

THEOLOGY WITH A HUMAN FACE

RASTKO JOVIC *

INTRODUCTION

Is Orthodox theology contextual? The answer to this question is: Yes, it is. Orthodox theology adapts to the context in which the Orthodox Church exists. Even when it deals with what appear to be irrelevant questions, theology is contextual, because the context of the problem is always evident. This was the case during communist times, when theology consciously dealt with 'irrelevant' problems¹ instead of dealing with the challenges of that specific moment, because it was trying to prevent the further persecution and suffering of the Church. Even that passive mode of theology tells us about the context in which the Church found itself. If we start from the fact that every theology is contextual, then the question that arises is: Is theology creative? With this question, we want to discover whether theology is relevant for the society in which it lives and for the Church, or whether it represents an escape from the world. In other words, is theology a critical reflex for the present (engaging mode), or an escape from it (passive mode)? If theology is a science, it is because of what it has to offer and because it reveals the truth as an action, with theology being 'practical' and relevant for society.² What

* University of Belgrade.

¹ Some problems are irrelevant, and criteria for this definition are human beings and their practical life. Insofar as problems are related to the life of humans, they are relevant. Those which cannot relate to practical life and existential problems in the world can be denoted as irrelevant.

² Under the influence of the Frankfurt School and of the entire neo-Marxist movement, the idea of truth reoriented towards praxis. Truth is produced by a method of praxis. Therefore, so-called practical theology provides the real start and end point of the whole framework of the theological sciences. The whole idea of theological disciplines could be understood "as a part of the struggle for a more human future on the basis of memories preserved in the history of faith" (Joseph Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology* [San Francisco/CA, 1995], p. 79).

we should long for is the permanent integration of theology and life, of theory and practice.

The history of the Orthodox Church testifies that it has been contextual and connected to politics. The Apostle Paul's concern was to be "all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:22). Our canon law testifies to eternal and variable truths. It testifies to the Church's concern that eternal truths be transferred from dogmas into everyday life.³ Canon law is testimony to the contextualization and social vision of the Church that lasted until the 7th century. Politics affects the life of the people at the most basic level. Ignoring politics would be a betrayal of the Church's vision of the relationships that human beings should have. Politics has one vision of human life, and theology another. These two visions of history and life connect politics and Christianity.⁴ Christ died at the hands of the Roman Empire, which, politically, was the greatest power. His Body was a challenge to the culture, religion and politics of the time. Thus, when Christ's Body is constituted during the Liturgy, the Church as a political body is constituted as well.

I will try to present here two modes of theology, one that is a contextual passive mode (*Theology of Docetism – Passive Contextual Theology*) and the second, a contextual mode that relates to human life (*Theology with a Human Face – Engaging Contextual Theology*).

THEOLOGY OF DOCETISM (PASSIVE CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY)

When we talk about the contextual passive mode of doing theology, we talk about passivity and escapism from the present, and that is something that we could call a *Theology of Docetism*. The Docetists believed that Christ's physical death was an illusion. In that sense, the resurrection became irrelevant. If we understand death as the source of all our suffering, fears and problems, then we realize that avoiding talking about death is simply ignoring the present. The Docetists ignored death in the body, which led them also to ignore history and all its attendant problems. We have witnessed many times how theology ignores history and the world in which it

³ Nikolaj Afanasjev, *Studije i clanci* (Vrsac, 2003), pp. 60-84.

⁴ Emmanuel Clapsis, 'Politics and Christian Faith', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 37 (1992), pp. 99-103, here 100.

exists and which it creates. Where does this ethos that ignores death come from? Is this problem related to the reservations of modern, bourgeois religiosity that would rather ignore reminders of Christ's death and passion, as well as "the anchoring of Christian ritual in historical events?"⁵ If we follow the path of disregard, it means that Christian theology will continue to deal with "illusory" problems, detached from life and the present, and not challenge the system in which it lives.⁶ Ignoring death makes the resurrection and eschatology unnecessary. In other words, in disregarding history, we disregard eschatology, i.e., vision of the Kingdom of God.

