A CANONICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL PHRASE OF THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL: “THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ACCEPTS THE HISTORICAL NAME OF OTHER NON-ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND CONFESSIONS THAT ARE NOT IN COMMUNION WITH HER”

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I will try to emphasise the genesis and the development of the phrase: “the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions”, by finding how this highly controversial formulation emerged and who were its promoters. Surprisingly, the direct promoter of this formulation of the final document of the Third Preconciliar Pan-orthodox Conference is none other than Theodoros Zisis, at that time a consultant member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The main question that we have addressed is the following: is there in the patristic, synodal and canonical Tradition of the Church any example where certain heterodox communities were called “Churches” without recognizing their ecclesiality or an ecclesial status? I have emphasised the diachronic development of the use of the word “church/ἐκκλησία” applied to other Christian communities in some synodal decisions and works of the Holy Fathers in order to designate certain communities that ceased the communion with the Orthodox Church and departed from it, but by the use of the word “Church” they did not give an ontological ecclesial status to other Christian communities.

Keywords: historical name, Church, confessions, reception, contestation, Theodoros Zisis, Hierotheos Vlachos, Holy and Great Council.

The most controversial phrase from all the decisions of the Holy and Great Council is found in the sixth chapter of the document: “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World”, where it is stated that: “the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian

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Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her\footnote{1}. This statement is considered by the detractors of the Holy and Great Council as an innovation, a betrayal of the Orthodoxy and Eccesiology of the Holy Fathers of the Church, by granting eccesial status to other Christian communities, recognizing the existence of other Churches, or of several bodies or brides of Christ outside the Orthodox Church\footnote{2}. Even the Orthodox Church of Georgia stated in its decision on May 25, 2016 that "the Holy Synod found that this document contains ecclesiological and terminological errors and requires important changes". If those changes are not made in the document, the Georgian Church will not sign it\footnote{3}. Unfortunately the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Georgia said nothing more about those errors that they have found in this document\footnote{4}.

\footnote{1}{The French translation is "l'Église orthodoxe accepte l’appellation historique des autres Églises et Confessions chrétiennes hétérodoxes qui ne se trouvent pas en communion avec elle", the Russian translation is: "Тем не менее Православная Церковь признает историческое наименование других не находящихся в общении с ней инославных христианских церквей и конфессий," the Greek translation is: "Ορθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἀποδέχεται τὴν ἱστορικὴν ὀνομασίαν τῶν μὴ εὐριπεμένων ἐν κοινωνίᾳ μετ’ αὐτής ἀλλών ἑτεροδόξων χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καὶ Ὑμηλογιῶν". As we can see, there is a difference between the English word: "non‐orthodox" and the word used in the other official translations: "инославных", "hétérodoxes" and "ἑτεροδόξων". For a brief overview of the document, see: Rade Kisic, 'Die Fundamente stärken. Ein Kommentar zum Dokument des Konzils von Kreta über die "Beziehungen der Orthodoxen Kirche zu der übrigen christlichen Welt', Catholica 71, no. 1 (2017): 52–59; Evgeny Pilipenko, 'Zum Ökumene‐Dokument der Orthodoxen Synode auf Kreta. Einige Überlegungen in Reaktion auf das Referat von Rade Kisic', Catholica 71, no. 1 (2017): 60–63; Eva Maria Synek, Das 'Heilige und Grosse Konzil' von Kreta (Freistadt, Verlag Plöchl Freistadt, 2017), 75–80.}


\footnote{3}{On 25 May 2016, the regular plenary session of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Georgia said about this document: "It was noted that the document had been from its inception unacceptable for the representatives of the Church of Georgia and that it had only been signed at the preliminary meeting because the following sentence was written in the text: "The Orthodox Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria left the World Council of Churches; the first of them left it in 1997 and the latter – in 1998, since they have their own opinions on the activity of the World Council of Churches which is why they do not participate in the events of the mentioned Council and other activities of the inter-Christian organisations". http://basilica.ro/en/georgian-orthodox-church-communicque-on-the-holy-and-great-council/}

