

# **SYNDESMOS Summer Institute**

**Archim. GRIGORIOS D. Papathomas**

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First of all, I would like to thank, from this podium, the inspirers of this Summer Institute, one which is very important for youth, as well as the organizing Committee of SYNDESMOS for including me among the speakers at this meeting.

My interest in dealing with this issue, suggested by SYNDESMOS and of which you are aware through the programme, begins from my personal anxiety about what is happening every day in the world. It is a purely human thing, which is considered by the majority of people to be self-evident. The acceptance of a religion, the adoption of an ideology, the incorporation into a social pattern of any kind nowadays constitutes a socially self-evident fact which many times has been forced upon us. However, this fact plays a direct and organic role in the Church's missionary and pastoral attempt to approach the world.

From the subject, as it has been formulated, one would expect that we will deal with the following questions : « What is internal or pastoral mission ? », « How can it be organized ? », « How is it implemented today in a traditionally Orthodox country ? », etc. However, there are relevant educational manuals on these subjects in Orthodox Theological Schools and one could look there to study them. So, there would have been no need for us to have assembled here from the ends of the earth. When I was given the subject, I thought I would take this opportunity to raise certain issues and essentially bring to the fore the characteristics, difficulties, and inner obstacles of any missionary or pastoral attempt, as these arise in practice. Therefore, along with the other issues that have been, and will be, raised by the other speakers, I believe that the aforementioned issues will give rise to productive discussion, exchange of opinion and presentation of experience from the wider area of the five continents of the earth, where each one of us lives and works. And in this way, our present meeting will be blessed and profitable for all of us. At this point exactly, we can understand how inestimable is the contribution of SYNDESMOS.

One final clarification: in Theology we use two terms to define two different situations : the term "mission" and the term "pastoral care". We talk about mission when in a country, region, or location, there are only a few Christians or even none. If the number of Christians increases, then, in Christian communities, that result from this missionary effort, we exercise pastoral care, rather than "mission". Consequently, a precise definition of the term "internal mission", for our purposes, is "pastoral care", especially as far as a traditionally Orthodox country is concerned. However, today, we shall approach some matters related to issues of Orthodox witness, in mission, as well as in the pastoral care of peoples.

From the start, if we take into consideration these conditions, we have defined the subject « Internal mission of the Orthodox Church ». I have divided the content of this section into two parts : A) Difficulties in internal mission and B) Key suggestions to overcome these difficulties. As such, it will be easier for you to follow.

## **A) DIFFICULTIES IN THE INTERNAL MISSION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH**

When a Western observer first studies or visits an Orthodox country, as we used to call it, he/she is mostly impressed by the composition of its people. They appear “compact” as far as their Orthodox identity is concerned and they are in a majority whose a percentage approaches the limits of the whole, i.e. in the region of 97 %. This, for example, is the case in Greece, a single case among so many other traditionally Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe. This compact feature fosters a manifest *consciousness of supremacy and exclusivity of Orthodoxy*. Hence, Orthodoxy is taken for granted in the family, school, parish life, the armed forces, the professions, social life and every manifestation of life in general. This originates in infant baptism which makes everyone feel that one did not become an Orthodox Christian, but *was born* as such. In fact, Orthodoxy, considered as a personal identity, is — generally speaking — for everyone a situation, a characteristic of the national identity. It is not an empirical conquest ; it is not the result of a personal struggle nor a personal choice, and certainly neither a demand nor an offer of life that primarily concerns the person himself.

Exactly at this point, the mission and pastoral care of the Church have to intervene in order to make people participate in its experience. The experience of the Church, which has neither ideological nor social content, but rather an ontological one, suggests intervention in the way that the Church itself makes use of and proceeds to innovations. Orthodoxy is valuable only when it influences or underpins life ; when it contains life. Otherwise, it remains an empty letter, salt that has lost its “salting savour”, life without meaning or guarantee. However, even if Orthodoxy, in the case to which we refer today, is taken for granted in the personal life of any person who becomes Orthodox in an institutional way, this does not mean that this person automatically adopts the gift of life that Orthodoxy promises to mankind.

For this reason, various ways of how to *use* Orthodoxy exist. These ways constitute a means, not the adoption of Orthodoxy as a way of life and being. With some other people, who appear to be committed Orthodox Christians, symptoms of introversion and self-sufficiency are evident. In addition to this, the overwhelming majority in compact Orthodoxy, which characterizes one people in connection with these last two points, produces the mentality of a makeshift, unloved, xenophobia, which fails to communicate (socialization). As a result, the spirit of opening oneself to

the world does not exist. (This will be better demonstrated by the evidence below). In this case, Orthodoxy gives the impression that it is in “Babylonian captivity” (Fr. G. Florovsky, Athens 1936) and that it is subjected to eternalist visions of national life, which are usually characterised by exclusivity. However, this is all too general. So, let us proceed to more precise and concrete issues.

### **Religionisation of Orthodoxy and its alienation**

The reduction of Orthodoxy to a religion is an issue characteristic of traditionally Orthodox peoples. Today, we very easily say that Christianity is a monotheistic religion. First of all, Orthodoxy is not a religion. Jesus Christ did not come to earth to create a new religion ; so many other religions already existed ! Under no circumstances do the origin or, indeed, any constituent part of Orthodoxy form a religion. With equivalent facility, we place Orthodoxy among the three main monotheistic Religions of Mankind. Here, it is of value to raise a question in order to understand how misguided is this classification and characterisation. How can we talk about monotheism, when there are three Persons ? Therefore, we have ...polytheism ! But is this really polytheism, when there is one God ? Our Church reminds us every day in the Liturgy of the “Triune God in Unity”, an ontological event which does not fit into any conventional, rationalistic mould, neither into monotheism nor into polytheism, since, finally, it has nothing to do with either of them. Moreover, the theological paradox of Saint Gregory the Theologian, « One and One and One makes One », is not compatible with rationalism.

“Religion”, as a form tailored to social expediency, has nothing to do with the Truth, that is a Person, that is Christ Himself, who, among other things, saved us from religions by « breaking down the dividing wall of enmity » and by « making two parts one » (Eph 2, 14). Religion is too convenient, whereas Orthodoxy is different : it makes no compromise with any religious convention. From the moment that Christianity becomes a system, an ideological system (*cosmotheory*), “humanism”, Morality, a theory of culture, a political banner, an ideology or religion, the mystery of the living God is stifled and, as a result, is alienated. Theology is the experience of God Himself, who is beyond any intellect and any human attempt at interpretation. Theology does not exist outside (spiritual) experience. Thus, Orthodoxy is a paradoxical fact for the human being ; it is neither knowledge, nor a passive version of a marvellous event, nor a system of perfect Morality. However, the understanding that people have of it today — especially Christians, the members of the Body of Christ as children of the Church — is one of Morality or Religion. This is why Morality can come to be Christianity’s betrayal, while Religion becomes its perfect distortion.

### **Ideologicalisation of Orthodoxy**

In examining the place of Orthodoxy vis-à-vis ideology, we should also note that ideas are intellectual, individual actions. They constitute ideologies when a group of people adopts them and fights on several fronts to promote them through social institutions or attempts to put them into action. Consequently, an ideology is a system of elaborated ideas which reflects in people's minds certain specific experiences, wishes or even illusions and which serves people as a system of orientation. Ideology as a whole constitutes an illusion ; it has no ontology. Of course, the fanatical devotion to illusions constitutes an organic part of every ideology. *All ideologies contend for the privilege to interpret the world or change it, each one in its one way, and to have effect as ultimate truths.* However, the absolutisation of their ideas and objectives constitutes a form of idolatry, since no ideology can either be verified or denied. They operate in a religious way as long as they are possessed by the *a priori* conviction that the truth they comprise is self-evident ; this fosters faith in the followers of the ideology, while its ideas turn into idols.

However, every ideology is partial in interpreting aspects of reality, is contradictory and is finally discredited. This is why everyday human practice implacably relativises ideas in a way which proves their insufficiency. There are no theories, ideological or philosophical systems that can encompass everything and give an overall interpretation of the world and reality that is valid for all subjects and for all historical periods. However, ideologists pose as "Messiahs", because they believe that their own ideological system (*cosmotheory*) contains this secret thing, which, if adopted by people, will preserve them (from an existential point of view) and will be able to save the entire world. Furthermore, ideologies, as systems of ready-made ideas, make sure that a human being is completely relieved from the trouble of thinking and say the things which he likes to hear. This is the slavery of prêt-à-porter thought. Nowadays, the overwhelming majority of people has reached a state of abandon (even if everyone pretends to be a dissenter) and has laid the essential part of its thoughts and especially of its personal pursuits in the hands of the authorities, the political party, propaganda, consumption, publicity or the mass media. Ideology is a philosophical and psychological problem which deceives the faithful Orthodox people as well and creates obstacles to their pastoral care.

Marx was right when he once said, « religion is the opium of the people ». Marx himself was of course completely ignorant of Orthodoxy. Just as people today identify Orthodoxy with Religion, Marx himself only had experience of Western, secularized Christianity. What Marx was unable to imagine was that his remark would also involve himself, because ideology is also the opium of the people. And even more : nationalism-ethnophyletism (that we will consider presently) also exists and functions as the opium of the people. In other words, religion is a downfall ; ideology a drug (opium) ; nationalism-ethnophyletism a new heresy. All of these constitute a

deviation from the participation in the fullness and universality of Orthodoxy and annihilate its entire witness.

### **Nationalism-Ethnophyletism**

Let us now examine what nationalism-ethnophyletism has in common with religion and ideology and how these hinder the Church's mission and pastoral care. Let us also see why ethnophyletism is a factor that decisively poisons the Ecclesiastical body and is detrimental to interorthodox unity. This is a very important issue and it is impossible to examine it completely within the limits of this short presentation. All the same, a historical reference can provide a clue to its understanding and open a field for further thought.

The political ideology of Byzantium, baptised in the Theology of the Church, had a positive effect on the civilization and cultural success of the peoples of Eastern and Central Europe who were surrounded by four seas : the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Caspian. Byzantium's "theological" choice in the field of foreign policy was based on the following fact : The representation of the Church as depicted in the icon of Pentecost. In this icon, the Apostles, surrounded by the Saints, form a semicircle *and not a closed circle*. This gives precisely to everyone, individuals and peoples, a free choice of participation and communion. Influenced by this theological position, Byzantium constitutes the only state entity without frontiers. Having embraced an existentialist way of life and living (in) the atmosphere of Orthodoxy, it considered that all peoples are invited to participate in the same eschatological perspective. This statement constitutes an unconditional factor which gives a precise explanation for Byzantium's universality and cosmopolitan character, *embracing a host of peoples without ethno-phyletism*. The Byzantine Empire believed in this and throughout its historical life, it affirmed the cultural *otherness* of new-coming peoples into its bosom by offering them the possibility of permanent spiritual unity, the Orthodox faith.

The peaceful co-existence and reciprocal cultural *perichorisis* of Orthodox peoples continued in the years of the Ottoman Empire. However, this long-lasting reciprocity was reversed with all its consequent dark sequels during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the emergence of the principle of national self-determination, which is the absolute principle of self-determination of peoples accompanied by a restrictive existence of the state. This reversed the previous experience. Statism possibly offered much to Europe's new state-controlled institutions. However, it contributed decisively to the varied fragmentation of South-Eastern Europe, which had been culturally united. Moreover, in contrast with previous historical experience, *statism became a closed circle*. State dominance was based on exclusivities : one nation, one race, one language, one religion. Briefly put, the supremacy of only one nationality...

Statism is closed by nature. On account of this particularity of statism, closed political systems (dictatorships, ideologies of extant socialism, etc.) found fertile ground for their development. Almost throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, each one of these systems oppressed in its own way the traditionally Orthodox peoples in particular. This happened exactly at the same moment when the other neighbouring peoples of Central and Western Europe realised the many-sided bankruptcy of statism and, abandoning it, progressed to a new historical formation: the European Commonwealth (1948-1993), which restored the freedom of communication and co-operation among peoples.

From this brief historical outline, we can see where the source of Ethnophyletism lies. The term was used for the first time in 1872 by a Panorthodox Synod in Constantinople, which made continuous efforts to save the unity of Orthodox people, especially by condemning ethnophyletism as a heresy. The term essentially describes discrimination, which is nothing more than the principle of national self-determination applied in the bosom of the Ecclesiastical body. It is the voluntary discrimination of race and nationality in the bosom of the Church; in other words, the confusion between Church and Nation. The Church cannot be identified with the expression of only one nation. This is the reason why it cannot be given a theological justification. Furthermore, ethnophyletism is also the privilege and sovereignty of racial origin over ecclesiastical identity. It is the *eonistic* choice of a way of existence as a life position (*modus vivendi*) to the detriment of the eschatological perspective of man.

It is obvious that the Church, having admitted us through baptism, approved of our national, racial, linguistic and other features; she did not reject them. However, she gave priority to our eschatological identity, which is a common demand and right of all human beings. In other words, we are first Christian and then European, Australian or American. First Orthodox and then Polish, Russian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian. The opposite is Ethnophyletism, *Eonism*, Heresy.

Though this issue does not end here, it may be extended further. Let us take one approach by way of example. It is common knowledge that in traditionally Orthodox countries newly-established Autocephalous Churches have come into being, especially from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the present, and that some of them bear the honorary title of Patriarchate. Autocephaly does not imply a National Church but the possibility of communion within the (national) otherness of every local Ecclesiastical Body. In spite of this, Autocephalous Churches today operate as National Churches — not to say State-controlled Churches, following the Protestant model. Thus, worship mostly has a national character and not an ecclesiastical or eschatological one. We are Orthodox, because it so happens that we are Greek, Serb, Russian or Romanian, but not the other way round. To the same effect, we are not Muslims, precisely because we are not Turkish or Saudi Arabian.



This mentality has also penetrated into parts of the Orthodox Diaspora, where its consequences are more significant and decisive in the area of interorthodox unity as well as, and especially, in the field of missionary witness and testimony to the nations (Mt 28, 12). Hence, national origin and descent come first and as a result they dominate and then follow Orthodox identity and substance.

We all know the result. We are incapable of finding a solution to ecclesiastical (dis)unity in the Diaspora. Orthodox ecclesiastical communities are established on the basis of Ethnophyletism and not geo-ecclesiastical bases. They are turned to, and have as their point of reference, the national/ecclesiastical centre, and refuse to be in contact and communication (communion) with the real local Church. In both cases (metropolitan and Diaspora), Orthodoxy becomes part of national life and national culture. From “containing”, which is the ontological characteristic of Orthodoxy, she now becomes “contained” and ceases to be of existential benefit to the people who bear her. Dialectically, too there is disruption, because in the name of “their” Orthodoxy, certain people are opposed to other people whether of the same denomination (*orthodox*), another denomination (*heterodox*) or another religion (*heteroreligian*), as well as to different Orthodox national groups in the Diaspora. Everything depends on the length of the “umbilical cord” that connects everyone to the “effigy of Orthodoxy”, whether in one’s own country or in the Diaspora, with the “mother Country”, or with the level of emancipation...

### **Zealotism wearing the mask of Fundamentalism**

Another issue, that depreciates not only some Orthodox “milieux”, but also every form of inter-human manifestation, and that poisons inter-human relationships, is the unprecedented phenomenon of Fundamentalism. According to its modern religious form, it could be characterised as “neo-zealotism”, but, actually, this expression does not adequately cover all of its aspects.

It is therefore of value, for a true understanding of the Orthodox Church’s mission, that, before everything else, we attempt to define, the term “fundamentalism”. Its Latin root “fundamentum” means the “foundation” that supports an entire edifice. It refers neither to an ideology, nor to a philosophy, religion, political system, or theory. Indeed, the term was used *pictorially* or *typologically* to denote the fundamental principles, ideas or values, on which a theory, a religion, or an ideology, a political system or even a scientific proposition or assumption is founded. Thus, speaking literally, this is a neutral term of the media vox that assumes a particular meaning whether from its historical phenomenology and semantical change or from attributes belonging to it. Hence, we observe national, ideological, religious, aesthetic, political and scientific fundamentalism, whose significant elements have much in common. Furthermore, fundamentalism underscores what is persistent in something that is fundamental, in the founding formulations of a theory or teachings, as well as in the invitation to return to initial authenticity. For this reason,

fundamentalism could be rendered in Greek with the terms “qemeliokrativa” [*themeliokratia*] or “ajkeraiofrosuvnh” [*akeraiofrosyni*] (preservation of the integrity of fundamental authority). As a phenomenon, it should be associated with zealotism, and militant conservatism. At the same time, it can also be differentiated. However, it is completely opposed to modernism and secularism even though it is essentially nourished by their existence. So, in that it constitutes, under this form, a peculiar symptom of the universal community and tends to affect the life and expression of the Orthodox experience, it would be appropriate to continue with a brief analysis of its constituent elements.

Fundamentalism first appeared in the United States in 1919. It determined the identity of a wider religious (Protestant) movement that rejected *modernism* (especially the Darwinian theory of evolution) and the subsequent secularisation of theology as well as the relativisation of moralism’s demands. Today, the term/tendency has a wider meaning. It describes fanatical conservative manifestations of any form of religious or ideological dogmatism. Such phenomena appear in areas of the Orthodox world too, and one could identify the zealotist movements of the Old-Calendarists, as well as other religious groups such as the “zealots” in Greece, the Raskolniki in Russia, and contemporary political groups in the world of former (existing) socialism. Of course, a more dynamic form of fundamentalism developed in the bosom of Islam, as result of its confrontation with the secularised spirit of the West. And as Islam unites powers both religious and political, there is a direct relationship between religion and politics in its fundamentalist movements. Finally, fundamentalist movements of no particular religious character appear in several areas of the world, having instead national, political and social pursuits.

We could say that the basic elements of today’s fundamentalist phenomenon are, among others, traditionalism, a “one-way” attitude towards life, legalism, and moralism. An absolute position is given to the “letter” of the founding formulations of a theory or teachings, while at the same time these formulations are converted into an objective authority and an infallible law. Canonical principles of individual and collective behavior always arise from the founding formulations, in that they include a detailed casuistry (moralism) and violation of external conventions. This is seen in the rejection or disobedience to the initial precepts of the teaching. Every form of fundamentalism is coupled with intense psychological fanaticism, unshakeable encapsulation into one-sidedness and militant passion in the defense of its principles. This also explains its incapacity for dialogue and, consequently, its rejection. Fundamentalism is dominated by the feeling that the integrity of authority is threatened and resorts to “purification” and a reorientation to *authenticity*.

On the basis of this brief survey of its main features, the consequences of this phenomenon are obvious. It generates introversion and isolationism, deviation towards extreme reactions and

fanaticism as well as aggressive intolerance. It releases expansionist forces (eg. the Crusades, colonialism, financial submission) and produces a chain of conflicts among people (cf. the Balkans). Since its understanding of tradition is static and absolute, those who threaten its authenticity are considered dangerous. For this reason the use of violence is neither unknown nor rejected (eg. Islam, recent incidents in Larissa/Greece, etc.). Besides, fundamentalism regularly demands a return to the roots (conservatism, ancestor-worship) and is characterized by austerity in religious expression (standardization of religious life, unwavering application of external conventions, such as old-fashion dress style, etc.), biblical and apocalyptic trends (antichristology, Satanist phenomena), the legalization of the relationship between man and God, and moralism in every form of everyday life. Another basic aspect of the semantic approach of fundamentalism is how it regards its place in the relationship between faith and its expression, which entails other relations and dichotomies, such as those between the truth and the historical expression of truth, between essence and formality, spirit and letter, signifier and signified (conservatism, Old-Calendarism). Hence, devotion to tradition means a fundamentalist invocation of antiquity, the absolutisation of the past, partiality (which is contrary to universality) and submission to conservatism (in fear of freedom). In brief, a static and not dynamic understanding of Tradition.

Another aspect concerns the absolutisation of the symbols of the expression of the truth. The ostentations placing of crosses in highly visible places, apart from the fact that it echoes a Western, Roman Catholicism practice, is part of the phenomenology of fundamentalism. Provided that Christian fundamentalism uses Christian symbols, which naturally coincide with symbolic issues of the Church, it is not always easy to detect from its externals. Specifically, fundamentalism is distinguished by the way it makes the symbolic system autonomous and absolute. For this reason, the symbolic system itself can express freedom or obscurantism, genuine spiritual life or fundamentalism.

Finally, differentiated from interpersonal inelasticity, it denies dialogue, because through dialogue one may bring the part under the organic whole of the truth, so that the part is not imposed on the whole. Fundamentalism, however, in seeking the opposite, operates as a serious threat to civilization itself and to the whole of revealed truth. Indeed, fundamentalists seek the title-deeds not only of truth but also of its authentic explanation, thereby excluding any constructive dialogue with dissenters or even nonconformists.

As you realize, this is a difficult issue, so I will cite an incident, recently recorded by the ecclesiastical press in Greece. The title of the two-columned article was : “Massive demonstration and dynamic protest against Jehovah’s Witnesses”. And it goes on : « The following has been communicated and published from Kassandra in Chalkidiki. The demonstration “against the Millenarians” that took place in the central square of Valta, turned into one of the largest meetings

to have taken place in the post-war period in Chalkidiki. Thousands of Chalkidiki's inhabitants, using every means of transport, buses, taxis, private cars and tractors, and coming from every part of the peninsula, gathered at the old See of Kassandra's Metropolis, Valta. The demonstration was organized by the municipality of Kassandra, the local Church and several authorities of the region.

» The main demand was for a room intended for the religious services of the Jehovah's Witnesses not be constructed in Kassandra. The atmosphere was particularly electrified, especially after the attack made by a Jehovah's Witness ten days ago on Archimandrite Nektarios, vicar of Kassandra, after they had an argument. As a matter of fact, on Friday, some inhabitants of Valta and its neighbouring villages prevented works from starting in the place where the Jehovah's Witnesses plan to install a prefabricated building. They formed a human chain and barricaded the area with agricultural machinery and a bus. Jehovah's Witnesses arrived hurriedly from Nea Flogita, Moudania and Thessaloniki, where they maintain powerful cells and organized an informal meeting in ...a fish restaurant in Siviri »... (*Orthodox Press*, issue n° 1328/16-7-1999, p. 6).

Everything mentioned so far applies in some manner to fundamentalism, but there is more. However, I do not wish merely to give evidence passively. Since this issue is of vital importance for our time and also for the outlook of the Ecclesiastical body, let us move quickly on to suggestions concerning its ontological overcoming.

The symptoms of the phenomenon already existed before its historical crystallization in 1919, but no one denies any longer that fundamentalism constitutes an important phenomenon of religious and socio-political psychology. It is the *human person* that constitutes its focal point and not the structure of society or its political organization.

Fundamentalism seeks for foundations and identifies them with the absolute even though they may be on the level of the created and not of the uncreated. Fundamentalism of every kind absolutizes created elements and absolutization of the created means restriction within the space of the world (εγκοσμιοϋθη" [*egkosmiotis*]) ; it means idolatry. Consequently, such a position mutilates the truth for the human person. The created, as corruptible and perishable, is located within the limits of death. Therefore, it cannot save human beings from the fear of death or offer them freedom and fulfillment. It cannot help them to integrate as persons, and creates insecurity. Uncertainty and the feeling of emptiness, which lead to the emergence of fundamentalism, do not constitute morality or anything similar, but ontological situations. Fundamentalism does not have ontology even though it manages to convince its followers, and those who express its beliefs, to accept its moral pretensions or deontology as ontology. Its fatal illusion and weakness is located here, as is its fanaticism and intransigence.

However, people, who have tasted and have lived the experience of freedom, love and resurrection, are alien to neuroses from fundamentalist phenomena and such mentalities. Therefore, since fundamentalism's pretensions are ontological, it is natural that it should be overcome on the level of ontology. Only on that level can fundamentalism be approached and overcome. Because the history of fundamentalism is a history of man's agonized effort to fill his inner emptiness with objective certainties. For this reason, the "ontological overcoming of fundamentalism" may be the only realistic way to confront it.

### **Prejudice against European Integration**

The year 1993 constituted the symbolic starting point of a "new state" institution, or, better, the starting point of a new geopolitical entity. Even from the early years, its visionaries called it *United Europe*. Today, its champions, deprived of any concept of vision, even of essentials, call it the *European Union*. Of course, beyond any obvious and dawning national(ist) (nation-centred) behavior of individual-centred priorities, this concerns a new *cosmogony* that is still insufficiently appreciated in our everyday and institutional life. Since traditionally Orthodox countries (Greece, [Finland], and shortly Cyprus, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, etc., are about to enter) have already started to take part in this new geontology, it is advisable that we continue with an anatomic appreciation of this new prospect and of its relation with the Orthodox body.

The fact that the Ecclesiastical body remains indifferent in the face of *European developments* should make us think ; and we, the Orthodox Youth, should tackle this problem in relation to the subject that we have chosen to treat. Our attitude vis-à-vis this *cosmogony* is, at the worst, hostile and at the best, dull. By definition, this means that the Ecclesiastical body of the Orthodox Church is obviously absent. It is absent not because we have not been invited to participate, but because we have, in one way or another, chosen not to participate in these historic developments, the main reason being that we were remiss or prejudiced against it. Of course, the causes are obvious, whereas the issue remains serious and of major importance. Let us now take a quick look at a basic aspect of primary importance.

First of all, a United Europe, considered as a historic reality, corresponds more to the Roman , Byzantine and Ottoman Empires and less or even not at all to the state, which gave birth to the prevalence of the committed principle of national self-determination. Consequently, European unification constitutes a challenge to our national individualism so powerfully promoted by European statism during the last two centuries. The perspective of unification has, even by coincidence, theological characteristics, such as the communion of peoples, the communion of persons, etc. Europe, by preserving a framework of equality of people before the law, will moderate

their differences and will facilitate their unity, but also, unwittingly and unwillingly, the unity of Orthodoxy.

But let us take a look at the approach of Orthodoxy and Europe, as well as the mode of contribution of the Orthodox Church to common European developments from a theological point of view. All of these things are equally apparent from the example that we mentioned above, to illustrate the issue of Ethnophyletism : the example of the representation of the Church on the icon of Pentecost. I simply wish to remind you that on this icon the Apostles, surrounded by the Saints, form a semicircle *and not a closed circle*, giving precisely and freely to everyone the possibility of participation and communion. Historically, unprecedented statism provoked the creation of state formations (*nation-states*) in the bosom of Europe ; it decisively contributed to its varied fragmentation. Moreover the state, in contrast to its former historical experience (which we described above), *became a closed circle*. Hence, the states where Orthodox people lived became closed systems, because statism is selective by nature. United Europe, considered as a fact or as an idea, moves to the very opposite pole of statism and catalyses this change, provided that it does not take the form of a closed circle, but rather embraces more and more peoples. Therefore, European unification, as well as our simultaneous incorporation into it as Orthodox Christians, constitutes a spiritual fact of major importance.

Futhermore, I would like to remind you of two historical factors : Greco-Roman civilization and Christianity which constitute the spiritual “godfathers” of Europe. They give a reference point to the historic conditions that form the geo-entity called “Europe”. Consequently, Western civilization is not conceivable without Orthodoxy. It becomes clear that Europe is our preoccupation ; it is an area belonging to our spiritual responsibility for what has already taken shape. We are the heirs of the ecumenical dimension of two empires, the empire of Alexander the Great and that of the Romans. Orthodoxy cannot be exhausted within the utopic limits of a state.

On this point exactly, the issue regarding the substantial offer that the Orthodox Church will shortly be invited to make to Europe is raised. And here, special attention and care will be required from those responsible in today’s Church : mainly bishops, clergymen in general, theologians and of course the youth, and without exception, all of us. Perhaps, Orthodoxy constitutes the only hope of the Western world. Do not take what I say in a messianic way ; but sooner or later the testimony of Orthodoxy will be “*conditio sine qua non*”, indispensable in tomorrow’s European society under Western domination. Because, « those who consider History as a combination of several elements, which are bound together by the keystone called attitude towards the world and understanding of life, will turn to Orthodoxy with greater expectations » (J. Zizioulas) than they turn nowadays to Islam and other Far Eastern exotic creeds. This is why time has come for Orthodoxy to be present in Europe.

In this sense, it is now worth making an attempt to decode the terms *Europe* and *Orthodoxy*. The first concept hides the dimension of *cultural polyphony*, while *spiritual unity* constitutes a mode of relationship for Orthodoxy. The affirmation of otherness in the perspective of ontological unity constitutes a harmonious conjunction with existential consequences. In other words, we unite by distinguishing and we distinguish by uniting. The wealth of every people should be harmonized with a unique spiritual factor of synthesis and transcendence. This is something no one to date has managed to accomplish in Europe, not even in the second millennium. Therefore, only the Church is able to make the communion of people and the communion of individuals ontological and consequently substantial.

Today, some people talk about danger coming from Europe. Orthodoxy is not in danger because of Europe, it is in danger because of its inertia and its incapacity to let people know about its wealth and to show this wealth to them with humility and respect. It is in danger of closing itself up, while it has so much to offer. Orthodoxy is not afraid of the West, whereas the West seems to need Orthodoxy more and more. Its power is in itself, in its Truth and spirit, because it constitutes an ontological dimension that is not absorbed by its environment. On the contrary, it influences the environment with authority and ontological power.

The Orthodox Church has a determinative testimony of life to give to the Old Continent. The realization of what our particularity possesses may have pionnering consequences. Standing on the threshold of the 21<sup>th</sup> century and also of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millenium, we are invited to devote ourselves to a cutlivation and deep familiarity with Orthodoxy and to its interpretation in the contemporary Western world. In two words, we should demonstrate *self-consciousness* and *witness (martyria)* ! If this does not happen now, then it might be too late not only for the destiny of Europe, which absolutely needs Orthodoxy to survive, but also for our own national identity, which risks being altered and completely eliminated.

However, apart from the general theological dimension of the subject, if we are specific, it ever remains a *missionary* and *pastoral* issue. The “Orthodox Church in Europe” means among oher things a way of conducting pastoral care of people in a unique geopolitical area.

Six years ago Europe entered a new era that will soon be called by historians “European”. The constant factors that till now determined the European *status quo* seem obviously to be relativized. Europe leaves behind the experience of statism and wounded, she seeks for new paths to continue her historical course. By being Orthodox, *we fulfil the conditions for an enterprising itinerary, because these conditions are neither nationalist, nor cultural, nor anything else ; they are primarily theological*. Julian the Apostate experienced failure and along with him the vision that he

wanted to resuscitate also failed, because he stepped backwards, because he aimed at retrogression. At that moment, Orthodoxy won the future of (idolatrous-paganistic) Hellenism, because it did not constitute a way back, but rather a *creative synthesis*. This is the heritage and, at the same time, the duty and the mission of Orthodoxy in United Europe.

## **B) KEY PROPOSALS TO OVERCOME THESE DIFFICULTIES**

Not-with-standing these matters, let us go on to the selection and examination of some suggestions, since criticism becomes constructive only when it is accompanied by positive counter proposals.

Our times are characterized, perhaps more than ever before, by the simplification of everything. There are many more issues to be raised other than those mentioned hither-to, as seen through the apostolic (missionary) tradition and life of the Church. There are also their extensions and it would be meaningful for the issues raised today to refer to some cases by first asking the question : How can the Ecclesiastical body overcome these difficulties, some of which have already been mentioned, so as to be able to give leadership in a historically suitable way, according to its mission, that is to say ontologically and eschatologically. In our opinion, there are two levels and they are focused on the life and on the administration of the Church.

### **Theological awakening of the Ecclesiastical body**

Father Georges Florovsky in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Inter-orthodox Theological Congress, which took place in Athens in 1936, said with bitterness and emphasis that Orthodox theology is under a “Babylonian captivity” on account of its westernization, its secularization, its nationalism and its lack of the Patristic tradition. Sixty years and more have passed since then. Can we truly say that this does not happen today as well ? Especially, when the evidence just presents confirm it ? Consequently, there is a “famine of the Patristic word”, theological speechlessness (*aphasia*) and “the issues of the Church are not pastorally faced” (St Gregory the Theologian). This explains why the mission and the pastoral work of the Church do not progress. In order to demonstrate what I want to say, I will make a comparison and a deduction.

For example, during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, our Fathers, among other things, showed a unique capacity to face and solve successfully the problems that arose. They faced with daring and *dialectism* and solved decisively with creative synthesis whatever problems they had inherited from philosophical antiquity, but also whatever problems were raised in their times. In this way, the Christians of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century had the certainty and the pride that the Theology of the Church had solved whatever problem had faced mankind till then. Have we, the Christians of the 21<sup>th</sup> century



the courage to say the same today ? We are theologically confused to such an extent that our theology today, instead of solving problems, adds to and increases the existing ones that still lie in the bosom of the Ecclesiastical body.

Orthodox Theology has been disfigured by external influences brought about by Orthodox theologians, whether by tolerance or choice, who were unable to engage in discussion with secular theologies. Therefore, as mentioned above, it has in its bosom pure Western and Eastern elements, that is Calvinistic, puritanist, moralistic, scholastic, Muslim, neo-philosophical, legalist, and of course eonistic, nationalist, secularist, etc. A medley of influences that have corrupted even the phenomenology of the Church's own experience. It will take hard work, study, prayer and struggle to clarify its profile.

However, the situation is definite and clear for the diachronical life and tradition of the Church : her members are in communion to the extent that they participate spiritually and empirically in the Body of the living Christ. Obviously, they do not commun(icate), because they do not participate. This is the point from which the theological awakening of the Ecclesiastical body which I envisage needs to start. This means an awakening that crosses through liturgical life, monastic tradition, the ascetic aspect of Orthodoxy, the Fathers' guidance, the harmony of mutuality and participation of the four charismas (St Hippolytus of Rome), namely, the local Church, synodality, the *co-love (syn-agape)*, the communion of persons, sanctity of life, humility and theosis. It is about a perspective that goes through the "doing and teaching" (Mt 5, 19) of the Lord. First to do and then to teach... But, today, we teach before having undertaken the doing. God's people are ready to move forward as long as they find open theological horizons which should be eschatologically oriented...

### **Restoration of the Metropolitan system**

I will insist on this point at some length. There are several areas that require theologically conceived functions in a pastoral form in the Church. I believe that the key condition for such a perspective is the *restoration of the Metropolitan system* not only in traditionally Orthodox areas, but also in Europe and the Australian-American Diaspora. Statism recently abolished (20<sup>th</sup> century) this canonical system in almost every place, in spite of the fact that it had functioned from the 4<sup>th</sup> century until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And this after an experience of 16 centuries, and it is directly related to the pursuit of solutions or the creation of possibilities by the Orthodox Church in the newly-established fields of both United Europe and the New World (United States-Australia). It is also a matter of crucial importance for many other parameters of ecclesiastical administration and life. Here, we will simply present it briefly and finish the presentation.

Geopolitical changes have always influenced the institutional basis and the external structure of the Church. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Church's will to adapt her administrative systems to each new geopolitical context appears in the Synods. For example, the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325), first introduces the *metropolitan system* as a criterion of canonical continuity and as good will for practical harmonization of the administrative structure of the Church. This followed the geopolitical readjustment of the administrative situation in the Roman empire of Diocletian and Constantine the Great. This fact turned out not to be immediate. The canons 17/D (451) and 38/Penthekti [Quinisextus] (691) echo the same synodical practice that suggests a geo-ecclesiastical adaptation of the same or a similar type : « The order of ecclesiastic affairs should be followed according to political and public models ». This canonical order and practice that were formed have always functioned as a co-efficient of the harmonization of “the order of ecclesiastic matters” with “political and social models” for purely missionary and pastoral reasons. This is something that we forget today. Institutional initiatives and priorities regarding any geo-administrative reform always belonged to the Empire/State. Having this geopolitical restructuring as a criterion, the Church organizes afterwards its local churches and dioceses and she develops activities connected to her pastoral and soteriological work.

Obviously, this approach is in direct relation with the new geopolitical formation of the European Union and the fermentations in the New World, and therefore with the canonical demand for a re-activation of the Metropolitan system. It is advisable to remember ourselves that the concept of the national state gives way to the framework of the European Union and along with it ecclesiastical centralism, which, fed on statism, is relativized. The basic vision of the European Union is *administrative decentralization* and *the strengthening of local authorities*, two elements that also constitute the functional features of the Metropolitan system, such as metropolitan districts and putting into effect the institution of local (metropolitan) synods.

There are also other essential reasons that suggest this restoration, since our age is undermined, perhaps as never before, by individualism. The personal feature of pastoral work is set forth within the *Metropolitan system* and makes its operation more essential. Another basic element of this adoption deals with its practical dimension and brings consequences in the strengthening of relations between pastors and faithful, in the decentralization of the Church's administration, in the confrontation of pastoral problems on a local basis, in missionary activity, and in the confrontation of heretical groups, and so on. In one word, the Ecclesiastical body should face directly and accurately the “issues arising”, as mentioned in the canon 19/D. The canonical system suggests by its nature a larger number of local churches and, therefore, smaller flocks for pastoral care, thus preserving personal identity in the Church's pastoral work. Its absence means for the most part that « the issues of the Church are not pastorally faced » (St Gregory the Theologian).

In order to face the new historic challenge of our time, our Church is invited today to bring again into effect the Metropolitan system, which existed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and which still exists in some Orthodox countries. This matter in relation to the issue of European integration concerns not only the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but also the Church of Greece, which along with the Autonomous Church of Finland, is the only one — for the time being — that is already incorporated into United Europe. However, presuppositions increase as European integration continues day by day.

The proposition of the restoration of the Metropolitan system in the perspective of United Europe is supported by the Church's canonical tradition and by the contemporary pastoral demands of the new European era that have already started to emerge. We should have detected in time its necessity and its spiritual value. I need to clarify that this is not a proposal either for reform or administrative change, nor is it an attempt at institutional innovation. The (Canonical) Tradition of our Church is characterized by fullness and as a result it is the means for an innovative line “with a spirit of leadership” in a world with unquenchable spiritual pursuits, but also at the same time with a weakness in ontological orientation.

Therefore, every metropolitan synod of the Metropolitan system will be responsible for the geopolitical mainland, In the same way, the Metropolitan system will not only make more positive the operation of the Ecclesiastical body and produce wider cooperation on a local level, but will also preserve its *quality*, *canonicity* and *polyphony* without showing the canonical weakness we have detected ; and this will happen within the bounds of the synodical communion of local churches.

This evidence has a clear canonical basis, if we take into consideration the specific decisions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Council (381) that echo a long-lasting and well-tried ecclesiastical tradition : « [...] It is obvious that by the observance of the canon concerning administration, *the cases of each district will be settled by the synod of the (metropolitan) district*, according to what has been determined in the Council of Nicea [...] » (2/B). However, each attempt presupposes discernment and a *suitable way*, so as not to harm the order of the liturgical life, of the the canonical tradition and of the pastoral *diakonia* that take place in the bosom of the Church. Nothing can replace personal relationship and the personal character of every synodical effort. Any other means are helpers with the particular objective of strengthening *personal communication* — *not to replacing it* — and are to be incorporated into the eschatological perspectives that differentiate and characterize the Church. Our generation assumes this responsibility on the threshold of the 21<sup>th</sup> century. Our current and future behavior will determine the future of the Church's mission in the contemporary world.

## Conclusion

I would like to remind you of the practice of the Fathers that proved to be precious in history and that will contribute to issues we have raised. One of the characteristics of the Fathers' attitude towards the world as well as its exclusive success consists in the fact that the Fathers achieved something new that made them to be and to remain pioneers in the bosom of the Church and in its historical evolution. They took action so as to succeed in *receiving contemporary reality*, acting like an amoeba, which takes and assimilates, accepts voluntarily and transforms... In practice, this means that the Ecclesiastical body is invited today, as never before, to *receive contemporary reality*, which, due to its fast rhythms, has brought to the Ecclesiastical body, among other things, at present, certain contradictions, like those mentioned above. It is important that we know the conditions of every alteration that takes place every day. However, it is far more important to be able to reach vital conclusions from these *a priori* and from similar considerations and to raise suggestions for the current and future course of the Ecclesiastical body, « in order to live in newness of life » (Rm 6, 4 - 7, 6). I believe that this constitutes the golden key for every missionary and pastoral effort.

In conclusion, I would only like to say that, in this presentation, I have simply tried to set forth, using a proportional method, the problems through their extensions (the pessimistic as well as the optimistic perspectives) having as a keystone the fact that behind the particular problems of ecclesiastical life brought about by the world of today lies hidden, our attitude towards the way we approach truth... Through a *missionary* and *pastoral* evaluation of these matters, I submit all these thoughts together in order to make you think and also as a form of counter-proposal for possible action that could transpire in the future, even in the prospect of *transcendence*, of *synthesis* or even *restoration*. Not only that ! We have the example of the Fathers before us. Their clear-sightedness and their holiness let them go beyond the future and be ahead of their time, thus becoming leaders in History, pioneers and Ecumenical teachers. I believe this verifies what I have said, and with its rich message for our topic of study, gives us all hope for the future.