We are witnesses today to the fact that sometimes in our Church there is an imbalance between worship and social activism. Using our eschatological experience as an excuse, we are sometimes completely uninterested in the problems that are developing around us. Such eschatology is a kind of spiritual oppression regarding the present suffering of many. Instead of being relevant to their suffering this kind of eschatology advises submission and patience while here on earth; comfort, hope and happiness are a heavenly reward. The Orthodox Church seems to focus only on eschatology, and everything else is secondary. The problem here is not the primacy of eschatology but the appreciation of eschatology. Instead of being an excuse for our passivity, eschatology should be an unprecedented power that calls us into transformation. The Kingdom of God as a new mode of life, harmony and love should be mirrored by the Church's vision of the world. "The mission of the Church is but a struggle to witness and to apply the eschatological vision of the Church to the historical realities and to the world at large ... Theology and the Church exist not for themselves, but for the world".⁷

The *Theology of Docetism* today ignores history and critical reflection on the present, devaluing the importance of eschatology. It is contextual, but at the same time it is irrelevant. Economic extortion and the enslavement of people and nations are demons of our time,⁸ so visible in today's economic

⁵ Bruce Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville/MN, 2000), p. 179.

⁶ It is not necessary to state here that, from the very beginning of Christianity, there have been tendencies to ignore or neglect Christ's death in various gnostic groups (Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, p. 179).

⁷ Petros Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness* (Geneva, 1998), p. 194.

⁸ Fiorenza Elisabeth Schüssler, *In Memory of Her* (London, 1983), p. 123.

crisis. The experience of dying calls upon us to recognize the ‘logic of death’ which is hidden in various forms of contemporary society. The assumption of resurrection is consciousness of death in all its forms: economic and social. The majority of theological texts written today disregard the present. Theology is written for its own sake, without its being able to make the achievements and knowledge from the past relevant to people today.⁹

A *Theology of Docetism* is evident in the issues of Church identity. Present-day questions of liturgical renewal and reform¹⁰ are just one indicator of the harmful consequences of this kind of theology. Liturgy as it is today is offered to us through the prism of the Byzantine imperial cult. This “imperial” element, which is visible in the Liturgy, only encourages segregation and clericalism in the Church’s inner being, because the Byzantine Empire itself was often a tyrant and segregator among people through its feudal structure. It appears that the imperial cult denies the purpose of the Liturgy as a reflection of the Kingdom of God within history. The identity of Liturgy has always been sought in the past.¹¹ Escape from the present into the past does not solve any problem; it only disregards any creative attempt to meet the challenges of today.¹²

The New Testament reveals the Kingdom of God as a new mode of relationship, a new quality of life. The Kingdom is proclaimed when the sick and the poor are healed, when the dead are resurrected, when the disenfranchised are accepted, when abundance of food is offered to many, when justice, love, peace, harmony and solidarity rule (Matt 4:23; 5:10; 25:34; Luke 9:2; 9:12-18; Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 6:9). Let us look at the words from the beginning of the Liturgy: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”. Through these opening words, the Liturgy is

⁹ This is especially evident in the theological context of Serbia. When we read a magazine today, we cannot be certain when it was written; the articles are so distant from the present that they could have been written at any time.

¹⁰ Even if we try to avoid this expression, it explains better what Liturgy needs today in order to be the expression of the Kingdom of God. It is a deep change born through the change of perspective of sense, goal and source of Liturgy.

¹¹ Nikolai Berdyaev warned the Church that it is interested too much in the past, instead of being involved in creativity, Nikolai Berdyaev, *Spasenje i stvaralastvo* (Belgrade, 1994), p. 172).