The ecclesiological basis of the document and its statements are very clear and just a tendentious interpretation might change its claims. The first article of the document clearly states that the Orthodox Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, and no other Christian community can possess these four attributes. The Orthodox Church is the only one that has the apostolic succession and the whole truth, its dialogue with the other Christian communities relying precisely on the necessity of expressing this truth, which gives to the Orthodox Church its catholic character, as we can read in the second article of the document. The third article of the document emphasises the indissoluble bond between true faith and sacramental communion and the sixth article states that: “In accordance with the ontological nature of the Church, her unity can never be perturbed”. Even the most conservative Orthodox theologians, such as Anastasios Gotsopoulos, agree with these positive aspects of the document that are expressing the authentic faith of the Church. The Orthodox Church does not recognize the ecclesial status of other Christian communities, just the name they have given to their communities over time and only under certain conditions. The recognition of the historical name of “churches and confessions” is totally different from the recognition of the ecclesiastical unity of a community. If the Council of Crete had accepted the ecclesial status of other Christian communities, the first canonical manifestation of this recognition would have been the Communicatio in sacris, or the common receiving of the sacraments, a fact absolutely and unequivocally condemned by the document, by Orthodox theology and by the participating bishops. These Christian communities are considered heterodox, or not in accordance with the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, being different from Orthodoxy in terms of doctrine. The Orthodox Church is not in Eucharistic communion with them. However, some theologians, such as Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, are militating against this formulation by dedicating some papers to this problem, trying to contest any use of the word “church” for other Christian communities.

5 “The Orthodox Church, as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, in her profound ecclesiastical self-consciousness, believes unflinchingly that she occupies a central place in the matter of the promotion of Christian unity in the world today.” https://www.holycouncil.org/-/rest-of-christian-world
6 “The Orthodox Church founds the unity of the Church on the fact of her establishment by our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the communion in the Holy Trinity and in the sacraments. This unity is expressed through the apostolic succession and the patristic tradition and is lived out in the Church up to the present day. The Orthodox Church has the mission and duty to transmit and preach all the truth contained in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, which also bestows upon the Church her catholic character.” https://www.holycouncil.org/-/rest-of-christian-world
8 For the meanings of the word ἑτερόδοξος in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, see: Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 552.
9 Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καί Ἁγίου Βλασίου Ἱεροθέου “Παράμβολα καί κέιμενο στήν Ιεραρχία τής Εκκλησίας τής Ελλάδος (Νοέμβριος 2016), http://parembasis.gr/images/anakoinoseis/
First of all let us see the genesis and the development of the phrase: “the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions”, by finding how this highly controversial formulation emerged and who were its promoters. The pre-conciliar document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World” was drafted at the 5th Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference on October 15, 2015, and was signed by representatives of all 14 Autocephalous Orthodox Churches. It is composed of the two documents of the Third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference held in Chambésy (1986): “The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement” and “Relationships of the Orthodox Church with the Christian World”. The Pre-conciliar draft text from 2015 and even the final document of the Holy and Great Council are nothing else than a restructuring of these two documents with some clarification and the modification of certain articles. Of the 24 final articles 2016/NAYPAKTOY_IERARXIA-NOE-2016.pdf. The English translation: Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naupaktos and St. Vlassios, Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece (November 2016) regarding the Cretn Council, https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council

10 Metropolitan John of Pergamon, (Ecumenical Patriarchate); Archbishop Sergios of Good Hope (Patriarchate of Alexandria); Metropolitan Damaskinos (Patriarchate of Antioch); Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias (Patriarchate of Jerusalem); Metropolitan Hilario of Polokolamsk (Church of Russia); Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral (Church of Serbia); Honorable Metropolitan Nifon of Targovişte (Church of Romania); Metropolitan John of Varna and Veliki Preslav (Church of Bulgaria); Metropolitan Gerasimos of Zoukdidi and Tsaissi (Church of Georgia); Metropolitan George of Paphos (Church of Cyprus); Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Peristeri (Church of Greece); Bishop George of Sieniatycze (Church of Poland); Metropolitan John of Korčë (Church of Albania); Archbishop George of Michalovce and Košice (Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia). For a full list of the members of all delegations, see: Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L’Église Orthodoxe, ed., ‘Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψης, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Οκτωβρίου 2015, Synodika, XIII (Chambésy-Genève: Centre orthodoxe du Patriarcat œcuménique, 2016), 9–10.


