liturgické reformy v královéhradecké diecézi na přelomu let 1966 a 1967“, *Studia theologica* 25, no 4 (2023): 99–118. Tomáš Řepa, „Počátky obnovy liturgie po II. vatikánském koncilu na příkladu umělecké komise brněnské diecéze“, *Zprávy památkové péče* 83, no 2 (2023): 103–112. Siehe auch Jiří Hanuš, Petr Fiala (Hgs.), *Koncil a česká společnost: Historické, politické a teologické aspekty přijímání II. vatikánského koncilu v Čechách a na Moravě* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2000). Pavel Kopeček, *Liturgické hnutí v českých zemích a pokoncilní reforma* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> ABL, V-28, Schreiben von Josef Gospos an Štěpán Trochta vom 31. Oktober 1970.

Fragesteller aber gleichzeitig erlaubte, den Opfertgottesdienst wie bisher zu feiern.<sup>53</sup>

In manchen Punkten zeichnete sich eine Übernahme des Messritus nach den Rubriken des Missale von Papst Paul VI. schrittweise ab. So wurden die Psalmen mancherorts „noch nicht gesungen“, die Kommunionprozession „noch nicht gehalten“. Den Priestern standen keine Messhelfer zur Seite, so dass sie sich den Erfordernissen der Messliturgie anpassen mussten, indem sie die Konsekrationsworte teils still rezitierten (sangen) oder dann schweigend bis zur Doxologie fortführen, während die Gemeinde sang. Auch der Vortrag des Hochgebets wechselte, wobei der römische Kanon weiterhin vorherrschte. In den Filialkirchen und Kapellen gab es logischerweise weniger Anpassungen als in Pfarrzentren, und oft wurde die Feier dort weiterhin mit dem Rücken zur Gemeinde zelebriert. Zuweilen gab es auch Experimente: In Bozkov wurde der ursprüngliche Altar weiter benutzt, aber auch „der Gemeinde zugewandt ein tragbarer, was man erst nach den endgültigen Anpassungen aufgab“.<sup>54</sup>

Zu Beginn der 1970er Jahre waren der Gemeinde zugewandte Altäre bereits üblich, während Ambos weniger häufig waren. Der Wortgottesdienst wurde von einem vor den Kirchenbänken aufgestellten Lesepult aus gehalten und teils wurde das noch vorhandene Chorgestühl oder die Kanzel verwendet. Die Quellen geben keine Hinweise auf Widerstand gegen die Reform, gelegentlich jedoch ein gewisses Zögern bezüglich der geeigneten Lösung. Frage: Ist der Sitz für den Priester passend platziert? Antwort: „Ich hoffe, dass ja.“<sup>55</sup>

Die stille Andacht wurde nur mancherorts umgesetzt, gewöhnlich nicht nach der Homilie, die aber regelmäßig gehalten wurde. Ebenso setzten sich die verschiedenen Möglichkeiten des neuen Messbuchs nur teilweise durch; so konnte z. B. der Friedensgruß nur an Sonntagen stattfinden (ausdrücklicher Verweis auf die geringe Zahl der Gläubigen und den räumlichen Abstand zwischen ihnen). Die Texte der Bußhandlungen wurden selten verändert, feierliche Segnungen kaum verwendet und die Konzelebration fand aufgrund der Größe der Seelsorgebezirke und der geringen Zahl der Priester praktisch nicht statt (womöglich bei Firmungen oder Visitation durch den Oberen).

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, Brief von Štěpán Trochta an Josef Gospoš, undatiert (nach den Stempeln des Ordinariats irgendwann nach dem 12. November 1970 abgeschickt).

<sup>54</sup> ABL, V-28, Mariä-Heimsuchung-Kirche (Bozkov – Boskau).

<sup>55</sup> ABL, V-28, Peter-und-Paul-Kirche (Wolfartice – Wolfersdorf).

Der früher übliche Inzens der Gemeinde wurde zur Ausnahme, Latein als liturgische Sprache verschwand fast völlig und die Gläubigen zeigten kein Interesse daran. In Einzelfällen beteiligte sich das Volk an der Feier, „indem es alle lateinischen Texte rezitierte, wenn auch mit verständlichen Schwierigkeiten“. <sup>56</sup> In Štětí hingegen sei die lateinische Messe nach Angaben des dortigen Pfarrers „nicht mehr möglich“. <sup>57</sup> Taufen gebe es dort und in der Umgebung genug, doch über die Eltern schreibt der Priester, dass sie „in den meisten Fällen wenig Glauben haben“. <sup>58</sup>

## 2.3 Seelsorge, Sakramente

Die Liturgiereform im Bistum Litoměřice wurde vom Klerus oft unter schwierigen Bedingungen durchgeführt. Bei einigen Antworten – u. a. das vorherrschende Verlesen des allgemeinen Gebets der Gläubigen (Fürbitten) durch den Priester betreffend – lässt sich daher schwer feststellen, ob die Liturgiereform in der jeweiligen Pfarrei sich erst noch durchsetzte oder ob die örtlichen Bedingungen die Einbeziehung weiterer Personen nicht zuließen, da diese schlicht nicht vorhanden waren. Die geringe Zahl an Geistlichen ebenso wie an Gläubigen führte zu großen wirtschaftlichen, pastoralen und rein praktischen Problemen.

So litten die Priester angesichts der Größe der Seelsorgebezirke unter Zeitdruck: „Die Gottesdienste sind so angelegt, dass sie sehr kurz auf das vorangegangene Excurrando folgen, was eine umfangreichere liturgische Gestaltung praktisch unmöglich macht.“ <sup>59</sup> Die liturgischen Laiendienste wurden oft von betagten Personen geleistet, es gab nur wenige bzw. gar keine Messdiener und Sänger. Vielerorts fehlten Lektoren oder die Aufgabe wurde übernommen, „wenn jemand aus einer anderen Pfarrei kam“. <sup>40</sup> Die Anzahl an kirchlichen Trauungen änderte sich und mancherorts gibt der Fragebogen Jahre an, in denen überhaupt keine Eheschließung stattfand.

Bei den Taufen und den Zukunftsaussichten ist die Frustration am größten. Das Taufsakrament werde gespendet (wenn auch keineswegs überall), die Erfahrungen seien jedoch unbefriedigend, denn „auf

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<sup>56</sup> ABL, V-28, Franz-von-Assisi-Kirche (Kováň).

<sup>57</sup> ABL, V-28, Simon-und-Judas-Kirche (Štětí – Wegstädtl).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>59</sup> ABL, V-28, Kirche St. Johannes Baptist (Horní Habartice – Ober Ebersdorf).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

die Taufe folgt nichts mehr“.<sup>41</sup> Der Verwalter in Zábοří bei Mělník, Václav Sikyta, sonst begeisterter Befürworter der Reform, sagt über seine Erfahrung aus: „Schlecht – [die Eltern] hören zu, aber es schert sie nicht.“ Trauungen fanden in der Pfarrei nicht statt, ebenso wenig Messen für Kinder („keine Kinder, Religion wird nicht gelehrt“) oder Jugendliche („kommen nicht“). Diese Angaben treten in verschiedenen Variationen im gesamten Bistum auf und entsprechen dem rapiden Rückgang der religiösen Praxis während des Berichtszeitraums. In der Pfarrei Hořetice (excurrento verwaltet von Staňkovice bei Žatec aus) wurden zwei bis drei Taufen pro Jahr gefeiert, und in die Erfahrungsspalte schrieb der geistliche Administrator Jaroslav Ludvík Stanovha O. Praem: „Interesse nur für den Tag der Taufe.“<sup>42</sup>

Ausnahmen bilden die Berichte aus Bělá pod Bezdězem, wo es zu einer offiziell bewilligten Umgestaltung der Kirche kam, oder aus Železný Brod, wo neben dem sakramentalen Leben und kirchlichen Bestattungen auch Andachten und geistliche Erneuerungen stattfanden; der Pfarrer verwies auf seinen Kontakt zu jungen Eheleuten, der in den excurrento verwalteten Teilen schwieriger sei.

## 2.4 Musik und Gesang

Aufgrund der langen Tradition des tschechischen Kirchengesangs widmen wir auch diesem Bereich unsere Aufmerksamkeit. (Wenn Antiphonen, Proprio, Psalmen usw. gesungen wurden, dominierten die von Josef Olejnik komponierten Hymnen). Am häufigsten nannten die Priester Hymnen aus dem *Český kancionál*. Das Gesangbuch – eine Auswahl tschechischer geistlicher Lieder aus verschiedenen Epochen – entstand 1921 nach langen Vorbereitungen des Musikwissenschaftlers Dobroslav Orel und des Priesters Vladimír Hornof und wurde in den Folgejahren wiederholt veröffentlicht, zuletzt 1968. An der Auswahl, den Melodien und Texten wurde sorgfältig gearbeitet, was zu einer Vereinheitlichung und zur Wiederbelebung des Volksgesangs führen sollte. Die Herausgeber erreichten ihr Ziel jedoch nur teilweise, da die Diözesen und Gemeinden weiterhin ihre eigenen Liederbücher herausgaben, die den regionalen bzw. lokalen Bedürfnissen entsprachen.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> ABL, V-28, Franz-von-Assisi-Kirche (Kováň).

<sup>42</sup> ABL, V-28, St.-Laurentius-Kirche (Žiželice-Hořetice – Schiesselitz-Horatitz).

<sup>45</sup> Vgl. Ondřej Talaš, *Církevní zákonodárství o posvátné hudbě a jeho recepce v českých zemích od Tra le sollicitudiní do II. vatikánského koncilu* (Diplomarbeit, Olomouc 2018), 44–46.

Die örtlichen Gesangstraditionen unterschieden sich somit von Pfarrei zu Pfarrei.

Der Untertitel *Gemeinsames Gesangbuch* der tschechischen und mährischen Bistümer berücksichtigte die Liturgiereform des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils. Es wurde erstmals 1973 vom Zentralen Kirchenverlag in Prag herausgegeben, im selben Jahr, als auch der Fragebogen ausgewertet wurde. Im Vorwort wurde die Neigung zu bekannten Gesängen eingeräumt und die Herausgabe von separaten Büchern für Andachten, Vespren und Karwochenfeiern sowie von neuen Werken in Aussicht gestellt:

Dieses Gesangbuch kann kein vollkommenes Hilfsmittel sein, denn wir stehen am Anfang einer neuen liturgischen Praxis, deren Geist wir uns noch aneignen müssen. Dennoch sind wir der Meinung, dass es nicht zu früh erscheint: Es soll sowohl eine Brücke zur Einheit des kirchlichen Gesangs als auch eine Anregung zur Entwicklung des Volksgesangs in der erneuerten Liturgie sein.<sup>44</sup>

In den Fragebögen wird hauptsächlich die Orgel erwähnt, kaum andere Instrumente. Sehr oft wird angegeben, dass sie repariert, manchmal generalüberholt werden muss. Einzelne Aussagen verdeutlichen den Zusammenhang der untersuchten Aspekte; in der Kirche St. Johannes von Nepomuk in Slatina (Gemeinde Libochovice) z. B. müsse der Reparatur der Orgel die Reparatur der Decke vorausgehen.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.5 Denkmalpflege

Obwohl nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil erhebliche und teils radikale Eingriffe in die Innenausstattung von Kapellen und Kirchen vorgenommen wurden, findet sich nur selten der geforderte Verweis auf Dokument und Verfahrensnummer zu deren Bewilligung auf Ebene des Bistums oder Kapitelkonsistoriums. Ebenso verfügten die Pfarreien in der Regel über keinen genehmigten Plan für weitere Änderungen. Für das Bistum Litoměřice gibt es keine Unterlagen über eine breitere Beteiligung der staatlichen Denkmalschutzbehörde.

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<sup>44</sup> *Kancionál: Společný zpěvník českých a moravských diecézí* (Praha: Česká katolická Charita, 1973), 5. Siehe auch František Kunetka, *Stručné dějiny hudby a zpěvu v liturgii* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 1999), 32.

<sup>45</sup> Vgl. ABL, V-28, Johannes-Nepomuk-Kirche (Slatina, Pf. Libochowitz – Libochovice).

Änderungen hingen gewöhnlich von der Person des geistlichen Verwalters und dessen Einstellung und Geschmack ab oder von Konsultationen innerhalb des Diözesanklerus (Vikariatsversammlungen).

Eingriffe, die die Gestalt der sakralen Innenräume auf lange Zeit bestimmten, erfolgten oft spontan und meist nur in Verantwortung der örtlichen Priester bzw. Gemeinden. Aus den Fragebögen geht hervor, dass Priestersitz und Ambo (provisorisches Lesepult) praktisch überall aufgestellt wurden. Vielerorts gab es einen festen Altar, anderswo nur ein der Gemeinde zugewandtes Provisorium. Aus der Pfarrei Kněžice erhielt das Konsistorium folgende Beschreibung der Veränderungen in der Katharinenkirche: „Kirche gestrichen, Kirchenbänke ausgetauscht, morscher Seitenaltar entfernt, Kanzel – Sakristei in eine Winterkapelle umgewandelt.“<sup>46</sup> Der Priester referierte zwar über den Ambo und den korrekt aufgestellten Sitz, feierte die Messe jedoch am bestehenden Hochaltar und plante keine weiteren Veränderungen. Die Akustik des Raumes empfand er als zufriedenstellend und feierte werktags die Messe in Latein *sine populo*.

Das tatsächliche Ausmaß der Anpassung wird oft nur durch kurze Aussagen oder die Verbwahl klar. Für die Kirche Unserer Lieben Frau in Benešov nad Ploučnicí heißt es z. B.: „das Gitter für die Austeilung des Heiligen Abendmahls entfernt, kleine Bänke aus dem Presbyterium entfernt; der Übergang von Kirchenschiff und Chor (auf Höhe der Kanzel) für die Liturgie ‚ceram populo‘ umgestaltet“.<sup>47</sup> In der Kirche St. Johannes der Täufer in Horní Habartice wurde „provisorisch die Möglichkeit geschaffen, der Gemeinde zugewandt zu zelebrieren (unter Verwendung der Mensa des Seitenaltars). Im hinteren Teil Beichtstuhl aufgestellt.“<sup>48</sup>

Die Eingriffe trafen verschiedene Teile der Kirchen, wovon wir oft nur eine vage Vorstellung bekommen. In Horní Řasnice wurde der Vorraum in eine Winterkapelle umgewandelt und in Srbská „der Seitenaltar in die Mitte gestellt und umgestaltet“.<sup>49</sup> In der Kirche der Geburt des Heiligen Johannes des Täufers in Proboštov kann man von einer größeren Rekonstruktion sprechen: Das Chorgitter wurde entfernt,

<sup>46</sup> ABL, V-28, St. Katharina Kirche (Groß Herrndorf – Kněžice).

<sup>47</sup> ABL, V-28, Mariä-Geburt-Kirche (Benešov nad Ploučnicí – Bensen).

<sup>48</sup> ABL, V-28, Kirche St. Johannes Baptist (Horní Habartice – Ober Ebersdorf).

<sup>49</sup> ABL, V-28, Mariä-Empfängnis-Kirche (Horní Řasnice/Bernsdorf pod Smrkem – Bärnsdorf an der Tafelfichte), Kapelle Unsere Liebe Frau vom Schnee (Horní Řasnice-Srbská – Wünschendorf).

die Holzaltäre und Skulpturen restauriert, Fußboden und Beleuchtung repariert und die Kirche wurde ausgemalt.<sup>50</sup> Eine Reihe von Änderungen seit 1965 werden (aufgrund der Form des Fragebogens) nur flüchtig erwähnt, z. B. in der Kirche St. Martin in Robeč: „Gesamterneuerung von Innenraum, Statuen, Altären, Bänken, Anstrich, Altar zur Gemeinde.“<sup>51</sup> Den Umbauten fehlte allerdings die Bewilligung durch das Konsistorium (die entsprechende Angabe im Fragebogen lautete „noch nicht“). Angesichts der gängigen Praxis ist davon auszugehen, dass der geistliche Verwalter die Denkmalschutzbehörde ebensowenig konsultiert hatte. Und die angeführten Beispiele waren sicher keine Einzelfälle.

Einzelne lakonische Angaben lassen Begebenheiten aus der Nachkriegszeit des Bistums nur erahnen. So wurde das Harmonium aus der Kirche des Heiligen Johannes von Nepomuk in Velký Valtinov (Gemeinde Jablonné v Podještědí) „vor 1945 [gestohlen]“.<sup>52</sup> Die denkmalgeschützte Kirche wurde den Gläubigen 1973 nach etwa zehn Jahren wieder zugänglich gemacht. Die Pfarrkirche St. Jakobus der Ältere in Horní Libchava wurde wegen ihres baufälligen Zustands nicht genutzt, die Liturgie wurde in der 1973 errichteten Pfarrkapelle gefeiert.<sup>53</sup>

## Resümee

Die Annahme des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils in Tschechien beschränkte sich hauptsächlich auf die liturgische Reform, und diese wiederum auf die Änderung des Messritus. Der Gesamtprozess war durch den historischen und sozialen Kontext stark beeinflusst; auf die kurze Zeit des Prager Frühlings 1968 folgte die lange Periode der sogenannten Normalisierung. In den 1970er und 1980er Jahren wurden die Konsequenzen der massiven Verfolgung der römisch-katholischen Kirche der Jahre unmittelbar nach 1948 deutlich sichtbar, während zugleich eine breite alltägliche Atheisierungskampagne im Gange war, die die Religiosität weiter schwächte.

Die pastorale Situation im Bistum Litoměřice zeigt, dass die örtlichen geistlichen Verwalter und die Gläubigen mit einem dramatischen Personalmangel zu kämpfen hatten. Die Liturgiereform hatte

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<sup>50</sup> Vgl. ABL, V-28, Kirche Geburt Johannes des Täufers (Probošov – Probstau).

<sup>51</sup> ABL, V-28, Kirche St. Martin (Robeč – Robitsch).

<sup>52</sup> Vgl. ABL, V-28, Johannes-Nepomuk-Kirche (Velký Valtinov – Groß Walten).

<sup>53</sup> Vgl. Ibidem, St. Jakob Kirche (Horní Libchava – Oberliebich).

stattgefunden und die Fragebögen enthalten keine Ablehnung ihrer Umsetzung. Meist handelte es sich jedoch um ein langwieriges Provisorium: In den Gebieten mit ehemals deutscher Bevölkerung fehlte es an aktiven Laien, finanziellen Mitteln und Enthusiasmus. Als die Fragebogen ausgefüllt wurden, waren die Auswirkungen der kommunistischen Verfolgung und der Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen bereits zu spüren.

Die verfügbaren Quellen dokumentieren die häufige Aufstellung von der Gemeinde zugewandten Altären, vielerorts auch den Ambo und den Sitz für den Priester, während die angebotene Variabilität der Liturgiefeyer (feierlicher Segen, Hochgebet usw.) selten genutzt wurde. Änderungen wurden zwar vorgenommen, aber in der Regel ohne offizielle Genehmigung des Konsistoriums, ohne Rücksprache mit Denkmalschützern und ohne klare Vorstellung vom weiteren Vorgehen – die bestellten Vertreter der Kirchengemeinden handelten nach eigenem Gutdünken. Wir dürfen jedoch nicht vergessen, dass die Aufgabe der geistlichen Verwalter, die Liturgiereform umzusetzen, in einem schwierigen Umfeld geschah.

Das Bistum Litoměřice war von der Vertreibung der deutschen Bevölkerung stark betroffen, die Zahl der praktizierenden Gläubigen ging dramatisch zurück und die seelsorgerische Betreuung der zugezogenen Einwohner stellte die wenigen Geistlichen vor eine schwierige Aufgabe. Die geschwächten Gemeinden wurden von Priestern geführt, die große Bezirke zu verwalten hatten, und deshalb nicht in der Lage waren, sich um Sakralbauten, kleinere sakrale Denkmäler und Friedhöfe zu kümmern. Vielmehr sahen sie sich nach 1948 langfristig der Marginalisierung und Verfolgung durch staatliche Behörden ausgesetzt. Die oben beschriebene Situation spiegelte sich sowohl in der Seelsorge als auch der materiellen Absicherung wider. Die Pfarreien waren offensichtlich geschwächt und ihre natürliche Erneuerung durch nachfolgende Generationen fand nicht statt. Zu den wichtigsten und zugleich schmerzlichsten Teilen des Fragebogens gehören die Aussagen über die geringe Anzahl an Taufen und die fruchtlose Zusammenarbeit mit den Eltern; es gab fast keine kirchlichen Trauungen und nur wenige kirchliche Bestattungen. Damit in engem Zusammenhang stehen die Angaben über nur wenige oder gar keine Ministranten, geringen jugendlichen Nachwuchs und den Mangel an Organisten, Lektoren und Kantoren. Fast drei Jahrzehnte nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs benötigten die Kirchen und Kapellen des Bistums Litoměřice

Reparaturen, besaßen nur unzureichende Beleuchtung (man benutzte gewöhnlich Kerzen), (stark) reparaturbedürftige Orgeln und Fenster, unzureichende oder gar keine Tonanlagen.

Die Zeit unmittelbar nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil war bestimmend für die praktische Umsetzung der Reformen. In der Tschechoslowakei beschränkten sich diese Reformen jedoch aufgrund des Drucks der kommunistischen totalitären Herrschaft fast ausschließlich auf die Liturgiereform. Die Quellen belegen, dass bereits in den ersten Jahren nach dem Allgemeinen Konzil nicht nur Änderungen tatsächlich umgesetzt wurden, sondern sich auch eine konkrete religiöse Praxis etablierte, die die römisch-katholische Kirche viele Jahrzehnte lang beeinflusste und in mancher Hinsicht noch immer beeinflusst.

Schließen wir mit Josef Resls brillanter Analyse der Situation im Grenzland und einer Erinnerung an das veränderte Verhältnis zur römisch-katholischen Kirche, das allerdings nach einer kurzen Periode begrenzter Demokratie nach 1948 auf offizieller Ebene durch die kommunistische Kirchenpolitik abgelöst wurde:

Die religiöse Ignoranz und Dumpfheit ist mancherorts schlichtweg beklagenswert. [...] Es muss aber auch gesagt werden, dass trotz der allgemeinen religiösen Lauheit unserer Nation das Interesse der Tschechen an tschechischen Priestern und Gottesdiensten größer und aufrichtiger ist[,] als es nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg der Fall war. Heute ist die Situation für die tschechischen Priester günstiger, denn die tschechische Priesterschaft, die mit dem Volk gelitten hat, [...] besitzt dessen Vertrauen, sodass es dem Priester leichter fällt, Mitstreiter zu finden [...].<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> [Resl,] Referát, 67.

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TWO TYPES OF DIALOGICAL PHILOSOPHICAL  
THEOLOGY: RICHARD SCHAEFFLER  
AND JOLANA POLÁKOVÁ\*

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MARTIN VAŠEK

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to present the two forms of dialogical philosophical theology developed by Richard Schaeffler and Jolana Poláková. Schaeffler was a German philosopher who developed a transcendental-philosophical way of thinking about God. Poláková is a Czech philosopher, a representative of dialogical personalism. Her thinking seeks to grasp the responsive relationship of the human being to God and thus to conceive a dialogical type of philosophical theology. In Schaeffler's case, I believe we can speak of an implicit dialogical philosophical theology based on transcendental thinking and dialogical *Erfahrungstheorie*, and in Poláková's case, of an explicit dialogical philosophical theology. The study demonstrates the methods and possibilities of philosophical theology outside the circle of analytic philosophy – transcendental and dialogical approaches.

**Keywords**

Richard Schaeffler; Jolana Poláková; Philosophical theology; Dialogical thinking; Christian philosophy; Philosophy of religion

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**R**ichard Schaeffler (1926–2019) was a German Christian philosopher advocating transcendental philosophy. In 1983, he published *Religionsphilosophie*, which was evaluated as a landmark in the history of this discipline. According to *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, the publication provides the first typological summary of all the main problems concerning the philosophy of religion.

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\* Texts from German, Czech and French have been translated into English by the author of the study.

Schaeffler understood experience as a dialogue with reality, which is necessary because it reveals the ‘always greater truth of things’ (*veritas semper maior*). Through it, we allow ourselves to be transformed to a newness of thinking. This original religious appeal of the Apostle Paul is also applicable in the context of profane experiences; therefore, it is important to learn to dialogue with reality. On this basis Schaeffler creates his own project of philosophical theology with a transcendental approach (*Philosophische Theologie von transzendentelem Ansatz*).<sup>1</sup>

Czech philosopher Jolana Poláková (born 1951) places her philosophical conception in the ‘post-Kantian’ tradition: she does not consider the speculative element of thought to be beneficial unless its conceptions are controlled and verified by an analysis of experience. Philosophically, she seeks to think through the stimuli that Christian and Jewish thought brings to philosophy – especially the biblical testimony of knowledge understood as a living relationship to reality. This relationship is conditioned by humility, openness and receptivity. For these reasons, the line of post-Kantian philosophising closest to her is that which in the 20th century resulted in the ‘philosophy of dialogue’. Poláková is classed with dialogical personalism and with those thinkers who ‘go with Levinas beyond Levinas’. In *God in Dialogue*, she speaks of a ‘dialogical philosophical theology’, which she understands as a certain way of contact with God.<sup>2</sup>

This study aims to present the two forms of dialogical philosophical theology as developed by Schaeffler and Poláková. I believe that in Schaeffler’s case, we can speak of an implicit dialogical philosophical theology (based on a transcendental approach) and in Poláková’s case of an explicit dialogical philosophical theology. I will strive to clarify and defend this claim and demonstrate the core of their understanding of the dialogical relation to reality, as well as the commonalities and differences between the two authors.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Schaeffler, ‘Religionsphilosophie und Philosophische Theologie von transzendentelem Ansatz,’ in *Gott und Vernunft. Neue Perspektiven zur Transzendentalphilosophie Richard Schaefflers*, ed. Bernd Irlenborn and Christian Tapp, (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2013), 26–35.

<sup>2</sup> Jolana Poláková, *Bůh v dialogu. K hledání živého základu filosofické teologie* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2001).

Schaeffler does not speak primarily and explicitly of a ‘dialogue with God’ within philosophical theology, nor of dialogical philosophical theology, as such. Nowhere does he use this term; he does not understand his own philosophical theology as dialogical. Nevertheless, I believe we can speak of his implicit dialogical philosophical theology. In other words: we can speak of an explicit dialogical philosophy of experience (*Erfahrungstheorie*) in Schaeffler but not of an explicit dialogical philosophical theology in the sense that Poláková understands it, and as I will explain below. However, the different starting points or approaches will undoubtedly influence the shape of philosophical theology.

I seek to emphasise two ideas and differences:

1. In philosophical theology, Schaeffler focuses primarily on a ‘dialogue with reality’ (from the world to God, ‘reading the book of the world’) and on the dialectic of reason.<sup>5</sup> Poláková focuses primarily on grasping the dialogical relationship between human beings and God, and believes that we can properly understand (‘read’) the world only in relation to God. Outside of the relationship with God, everything is cloudy, obscured, a screen, an obstacle and a source of misunderstanding for human beings. Poláková believes that recognising God in the world or through the world is difficult, problematic or even impossible because reality presents itself to us in many ways. Individual facts may not serve as support, inspiration or symbols for a person seeking God.

2. Schaeffler’s philosophical theology is a natural theology separated from faith and religion. Poláková’s philosophical theology is connected with faith; therefore, God is not a postulate of reason received by rational faith. I consider these two differences and aspects crucial in identifying and differentiating Schaeffler’s and Poláková’s dialogical philosophical theology.

<sup>5</sup> Kai G. Sander writes: ‘Schaeffler verweist also auf die unerlässliche Notwendigkeit auch eines transzendental-philosophischen Gottesbegriffs, indem er Erkenntnis (“Erfahrung”) als einen Dialog mit der Wirklichkeit begreift, der geprägt ist vom Verweis auf die verschattete Präsenz Gottes. Mehr als ein solcher “Verweis” kann am Ende dieses Diskurses nicht gefunden werden – aber für die Vernunft bedeutet es viel, wenn sich ihr hier ein gangbarer Weg auftut.’ Kai Sander, ‘Ist der transzendental-philosophisch verstandene Gott ein selbstgemachter Gott? Fundamentaltheologische Anmerkungen zur transzendentalphilosophischen Gottesrede bei Richard Schaeffler’ in Irlenborn and Tapp, *Gott und Vernunft*, 130–131.

In other words, we can argue that there is a fundamental difference between 1. a cognitive relationship and a postulatory relationship and 2. an understanding of God (*Gottesverständnis*) and a relationship to God (*Gottesverhältnis*), as B. Irlenborn claims. Irlenborn notes that Schaeffler's model of the transcendental-philosophical concept of God does not posit (express) a cognitive, but only a postulatory relationship to God; thus, within his natural theology, it is not a cognition (understanding) of God, but only a postulatory relationship to Him.<sup>4</sup>

Poláková's approach is different; within dialogical philosophical theology she offers not a postulatory relationship to God but a 'lively relationship with a transcendent God' and a cognitive relationship to Him. A cognitive relationship and understanding of God in Poláková means – knowing within the relationship to God, not in the sense of objectification (God as object of natural theology) or a postulate of reason. Hence, Poláková argues that the central question of dialogical philosophical theology is the question 'Who are you, God?'

Philosophical theology has had a strong presence in analytic philosophy in recent decades. The intention of this study is also to recall other approaches and backgrounds – both transcendental-philosophical and dialogical.

## 1. Definition and understanding of philosophical theology

Undoubtedly the first question, yet one that I cannot further address here, is the question of the understanding and definition of philosophical theology. Are we to understand philosophical theology as being based on the natural cognitive faculty (capacity) of human beings, independent of faith, where the emphasis is on human reason proving the existence of God? Can we speak of philosophical theology even in the case of philosophers who are believers? What is the particularity of this type of philosophical theology? In this case, is faith 'bracketed' and does the philosopher proceed as if he were not a believer? Or does he reflect philosophically on his faith, its contents and his living relationship with God? The answers to these questions vary.

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<sup>4</sup> Bernd Irlenborn, 'Religiöse Erfahrung und postulatorischer Vernunftglaube. Zum Konzept und zur Tragfähigkeit von Schaefflers Erfahrungstheorie,' in *Religiöse Erfahrung. Richard Schaefflers Beitrag zu Religionsphilosophie und Theologie*, ed. Thomas M. Schmidt and Siegfried Wiedenhofer (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2010), 123–141.

For example, C. Taliaferro does not exclude Christian philosophical theology.

Examining a religious tradition philosophically from within is not necessarily partial or biased, but it does involve practising philosophy from the standpoint of some given theological tradition. Christian philosophical theology, for example, might take some key Christian teaching (about the Trinity, the incarnation, miracles, prayer, teachings about forgiveness) and consider whether such teaching can make philosophical sense.<sup>5</sup>

Other authors identify philosophical theology with natural theology (*theologia naturalis*).

‘Other philosophers of religion hold that reason can provide at least some insight into the nature of God. This approach is known as “natural theology”—“natural” because it appeals to our natural capacities for reasoning.’<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, M. J. Adler, for example, rejects such a division and distinguishes between sacred, natural and philosophical (pagan) theology. He considers Aristotle’s theology to be an example of pure philosophical theology.<sup>7</sup>

The *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* editors state in their introduction:

Since philosophical theology (as we understand it) is aimed primarily at a theoretical understanding of the nature and attributes of God and God’s relationship to the world and things in the world, the prevailing scepticism about our ability to learn about God through philosophical reasoning left philosophical theology on the wane.<sup>8</sup>

Poláková neither proves nor postulates God (like Schaeffler) within her philosophical theology, and she understands dialogical philosophical theology as a ‘universally thinking part of a broad monotheistic

<sup>5</sup> Charles Taliaferro, *Contemporary Philosophical Theology* (New York: Routledge-Taylor & Francis, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Tim Bayne, *Philosophy of Religion: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, ‘A Philosopher’s Religious Faith,’ in *Philosophers Who Believe. The Spiritual Journeys Of 11 Leading Thinkers*, ed. Kelly J. Clark (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 205–221.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

tradition'.<sup>9</sup> This Czech philosopher sees the synthesis of philosophical theology and Christian faith ambivalently. On the one hand, she evaluates it as a certain trap for both sides, as has been shown in the past. The Christian, originally existential-dialogical approach to God has been crippled at its very foundation by monological philosophical thinking. For the independence of philosophical thought, this connection with the Christian faith in turn meant decline and limitation. On the other hand, a deeper look reveals that the union of philosophy with faith brought philosophical theology to a fundamental awareness of the inadequacy of the monological variant (approach).

For Poláková, therefore, the main dividing line is between monological and dialogical philosophical theology. She sees the latter approach as the completion of philosophical theology which came about through the influence of religious thought on philosophy and the philosophical grasp (expression) of the person's lived responsive relationship to God. In other words: 'Philosophy becomes the philosophy of relation, in relation and from relation. It becomes a relational metaphysics.'<sup>10</sup>

According to Poláková, philosophical theology has not only talked about God, but has also remained silent and considered him 'dead'. In the modern silencing of monological talk about God, she argues, there is an element of both resignation and new hope. A consequence of resignation is the widespread replacement of philosophical theology with a philosophy of religion, a phenomenology of religious experience or an analysis of religious language, whereby philosophy abdicates the question (thematization) of God. On the other hand, as an example of the new hope, she cites Heidegger's well-known idea that godless thought which must renounce the God of the philosophers is perhaps closer to the real, divine God.<sup>11</sup>

Poláková asks three specific, important and relevant questions. What is characteristic of dialogical philosophical theology, or how does a dialogical way of thinking operate in the field of philosophical reflections on God? What impact does dialogical philosophical theology have on other philosophical disciplines, if we understand it as a 'first philosophy'? What does dialogically-based philosophical theology bring to Christian theology?

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<sup>9</sup> Poláková, *Bůh v dialogu*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Jolana Poláková, *Perspektiva naděje. Hledání transcendent v postmoderní době* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1995), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Jolana Poláková, *Dialog s Bohem a filosofie* (Praha: Ježek, 1999).

Schaeffler considered the concepts of the Christian philosophers – Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas – to be philosophical theology. He took up and preserved the two fundamental questions of philosophical theology – whether and what God is, *De Deo an sit et quid sit*. Philosophically, he resigned neither to the question of God nor to the possibility of conceiving a philosophical theology. The question of whether there is a God, however, cannot be fully answered within his transcendental philosophy without religious experience. As noted above, the existence of God is not proven in philosophy, only postulated and accepted by rational belief. In this approach, the German philosopher differs from the Czech author.

As Irlenborn noted, Schaeffler held that philosophical theology is possible in today's philosophical-historical conditions only as transcendental theology. His thesis is thus clearly directed against the possibility of other philosophical approaches that speak about God – in particular, against the analytic philosophy of religion. Irlenborn attempts to clarify where Schaeffler thinks the prerogative of transcendental God-speaking lies *vis-à-vis* other models of philosophical *Gottesrede*.<sup>12</sup>

Irlenborn writes that Schaeffler's overall philosophical *oeuvre* on the concept of a dialogical theory of experience must be understood as a standalone elaboration of the transcendental philosophy of Kant. This development culminates in the philosophical concept of God – as the 'highest point of transcendental philosophy'.<sup>15</sup>

Developed transcendental philosophy describes experience as a 'dialogue with reality', and in this dialogue, thinking can let itself be transformed through the claim of the real (*Anspruch des Wirklichen*) into a newness of thinking. At the same time, as Schaeffler states, this philosophy also gains access to philosophical talk about God, or rather the question is raised as to how God becomes the subject of a developed transcendental philosophy. In his view, God is anticipatorily present in our experience, calling us to respond to the claim of reality, and is the basis of our hope to surrender to the claim of reality and persevere in this task.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Bernd Irlenborn, 'Transzendentalphilosophische und analytische Rede von Gott,' in *Gott und Vernunft*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Schaeffler, 'Die Transzendente Theologie ist der höchste Punkt der Transzendentalphilosophie. (Kant, opus postumum),' in *Religiöse Erfahrung. Richard*

## 2. Schaeffler's implicit dialogical philosophical theology or philosophical theology based on a transcendental approach

I will give three reasons why Schaeffler's transcendental-philosophical theology can be characterised as an implicit dialogical philosophical theology and will do so despite three (seemingly opposite) reasons: 1. Schaeffler does not start from a philosophy of dialogue; 2. the concept of God is not based on religious experience; and 3. God is a postulate of reason accepted by rational faith.

(1) Schaeffler mentioned how he observed painters and interviewed artists on Reichenau Island on Lake Constance in 1991. His attention was aroused by the painters' concentration as they observed their surroundings and also by the creative freedom with which they created images on canvases: the resulting paintings were not mere copies of the landscape, but rather expressions of the artists' power of creation (*Gestaltungskraft*). They were depicting what was in front of them – trying to capture it appropriately and relevantly. Schaeffler sought to express the relationship between the precision of their gaze and the freedom of artistic creation with the term *responsorisches Gestalten* (responsive shaping). This expression seemed to him to be just right to describe a specific dialogue with reality, which concerns not only artists but every perception.

In 1995, Schaeffler published *Erfahrung als Dialog mit der Wirklichkeit* and in 2014 *Erkennen als antwortendes Gestalten*. He emphasises, on the one hand, the passivity, the retreat of the subject in his encounter with objects; on the other hand, the subject nevertheless must fulfil his role, for only he 'brings things to speech'. Although Schaeffler does not explicitly articulate it, I hope that passivity and activity are both the dialectic of the subject and a condition of its openness – in this stance, the human being is receptive, thinking and listening.

Schaeffler holds a dialogical conception of subjectivity and truth, resulting in an understanding of experience as a dialogue with reality – and because his philosophical theology is based on these foundations, I take it to be an implicitly dialogical philosophical theology. 'The truth of things comes to speak only in our response. And the truth of

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*Schaefflers Beitrag zu Religionsphilosophie und Theologie*, Thomas M. Schmidt and Siegfried Wiedenhofer, (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2010), 23.

sentences is the way our response “corresponds” to that claim. Thus, the concept of truth emerges as a dialogical concept.”<sup>15</sup>

Schaeffler also writes:

Experience requires a change of our perception and thinking. This change is not imposed on us, but is brought about by ourselves in an act of responsive shaping. Of new significance, especially in the specific context of human knowledge and divine salvific intention, is a moment that is otherwise easily forgotten, namely that the way in which salvific intention reveals itself to us is also the result of responsive self-shaping. Responsive shaping here means a special kind of dialogue between the creature and its Creator, and one might add: every other form of dialogue between human beings and their world of experience is only the image, the experienceable present form of the dialogue between the Creator and his creatures.<sup>16</sup>

M. Dumas aptly remarks:

Experience is, therefore, more than an interpretation received intersubjectively; it is a process where a frame of reference is broken and possibly reconstructed, therefore, a frame stable enough not to sink into chaos and not so stable as to lose its capacity for surprise and experience. Experience is a dialogical process with the reality that operates a critical work of the subjectively lived experience. It lets me discover what I alone would not have imagined; it also calls me to respond to this discovery, which I am the only one who can give/do. For Schaeffler, the mainspring of experience is what we called the event above. The *Ereignis* is a moment internal to the experience which provokes progress in the search for a new answer.<sup>17</sup>

When something shows itself to us, it is a contingent and not infrequently surprising event (*Ereignis*). The ideas of ‘world’ and ‘I’ suggest (outline) for us the task of vacating the space in which these contingent events can take place, and this means that we must ultimately

<sup>15</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Ontologie im nachmetaphysischen Zeitalter: Geschichte und neue Gestalt einer Frage* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2008), 136.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Phänomenologie der Religion. Grundzüge ihrer Fragestellung* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2017), 205.

<sup>17</sup> Marc Dumas, ‘Une réponse à Richard Schaeffler,’ in *Religious Experience and Contemporary Theological Epistemology*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Yves De Maeseneer and Stijn Van den Bossche, (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2005), 58.

self-critically retreat before the new givenness of the object. Only this retreat allows us to discover and to see the objectivity of the real; that is, the retreat allows the real to become an object for us, and thus the measure of our critical self-assessment.

I believe that we can understand religious experience and the response to this experience as *Ereignis* par excellence. Richard Schaeffler writes about religious experience:

Experiences of this special kind can be called ‘religious experiences’. The appropriate response to them can be described with a word coined by Martin Heidegger: *andenkendes Sich-Verdanken*. By ‘remembering’ the unforeseeable event (*Ereignis*) of such experiences, human beings feel ‘gratitude’ for what has been revealed to them in these experiences: the empowering power, liberating freedom and redeeming goodness of God.<sup>18</sup>

(2) Poláková claims that Kant’s description of the world of free ethical reciprocity of rational beings (ethical community) whose ‘head’ or supreme lawgiver is God is meant in its core personally and dialogically. The supreme Being cannot be proven, only postulated, and Poláková understands the certainty of this postulate as an implicitly (inherently) relational certainty, as opposed to a purely theoretical construct. From her point of view, the potential dialogicity of the Kantian line of philosophical theology was preserved in the next tradition of transcendental philosophising, and she explicitly refers to the work of Richard Schaeffler.<sup>19</sup>

Schaeffler emphasised the transition from idea to postulate and spoke of the personality of the postulated God. The concept of God is not a *bloße Idee* describing and expressing the role of reason; the concept of God speaks of an existent essence that makes the fulfilment of these tasks possible. We can certainly agree with Poláková – the postulate of God is a postulate of hope, and hope implies desire, expectation and trust, which are only possible in a relational attitude. According to Schaeffler, postulates are justifications of hope, while being neither expressions of knowledge nor of opinion. Hope cannot be understood merely as a sheer presupposition (a theoretical construct) that we

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Philosophische Anthropologie. Das Bild vom Menschen und die Ordnung der Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 22.

<sup>19</sup> Jolana Poláková, *Smysl dialogu. O směřování k plnosti lidské komunikace* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2008), 46.

construct to be sure that we can overcome the dialectic of reason.<sup>20</sup> The postulates formulated are thus in the nature of a confident hope; they are neither a personification of the idea of God nor a rational construct. To speak about God means that God's affection, His invitation and promise, which constitute the content of religious experience, are also the fulfilment of a postulatory hope, without which reason cannot free itself from its self-cancellation.<sup>21</sup>

The postulate of God (*Gottespostulat*) is an expression of hope, which is necessary if reason is not to succumb to sceptical doubt. The postulate expresses confidence in the truthfulness of God, which guarantees that the provisional character of our knowledge does not lead us into confusion and does not end in absurdity. Thus, we encounter a specific understanding of God, or rather of His attribute – *veracitas Dei*. I must rely on it if I am to be able, in the shocks of reason, through the experience of paradoxes, to assume the claim or demand of reality that is addressed to me in these shocks. Already in Descartes, the *veracitas Dei* is placed at the centre of all predicates of God, because only trust in *Gottes Wahrhaftigkeit* can restore the shaken self-confidence of reason.<sup>22</sup>

The postulate of God has a specific status, transcending the three regulative ideas (the idea of unity of the subject, the idea of unity of the world, and the idea of unity of universal history). As B. Irlenborn states, in the case of the postulate of God, it is not a demonstration of the existence of God, but only a legitimated acceptance – made legitimate by rational reasons and religious experience. Schaeffler did not conceive of the idea of God as one of the three ideas, as Kant did; for him, God as the author of the claim of reality is always already included in all three ideas as the *focus imaginarius*.<sup>23</sup>

Schaeffler emphasises trust in God, a trust full of hope. Hope as the core of religion is also the principle through which reason is liberated from dialectics. Hope is the source of the ability to respond to the claim of the real and, above all, to discover in moral action the

<sup>20</sup> Schaeffler, *Ontologie*, 115.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Unbedingte Wahrheit und endliche Vernunft. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen menschlicher Erkenntnis* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017), 74.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Unbedingte Wahrheit und endliche Vernunft*, 90–91.

<sup>23</sup> Bernd Irlenborn, 'Religiöse Erfahrung und postulatorischer Vernunftglaube. Richard Schaefflers Beitrag zu Religionsphilosophie und Theologie,' 128–129.

chance not only to become the image of God, but to be an instrument of God's redemptive action, to carry out His will.

Since the rational postulate of God claims to speak of the same God that religions speak of, it must be hermeneutically and critically affirmed in religious experience, for only here is the reality of God originally given. This does not mean, of course, that there is no difference between postulated rational belief and religious belief. For the religious person, the reliability of hope is based on the promise of God, whereas the postulate is based on an assumption, a requirement. What the postulate demands as a necessary precondition for the recovery of the faculty of experience has become certain in faith by virtue of the *sensus spei*.

(3) I believe that we can also speak of Schaeffler's dialogical philosophical theology in another sense (in a different meaning), and I find inspiration for this interpretation in Czech philosopher Karel Skalický. Schaeffler states:

Philosophy of religion on the basis of philosophical theology (and in a particular way on the foundation of a speech upon God in terms of transcendental philosophy) has the double task, then, of criticism of religion, and at the same time an exposition of religion in its self-presentation. It contains a hermeneutic proffer to religious consciousness to understand itself better in its meaning-logic and intentionality and to become critically attentive to the danger of its possible faulty composition.<sup>24</sup>

Here, the conversation between religious and philosophical consciousness that Skalický writes about in the preface to the Czech translation of Schaeffler's *Religionsphilosophie* is visible. Schaeffler combines three methods in his philosophy of religion: transcendental, phenomenological and linguistic.<sup>25</sup> This combination allows him

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Reason and the Question of God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1999), 120.

<sup>25</sup> Schaeffler writes: 'This means, for the interrelationship of the three methods here described that, owing to its special manner, act-structure, and object-relationship, by way of the "basic phenomenological law", the phenomenological method wins a pre-eminence with regard to a choice of themes. As for method, the doctrine of God in transcendental philosophy is to be ascribed a pre-eminence, since without the transcendental method neither can phenomenology and linguistic analysis reach their appointed goal. But the analysis of religious speech, especially the speech of prayer, wins a pre-eminence when it is a matter of obtaining criteria on which the religious act and its meaning-logic clearly distinguish themselves.' *Ibid.*, 117.

to approach religion not as an immutable, passive object, but rather as a dialogue partner. Schaeffler thus creates a new type of philosophy of religion which fully corresponds to a paradigm that understands the relationship between religion and philosophy as a relationship between two subjects.<sup>26</sup>

Philosophy and religion are dialogue partners, aware of differences, specificities and tensions, as well as the contribution and enrichment from the other side.<sup>27</sup> We can add that, according to Schaeffler, if reason or secular thought receives stimuli from religion, this does not mean that reason accepts religion's schemes and thus itself becomes religious. Reason does not lose its uniqueness, its secularity, but takes it to a higher qualitative level, discovering and realising a more responsible secularity. Only self-critical (not sceptical) reason and self-critical (not relativistic) religion are possible partners in the dialogue. The role of philosophy is to encourage this self-criticism and thus to mediate the mutual dialogue.

### 3. Explicit dialogical philosophical theology of Jolana Poláková

Jolana Poláková understands dialogue as a relational process, and its meaning does not consist only in the transmission of information or in the building of consensus. In the case of a dialogue between two human beings, the aim of the dialogue is mutual understanding. Dialogue is also obviously linked to cognitive relation to the object and is therefore not only a practice but also knowledge – to apply dialogue in the field of knowledge is to subordinate the closedness of the subject to openness and relations. Dialogically constituted knowledge does not impose unilateral conditions on reality; it considers its extra-categorical, non-apparent or ineffable aspects as relevant, as well. Alterity, as an

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Schaeffler also writes: 'Without an analysis of religious language, the programme of a phenomenology of religion cannot be realised. So, if theology "needs" transcendental phenomenology in order to fulfil its task, then it also "needs" its "linguistic turn". And it needs a linguistic turn of such a kind that the transcendental character of phenomenology is not lost in the process. For if phenomenology were to lose this transcendental character, it would at the same time cease to be "useful" for theology.' Richard Schaeffler, *Transzendente Theologie. Gott als Möglichkeitsgrund der Erfahrung* (Baden-Baden: Verlag Karl Alber, 2022), 114.

<sup>26</sup> Karel Skalický, 'Předmluva k českému vydání,' in *Filosofie náboženství*, Richard Schaeffler (Praha: Academia, 2003), 13–15.

<sup>27</sup> Because of the prescribed length of the article, I cannot here elaborate on the enrichment of philosophy by religion.

unknowable part of reality, encourages us to encounter it, and we can accept reality as a source of potential innovations of open thinking.<sup>28</sup>

Like Schaeffler, Poláková argues that the basis and a prerequisite of dialogical knowledge is openness – the degree of dialogicality depends precisely on the degree of openness to reality. Epistemic dialogue is the most open theoretical activity in which we approach reality in its living totality, while reality also influences the manner and extent of our knowledge. Poláková even speaks of a ‘creative openness of thought’ to reality.<sup>29</sup>

According to Poláková, dialogue enables and brings about reciprocity, but it does not imply mechanical symmetry. Every dialogue is asymmetrical in different ways and to different degrees, thus enabling giving and receiving. At the same time, dialogue is conditioned by mutual freedom, and the asymmetry and freedom of dialogue are the source of creation. Poláková, like Schaeffler, continues:

Human creation can therefore not be regarded as a sovereign performance, but as a happening that takes place only dialogically: one allows oneself to be addressed and inspired by created and uncreated reality (...) and allows what is good to speak into being through oneself. This creative struggle for the good in the field of being produces history – a mysterious and living process that can never be systematised and closed, because it is carried by human and divine freedom.<sup>30</sup>

Poláková believes that at the origin of all metaphysics is the effort to have a living relationship to reality. If this dialogical contact with reality is forgotten, metaphysics eventually becomes the opposite of what it was at its inception. It becomes a system of rigid assertions closed to reality, when it was originally something else – an effort to dialogue with reality. That it is possible to fulfil again the original mission of metaphysics is shown by dialogical philosophy, and metaphysics has within itself the possibility of subordinating its attitude of objectification and immanence to a dialogical attitude.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Poláková, *Smysl dialogu*, 42–47.

<sup>29</sup> Jolana Poláková, *Myšlenkové tvoření. Nárys obecné teorie* (Praha: Filosofický ústav AVČR, 1995), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Poláková, *Bůh v dialogu*, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Jolana Poláková, ‘Z rozhovoru pro diplomovou práci,’ in *Dialog s Bohem ve filozofii Jolany Polákové*, Žaneta Žurková (Ostrava: Pedagogická fakulta, 2017), 58–60.

The true principle of relation to reality is thus non-intentional metaphysical reverence, not intentional metaphysical grasping. The transcendent character of dialogue abolishes the idolatry of any constructed meaning and makes it possible to embrace a meaning that, in turn, constitutes and transforms us. The source of this sense is the infinite, which we glimpse in the ‘cracks’ of our order. As Tatranský points out, in *God in Dialogue* Poláková works, in addition to the pair immanence-transcendence, with the monologue-dialogue dichotomy, which in the context of her philosophy has a similar key meaning as *le dire-le dit* in Levinas and *idol-icon* in Marion.<sup>32</sup>

The philosophy of dialogue unquestionably provides the methodological presuppositions for philosophical theology. It is about searching and questioning – whether and how we can talk about the God who speaks to us. Can philosophy capture, reflect and express this reality, this relation and this type of experience? In the monological type of philosophical theology, God is a silent object, and idolatry and nihilism are the two basic variants of the monological spiritual orientation, whereas, in the dialogical type, God is an active subject and a person I can listen to.

<sup>32</sup> Tomáš Tatranský, *Lévinas a metafyzika* (Svitavy: Trinitas, 2004), 104.

Adriana Cavarero writes: ‘Elsewhere, as he continues his critique of metaphysical logocentrism, Levinas explicitly invites us to distinguish between Saying (*le Dire*) and the Said (*le Dit*). This move is paradoxical. Saying is in fact understood by Levinas as “anterior to verbal signs, anterior to linguistic systems and to semantic reflections – preface to languages.” Again, this is not the phonetic aspect of speech, not a voice that reverberates. Rather, Saying is here – at least, in its simplest meaning – the act of speaking, the event by which human beings speak to each other one by one, without regard for what they say. This Saying is distinguished by Levinas from a Said that is, at the same time, that which they say to one another and that which the entire knowledge of the west says. But the Said is above all the system that organizes speech. The Said is therefore the logos of the Greeks, or rather the principle on which the metaphysical tradition that “subordinates the human to the anonymous games of being” is founded.’ Adriana Cavarero, *For more than one voice. Toward a philosophy of vocal expression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 28.

On the difference between idol and icon, Stephanie Rumpza states: ‘This, then, is the problem, framed concisely: the idol marks our greatest capacity of encountering God. Whether we carve statues to try to represent that experience or forge concepts, the problem is that it is exclusively framed from our aim, bound to our capacities. And our capacities are finite. However lovely this idol may be, it will not in the end be God. The icon, on the other hand, does not attempt to collapse God into visibility, but tries to preserve the invisibility that would be a necessary result for something which surpasses my comprehension or control. While the idol attracts the gaze to fixate on it, the icon is not a resting place for the gaze, but constantly urges us to move beyond it.’ Stephanie Rumpza, *Phenomenology of the icon. Mediating God through the image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 95–96.

I would characterise Poláková's philosophical theology as an explicit dialogical philosophical theology, because – based on the philosophy of dialogue – it grasps (captures) the dialogical relationship between God and man and understands man's relationship to reality as carried, formed and determined by the relationship to God.

In relation to God – and only in relation to God – everything that is not God retrospectively receives the function of a transitive, transparent image. Nothing is a fixed end in itself; everything becomes a medium of holistic communication between God and man, an expression of their being-in-dialogue. The world as God's work and man's life in this world are, to the last breath of their being, a kind of total communication between God and man.<sup>55</sup>

Poláková refers several times to the work of Ferdinand Ebner, continuing the line of his thought and agreeing with him in the understanding of philosophical theology. Dialogically based philosophical theology arrives at the only possible philosophical and human certainty we can have about God – the certainty given to human beings by God Himself. She writes:

Ebner's dialogical personalism opens for philosophy a daring possibility of not stopping at the threshold of the Christian revelation, but of entering with adequate subtlety directly into the heart of the Christian message. What in the monological version of philosophical theology necessarily appeared to be completely inaccessible to reason, in the personalistic approach appeared to be inaccessible only to the reason which remains non-dialogically limited. Ebner's work thus shows that philosophical theology is in principle able to work even at the level of personal relation: to thematise God philosophically as a partner about whom it is impossible to speak meaningfully without Him.<sup>54</sup>

For the philosopher, dialogue is the way to a God about whom he can speak but cannot appropriate, and who theo-morphises philosophical

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<sup>55</sup> Poláková, *Dialog s Bohem*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> Jolana Poláková, 'Filozofická teologie F. Ebnera,' *Teologické texty* 8, no. 1 (1997): 15.

theology. ‘The essential basis of dialogical philosophical theology is the living consciousness of a personal relationship.’<sup>55</sup>

Recall Ebner’s thoughts: ‘The fact that the assertion of God’s existence in the third person through the thesis “God is” or “there is a God” is nonsensical and signifies no more than the sentence “the I is” or “the Thou is” – in other words, that it literally says nothing; and the fact that this assertion in no way concerns the real existence of God and above all not the personality of this existence must actually bring all theology and theologically speculative metaphysics to nought. God either has a personal existence, or He does not exist at all. Yet man cannot apprehend God’s personality speculatively, but only through personally relating to Him (which is the demand of man’s spiritual life and the summons of God) – that is, by making Him the Thou of his I; and then all speculating and every theological and metaphysical profundity has ceased *eo ipso*.’<sup>56</sup>

The relation to God is determinative for our knowledge of reality; therefore, we can claim that from Poláková’s perspective it is not primarily reality that addresses us and lays claim to us, but the relation to God is a prerequisite and a condition for a correct perception of reality.

Knowing reality taking place in dialogical contact with its Creator has a greater chance of being true. It is also open to that which transcends all forms of human cognition, which actively changes its very structure and meaning from the outside and affects its deepest starting points. In dialogue with the fullness of created and uncreated reality, the whole human being is transformed – especially in the dialogical way of knowing God, man is in a sense re-created – and with it, human cognitive approaches and conceptions of truthfulness are also transformed.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, dialogue with God is for our knowledge a universally opening access to reality in general, as well as a determining way to any partial reality. A dialogical relationship with God is epistemologically crucial and significant since it is constitutive of the dialogicity of all our knowing. For this reason, God is the most vivid possible dialogue partner for human beings and dialogical philosophical theology. Poláková – like

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>56</sup> Ferdinand Ebner, *The Word & the Spiritual Realities (the I and the Thou) Pneumatological Fragments* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 211.

<sup>57</sup> Poláková, *Bůh v dialogu*, 64.

Marion – claims that the beginning of a dialogical relationship with God is not the moment when we ‘see God’, but the situation when we capture His gaze turned to us. His gaze is specific and can ‘shine through’ a multifaceted reality. But, according to Poláková, without a primary relationship with God, it is difficult to reliably discern what is a manifestation of God in the world – how can I recognise God in the world if I have not known Him separately before?

By relating to God, reason becomes freer and more complex as it is not forced to limit its questioning and critical reflection. It is open to all potential contexts that transcend it. ‘The positive dynamics of the cooperative interdependence of reason and faith and their common openness outside and above oneself is demonstrably maximised in relation to God.’<sup>58</sup>

This is where I see the difference between Schaeffler and Poláková. For Poláková’s philosophical theology, the relationship to God is determinative for a true knowledge of reality. Schaeffler primarily emphasises dialogue with reality, whereas knowledge of the world, of our finitude and the dialectic of reason, results ultimately in the rational postulate of God.

Schaeffler writes:

It is not the top of the pyramid of being or the scale of values, the *sum-mum ens* and *summum bonum*, that is the primary place where God can be sought, but rather every object of experience and its claim on our perception and thinking can become the form in which God encounters human beings. Because the capacity for experience, which is threatened in the dialectics of reason and proven to be contingent, is restored by understanding the demands of reality, to which we respond, as manifestations of divine attention.<sup>59</sup>

I think the problem with Schaeffler’s concept lies in the fact that people do not perceive (‘read’) the world in the same way; there are differentiated interpretive frameworks, and a dialogue with reality does

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<sup>58</sup> Jolana Poláková, ‘Rozum a víra. Rekapitulace jednoho přístupu,’ in *Čeští svědkové promyšlené víry. Filosofie a teologie v interakci u současných českých myslitelů*. K. Skalický, R. Svoboda & F. Štěch (Eds.), (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2005), 78.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Transzendente Theologie. Gott als Möglichkeitsgrund der Erfahrung* (Baden-Baden: Verlag Karl Alber, 2022), 75.

not guarantee a path to God; the path from the world to God is not straightforward. Rather, the reverse is often true: the relationship with God influences the worldview, opens new perspectives and makes it possible to see the depth of reality with new eyes. Respectively, dialogue with reality frequently will confirm and strengthen the atheistic experience, the experience of the absence of God.

Moreover, reason does not have to point to the postulates of God to overcome its own dialectic; the question of God need not be in play at all for contemporary people. Even dialectics need not appear problematic, and/or reason need not perceive (be aware of) its self-endangerment. As S. Zabala described:

Postmodern man, who has lived out the end of the great unifying syntheses produced by traditional metaphysical thought, manages to live without neurosis in a world where God is no longer present; therefore, in a world where there are no longer stable and guaranteed structures capable of supplying a unique, ultimate and normative foundation for our knowledge and for our ethics. In other words, postmodern man, no longer needful of the extreme, magical reassurance supplied by the idea of God, accepts the probability that history is not on his side at all and that there is no power capable of guaranteeing him the happiness he seeks. Postmodern man has thus learned to live without anxiety in the relative world of half-truths.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

Czech thinker Poláková's starting point is not the transcendental-philosophical approach and, unlike Schaeffler, she does not favour this approach in philosophical theology. Poláková does not philosophically ask the question of whether there is a God, because this question is irrelevant in the context of dialogical philosophical theology. The potential proof or postulation of God is here transformed into a living encounter with Him. Philosophy, from her perspective, can do more than arrive at the postulates of reason – it can reflect philosophically on the relationship of the living God to a person and think in and from

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<sup>40</sup> Santiago Zabala, 'A Religion Without Theists or Atheists,' in *The Future of Religion*, Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 11–12.

that relationship. ‘Dialogical philosophical theology is itself a way of contact with God.’<sup>41</sup>

Bernhard Casper has very aptly characterised the thought of Jolana Poláková, arguing that the Czech philosopher puts forward her own ideas about the human relationship to God and the relationship of God to human beings. These reflections are based on her thinking experience, which can also be called a spiritual experience. It is not a reflection ‘about something’ but a ‘description’ from within – expressing and articulating a relationship to the unconditional God’s calling. It is hermeneutic of the facticity of the relation to God, a thinking (and thinker’s) approach to the reality of that relation, and this facticity is made accessible to ‘experiencing philosophy’ (Rosenzweig’s term).<sup>42</sup>

Within the framework of Christian thinking, it is undoubtedly possible to take different positions – and therefore, also to conceive different forms of philosophical theology. I believe that both authors inspire and invite us to rethink not only the possibilities of philosophical theology in the present, but also the possibilities of its transcendental-philosophical and dialogic versions.

The ideas of Richard Schaeffler have been discussed in Germany by many authors, and their valuable contributions have dealt with almost all his philosophical topics. Nevertheless, I believe that Jolana Poláková’s contribution offers and opens another possible perspective on Schaeffler’s thought – especially on the question of the possibility of a dialogical philosophical theology, its different shapes, and their comparison. I will give two reasons, or rather two short notes.

1. I believe that one of the open and problematic questions is whether it is possible today to restore, reconstruct or update the concept of rational faith and the postulate of God and whether a transcendental version of dialogical philosophical theology is acceptable and sustainable in our time.

On the one hand, it is possible to understand Schaeffler’s intention and approach – his emphasis on a dialogical relationship with reality, on human openness in the cognitive process, on awareness of one’s own finitude and the dialectic of reason – all of which culminates in rational faith and the postulate of God. However, is such a path

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<sup>41</sup> Poláková, *Bůh v dialogu*, 62.

<sup>42</sup> Bernhard Casper, ‘Úvod,’ in *Bůh v dialogu*, Jolana Poláková (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2001), 13.

feasible today within Christian philosophy and philosophical theology? Or would we rather expect that non-religious thinking should arrive at the postulate of God and thus reach the boundary between philosophy and religion? Or is it possible to arrive at postulates and rational faith only if the philosopher already has religious faith? Or should we agree with Ebner's criticism of postulates?

Ebner stated:

But speculative reason seeks God in vain and finally is destroyed in the conflict with itself, in which it gets ever more deeply involved. Moreover, in that practical reason, which according to Kant's doctrine necessarily postulates the existence of God for ethical reasons, man has not yet emerged from his I-aloneness, and the God postulated by it is nothing but the idea of the divine—not God himself, who is a reality of the spiritual life.<sup>45</sup>

Certainly, from Schaeffler's point of view, it is not only ethical reasons that lead reason to the postulate of God and rational faith. Furthermore, I am convinced that Schaeffler's developed transcendental-dialogical concept is more complex than Kant's, and therefore, Ebner's criticism does not apply to him. Schaeffler repeatedly emphasised that the postulate itself is insufficient, or rather that postulates without religious experience are empty, and religious experience without postulates is blind.<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately, Jolana Poláková did not deal with Richard Schaeffler's thinking in detail, mentioning him only in a few passages. However, I assume that she would accept and welcome Schaeffler's version of transcendental-dialogical philosophy because Schaeffler not only maintained but also updated and developed the potential dialogicity of Kant's line of philosophical theology. Poláková argues that in Kant, philosophical theology rises above the anthropocentric horizon of theoretical monologue – to the threshold of the possibility of a dialogical relationship between practical reason and the reality of God. She adds that Kant's description of the 'intelligible world' as a world of free ethical interaction between rational beings, whose 'head' is God, is essentially personalistic and dialogical. At the same time, the existence of God can only be assumed, not demonstrated, and the certainty of this

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<sup>45</sup> Ebner, *The Word & the Spiritual Realities*, 117–118.

<sup>44</sup> Schaeffler, *Phänomenologie*, 210.

ethical assumption is – unlike a theoretical construct – an implicit relational certainty.<sup>45</sup>

2. The second note concerns types of philosophy of religion. In his 1983 work *Religionsphilosophie*,<sup>46</sup> Schaeffler distinguished five types of philosophy of religion: 1. philosophy of religion as a critique of pre-rational consciousness, 2. philosophy of religion as the transformation of religion into philosophy, 3. philosophy of religion based on philosophical theology, 4. phenomenology of religion, and 5. philosophy of religion as an analysis of religious language. In his later work *Phänomenologie der Religion* (2017), he expanded the original division to six types or methodological approaches – the additional one being a philosophy of religion based on transcendental theology. In 1983, he did not yet define this approach as a separate type but subsumed it under the philosophy of religion based on philosophical theology.

I believe that, based on Jolana Poláková's thinking and inspired by her, we can ask whether it would be possible to supplement the philosophy of religion based on philosophical theology with a subtype of 'dialogical philosophical theology', which is absent in Schaeffler's work. Or can we even consider expanding the typology with another/new type – 'philosophy of religion based on the philosophy of dialogue' or simply 'dialogical philosophy of religion'? Should we separate it from philosophical theology, just as Schaeffler separated the transcendental-philosophical approach? I believe that Poláková's thinking inspires and encourages us to single out the dialogical philosophy of religion as a separate type.

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.jolana-polakova.cz/Knihy/Dialog-s-Bohem-a-filosofie/Filosofie-o-Bohu>  
The Czech philosopher Ondřej Sikora also talks about the dialogical understanding of reason in Kant's philosophy. 'I believe that if Kant speaks of the "need of pure reason", he is pointing to a broader understanding of the elementary of the receptivity/spontaneity duality. This broader understanding would allow the argument that pure reason is not a spontaneity sufficient for itself, but that it is characterized by a certain insufficiency that makes it an inherently dialogical openness to which it is incapable of from itself, which it has no choice but to accept.' Ondřej Sikora, *Kantova praktická metafyzika* (Praha: Karolinum, 2017), 28.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Schaeffler, *Religionsphilosophie* (Freiburg und München: Karl Alber Verlag, 1983). English: Schaeffler, *Reason and the Question of God*.

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## **REVIEWS & NEWS**

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**Report on the 8th International Symposium titled  
*The Language of Biblical Transmission in West  
Slavic Communication Spaces / Język przekazu  
biblijnego w zachodniosłowiańskich przestrzeniach  
komunikacyjnych / Jazyk biblického poselství  
v západoslovanském komunikačním prostoru,*  
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań,  
May 29 – June 1, 2025**

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T O M A S Z L I S O W S K I

This international symposium, held from 29 May to 1 June 2025 at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, was jointly organized by the Department of Anthropological Linguistics (Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) and the Department of Biblical Sciences and Ancient Languages (Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague).

The Poznań symposium marked the 8th edition in a series of scholarly discussions bringing together linguists, translators, and biblical theologians whose research focuses on translations of the Bible into West Slavic languages.<sup>1</sup> The initiator of this annual symposium series is Associate Professor PhDr. Josef Bartoň, Th.D., of Charles University in Prague, who hosted the previous seven meetings. The Poznań symposium, the first to be held outside Prague, brought together nine scholars – five from the Czech Republic and four from Poland – representing six academic institutions.

The symposium was formally opened by Professor Konrad Dominas, who also serves as Deputy Dean for International Cooperation at the Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology. In his opening remarks, he emphasized the significance of this international forum as a platform for the exchange of scholarly insights among researchers engaged in closely related fields. He expressed his conviction that the symposium, by encouraging perspectives beyond narrow national or institutional frameworks, would help outline new research objectives – goals that can be effectively pursued only through international collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> Articles based on the papers presented at the five most recent conferences (held in Prague between 2020 and 2024) have been published in the journal *Clavibus Unitis* (issues 2/2020, 2/2021, 2/2022, 2/2023, and 2/2024) and are freely accessible at the following address: [https://www.acecs.cz/?f\\_idx=4](https://www.acecs.cz/?f_idx=4).

Subsequently, scholars from academic institutions in the Czech Republic and Poland took the floor to present the results of their research. Their papers addressed both historical and contemporary translations of the Bible into Czech, Polish, and Kashubian, with occasional references to Sorbian and Slovak. These translations were analyzed within a broad framework encompassing historical, cultural, and confessional contexts, exegetical approaches, translation strategies, and the linguistic competence of both translators and recipients of the texts. These factors were examined as elements shaping and modulating the translations as texts that (co-)constitute West Slavic communication spaces.

Kateřina Voleková<sup>2</sup> (Department of Language Development, Czech Language Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague) drew attention to the text of the *Psalter of St. Bernard* – a devotional prayer composed of a compilation of eight psalm verses traditionally linked to St. Bernard of Clairvaux. This prayer text enjoyed considerable popularity in medieval institutional and private devotion, as evidenced by its numerous (variant) attestations in Latin manuscripts and vernacular translations. Voleková conducted a comparative analysis of Czech translations known from seven manuscripts dating from the second half of the 15th century to the early 16th century, compared them with two Polish translations found in early 16th-century prayer books – the *Szczyt duszny* (a 1528 manuscript) and *Tarcza duchowna* (a Kraków print from 1533). These Czech and Polish versions differ to some extent linguistically. Of particular cognitive interest is the fact that, in these texts, the Latin lexeme *spiritus* could be rendered in Czech and Polish both as *duch* (Czech, Polish) and as *duše* (Czech) / *dusza* (Polish), i.e. with concepts already being semantically distinct in both Slavic languages at that time.

Tadeusz Rubik<sup>3</sup> (Faculty of ‘Artes Liberales’, University of Warsaw) focused on the authorship of the sixteenth-century *Biblia Leopolda*, the earliest known complete translation of the Bible into Polish. Its first printed edition appeared in 1561, followed by a revised version published in 1575. Rubik argued, through textual criticism of the *Apostolic Letters*, that linguistic features in the translation can be attributed both to the anonymous translator and to Jan Nicz of Lwów (Leopolda), the editor of the printed edition.

Robert Dittmann<sup>4</sup> (Institute of Czech Language and Theory of Communication, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague) examined the translation of Latin and Greek reflexive possessive pronouns into Czech in sixteenth-century biblical pericopes produced by the Unity of the Brethren. His philologically meticulous research revealed that these translations, which prioritized

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<sup>2</sup> Mgr. Kateřina Voleková, Ph.D., *Staročeský a polský Žaltář svatého Bernarda*.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Tadeusz Rubik, *Biblia Leopolda*. Próba rozróżnienia pracy anonimowego tłumacza oraz redaktora Jana Nicza ze Lwowa.

<sup>4</sup> PhDr. Robert Dittmann, Ph.D., *Reflexivní posesivum v biblických perikopách jednoty bratrské v 16. století*.

semantic fidelity, deviated from literal, word-for-word correspondence with the source texts. Reflexive possessive pronouns of the first and second person in the source text (e.g. Latin *meus, mea, meum; tuus, tua, tuum*) are rendered more frequently than in older Czech biblical translations as *svůj, svá, své*, in accordance with the Czech language system. This marks a shift away from literalism and offers compelling evidence of the gradual vernacularization of Czech biblical translations.

Tomasz Lisowski<sup>5</sup> (Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) presented the results of qualitative and quantitative research on the lexicon of the 1632 *Gdańsk Bible* New Testament by Daniel Mikołajewski. Linguistically, this lexicon reflects the state of the Polish language at the close of a transformative period shaped by Renaissance intellectual currents. Lisowski highlighted that the variability in lexical equivalents – identified through comparison with earlier translations within the Protestant continuum, as well as with Jakub Wujek's Catholic Bible – testifies to an ongoing effort to modernize the language of the Mikołajewski's translation. This process contributed to the development of contextual synonymy and increased the functional range of Polish of the time. Furthermore, analysis of the extent to which the language of the 1632 New Testament was adapted to its recipients'/ readers' perceptual capacity suggests that roughly three-quarters of the lexicon was neutral, with a slight tendency toward vocabulary outside the average range of Renaissance Polish.

Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska<sup>6</sup> (Center for Kitab Studies, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) discussed the critical apparatus found in the Tatar tafsir – a sixteenth-century Polish translation of the Qur'an accompanied by commentary (the oldest extant manuscript dates to 1723). She also pointed to analogies between this tradition and Renaissance-era translations of the Bible into vernacular languages. In preparing the Polish version of the Qur'an, Tatar translators drew not only on Muslim exegetical texts in Arabic and Turkish – which is entirely justified from a religious standpoint – but also drew from contemporary Polish Bible translations. Of particular interest to them was Szymon Budny's 1572 translation, marked by an anti-Trinitarian doctrinal stance. Kulwicka-Kamińska showed that the Muslim authors of the Polish-language tafsir were well acquainted with the translation techniques for sacred texts that had developed during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

Adam Ryszard Sikora<sup>7</sup> (Faculty of Theology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), translator of the Holy Scriptures into Kashubian from the original languages, recalled that earliest biblical texts addressed to the Kashubian

<sup>5</sup> Prof. dr hab. Tomasz Lisowski, *Leksykon Nowego Testamentu Biblii gdańskiej* (1632) w świetle renesansowego ewangelickiego kontinuum przekładowego.

<sup>6</sup> Prof. dr hab. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Metatekst w tefsirze Tatarów polskich jako wspólne dziedzictwo przekładów ksiąg objawionych*.

<sup>7</sup> Ks. prof. dr hab. Adam Ryszard Sikora, *Współczesne przekłady na kaszubski i ich recepcja w kaszubskim kręgu kulturowym*.

community emerged from the Lutheran Protestant milieu as early as the late 16th and 17th centuries (e.g., the handwritten *Perykopy smoldzińskie* [*Smoldzino Pericopes*] for Sundays and feast days). Catholic-oriented Kashubian texts appeared only in the twentieth century, including translations by Alojzy Nagel and Rev. Franciszek Gruca, based on Latin (*Vulgate* or *Neo-Vulgate*) texts. Also noteworthy are the Kashubian *New Testament* and the *Book of Psalms* rendered by Eugeniusz Gołabek, based on the Polish *Biblia Tysiąclecia* [*Millennium Bible*], which serves as the current liturgical translation of the Catholic Church in Poland. The most recent translations into Kashubian – stemming from exegetical and semantic studies by Rev. Professor Adam Ryszard Sikora – constitute the first translations in history made directly from the original languages. His translations of the *Four Gospels* and the *Pentateuch* have garnered considerable interest and acclaim within the Kashubian community.

Josef Bartoň<sup>8</sup> (Department of Biblical Sciences and Ancient Languages, Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague) analysed the linguistic features of a little-known Czech *Psalter* published in Dresden in 1781, authored by the Protestant clergyman Jiří Petrmann. Although originally from Slovakia, Petrmann spent the majority of his life in Saxony and Brandenburg, serving Czech Protestant exile communities. Bartoň's in-depth philological analyses presented by the speaker – on grammatical, lexical, stylistic, and semantic levels – revealed that the text exhibits not only elements of Slovak linguistic influence but also specific linguistic and textual inspirations from the Sorbian milieu, likely due to Petrmann's early work among the Sorbs in both Upper and Lower Lusatia.

Tomáš Matějec<sup>9</sup> (Department of Biblical Sciences and Ancient Languages, Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague) examined the intriguing lexical and semantic development of the translation equivalents of the Hebrew nouns *tebah* and *aron*, which are rendered in the Latin *Vulgate* by the lexeme *arca*. These terms appear in Czech biblical expressions such as *Noemova archa* ('Noah's Ark'), *archa úmluvy* ('Ark of the Covenant'), and *Mojžíšův košík* ('Moses' basket') – the latter referring to the papyrus container, sealed with resin and pitch, in which the infant Moses was placed to be hidden among the reeds on the bank of the Nile (Exodus 2:3). Matějec traced the evolution of these expressions throughout the long history of Czech Bible translations from the 14th century to the present.

Karel Komárek<sup>10</sup> (Department of Czech Studies, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc) noted that Václav Bogner was involved as the translator of the Old Testament in the preparation of the Czech Bible currently used in

<sup>8</sup> Doc. PhDr. Josef Bartoň, Th.D., K jazykovým zvláštnostem drážďanského žaltáře Jiřího Petrmanna (1781).

<sup>9</sup> ThLic. Tomáš Matějec, Ph.D. et Ph.D., *Noemova archa, Hospodinova archa a Mojžíšův košík v českých biblických překladech*.

<sup>10</sup> Doc. PhDr. Karel Komárek, Ph.D., *Starý zákon Josefa Hegera (1958) – další textový zdroj českého liturgického překladu Bible*.

the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Republic. Komárek shared the results of his intertextual comparative analyses, which demonstrate that one of the sources used by Bogner was Josef Heger's translation of the Old Testament, published between 1955 and 1958 – the first Catholic translation into Czech made directly from the original languages. The influence of Heger's translation on Bogner's version is particularly evident at the lexical level, especially in the domain of abstract and intellectual vocabulary. Komárek also identified traces of dependence on an even earlier translation of the Old Testament – Jan Hejčl's version, produced between 1917 and 1925 from the Latin *Vulgate* (with reference to the original languages). Lexical equivalents found in Hejčl's version entered Bogner's liturgical translation indirectly through Heger's rendering.

The symposium sessions, attended not only by the presenters but also by numerous students and faculty members as listeners, were open to the public. The presented papers sparked lively discussions and served as a forum for the exchange of in-depth research findings. By exploring the nuanced details of biblical translation into Czech, Polish, and Kashubian within the broader context of West Slavic communicative spaces, the symposium helped to define new research directions while emphasizing the importance of considering extralinguistic factors in translation studies.

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**Tommaso Greco, *Curare il mondo con Simone Weil*,  
Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 2023, 160 pages,  
ISBN 9788858152102.**

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JANA RUTH ŽÁKOVÁ

Il recente volume di Tommaso Greco si colloca nel vivace panorama di studi che negli ultimi decenni hanno riportato al centro dell'attenzione filosofica la figura di Simone Weil, pensatrice tra le più profetiche del Novecento. L'intento dell'autore, il quale nella sua ricerca tratta prevalentemente temi concernenti il rapporto tra i diritti e i doveri e la dimensione relazionale del diritto, non è di offrire un semplice saggio di interpretazione storica, ma di mostrare come la riflessione weiliana possa costituire ancora oggi una risorsa per ripensare la giustizia e la convivenza civile in un'epoca segnata da fratture, conflitti e processi di disumanizzazione.

Greco – professore ordinario della filosofia del diritto presso la Facoltà di Giurisprudenza all'Università di Pisa, direttore della collana 'Bobbiana' per l'editore Giappichelli e di *Diacronia – Rivista di storia della filosofia del diritto* – mette al centro del suo lavoro la giustizia intesa come cura, rileggendo Weil alla luce delle sfide contemporanee. Il volume è articolato in quattro capitoli preceduti da un'ampia introduzione (*La giustizia di tutti*).

Il primo capitolo del volume (*Forza del diritto, debolezza della giustizia*) affronta la questione centrale della forza e del suo rapporto con il diritto e la giustizia, riprendendo il celebre saggio weiliano *L'Iliade o il poema della forza*. Greco sottolinea come per Simone Weil la forza non sia semplicemente una delle molte dimensioni della vita sociale, ma una realtà capace di trasformare gli esseri umani in cose, di annientare la loro dignità e la loro libertà. La forza, in questo senso, non è solo violenza fisica, ma anche dominio economico, potere politico, logica impersonale delle istituzioni: tutte modalità attraverso cui l'uomo è ridotto a oggetto, privato della sua interiorità e della sua voce.

Da questa analisi Weil ricava una diagnosi radicale: la civiltà occidentale è segnata da una lunga egemonia della forza, che ha lasciato tracce indelebili nelle strutture politiche, giuridiche e sociali. Di fronte a tale predominio, il diritto rischia di diventare mero strumento di legittimazione della violenza, invece che suo argine. Greco evidenzia come Weil, pur consapevole dell'ambivalenza del diritto, individui la possibilità di una sua funzione positiva: esso può e deve limitare la forza, proteggere la fragilità, custodire la persona. Ma questo è possibile solo se il diritto è continuamente radicato in un principio che lo trascende, ossia in un senso di giustizia che non può essere ridotto a convenzione sociale o esito di rapporti di potere.

Il filo rosso del capitolo emerge chiaramente: la giustizia non nasce dalla forza, ma dalla capacità di resisterele, di aprire spazi di umanità là dove la logica dell'annientamento sembra prevalere. In questa prospettiva, Greco propone di leggere quello di Weil come un pensiero 'profetico', che denuncia le derive totalitarie e allo stesso tempo indica la necessità di una fondazione della vita sociale sul riconoscimento della fragilità dell'altro.

Dal tema della forza, Greco passa con naturalezza a quello dell'obbligazione, che costituisce il cuore del secondo capitolo (*Senza benda né spada*). Per Simone Weil l'obbligazione precede ogni diritto: è un vincolo originario che scaturisce dalla semplice presenza dell'altro e che interpella ciascuno nel profondo. Lungi dall'essere una costruzione giuridica o sociale, l'obbligazione ha una radice metafisica: essa nasce dal fatto stesso che l'essere umano, fragile e vulnerabile, porta in sé una dignità che chiede di essere rispettata.

Greco sottolinea con forza questo rovesciamento rispetto alle categorie dominanti della modernità giuridica e politica: se la tradizione liberale ha posto al centro il diritto come strumento di difesa dell'individuo, Weil mette in evidenza che i diritti non sono garantiti se non da un senso diffuso e condiviso dell'obbligazione. In altre parole, non esiste alcun diritto che non trovi la sua condizione di possibilità nell'assunzione di responsabilità nei confronti dell'altro.

In questo quadro, il diritto appare fragile, qualora non venga continuamente sorretto dall'etica dell'obbligazione. Greco interpreta questa prospettiva come una delle intuizioni più feconde di Weil: essa invita a concepire la giustizia non come equilibrio di pretese individuali, ma come cura attenta della vulnerabilità. È in tale orizzonte che emerge la centralità della nozione di 'radice', che verrà sviluppata nei capitoli successivi, e che lega ogni essere umano a un contesto di appartenenze, relazioni e legami che ne costituiscono l'identità più profonda.

Il secondo capitolo segna dunque un passaggio decisivo: dalla diagnosi della violenza esercitata dalla forza alla ricerca di un fondamento più radicale della convivenza umana, che non si trova nei diritti astratti, ma nell'obbligazione concreta verso chiunque si presenti nella sua fragilità.

Il terzo capitolo (*«Distinguere la vera grandezza da quella falsa»*) è centrato sulla categoria del radicamento, concetto chiave del pensiero weiliano e sviluppato in particolare nell'opera *Lenracinement*. Per Simone Weil, l'uomo ha bisogno di radici tanto quanto di pane: senza un legame vivo con una comunità, una cultura, una storia e una tradizione, egli rischia di smarrirsi, diventando preda della forza e dell'alienazione. Il radicamento non va inteso in senso esclusivo o nazionalistico, ma come appartenenza plurale, come inserimento in un tessuto di relazioni che dà senso alla vita individuale e collettiva.

Greco mette in luce come questo tema, apparentemente legato al contesto storico della Francia e dell'Europa degli anni Quaranta, possieda in realtà una sorprendente attualità: la crisi del radicamento si manifesta oggi nei fenomeni della globalizzazione incontrollata, della frammentazione sociale, delle

migrazioni forzate, della perdita di riferimenti culturali e spirituali. L'analisi di Weil diventa così una lente critica per leggere il presente, in cui gli individui sono spesso privati di legami vitali, esposti a nuove forme di solitudine e manipolazione.

In questa prospettiva, il radicamento appare come l'altra faccia dell'obbligazione: se l'obbligazione esprime la responsabilità verso l'altro nella sua fragilità, il radicamento indica la necessità di un terreno comune che nutra e sostenga la vita umana. Non si tratta, dunque, di un concetto statico o conservatore, ma di una dinamica vitale che permette all'essere umano di crescere e di svilupparsi in relazione agli altri. Il capitolo mostra bene come, per Weil, la giustizia non sia pensabile senza un lavoro di cura delle radici: è solo riconoscendo i legami che costituiscono l'identità personale e collettiva che si può costruire una società non dominata dalla forza, ma animata dal riconoscimento reciproco e dalla responsabilità.

Il quarto capitolo (*Itinerari della mitezza*) amplia ulteriormente l'orizzonte, affrontando il tema della giustizia come cura, che costituisce il nucleo interpretativo dell'intero volume. Greco mostra come in Simone Weil la giustizia non sia una questione di astratta equità distributiva o di bilanciamento tra diritti e interessi, ma anzitutto un atteggiamento di attenzione alla fragilità del mondo. La giustizia, in questa prospettiva, è inseparabile dalla carità: non una virtù privata, ma una disposizione fondamentale capace di trasformare le relazioni sociali e politiche.

In tale quadro, la cura non riguarda soltanto gli individui, ma anche le istituzioni, la cultura, la natura. Greco evidenzia con chiarezza come Weil ci inviti a pensare la giustizia come un prendersi carico delle ferite del mondo, resistendo alle logiche di sfruttamento e di dominio. È questo l'aspetto forse più originale della lettura proposta: la giustizia, per essere autentica, deve diventare forma di cura reciproca, attenzione partecipe e compassione attiva.

L'ultimo capitolo non si limita, tuttavia, a ribadire una tesi teorica: propone implicitamente una direzione di impegno concreto. Weil, infatti, non concepisce la filosofia come un sapere separato, ma come orientamento pratico dell'esistenza. Curare il mondo significa allora costruire istituzioni più giuste, coltivare relazioni fondate sulla responsabilità e contrastare i processi di disumanizzazione che ancora oggi minacciano la convivenza. Con questo approdo, il volume mostra tutta la sua coerenza interna: dalla diagnosi della forza come logica di annientamento, attraverso la scoperta dell'obbligazione e l'esigenza del radicamento, fino a giungere a una concezione della giustizia che, lungi dall'essere mero concetto giuridico, si rivela come principio vitale, capace di generare una nuova cultura dell'umano.

Il merito principale del volume di Tommaso Greco è quello di far risuonare la voce di Simone Weil nella sua sorprendente attualità. La filosofa non è presentata come autrice confinata nel passato, ma come interlocutrice capace di illuminare questioni che toccano da vicino il nostro presente: la violenza che

attraversa la vita sociale, lo smarrimento dei legami, l'urgenza di un fondamento etico della convivenza.

Grazie a una scrittura limpida e appassionata, Greco mostra come il pensiero di Weil possa essere oggi una bussola per quanti cercano vie di umanizzazione. In questo senso, il libro non si rivolge soltanto a studiosi e specialisti, ma anche a educatori, operatori sociali, giuristi e a tutti coloro che avvertono il bisogno di un orientamento culturale ed etico più profondo. *Curare il mondo con Simone Weil* si propone così come un invito a ripensare la giustizia non come equilibrio di interessi, ma come responsabilità e cura, indicando la possibilità di una civiltà più degna dell'uomo.

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**Ianire Angulo Ordorika and Susana de Sousa Vilas Boas (eds.), *Riesgos y fidelidades: Miradas teológicas para un mundo plural*, Barcelona: Herder Editorial, 2025, 424 pages, ISBN 978-84-254-5223-9.**

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JOSÉ MANUEL MARTINS LOPES, SJ

This work, *Riesgos y Fidelidades – Miradas Teológicas para un mundo plural* [*Risks and Fidelities – Theological Perspectives for a Plural World*], edited by Ianire Angulo Ordorika and Susana Vilas Boas, demonstrates the attention and care of these researchers for a topic that is so pertinent at every moment in the Catholic Church's dialogue with a world that is constantly raising new problems and that requires, more than answers, paths of reflection and bridges of dialogue.

The book, in an attempt to respond to Pope Francis' call in the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* on universities and ecclesiastical faculties, is divided into three parts: *La actualidad de los orígenes* [*The actuality of the origins*], *Voces para el diálogo* [*Voices for dialog*] and *Teología al servicio del encuentro* [*Theology at the service of encounter*]. In this way, the publishers have designed the structure of this work in order to demonstrate, as stated in §5 of *Veritatis Gaudium*, that 'Christian-inspired theology and culture have lived up to their mission when they have been able to live with risk and fidelity on the frontier.' To this end, they gathered reflections that were the fruit of theological research carried out at the Universidad Loyola Andalucía (Faculty of Theology – Granada) and that reflected the risks and fidelities that each theologian is experiencing.

There are lines of thought running through all the reflections, where it is easy to find unity in plurality. Faithfulness refers back to the origins, which is why the first part of this work, *La Actualidad de los Orígenes*, updates and reads the richness and diversity of today's world in the Bible.

Junkal Guevara Llaguno reflects on how Ezra is 'modified' and 'updated' in each historical moment in the different historical communities where it is meditated upon, without ever having lost its identity. For Ianire Angulo Ordorika, 'theology is called to offer a response from the faith to the challenges that each historical circumstance throws at us and, in this task, Scripture plays an essential role' (p. 43). For this reason, he invites us to meditate and allow ourselves to be challenged and to learn from the faithfulness of Ruth and Achior.

Carmen Roman Martínez shows us that if we are in a time of crisis, we are also always in a time of criterion, since the criterion 'is what leads us to think

and seek solutions in a reasoned way' (p. 70). That's why we need to get closer to Jesus Christ and the circumstances in which he lived. His Person illuminates every moment in which we live. He is the criterion for our discernment and living.

Ignacio Rojas Gálvez shows us how the First Letter of St. John connects with our reality, inviting us, in faith and fidelity, to risk becoming a creative minority that transforms every existential encounter into places of encounter in love. In a context where the Christian faith is marginalized, it witnesses the birth of different Christian groups that propose alternative developments to the apostolic faith. It analyzes the different factions living in the community, presenting the apostolates that support their affirmations, and delves into the simultaneously peripheral character of the readers of the Letter: socially marginalized and theologically on the edge.

This first part, *La Actualidad de los Orígenes*, concludes with a paper by Bruno Nicolás D'Andrea, which shows how the dialogical attitude of the Church Fathers requires an understanding of the plurality and challenges that our times present. Risk always implies greater vigilance in seeking and living fidelity. This brings us to the second part of our book: *Voces para el Diálogo*.

Manuel Porcel Moreno begins his anthropological journey by showing us the human understanding of God. He reminds us that affirming God's death has a contradictory meaning since, if God is dead, then he is not God, because, in fact, he did not live or that he is simply an image, an artificial idea that man makes of God. For this reason, the proclamations of God's various deaths do not touch the true essence of divinity, but rather its idolatrous representations, and the great authors on the question of God helped to purify the perception of God rather than prove his death. For our author, declaring that God is dead is due to the fact that for centuries God has been thought of reductively according to a conceptual model that has emptied the fundamental dimension of love, which is the intimacy revealed by divinity, of its essence. The aim of this essay is to show how the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whose love was revealed in Jesus Christ, manifests himself to each of us as a paradoxical phenomenon. The author starts from philosophical considerations about the death of God and reflects on revelation, challenging us to rediscover, from the point of view of phenomenology, the believer's way of being in the face of God.

According to Andrzej Sarnacki, this philosophical-theological line can be seen in the way Catholic theology has related to inculturation over the centuries and in the risks that are evident in our world today. This author addresses the interest that Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony aroused among intellectual elites, which subsequently developed into a ferment for cultural change.

Margarita Saldaña Mostajo presents the figure of Christian de Chergé, prior of a community of seven monks. Under his guidance, the community opted for a life of prayer and helping the people, and were eventually martyred in Algeria. Christian de Chergé is presented as a model of a person who, in fidelity to

his faith, courageously opens himself up to the ever-challenging newness of reality and dialogues, with all the risks that this entails, with what is different.

This brings us to the third and final part of this book, *Teología al Servicio del Encuentro*. Enrique Gómez García begins by telling us that, while it is true that there has never been so much reflection on man as there is today, it is also true that we are increasingly aware of how much we ignore about him, which calls for a more holistic and integrative reflection. Who is the human being? The answer to this question cannot be left unanswered by theologians and believers.

For many centuries, beginning with the Judeo-Christian tradition, man has always been thought of from God's point of view as a being who occupies a special place in the work of creation, because he was created in God's image and likeness. Today, this way of understanding the human being requires openness to dialog with a plurality of sensitivities, including ecology, dignity and the role of women in society and in the empirical and technical sciences. In this reflection, Gomez Garcia gives two readings of the accounts of the creation of the human being. One comes from the Magisterium of John Paul II and the other from the systematics of Michael Burdett, trying to find possible ways of dialoguing with the challenges raised by feminisms and transhumanisms.

In the same vein as opening ourselves up, in fidelity, to the responsibility and risk involved in dialoguing with others, Jaime Flaquer García, using a theological methodology, reflects on the primitive soteriology of early Islam, starting from the Koran, in an attempt to find some light on Islamic anthropology and theology.

Each religion understands the word salvation in different terms. Even within Islam, the answer is not easy, because there are different anthropologies and theologies within Islam itself. What does Islam save from? Who saves and what are the conditions for salvation? What role does God's mercy play? What place does grace have in Islam? All these questions lead us not only to reflect on theology, but also on anthropology. Flaquer García's main thesis is that the Koran combines God's omnipotent and omniscient character with a call for human responsibility in contributing to their salvation. This brings us to the problem of human freedom. Our author will reflect on the problems raised by these concepts, showing their connection with the Judeo-Christian tradition and the elements of divergence that determine religious pluralism.

For Luis María Salazar Garcia, fear is one of the basic emotions of the human being. However, underneath this emotion there are very diverse experiences, ranging from physiological reactions to pain to incapacitating phobias or religious fear of mystery. Starting from a differentiation between the experiences linked to fear, Salazar Garcia reflects on fear from a theological point of view: the fear of Jesus and that of the disciples, trying to draw some conclusions about the relationship between Christian life and dangers. Grace helps us to read and live fear differently in our lives.

Our plural world requires dialogue and, above all, a *union of hearts* so that we can integrate, for the good of all, with balance and harmony, what reason is

dictating to us and which, at times, seems to push us apart and seems to want to ‘cut’, if not ‘annul’, lines of thought that appear to be irreconcilable. Susana Vilas Boas has found the formula to unite us in our vulnerabilities and differences: Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Absolution.

In forgiveness, absolution and reconciliation converge, understanding it as a dynamic and not as a chronologically determined act. The healing character of absolution must produce real consequences in all the realities wounded by sin. Absolution and reconciliation, if authentic, must converge in the dynamic of forgiveness. While absolution points to the past – the eradication of condemnation, reconciliation points to the future, to the hope of restoring broken relationships. Reconciliation, in order to be, must be a visible manifestation of forgiveness, or a path towards its consummation, and is the inevitable consequence of authentic forgiveness. Salvation is offered to both the victim and the oppressor. Neither is isolated in this process. Forgiveness restores human dignity, both for the victim and the oppressor, without undermining the sense of justice. Forgiveness does not mitigate, nor does it try to hide the debt or erase the wrong done, but rather seeks to definitively interrupt the desire for revenge that feeds itself in an *ever-widening circle*. God’s action in the dynamic of forgiveness means that the resumption of relationships, with God and between people, takes place under the mark of justice that condemns the crime, but points to the salvation of the person who committed the crime, since there is a person before the crime. The ‘healing’ caused by forgiveness does not remove the sense of cross and suffering from the memory, but teaches it to live in another way, in a salvific way, where the vulnerability and responsibility of the victim and the aggressor are assumed, dialogued and reconciled as a path to peace. This, argues Susana Vilas Boas, is the mission of today’s theology, which must give visibility and intelligibility to the concepts of absolution, reconciliation and forgiveness, so that they become, in every ecclesial and social context, effective and operative means of a culture based on human life and salvation and not on the survival of some to the detriment of others.

José Antonio Sánchez Ortiz reminds us that Pope Francis has set the Church on a path of conversion, leading it to rethink its nature, structure and mission. Francis thinks, desires and wants a synodal Church that risks reaching out to everyone. To this end, the Pope invites us to return to the sources, to the origin and essence of the first evangelization, in order to find the strength, the light, the creativity, the fidelity, the keys that will help us discern and revive the Gospel in every situation of our present. And it is in returning to the sources that the Pope discovers the vitality and strength of the kerygma for the Church’s evangelizing action, since the kerygma has its roots in the Trinitarian mystery, the Alpha and Omega of our entire existence.

Diego Molina Molina reflects on the risks of synodality in the 21st century. There is great diversity within the Church, which can be seen especially when dealing with cutting-edge issues. Pluralism, which brings with it relativism, is part of our world, our culture, and is very deeply rooted within the Church

itself. With Pope Francis, ecclesial dissent is no longer a taboo, but a challenge. Today we know that this dissent goes not only through the public sphere, but also through figures within the Church itself, who show great difficulty in accepting the path of synodality defined by Pope Francis.

This context leads us, according to Molina Molina, to reflect on the characteristics of synodality that we should pay attention to, the conditions for a synodal Church to really emerge and what aspects the Church should work on to embody the ideas that are already found in current ecclesiological reflection. The author considers Baptism to be the basis for the development of a synodal Church, and then goes on to develop two aspects which he believes are fundamental and on which reflection is urgently needed: the idea of unity and the participation of all in the Church.

The richness of this book, *Riesgos y Fidelidades – Miradas Teológicas para un mundo plural*, is the result of several factors: the conception of the book's structure thought up by its publishers; the competence of the reflections which, starting from fidelity, risk answers for a plural and difficult world like the one we live in today; the unity that results from the interrelationship that each reflection has with the other parts and its whole.

We highly recommend reading it. In a world as plural as ours, the richness of its reflections challenges us, forcing us to rework concepts, ways of being, ways of acting. Those who read it will necessarily have new tools to lead their lives with greater discretion and meaning.

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