¹² Zoran Krstic, *Pravoslavlje i modernist* (Belgrade, 2012), p. 134.

supposed to open up towards the eschatological Kingdom, “a progressive movement towards the fullness of the Kingdom of Christ, towards His cosmic and historical triumph”.¹³ The new mode of relationship as a value of the Kingdom of God should be mirrored in the space of the Liturgy. Liturgy as an “*icon of the real*”¹⁴ Kingdom of God should be able to express these values as much as possible within the constraints of history. “The unique purpose of the Liturgy is to reveal the Kingdom of God ... Reminiscence, *anamnesis* of the Kingdom of God is the source of everything in the Church”.¹⁵ This change cannot remain past, but the Kingdom of God should be manifest in all of its social implications through historical limitations. It means that the Liturgy should not mirror the patriarchal mode of relationship, the degradation of women,¹⁶ disregard of lay people,¹⁷ and inaccessibility to the sick and elderly. Primacy should be given to these issues that collide with the values of God’s Kingdom and not to the historical tradition of the Byzantine Empire.

Through its spirituality, Christianity relativized history and the troubles that the faithful experienced. The Byzantine world strove for Heaven – with its symbols, art and culture. But this Byzantine world strove upward, not forward.¹⁸ Spirituality became avoidance of the troubles in the world. Even today, we have a real problem discerning the true meaning of the term

¹³ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood/NY, 2003), p. 181.

¹⁴ Νικόλαος Ασπροούλης, ‘Θεμελιακές προϋποθέσεις για μια (Ορθόδοξη) θεολογία της καταλλαγής’, in *Και επί γης ειρήνη... όραμα και αίτημα για τους λαούς και χριστιανικές εκκλησίες – ορθόδοξη συμβολή*, ed. Ελένη Κασσελούρη-Χατζηβασιλειάδη (Αθήναι, 2010), p. 65.

¹⁵ Aleksander Schmemmann, *Evaxristijsko bogoslovlje* (Belgrade, 2011), p. 172.

¹⁶ At several conferences (Agapia 1976, Crete 1989, Rhodes 1988, Damascus 1996, Constantinople 1997, Durres, 2010), female Orthodox theologians pointed to the fatal liturgical practice of our Church; however, nothing has been improved yet (Gennadios Limouris, ed., *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism* (Geneva, 1994); Karidoyanes Kyriaki FitzGerald, *Orthodox Women Speak: Discerning the ‘Sign of the Times’* (Geneva, 1999)).

¹⁷ Division between clerics and laics is evident in the issue of language use in the Liturgy. It is at this point that the criterion of the past has primacy. Thanks to the Volos Academy for Theological Studies, this question was raised again in 2012.

¹⁸ Aleksander Schmemmann, *Pravoslavlje na zapadu: crkva – svet – misija* (Cetinje, 1997), p. 283.

spirituality. If we look at the first Christian communities, it is striking how they conceived spirituality. "It is important that in both the Pauline and later Christian writings the 'spiritual person' is not someone who turns away from material reality but rather someone in whom the Spirit of God dwells".¹⁹ From this, we can conclude that the dimension which is spiritual is a dimension of life that is empowered only by God, and connected with the active presence of God. For Early Christianity, the spiritual was not primarily connected with extraordinary inner experiences, "but with the new network of communal relationship and perception that the presence of God makes possible for each spiritual person".²⁰

Spirituality does not mean a rejection of the world as if we should view this world as sinful and try to do nothing to save it. If we begin to look at this world through eyes enlightened by God's love and communion with Him, then we reflect God's love towards every creature. In that framework, Creation becomes our road towards God. Unfortunately, the primary emphasis today is placed on the individual's salvation of his or her soul (*transcendental egoism*).²¹ The Kingdom of God and its experience were divided into warfare for individual salvation, where the Church became more and more a "hospital of souls".²² Interest in history diminished, and the prophetic voice of Eucharist as the consciousness of society became silent. The Swiss socialist Leonhard Ragaz testifies to the failure of the "spiritual" (i.e., docetist) when he "stressed the tragic rift between those who believe in God but are not interested in his Kingdom and the atheists who want to build the Kingdom but who do not believe in God".²³ Spirituality, which is offered to us today through hundreds of magazines and books by Orthodox authors, is an expression of the *Theology of Docetism*, i.e., disinterest in a dialogue with the modern world and consequently in believers in that world. Very early on, the Church lost its "alternative" mode of life, giving more emphasis to the internal life of each believer than to society as a whole, thus

¹⁹ Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology* (Malden/MA, 1998), p. 6.

²⁰ McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, p. 6.

²¹ Berdyaev, *Spasenje i stvaralastvo*, p. 182.

²² Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, p. 54.

²³ Michael Plekon, Alexis Vinogradov, eds., *In the World of the Church: A Paul Evdokimov Reader* (Crestwood/NY, 2001), p. 74.

becoming self-enclosed and irrelevant to history.²⁴ In other words, even though we have not been called upon to realize the Kingdom of God on Earth, we have been called upon to prevent the world from becoming a hell.²⁵ *Theology with a Human Face* should not realize the Kingdom of God on Earth, but be on the road to that realization.

THEOLOGY WITH A HUMAN FACE (ENGAGING CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY)

Because of this perspective that ignores historical context, *Theology with a Human Face* appears to be necessary to transfer a message to the people, a message regarding themselves. Socialism was theoretically oriented towards men, and, in 1968, Czechoslovakia experienced *Socialism with a Human Face*. Socialism is ideologically assumed to have 'a human face' but in practice that is not the case. Thus, theology is oriented towards God and man, but in time it has become more interested in doctrine for its own sake, in history, spirituality and liturgical eschatology.²⁶ *Theology with a Human Face* is sensitive to the problems of the present and to people living in the present. This means that it is possible to study liturgics, history, dogmatics, and create a dialogue with the existential problems of society and individuals, i.e., care for every member (whether Orthodox or not) on the canonical territory of an Orthodox Church. Theology is not like any other science, so it cannot choose self-isolation, separation from other people, and the life of the Church. In order to have this kind of theology – requiring care for people, their place in society and the Church – it is necessary for certain conditions to pertain.

As we have already stressed, the Church is born liturgically as an icon of the Kingdom of God. Besides this liturgical dimension, I find it necessary for

²⁴ Spiritualizing anthropology has often led to a devaluing of the world and a tendency to withdraw from history (Athanasios Papathanasiou, 'Christian Anthropology for a Culture of Peace', in *Violence and Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Conversation*, ed. Emmanuel Clapsis [Geneva and Brookline/MA, 2007], pp. 86-107, p. 93).

²⁵ Plekon/Vinogradov, *In the World of the Church*, p. 88.

²⁶ 'Lethargic eschatology' means eschatology without any connection with this world, eschatology that does not empower us to take any action except fear of judgment for each individual believer.

the Church to reflect the values of the Kingdom in its very structure. In order to make *Theology with a Human Face* relevant for the future,²⁷ the Church has to become contextual within its being. In other words, the Church as embodied Christianity needs to stop functioning as a despotic feudal system with the monarchy of the bishop at the top, stemming from a hierarchical understanding of the Holy Trinity.²⁸ The eternal context of the Kingdom of God as an expression of the new mode of relationship represents the eternal contextualization of the Church, its constant historical adjustment to Him. If contextualization is not present, even lay theologians will not be able to apply the Word of God creatively to the relevant present, because despotic structures will suffocate and oppress it. The eternal contextualization of the Church itself enables it to be sensitive to the world in which it exists across time and space. Church life should thereby be valued for revealing “the incoming glory of God” through its structures.²⁹ A precondition of *Theology with a Human Face* is this need for the Church’s awareness of its structures.

Let us remember that the first Christians were involved in Church government and the election of priests. Over time, they were consulted less and less, and the Church hierarchy gradually became alienated from lay people.³⁰ In this *episcopo-monistic* structure of the Church with the bishop as a monarch,³¹ *Theology with a Human Face* will rely upon a few creative individuals and a few charismatic bishops to support this. The centralism of the

²⁷ Relevant theology deals with relations among people, so it is in dialogue with politics.

²⁸ Monarchy of the Father is studied and explored by Metropolitan John Zizioulas and Joseph Ratzinger. A quite opposite understanding has been developed by Jürgen Moltmann and Miroslav Volf: Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids/MI, 1998). Concerning the Trinity, Volf concludes that, “in a community of perfect love between persons who share all divine attributes, a notion of hierarchy is unintelligible” (Miroslav Volf, ‘The Trinity is our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement’, *Modern Theology*, 14/3 [1998], pp. 403-423).

²⁹ Emmanuel Clapsis, ‘The Holy Spirit in the Church’, *The Ecumenical Review*, 41/3 (1989), pp. 339-347, here 341.

³⁰ Dejan Mackovic, ‘Socijalni kontekst bogoslovlja Sv. Ignatija Antioxijskog’, in *Srpska Teologija Danas 2012*, ed. Radomir Popovic (Belgrade, 2013), pp. 288-302.

³¹ From the beginning, “the social organization of the church was a result of both the negation and adoption of existing forms of socialization” (Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 240).

bishop in Liturgy should not be translated into *episcopo-monism* in the structures of the Church, which only results in the marginalization of lay people in the process of decision-making in the Church.³²

If we take a careful look at the authentic epistles of Paul, we will notice a process that we could term 'limited revolution'. The Apostle Paul keeps the fact in mind that, before changes take place in society, it is necessary to reshape the Church and its ethos, which will in turn lead to changes in the structures of society. The Apostle Paul's concern is the Church! If we, as theologians, forget about the Church and ignore it while dealing with our individual theology, we will only assist in the development of a *Theology of Docetism* – indifference to society and the problems inside the Church. A *Theology of Docetism* leads to the dangerous separation of Political theology from Church politics. Church politics has become a concern for the preservation of the interests of hierarchy in society, without seeing the broader picture of the problems in society and concern for the human being. In that context, *Theology with a Human Face* is Political theology, because it does not deal only with the interests of the hierarchy. Its concern is every human for whom Christ was crucified and resurrected. Also, this kind of theology has to be directed internally, making lay theologians more involved in the life of the Church. Within this framework, theology will create corresponding church politics, i.e., church politics will be reflected in theology. Otherwise, we will have two separate realities – Political theology and Church politics, which is the case in many Orthodox contexts.

The gap between church authority and lay theologians is evident because theologians are not involved in the work of the Church structures which make decisions about the life of the Church. That way, theological schools become places for educating people who have very little or no influence in society, and even less influence in the Church. Losing its importance and influence, theology becomes self-sufficient (autism of theology) and introverted. A *Theology of Docetism* supports Church politics, which takes care of the power privileges among the hierarchy in society. Care for society has to start with care for problems in Church organization and its incongruity with the proclaimed values of the Kingdom of God. "The credibility of the Church's message in the political arena depends not on what it proclaims to

³² Leonardo Boff, *Crkva, karizma i vlast* (Zagreb, 1987), p. 64.

be, but on what it does. It is its praxis that authenticates its message and not *vice versa*".³³

If the Eucharist is a witness to eschatological reality for and in this world, then this liturgical ethos does not allow any separation between the Eucharist and active involvement in the world. Remembering Him, 2 Tim 2:14-16, does not mean keeping His image in our mind – but allowing this “memory” to form our thoughts and our actions in life.³⁴

The signs of the Kingdom of God cannot be exclusively viewed and sought in Liturgy. The carrier of the Liturgy has to be imbued with it, i.e., the Church has to iconize the Eucharist in its structure and life. The breaking in of the Kingdom has to start from the Liturgy and spread towards the structures of the Church. That is why Schmemmann’s mistake “lies in identifying the signs of the kingdom *only* in the liturgy, where they are glorious. But is that the case? Are the signs of the kingdom only evident in the liturgy?”³⁵ The signs of the Kingdom of God have to be visible in the structure of the Church. These signs within the Church, “while only fragmentary now in the time or history of this world, are nonetheless powerfully real for people who see with the eyes of faith”.³⁶ This can be achieved through the new mode of relationship within the Liturgy and consequently within Church structures and life in general.³⁷ In other words,

the liturgical (priestly) offices should exist for the sake of the Eucharist, and their *raison d’être* should be the celebration of the Eucharist together *with* the people rather than *instead of* the people, serving as an icon of the eschatological gathering of the people of God in one place around Christ, with the bishop ‘in the type and place of Christ’, and the presbyters as types of the apostles.³⁸

³³ Clapsis, ‘Politics and Christian Faith’, p. 103.

³⁴ Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, p. 162.

³⁵ Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, p. 134.

³⁶ Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, p. 134.

³⁷ In *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, Ion Bria has tried to show the implications and impacts that the Eucharist has had upon the everyday life of believers (Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* [Geneva, 1996], pp. 19-36). Identical in this social understanding of the Eucharist has been Paul Evdokimov (Plekon/Vinogradov, *In the World of the Church*, pp. 61-95).

³⁸ Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology* (Geneva, 2012), p. 103.

In that context, it is necessary to realize the signs of the Kingdom of God in the Liturgy, in order to reflect them in the Church structures and later in society itself.

ETHNO-THEOLOGY: HISTORICAL EXAMPLE OF 'THEOLOGY WITH A HUMAN FACE'

One example of what *Theology with a Human Face* represented is ethno-theology. In the Orthodox context (I am talking primarily about Serbia), the Church can never be fully prepared for the challenges of the modern world, because of its history. The long slavery of the Balkan peoples, feudalism, the authoritarian system of communism, and later the authoritarian governments, have not offered to the Church an insight into the contemporary social system.³⁹ Democracy came to Serbia through depleted uranium bombs, economic disaster and the disintegration of the country brought by representatives of liberal democracy in 1999. For that reason, our context prevents us from uncritical acceptance of the values and norms that democracy brings today.

In the time of communism, ethno-theology was an attempt to make the Church appear more important, as a way of broaching a forbidden issue in society. We can mention here the contextual theology in the former Yugoslavia, i.e., the ethno-theology of Justin Popovic and Nikolai Velimirovic. We can conclude that the fight for national expression was indeed a fight for basic human rights in a country of international communism, where nationality and its expression were persecuted.⁴⁰ The West, which swore by freedom and human rights, ignored on the basis of its own interests any breaking of those laws in the former Yugoslavia until 1991. Because of that, the Church was very anti-Western. Ethno-theology was avant-garde in that context, dangerous and liberal, seeking more democratic freedom. The right to have a national identity was a call for personal freedom, and against political arrests.⁴¹ In order to be consistent, we need to realize that the right to national

³⁹ Radovan Bigovic, *Crkva i društvo* (Belgrade, 2000), pp. 261-262.

⁴⁰ Compared to other communist countries (except the USSR), Yugoslavia was a multi-national country, so that any form of nationalism was excluded: Serbs 36.3%, Croats 20%, Muslims 9%, Slovenians 7.8%, Albanians 7.7%, Yugoslavs 5.4%, other 14.2%.

⁴¹ The theology of war is an example of a contextual and relevant theology concerned with man in times of conflict and wars from 1991-1999.

identity is not threatened in the present like it was in the past. Thus, *Theology with a Human Face* in the present should deal with the real problem that ethno-theology tried to point out, and that is the right to the freedom of personality.

Balkan societies have not yet experienced modernism and post-modernism in a proper way. Thus, it is not right to expect Orthodox theology to value the society that does not exist in its experience of life. Expecting that would be to make Orthodoxy irrelevant in its own context.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Theology with a Human Face means that theology and the Church should not relate to just one nation in today's world. Realizing its responsibility for men and consequently for the whole of society, it needs to address everyone living on its territory. The symphony between the Church and the state in the Byzantine Empire had many downsides, but it also had its upsides, one of them being the realization that the Church and the state are two separate realities. The Church should not become the state, and *vice versa*.⁴² Religion is not a private issue; it is a public one.⁴³ The Church should be more attached to civil society, and not just the state.⁴⁴ For the common good, it should be involved in the process of making laws.⁴⁵ By doing so, the Church will protect human values in general, and not just the rights of its own hierarchy.

⁴² In his book, Bell argues that the Church should replace the state. The visible case where Church becomes state is the Vatican (Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology After the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* [London and New York, 2001]).

⁴³ Lenin once said that religion should be kept a private affair "so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned" (Vladimir Ilich Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 10 [Moscow, 1978], p. 84). Even through these words, Lenin himself declared that religion is a public and not a private affair.

⁴⁴ Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, p. 81.

⁴⁵ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame/IN, 2012), p. 78.

Theology with a human face should follow these principles:

- a) Internal Contextualization of the Church:
 - Devotion to Ecumenical work – proving to be an integrative part of society.
 - Internal Liberation – giving more space to lay people in the Church organization, abandoning feudal structuring.
 - Liturgical Inclusiveness – shaping Liturgy with a new criterion to iconize a new life, and not only the past.
 - Relevant Context – understanding its own context, not solving outside problems
- b) External Relevance: Mirroring Internal Contextualization, theology should be a prophetic voice discerning problems in our social context such as:
 - Patriarchal model of repression of women and children;
 - Economic exploitation and impoverishment of people;
 - Hierarchical structure of power, favoring the strong, and neglecting the weak;
 - Racist arrogance and ethno-centricity;
 - Need to re-evangelize: involvement of lay people and more stress on the communal aspect of Christianity rather than the individual one;
 - Social Injustice: cooperation with the state and other organizations on the same tasks against injustice;
 - Need to understand sin in a new manner: finding and identifying sin in the economic, biological and digital world.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

Death on the cross is real, just as many problems facing our theology and our life are real, not illusory. Today, we can be Christians testifying to an 'alternative society', or docetists preaching the cheap triumph of Orthodoxy in the world, closing our eyes to problems. The Church is a society where a

⁴⁶ Social sin implies structural injustice, i.e., the power of sin is not adequately explained if it remains confined to the language of individuals. The structural dimension of sin exceeds the activities of isolated individuals. For more on this subject, see Bell, *Liberation Theology*, p. 118.

person as an individual needs to be placed in the service of God and be offered a cure to heal the whole human, spiritually and bodily. The Church needs to be ready to perform an open social act through its faithful members who will be invited to testify to the experience that they gained through the Liturgical mode of life. The contribution of a Christian as an individual in a civil or public area can be monumental. Church politics that protect the privileges of the hierarchy will turn laymen away from political engagement. *Theology with a Human Face*, through its sensitivity to and vision of general welfare, will motivate laymen to understand faith as a social engagement, not as something that satisfies their own personal interests. The meeting point of politics and theology will be in the creative clash of the visions of the future.

Abstract

This paper starts from the fact that every theology is contextual and that even passive modes of theology are informed by the context. Thus the issue at stake is rather creativity than contextuality. Has Orthodox theology drifted into 'docetism' by uncritically ignoring history, escaping from the present, and becoming irrelevant to society? Pleading for a *Theology with a Human Face*, the author discusses the credibility of the church by emphasizing that its message depends on its capacity to free itself from structures that are more reflexive of feudal societies than the kingdom of God.