12 A description of the document is made by: Viorel Ioniţă, Sfântul și Marele Sfânt al Bisericii Ortodoxe : documente pregătitoare (Bucureşti: Basilica, 2016); Secrétariat pour la préparation du Saint et Grand Concile de L’Église Orthodoxe, ‘Προσυνοδική Πανορθόδοξος Διάσκεψης, Σαμπεζύ Γενεύης, 10-17 Οκτωβρίου 2015, 383–388.

13 If we compare the final document of the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016) with the two documents of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference (1986), the following similarities can be found: the first article of the final document is the same as the first article of the Document: “The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement [OCEM 1986] adopted in 1986; the second article is equivalent to the first part of the second article from OCEM 1986. The third article is equivalent to the second part of the second article from OCEM 1986. The fourth article is a development of the third
of the document, only 5 articles are totally different from the document drafted at the Third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference from Chambéry in 1986. The sixth article of the final document of the Holy and Great Council, where it is stated that: "the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her, is almost the same as the second article of the document "Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Christian World" from the Third Pan-orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference held in Chambéry in 1986, with small changes, as we will see. The accusations brought against this document, that it was secretly composed in certain Pre-conciliar Conferences with the aim of betraying Orthodoxy, or that it was written without the knowledge of the Church's pleroma or bishops, are totally unfounded. The Orthodox Church had 30 years for the doctrinal analysis of a document published in 1986 in the official journals of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and in other journals. Although at the second pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox article of OCEM 1986, retaining the same wording. The fifth article is a development of the last sentence of the second article of OCEM 1986, being drafted at the 5th Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference. The sixth article is equivalent to the second article of the document "Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Christian World (ROCWCW 1986), with some changes. The seventh article almost the same as the fourth article of OCEM 1986. Article 8 is taken from article 3 of ROCWCW 1986; Article 9 is taken directly from the fifth article of ROCWCW 1986. The first part of the tenth article is taken from the fifth article of ROCWCW 1986, and the second part is added afterwards. Article 11 is taken from the sixth article of ROCWCW 1986; Article 12 is taken from seventh article of ROCWCW 1986; Article 13 is taken from article 8 of ROCWCW 1986; article 14 is taken from article 9 of ROCWCW 1986; Article 15 is equivalent to article 10 of ROCWCW 1986. Article 16 is a development of the fifth article of OCEM 1986, to which are added the withdrawals of the Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria from the World Council of Churches. Article 16 is a development of the last part of the fifth article of OCEM 1986, plus the addition of some historical development; Article 18 is taken from article 6 of OCEM 1986. Article 16 is a development of the fifth article of OCEM 1986. Article 19 is a takeover of article 7 of OCEM 1986, article 20 is a new article; article 21 is a development of article 8 of "OCEM 1986; articles 22-24 are new articles added to the draft texts of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference (1986).
Conference it was decided that no pre-conciliar document has validity and canonical applicability until after its approval by the Holy and Great Council, this 3rd pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference established that the document should be immediately applied due to its importance and necessity. If the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions was a heresy, why did Orthodox theology need 30 years to see this doctrinal error and why was no Orthodox theologian able to expose this "error" of the Holy and Great Council – and here we can mention great theologians who participated in these Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences – until Hierotheos Vlachos, Theodoros Zisis, Dimitrios Tsolengidis, Gheorgheos Metallinos or others? However, an overview of this formulation can show us that there is no heresy in the final document of the Council of Crete regarding this phrase, the accusations being, in most of the cases, without any theological foundation.

Let us see the genesis and development of this phrase in the draft documents of the Holy and Great Council. This formulation appears for the first time in the draft text of the First Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission organised at the Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy from July 16 to 28, 1971, in the paper about ecclesiastical economy in the Orthodox Church, a theme prepared by the Romanian Orthodox Church. At the end of this document it is written that: "the Orthodox Church recognizes the ontological existence of all these Christian Churches and Confessions". In this Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission participated some of the great theologians of the 20th century. Fifteen years later, as we can see from the acts of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, held in Chambésy 1986, naming and defining other Christian Communities was one of the most important tasks of the debates. Taking the floor, metropolitan Parthénios of Carthage said:

"Quand je dialogue avec les Catholiques romains - c'est là le point critique - est-ce que je reconnais qu'ils constituent une Église ou non? Il s'agit d'un problème important. Il s'agit de dire ce que sont ces hommes. L'Église orthodoxe est-elle la seule Église et tous les autres sont-ils en dehors de l'Église? Ou détiennent-ils eux


17 For example: Chrysostomos of Myra, Panteleimon Rodopoulos, professor of Canon Law, Prof. Gerasimos Konidaris, Justian of Moldavia, Antonie of Ploiesti, the future Metropolitan of Transilvania, Prof. Grigorij Skobij, Prof. Nikolaj Sivarov, Prof. Ioannis Karmiris and others. For all the members of the delegations see: Kallis, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Heiligen und Großen Konzil*, 359.
aussi quelque chose de l’Église? Que sont les Catholiques romains et quesont les anciennes Églises orientales? Si j’admets qu’il s’agit d’Églises, je commencerai
to moins à dialoguer avec elles de manière plus fraternelle. Voilà le sujet de
mon embarras et j’aimerais qu’on y trouve une solution. Pas immédiatement. Mais que
nous nous attachions à la question au cours de nos dialogues18.

In the final document of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference
attended by all delegations of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, the
formulation was that the Orthodox Church "recognises the actual existence
of all Churches and Christian confessions" (Fr: "reconnait l’existence de fait de
toutes les Églises et Confessions chrétiennes"; Gr.: "Ἀναγνωρίζει την πραγματική
ὑπάρξιν όλων τῶν χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καὶ Ὄμολογων")19. The phrase
from the document of the Inter-Orthodox Commission held in Chambésy in
1971 was changed. The direct promoter of this formulation of the final
document of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference is none other than
Theodoros Zisis, at that time a consultant member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate20. The
working committee for the elaboration of the text "Relations of the Orthodox
Church with the Christian World", whose chairman was Metropolitan Antionie
Plămădeală and its secretary Vlasios Phidas, presented on November 4, 1986, a
draft text in order to become the subject of debate in the plenum of the Conference.
In this text it was stated that the Orthodox Church "recognizes the ontological
existence of all Christian Churches and Confessions21", taking the text from the
document of the first Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission drafted in 1971. The next day, on November 5, 1986, during the debates on the document, Theodoros Zisis took the floor and states: "A little further is the question of "ontological recognition" of other Christian churches. Here is a contradiction. We can recognize the "existence" of other Christian churches, but not the "ontological existence". The text proposed by Theodoros Zisis, according to which the Orthodox Church "recognizes the existence of all Christian Churches and Confessions" was endorsed by Bishop Jeremiah of Wroclaw, the delegate of the Church of Poland and accepted by the Commission and placed in the final text of the document “Relation of the Orthodox Church with the Christian Word" drafted and signed by all the members of the delegations of the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference from Chambésy (1986).

How is it possible that Theodoros Zisis, the herald of Orthodoxy and the defender of orthodox faith against the heresy of ecumenism, the "pan-heresy" of heresies, who, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy 2017, ceased communion with his own bishop considering him fallen from the orthodox faith, not only say thirty years ago that the Orthodox Church can recognize the existence of all Christian Churches

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and confessions, but also through his proposals at the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference held in Chambesy (1986) can be the direct promoter of this phrase?

At the fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-conciliar Conference the formulation proposed by Theodoros Zisis is taken into the document with small changes. Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain proposed in the plenum of the Conference not to use the word “Church” for other Christian communities.

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The solution is rejected by Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka, who in 2016, at the Holy and Great Council refused to sign the documents for various reasons.

Taking the floor, Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka said: “Well, we cannot talk to other people with "brackets", and we need to recognize them as a historical entity, but not a doctrinal one (Λοιπόν, καί ἡμεῖς δέν δυνάμεθα νά ὁμιλῶμεν πρός τούς ἄλλους μὲ εἰσαγωγικά καί πρέπει νά τούς ἀναγνωρίζωμεν κάποιαι ἴστορικὴν ὀντότητα, ἀλλ’ ὧν δογματικῶν...). So we should not be afraid, because we have a careful formulation. We recognize the historical existence, not the ontological existence. These are two different things. (Ἑπομένως, δέν πρέπει νά φοβώμεθα, διότι ἐδῶ ἔχομεν μίαν προσεκτικὴν διατύπωσιν. Ἀναγνωρίζομεν τήν ἴστορικὴν ὑπαρξιν, ὧν ὀντολογικὴν ὑπαρξιν. "Ετερον ἐκάτερον.") So, the proposed


26 For the reasons see his letter: Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka, "Why I did not sign the document of the Council of Crete about the relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world" http://www.romfea.gr/images/article-images/2016/07/romfe42/a2.pdf.

27 "Ὁ Σεβ. Ἐπίσκοπος Μπάτσκας κ. Εἰρηναῖος. Εὐχαριστῶ, ἅγιε Πρόεδρε. Ἔχω πλήρη κατανόησιν διά τοὺς λόγους, διά τούς ὃποιους ὁ ἀδελφὸς Μᾶρκος προβαίνει εἰς τήν πρότασιν αὐτήν, ἀλλά πρέπει νά εἴμεθα νομίζω προσεκτικοί, ἀφ’ ἑνός μέν πρέπει νά ἀκριβολογῶμεν εἰς αὐτό τό κείμενο, ἀλλά τό κείμενον ταύτην δὲν εἶναι ἄκριβος τό προηγούμενον δογματικόν καθαρῶς ἐκκλησιολογικόν κείμενον, τό ὅποιον, κατά τήν ἄποψιν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Σερβίας, ἀπουσιάζει καί πρέπει νά προστεθῇ εἰς τό τόλμαν ὑλικὸν διά τήν μέλλουσαν Σύνοδον. Τό κείμενον ταύτῃ ἀναφέρεται εἰς τόν ὑπόλοιπον χριστιανικὸν κόσμον. Δηλαδή τό θέμα τοῦ ὑπό ἔξοσπαν καμάννου τήν στιγμήν ταύτην, εἶναι οἱ σχέσεις ἤμων τῶν τέκνων τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας τό πλήρες νόμιμον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας εἶναι Καθολική, ὥστε μόνον Ὀρθόδοξης. Λοιπόν, καί ἡμεῖς δὲν δυνάμεθα νά ἐμιλῶμεν πρός τούς ἄλλους μὲ εἰσαγωγικά καί πρέπει νά τούς ἀναγνωρίζωμεν κάποιαι ἴστορικὴν ὀντότητα, ἀλλ’ δὲν δογματικὴν. Καί τις Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ποιοῦνται διάφορων μεταξύ λόγου λογικοῦ, λόγου ἀγωνιστικοῦ ἢ ἀντιρρητικοῦ, καθὼς Βλεχον, δηλαδὴ λόγου πολεμικοῦ καί λόγου ἐπίσης ἀβροφροσύνης. Ὁ ἄγιος Μάρκος Ἐφέσιος ὁ Ἐὐγενικὸς εἰς τήν χαρατζαμίνα καί τήν προσφωνησίαν τοῦ πρός τούς πάπης Εὐγένιον κατά τήν ἀναφή τῆς ἐννομικῆς Συνόδου τῆς Φίλωρας ὡμήση τουτοπράξως, ὡστε σήμερον οἱ παρ’ ἡμῖν «φανατικοί» ἀπωδητῆσθαι διά τόν ἐπετειθεότατον εἰς πυρκαῖαν διά νά καθ’ ἑωνμονᾶς." Ελέγε Λοιπόν
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formulation of Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka was „historical existence" and „other heterodox or non-Orthodox Christian Churches”. Archbishop Konstantinos Aristarchos, delegate of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, said in the plenum of the Conference that it should be added the phrase „that are not in communion with her (μή εὐρισκομένων ἐν κοινωνίᾳ μετ’ αὐτῆς)”28.

The final draft document of the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference asserts that the Orthodox Church: “acknowledges the historical existence of other Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her”29.

After this Conference the text is sent directly to the Holy and Great Council. How can the bishops of the Greek Orthodox Church be against this phrase, if the final text of the document of the Holy and Great Council: “the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her”30? Furthermore it can be seen that the final document of the Council of Crete31 is more conservative than the previous documents regarding the name of other Christian communities and confessions.

29 https://www.holycouncil.org/-/preconciliar-relations
A CANONICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL PHRASE OF THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL ...

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The main question that we have to address is the following: is there in the patristic, synodal and canonical Tradition of the Church any example where certain heterodox communities have been called “Churches” without recognizing their ecclesiality or an ecclesial status?

Let us see the diachronic development of the use of the name applied to other Christian communities. If we analyse the Tradition of the Church we can see that the word “church/ἐκκλησία” has also been used in other synodal decisions and works of the Holy Fathers to designate certain communities that ceased communion with the Orthodox Church and departed from it, but by the use of the word “Church” they did not give an ontological ecclesial status to other Christian communities.

Clement of Alexandria used the word “ἐκκλησία” for other communities than the Orthodox ones in Stromata VII.16.98.2, by saying: “rather than be removed from the honours of the heresy and the boasted first seat in their churches” (τὰς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν πρωτοκαθεδρίας) and by saying about the

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31 Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon, 432.
32 αὐτίκα οὐκ ἀναγκαίας ἀρχὰς πραγμάτων καταβαλλόμενοι δόξαις τε ἀνθρωπίναις κεκινημένοι, ἐπειτα ἀναγκαίως τέλος ἀκολουθοῦν αὑτοῖς ἐκποριζόμενοι, διαπληκτίζονται διὰ τοὺς ἐλέγχους πρὸς τοὺς τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν μεταχειριζομένους καὶ τὰς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν πρωτοκαθεδρίας διὰ τὴν κάκισθαι τὴν συμποτικὴν καὶ τὴν πολυθρυλήτου κατὰ τὰς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν πρωτοκαθεδρίας, διὰ τὴν ἀπατεῖν τὰς ψευδωνύμους ἁγάπης πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἀνταποκρίνεται. (PG. 9, 536B) “Not laying as foundations the necessary first principles of things; and influenced by human opinions, then making the end to suit them, by compulsion; on account of being confuted, they spair with those who are engaged in the prosecution of the true philosophy, and undergo everything, and, as they say, ply every oar, even going the length of impiety, by disbeliefing the Scriptures, rather than be removed from the honours of the heresy and the boasted first seat in their churches; on account of which also they eagerly embrace that convivial couch of honour in the Agape, falsely so called.” The Writings of Clement of Alexandria: Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), 479–480. For the Romanian translation see: Clement Alexandrinul, Scrieri, partea a II-a, Stromatele, col. PSB 5, trad. cuvânt înainte note și indici de Pr. Dumitru Pectoru, (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misii al Bisericii...
heretical communities in Stromata VII.16.99.2 "so do these shut out the prophecies from their Church" 33.

In Expositio in Psalmum LXVII.16., a work attributed to St. Athanasius the Great 34, we can find this phrase: "the churches of the heretics (τὰς τῶν αἱρετικῶν ἔκκλησίας)" 35. Theodoret of Cyrus uses the expressions "the churches of the heretics (τὰς τῶν αἱρετικῶν ἔκκλησίας)" 36 in several places, and he used the word "church" even for the communities of some heretics 37.

Basil the Great, speaking about schismatics in his first canon 38, accepted their baptism because he considered them as "still belonging to the Church (τὸ δὲ τῶν ἀποσχισάντων, ὡς ἔτι ἐκ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὄντων, παραδέξασθαι)" 39. In

Ortodoxe Române, 1982), 536. For the context of this text and more details see: Paul Fike Stutzman, Recovering the Love Feast: Broading Our Eucharistic Celebrations (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 81–82.

"καὶ καθάπερ τὰ ποιημα πανδα τῶν παδαγωγον ἀποκλείει, ὡς καθάπερ τὰ πονηρὰ παιδία τὸν παιδαγωγὸν ἀποκλείει, οὕτως οὗτοι τὰς προφητείας εἴργουσιν. Ἡνά γὰρ ἐν τῇ πνευματικήν. Ἰνα τί τοίνυν ὑπολαμβάνετε, ὦ οὗτοι, ἕτερα ὀρατά ἔξω τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τετυρωμένα, ὃ τοῖς τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπεργάζεται. Ὄρος τετυρωμένον; ὃς τετυρωμένον, ὤρος πῖον· ἵνα τί ἑνεικτείνετε ἐν αὐτῷ; Ὅτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἔκκλησίᾳ κατοικεῖ, δῆλον ἐξ ἓν ὧν ἑαυτὲς ὧδε κατοικήσω, ὅτι ἠφελεῖν αὐτήν" PG, 27, 297.

Theodoretus, Explanatio in Canticum cantorum 2.2: “Καὶ ἔσορκα ἐντάθη τὰς τῶν αἱρετικῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῆς καλεῖν, διὰ τὴν αὐτῆς κόλπην, καὶ σοὶ διάτην ἔκειν προαιρεῖται" PG, 81, 88.

Theodoréus, Interpretatio in Psalmos LXVII. 17: "Ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίους ὁ προφητικὸς ἀποτείνεται λόγως καὶ πρός τοὺς παράνομους τῶν αἱρετικῶν συλλόγους· αἱ Ἐκκλησίας φιλαρτίς ἑαυτῶς ὀναμάζουσι· καὶ φησι, Τί ποτὲ ἐρέμων καὶ παραοικίαζεν οἰκεῖν δαίμονας, τὸ δὲ αἰωνίου ἀπήγαγε· Ὅτι γὰρ ἐγὼ ἐν τῇ ἔκκλησίᾳ κατοικεῖς δῆλον ἐξ ἓν ἑαυτῶς ἐξεσάζεται· Τίδε κατασκεύαζες, ὅτι ἐκβιβαζόμενα αὐτὴν" PG, 27, 297.


his letter 114, written in 372, he said: "I think then that the one great end of all who are really and truly serving the Lord ought to be to bring back to union the Churches now divided from one another (οἵμαι προσήκειν μίαν ταύτην εἶναι σπουδήν τοὺς γνησίως καὶ ἀληθινῶς δουλεύοσι τῷ Κυρίῳ ἐπαναγαγεῖν καὶ πολυτρόπως ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων διατηρεῖσας)"40. This text is used by the Russian Orthodox Church in the chapter: "2. The quest for the restoration of the unity" of the document "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions", adopted by the Jubilee Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church August 14, 2000.

In the 5th century, the Church historian Socrates Scholasticus uses the phrase "the bishop of the Arian Church" (ὁ τῆς Ἀρειανῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπίσκοπος), for the Arian bishop Eudoxios, who occupied the throne of Constantinople for 19 years41.

These are just some of the texts from the documents of the first centuries in which the word "church" is used for other Christian community than the Orthodox Church. We can find more evidences of the use of the word "church" in the writings of the second millennium, after the Great Schism.

Germanus II, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1223 until his death in June 1240, used in his work the word Church in the following phrases: "Latin Church (τῇ λατινικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ)"42, "Meletian Church" (τῆς τῶν Μελιτινιωτῶν ἐκκλησίας)43 or "the Church of Rome (ἡ Ρώμης ἐκκλησία)"44.

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42 "Καὶ οἱ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ κληρικοὶ, ὡς τὴν ἡμετέραν ἄπαξ ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ τῆς πατριαρχείου πίστεως ἀντέχοντα ζῶον, οὐκ ὑποκείσοντα τῷ τὴν ὑποταγήν προκαθίσθεν ἀρχιερέων αὐτῶν, οὐδὲ ἀφορίζοντων αