Balkan nationalism and the challenges of ecumenism[1]

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Introduction

The ecumenical movement is nowadays undoubtedly going through its own internal crisis of consciousness, at the point that many questions concern us about the present and future course of the bilateral and multilateral ecumenical dialogues. Thinking that is amplified by the prevailing external dispute of fundamentalism. The purpose of this paper is to approach and to present the historical conditions, that formed a national ecclesiology in the orthodox churches of the Balkans, as well as the conditions of the prevalence of the two prevailing trends and currents, that have shaped to the orthodox world and theological reflection, with special emphasis on the Greek-speaking area, as an impact of the challenges of the ecumenical movement and globalisation. Between this formed dipole of the "orthodox" religious fundamentalism and theological relativism, as mainstream, the necessity of formulating an ontology of ecumenism is being highlighted[2], as a condescending path to the dia-Logical meeting with the different, with the Incarnate Logos as the unique example and that means for a dialogue of love, honesty and humility, which does not idolise but ministering the dialogue.

I. From the multi-religious and multi-ethnocultural Balkan reality, to the national and ecclesiological insularism.

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[1] This paper was presented during the Erasmus-Socrates European Intensive Programme, entitled *"Translating God(s): Fluid Religions and Orthodoxy"*, which took place from 10th until 21st of September 2012 in "Ovidius" University of Constanța / Romania, under the auspices of the Trinity College Dublin / The University of Dublin.

[2] In the present study preferred by the author is the usage of the term "ecumenism" as a widely accepted term in the ecumenical movement, despite the fact that to the Greek-speaking areas it is negatively charged by the fundamentalist tide of opposition against the ecumenical dialogue, at the point that it is being analogised with the religious syncretism and theological drift from the orthodox faith. The above challenge (on the Greek-speaking areas) indicates the necessity of redefining and reinterpreting the term "ecumenism". So that it will not have the same meaning with the religious syncretism, and will not refer to an ideology that lacks of the ontological and eschatological orientation of the ecumenism.

If ethnicity has a cultural nature, it can be upgraded to a political nation, especially when the state promotes ethnicity as a symbol of legitimacy, according to Antony Smith[3]. But, what did really happen in the Balkan region, where the multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of the population made the formation of a national identity and consciousness even harder? Could cultural differences, such as ethnic and religious, yield under the seductiveness of a national unity? If we look at several theories, such as Hans Kohn's, we will see that he puts the national origins of European states at the Enlightenment and the French Revolution[4]. Shortly afterwards, Karl Deutch argued that every nationalism is shaped according to the social structures within which it is being developed[5]. Benedict Anderson on the other hand identifies the origins of nationalism in the dissolution of universal cultures and languages, in front of the decline of religion and the development of dialects[6]. After that, Antony Smith will address the role of national origins of religion and language, as unity factors of nations without states[7]. To end up to the discussion on the theory that best fits and was followed in the Balkans.

Studying the process of ethno-genesis and historical formation of the national identity and consciousness of the Balkan peoples from the first half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century, we observe that the orthodox faith played an ethno-forming role in the independence of the Balkan countries, and legitimisation of the states after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Due to the multi-faith and multi-ethnic composition of the population, the lack of shaped national consciousness and identity in the broader Balkan region was expected. Characteristic is the case of the single geographic region of Macedonia. This multi-religious and multicultural pluralism in the Balkans, until the First Balkan War (30th September 1912 - 30th May 1913) and during World War I (1914-1918), was succeeded by massive displacements of populations, through various treaties exchanges of population, ethnocides and ethnic-cleansing, and finally settlements in regions, so that each nation-state could achieve its national homogenisation, and its own national totalitarianism. Nationalism as an ideology of the nation-state, viewing towards cultural homogeneity and unity, used as a tool education and religion. The local national orthodox churches in order to play their own ethno-forming role, served national

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[3] See A. Smith, *National Identity,* London, Princeton 1991.
[4] See H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York 1944.
[5] See K. Deutch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, Cambridge 1961.
[6] See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London 1983.
[7] See A. Smith, *National Identity*, London 1991.

totalitarianism, by unfortunately blessing bloody conflicts of coreligionistic peoples, in front of the absolute identification of a necessary national consciousness and identity with the religious entity.

The harmonious coexistence and peaceful relationship of the orthodox Christians (Greek-speaking, Bulgarian-speaking, Serbian-speaking, Romanian-speaking, Slavicmacedonian-speaking, Vlach-speaking and Albanian-speaking) in *Rumillet*[8] of the Ottoman Empire, with the local Muslim and Jewish communities are after the national liberation revolution followed by the process of forming homogenous nations. The national homogenisation was the primary need from the respective side of every Balkan nation-state during the interwar period (1919-1939). Inevitably, the national independence of the Balkan nation-states, was followed by the autocephaly of the local orthodox national churches, with the Church of Greece (1850) opening the way[9], followed by the Church of Bulgaria (1870)[10], then the Church of Serbia (1879)[11], and later the Church of Romania (1885)[12], which although retained the eucharistic and ecclesiastical communion with the other local orthodox churches, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, fared in the path of national isolationism and of the formation of a national ecclesiology, which would preserve and promote national totalitarianism and nationalist ideology, sacrificing the ecumenical and supranational character of orthodox ecclesiology. Since then, inevitably the orthodox national churches of the Balkans fared not only to the national but also to the religious isolationism of a nationalistic ecclesiological persistence.

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[8] About the *Millet* System during the Ottoman Empire, see H. Poulton, "The Muslim Experience in the Balkan States, 1919-1991", *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 28 (2000), pp. 46-48.

[9] The "proclamation" of the Autocephalous Church of Greece happened with a coup in 1833, while the publication of the Patriarchal and Synodical Tome of the proclamation of the Autocephalous Church of Greece in 1950 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. For the historical development of the Autocephalous Church of Greece, see A. Nanakis, *Εκκλησία Εθναρχούσα και Εθνική (Ethnarchical and National Church)*, pub. Vanias, Thessaloniki 2002.

[10] In 1945 the Ecumenical Patriarchate has lifted the declaration of the "Great Council" of the Bulgarian Schism of 1870 and with the publication of the Patriarchal and Synodical Tome the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria was proclaimed autocephalous. In 1961 the value of the patriarchal Bulgarian Orthodox Church was recognised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. For the history of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, see J. Tarnanides, *Ιστορία των Σλαβικών Ορθοδόξων Εκκλησιών Α': Ιστορία της Βουλγαρικής Εκκλησίας (History of the Slavic Orthodox Churches I: History of the Bulgarian Church)*, pub. Kyriakides, Thessaloniki 2005.

[11] The Serbian Church had internal autonomy since 1831 under the supervision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. While in 1879 it was given the autocephaly by the Patriarch and Synod Tome, in 1920 it was elevated to Patriarchate. For the history of the Orthodox Serbian Church, see J. Tarnanides, *Ιστορία της Σερβικής Εκκλησίας (History of the Serbian Church)*, pub. Kyriakides, Thessaloniki 2007.

[12] The autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church was recognised in 1885 with the Patriarchal and Synodical Tome of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and in 1925 it was elevated to Patriarchate of Romania. For the history of the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church, see T. Damian, "The autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church: 125 years since its acknowledgement", *Religion in Eastern Europe,* 3 (2011), pp. 36-40.

If nationalism was born during the Enlightenment, as has come to be called, the concept of "Christian nation" and national ecclesiology is a product of nationalism. The ecclesiastical autocephaly, as we saw, became the basis of national independence promoted by the nation-state itself. So that, the national church became the operator of the formation and preservation of the national consciousness and identity. Characteristic is the example of Greece, in shaping national identity based on the religious one. This example comes from the modern historical reality, particularly from the *Constitution of Epidauros* (1822), which was resulted during one of the first assemblies of the provisional government of Greece, after its independence from the Ottoman Empire (1821). More precisely, the second article of the *Constitution of Epidauros* foresees that, *"Those indigenous inhabitants of the Territory of Greece who believe in Christ, are Greeks, and enjoy without any differentiation all political rights"*[13]. Based on the referenced item it is evident that, the term *Greek* was hitherto unnamed national, and especially during the Ottoman Empire. The Greek nationality, in the Modern Greek nation-state, is now being determined and assigned based on the religious beliefs of the indigenous inhabitants of the Greek territory in the person of Christ. That means that during the naturalisation of Christians within the newly formed Greek Nation-state, they were given the Greek nationality, whereas citizens of other religions of the existing Muslin and Jewish communities, who lived in large numbers in the Greek territory, were excluded from the process of efficiency of Greek nationality, as non-Greeks. In conclusion, apart from the ethno-forming role of the orthodox Christian faith in the newly-founded Greek nation-state, it is evident that from the first years of the independence, the national homogenisation has been promoted through religious cultural homogenisation.

During the transition from the multi-religious and multi-ethnocultural Balkan society, from the harmonious coexistence of people from different ethnocultural groups with different religious belief, who jointly shared the devotion to certain saints of the orthodox faith, co-celebrating and respecting Muslim and Jewish celebrations, began to see as national threatening and dangerous, anything religiously different. Undoubtedly, the "orthodox" religious nationalism led the Orthodox Church from the openness of ecumenicity to the nationalist isolationism. The national church in order to serve the nation was completely identified with this, interweaving the formation of a single national identity through the formation of a national ecclesiology. We believe, that the political and

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[13] See K. G. Mavria - A. M. Panteli, *Συνταγματικά Κείμενα (Constitutional Texts)*, Vol. I, pub. Ant. N. Sakkoula, Athens - Komotini 2007, p. 25: "Ὅσοι αὐτόχθονες κάτοικοι τῆς Ἐπικρατείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος πιστεύουσιν εἰς Χριστόν, εἰσὶν Ἕλληνες, καὶ ἀπολαμβάνουσιν ἄνευ τινὸς διαφορᾶς ὅλων τῶν πολιτικῶν δικαιωμάτων".

ecclesiastical reality in the Balkans would be different, if the constitutional project of 1809 that Regas Velestinlis envisioned for the Balkans, was successful[14]. A project that was not significantly differentiated from the principles of the *status quo* (Ottoman Empire), designed to maintain a multinational empire, of diverse and different religious and linguistic groups.

The return of multi-religiosity and multi-culturalism in today's social reality of the Balkans, is the prime challenge, that the ethnic and religious homogenised communities have to face today. The internal migration of the Europeans (now) citizens of Eastern Europe with the massive economic migration of people who come from the third world, brings its own cultural upheavals and advances, making the necessity of dialogue between cultures and religions urgent, in order to overcome any kind of insecurity, and to perceive any cultural and religious differences.

The orthodox national churches isolated from one another and preoccupied in a national ecclesiology, it seems that they are unable to listen to the current and upcoming challenges of today's social reality, of the osmosis of cultures and religions. They are recalcitrant in front of the necessity of the revision of their ecumenical theology, and the expression of the Christian witness in the modern world. For this to give result, an honest self-criticism is needed, as to whether the interweaving of the national identity through the development of a national ecclesiology, replaced the ecumenical-ecclesiological criterion with the national one. After identification of the Orthodox with the Byzantine culture, and the copying of the operating structures of the Byzantine Empire, followed the Fall of Constantinople (1453) and the formation of an ethnarchical-ecumenical ecclesiology of the *Rumillet*, throughout the period of Ottoman rule, with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople as the main exponent. This way an ecclesiological national obsession appeared in the temperament of the Orthodox. It had obvious signs of poor replication in the shaping of a national ecclesiology. Signs, that appeared as early as the mid 15th century[15], and continue to plague the orthodox churches till today.

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[14] For the intentions of Regas Velestinlis and the analysis of his constitutional project in more detail, See P. M. Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός (Modern Greek Enlightenment)*, Athens 1996, p. 303.

[15] A typical example is the Russian Orthodox Church, which after the mass baptism of the Russian people, during the leadership of Vladimir in 988, was Metropolis of the Great Church of Constantinople (Ecumenical Patriarchate). Up until in 1488, when the Episcopal Synod of Russians in Moscow, elected as head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Jonah. This coup autocephaly was recognized by the Patriarchates by awarding patriarchal value to the Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia in 1589, granting the fifth position in the diptychs, after the Jerusalem Patriarchate. This was followed in 1721 with its abolition in 1917 with its reconstitution.

Therefore, dialogue should first heal the wounds of the past in an Inter-Orthodox level, which means the isolation of the Orthodox churches in their national ecclesiology, without sharpening the wounds of the past, with placements that do not speak of an Orthodox Church in the present, but of a confederation of national orthodox churches, which certainly is not consistent with the ecclesiological identity of the Orthodox Church. Perhaps we should learn from the history of the division and isolation of the national orthodox churches by humans in the past, to avoid repeating past mistakes, and respond to the challenges modern global society poses. This challenge is even greater and always enduring for the Church, which is standing on the edge of created and uncreated communion, the visible and the invisible, the variable and invariable[16].

II. The "orthodox" religious fundamentalism and theological relativism

The identification of church and nation, with the church serving the nation, is the prime modernity within the Orthodox Church, which during the Byzantine and Ottoman Empire was multinational, multilingual and ecumenical. The subsequent loss of the ecumenicity of Orthodoxy, undermined the unity of the Orthodox Church. After the independence of the Balkan nation-states during the 19th and 20th century, and the political changes in Eastern Europe, the Orthodox Church has forgotten its transnational and ecumenical mission, abrogating the ecclesiological principles, that derive from its eucharistic and patristic tradition.

After two centuries of identification of the national consciousness with the orthodox faith for the Balkan peoples, the joint civilian casualties during the First and Second Balkan War (30th September 1912 - 30th May 1913 & 16th June - 18th July 1913) between coreligionistic people, the painful consequences of the two World Wars, which shocked Europe, and led to the vision of the European Integration, for the political and economical recovery towards a better future, followed the collapse of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), and the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia, so that the Balkan countries could not cope with the challenges of globalisation and globalised marketplace, with nationalism being at its zenith. Today, the orthodox Balkan peoples tend to see the orthodox faith as a connecting element of their national consciousness and identity, because

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[16] See Joh 18:36 "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence".

it has contributed to the ethnic homogenisation and national consistency. But this insistence undermines any effort to address the challenges, the modern world poses, including the ecumenical movement. Unfortunately, the current reality is being characterised by a large part of orthodox believers and pastors, who are trapped between an uncritical fundamentalism and xenophobic conservatism on the one hand, and an unconditional theological relativism on the other hand, ignoring the conditions and the prospect of the ecumenical dialogue. In both cases, unfortunately, the criterion seems to be common, even though the positions are diametrically opposed.

The ecumenical dialogue among the churches and Christian traditions, as well as the inter-religious dialogue has been lasting real and necessary. The reflection of our study was oriented mainly to the historical circumstances that led to the formation of an ideological dipole, namely the "orthodox" religious fundamentalism on the one hand, and the theological relativism on the other. On the one hand, the phobic syndrome of meeting with the religious and culturally different, on the other hand the ideological relativism, and syncretism of religious and cultural identity, they were two different reactions, characterised by a common criterion. Unfortunately, these two extreme tendencies seem to view the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue through a moralistic prism that idolises the object itself, instead of viewing it based on the ontological priority of the ecumenical dialogue towards eschatological existence. However, each dipole can only cause exacerbations and divisions, instead of becoming creative by promoting the ecumenical dialogue and theological reflection.

The phobic "orthodox" religious fundamentalism on the one hand sees the inter-christian and inter-religious dialogue, as the trap of the heterodox and hetero-religious respectively that aims to alter the orthodox faith, and the elimination of national cohesion. The ecumenical dialogue for them looks like a *"trojan horse"* of an antichrist movement in the context of globalisation that aims to the forming of a kind of pan-religion and global governance. So, inevitably we are led to the formulation of the following contradictory reasoning. How can a fundamentalist believer feel that he holds the Christian truth in its entirety, while at the same time he is possessed by a xenophobic isolationism. That is, he is not existentially released by the communion-knowledge of Truth[17], which liberates the believer, and generates the desire to share this Truth with everyone, who humbly seeks it in his religious tradition. The denial and aversion of any dialogical relationship as a way of

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[17] See Joh 8:32 "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free".

being and engaging the different, shows both the weakness of living and expressing of the Logos (Word) of Truth, as well as the absence of an actual communion-knowledge in the Incarnate Logos (Word) of God. Does the fear of followers of "orthodox" religious fundamentalism stem from the poor self-esteem for the orthodox faith and life, which they follow and reflect, but also from the dynamic of the Truth that they own and have to dialogically testify and express. I would dare to say that the "orthodox" religious fundamentalism is a hypocritical faith without any spirit and love. So, this kind of faith that is not accompanied by love looks like idolisation.

On the other hand, the theological relativism as an enthusiastic manifestation of Christian love without faith and authority, seems to look frantically for the theological convergence and cultural meeting, facing the agony of rehabilitating the division, and achieving a visible unity, which (theological relativism) is at the same time situated in front of the agony to respond to the challenges that a globalized society and marketplace have posed. Unfortunately, this kind of love without faith looks more like ideologization. Any dialogue and particularly the ecumenical, requires replacing the "I" with the "we" for the meeting, but this should require the exceeding of the theological identity and tradition or the adoption of the cultural difference between East and West. Because if the above apply, then in the first case we have the abomination of "I" and in the second case we will be talking about a cultural mutation. Looking back on the ecumenical examples of the past, being taught about the present and viewing the future, we see that the meeting between West and East on a theological level does not necessarily mean a meeting on a cultural level. This reality poses somewhat differently the basis and the prospect of the ecumenical dialogue, and the attitude towards it, without being ideologized by being seen moralistic, rather than ontological.

Between the dipole of the "orthodox" religious fundamentalism and theological relativism, just like the Truth of the Church cannot be defined and limited in the self-being, similarly it cannot be qualified and released for the other-being. These ideological extremes are considered fall and theological aberration, since on the one hand the "orthodox" religious fundamentalism follows a faith devoid of spirit and love, and on the other hand the theological relativism follows a love without faith and authority. Faith without love on the one side, and love without faith on the other, reveal basically an absence of communion with the Incarnate Logos (Word) of God, and no share to the ecclesiastic truth of Christ's

body, namely the Church. So, if faith without love looks like idolization of the object without intrinsic value, love without faith looks like ideologization.

III. Towards a search path of the ontology of ecumenism

If ecumenism as an idea promotes the Christian unity to rebuild the division, and to achieve the union between the disrupted churches, this can only be possible through the constant insistence on dialogue. Dialogue as a unique instrument of the ecumenical movement, can be effective in its purpose, only when conducted within the spirit of love, sincerity and honesty as well as when it serves equality and requires humility. The interactive meeting with the other stems from a desire to listen and to get to know each other away from *a priori* exclusions that do not accept the fundamental fact that humans seek through religious expression the above wisdom, and spirituality in its secular dimension, as an experience and empirical fact.

From the bright attitude of the Church Fathers towards the philosophical challenges encountered in their pastoral ministry, and the dialogue with the worldly idol of their time, we get the conclusion that they were never possessed by a fearful syndrome, which is a consequence of an introverted, self-limited, traditionalistic and national "orthodoxy" that leads to fundamentalism and feeds the anti-ecumenistic propaganda. The dialogue, for St. John Chrysostom, is the ultimate point of the loving condescension of God to human[18], it is an ongoing encounter of God with humans despite their disobedience and voluntary isolation[19]. The above patristic position, characteristic of the orthodox tradition, should be the criterion of our persistence to the ecumenical dialogue. Besides of being highly biblical and patristic, it can be co-relational when it comes from a living relationship with the sacramental life of the church, which is the place of the dynamic conservation of tradition.

Between the dipole of the "orthodox" religious fundamentalism of ideologization, and the theological relativism of relativise, the necessity for an ontological vision of ecumenism

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[18] See John Chrysostom, *Περί μετανοίας* 8, 4, *PG* 49, 344: "Καὶ δεῦτε, καὶ διαλεχθῶμεν, λέγει Κύριος· ποιήσατε μικρὸν, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ἐγὼ προστίθημι· ὀλίγον μοι δότε, καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἐγὼ χαρίζομαι".

[19] See John Chrysostom, Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὸν Ἅγιον Ματθαῖον τὸν Εὐαγγελιστήν 59, 6, *PG* 58, 581: "Οὐχ ὁρᾷς πῶς διαπαντὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῖν παραινεῖ, διὰ τῶν προφητῶν, διὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων, διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν; Τί οὖν; πάντα κατωρθώσαμεν, καὶ πάντα ἐπείσθημεν; Οὐδαμῶς. Ἆρ' οὖν ἐπαύσατο παραινῶν; ἆρα ἐσίγησεν; Οὐ καθ' ἑκάστην λέγει τὴν ἡμέραν ... Καὶ ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς διαλέγεται, καὶ οὐκ ἀφίσταται τοῦτο ποιῶν, καίτοι πολλὰ παρακουόντων ἡμῶν; Διὰ ταῦτα ἔλεγεν, ὅτι Ὀλίγοι οἱ σωζόμενοι. Εἰ γὰρ οὐκ ἀρκεῖ εἰς σωτηρίαν ἡμῖν ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀρετὴ, ἀλλὰ δεῖ καὶ ἑτέρους ἔχοντας ἀπελθεῖν· ὅταν μήτε ἑαυτοὺς, μήτε ἑτέρους διασώσωμεν, τί πεισόμεθα; πόθεν ἐλπίδα λοιπὸν σωτηρίας ἕξομεν;".

is being highlighted. To make myself clear, I shall present the following rhetorical antithetically and not through manichaeistic dualism. On the one hand is the Devil, and on the other the dia-Logos Christ as persons. We observe, that the first person (the Devil), as the cause of the fission of the communion of humans with God, is characterised by hatred, hypocrisy, ugliness, arrogance and division, while the second person (the dia-Logos) as a person of the enhypostatic union of God with human, characterised by love, honesty, beauty, cruciform humility and unity. For the ecumenical dialogue to serve the Christian unity for the restoration of human division, it must be inspired by the example of the dia-Logos Christ and be characterised by love, honesty, decency and humility. When, the ecumenical dialogue commences and ends at the Incarnate Logos of God, then it can be maintained *in the Holy Spirit* (ἐν Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι) in the Church, which is the living body of Christ. The sanctifying and conclusive grace of the Holy Spirit, which is constituting the institution of the Church, guarantees the fuelling of a social and unifying relationship with the dia-Logos Christ, after Pentecost[20]. Besides that, just like the hymnographer theologises *"when (he) distributing the tongues of fire, unto all human (he) called in unity"* (ὅ τε τοῦ πυρός τάς γλώσσας διένειμεν, εἰ ς ἑνότητα πάντας ἐκάλεσε), noting that the bright and burning Will of God, which is being revealed in the Pentecost, is the renovation and unity of the Church. This enhypostatic unity and recognition of the human race is being maintained to the body of the Incarnate Logos of God, who is the only self-truth and enhypostatic medium, whereby God moves and communicates dia-Logical (dialogical) with the created reality, and the human within it (the creation)[21].

If the foundation of the dialogue is the new command of love, which recognises the collective salvation of humankind in an eschatological perspective[22], then the ecumenical dialogue that aims at restoring the unity over the anthropogenic division, requires perseverance, forbearance, grace and above all patience[23]. Patience coupled with

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[20] See Act 2:1 "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place", see also I Th 1:5 "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake".
[21] See Hb 1:1-2 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;".
[22] See I Ti 2:4 "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth", see also II Ti 2:24-26 "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will".
[23] See II Ti 4:2 "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine".

perseverance and hope can lead to the fruition of dialogue according to St. John Chrysostom[24], just like in the case of the dia-Logos (dialogue) of God with humans. To sum up, it is obvious that the ecumenical dialogue requires collective responsibility, but mainly a personal one, especially by those who want to serve it, and who also have to strive for an eschatological hope and progress of the world to truly become *one fold* with the Incarnate Logos of God as *shepherd*[25].

The ecumenical dialogue cannot be confined in ignorance, falling selfishness, and at times extreme manifestations of religious fundamentalism ideologization, and persistence. The critics of the ecumenical dialogue often raise their opposition on how it takes place. This opposition they raise is based on the limits that the Church Fathers have supposedly set for the dialogue, justifying this way any extreme action they might take. But, there are limits to the dialogue according to the Fathers, and what are there? If there is a term which does not limit, but instead releases the dialogue without relativising it, then this according to St. John Chrysostom is humility, epitomised in the dialogue that Christ had with the Samaritan[26], while the correctness of the dialogue he ads lies in leniency[27], and gentleness[28]. The condition of humiliation to which St. John Chrysostom refers to, stems from the Cross, which was the instrument of divine humility and divine glory of the human being, and one must not forget that the patristic theology was predominantly cruciform and kenotic, for this reason resurrection. To sum up, we can certainly argue that the ontological view of ecumenism begins and ends at the humiliation and defeat of each and everyone.

Conclusion

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[24] See John Chrysostom, Ὑπόθεσις τῆς πρὸς Κορινθίους πρώτης Ἐπιστολῆς 3, *PG* 61, 30: "Κἂν μὴ σήμερον πείσῃς, αὔριον πείσεις· κἂν μηδέποτε πείσῃς, σὺ τὸν μισθὸν ἕξεις ἀπηρτισμένον· κἂν μὴ πάντας πείσῃς, ὀλίγους ἀπὸ πολλῶν δυνήσῃ· ἐπεὶ καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι οὐχὶ πάντας τοὺς ὄντας ἀνθρώπους ἔπεισαν, ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως πᾶσι διελέχθησαν, καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι μισθὸν ἔχουσιν. Οὐ γὰρ πρὸς τὸ τέλος τῶν κατορθουμένων, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν γνώμην τῶν κατορθούντων ὁ Θεὸς τοὺς στεφάνους ὁρίζειν εἴωθε".

[25] See Joh 10:16 "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd".

[26] See John Chrysostom, Εἰς τόν ἅγιον Ἰωάννην τόν ἀπόστολον καί εὐαγγελιστήν 32, 3, *PG* 59, 191: "Τί δὲ ἐθαύμαζον; Τὸ ἄτυφον, τὸ ταπεινὸ μεθ᾽ ὑπερβολῆς, ὅτι οὕτω περίβλεπτος ὤν, ἠνείχετο μετὰ τοσαύτης ταπεινοφροσύνης γυναικὶ διαλέγεσθαι πενιχρᾷ καὶ Σαμαρείτιδι".

[27] See John Chrysostom, Περὶ ἀκαταλήπτου 1, 7, *PG* 48, 708: "Μὴ τοίνυν πρὸς ἐκείνους ἀγριαίνωμεν, μηδὲ θυμὸν προβαλλώμεθα, ἀλλὰ μετὰ ἐπιεικείας αὐτοῖς διαλεγώμεθα· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐπιεικείας καὶ πραότητος ἰσχυρότερον. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ Παῦλος πολλῇ τῇ σπουδῇ τούτου τοῦ πράγματος ἀντέχεσθαι ἐκέλευσε λέγων· Δοῦλον δὲ Κυρίου οὐ δεῖ μάχεσθαι, ἀλλ᾽ ἤπιον εἶναι πρὸς πάντας. Οὐκ εἶπε, Πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς μόνον, ἀλλά, πρὸς πάντας".

[28] See John Chrysostom, Εἰς τὰς *Πράξεις* τῶν Ἀποστόλων 32, 2, *PG* 60, 236: "Ἀλλ᾽ ὅρα ἐκείνους, πῶς ἐπιεικῶς καὶ οὐ μετὰ αὐθεντείας διαλέγονται· τὰ γὰρ τοιαῦτα ἐπιθυμητά, καὶ πέπηγε μᾶλλον. Ὁρᾷς οὐδαμοῦ λόγων ἐπίδειξιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ τῶν πραγμάτων, τὴν διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος; Ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως καὶ τοιαῦτα ἔχοντες τεκμήρια, ἔτι ἐπιεικῶς διαλέγονται".

Between the two extremes of the "orthodox" religious fundamentalism and theological relativism the fullness of truth is placed in the middle and certainly not at the extremes. These two ideological extremes lead to falling and theological drift, since "orthodox" religious fundamentalism on the one side follows a faith devoid of spirit and love, and theological relativism on the other follows a love without faith and principle. Faith without love by one, and love without faith, mainly indicates lack of communion with the Incarnate Logos (Word) of God and lack of share in the Church's True of Body Christ's, which the Church itself. If faith without love looks like idolisation of an object without any intrinsic value, then love without faith looks like ideologisation. The dialogue of truth though presupposes the love that follows faith, and this in turn the Truth that is Christ. Therefore, when a member of Christ's Body participates and communicates the Truth at the sacraments of the Church, then it just might be co-relational and to co-communicate the Truth. In conclusion we emphasise that, just like such a theology cannot be orthodox if it is traditionalistic and fundamentalistic, similarly it cannot be orthodox if it is relativistic and liberal. For the reason that if the fundamentalistic theology does not allow one to know it, then the relativistic theology is not that what it could and should be.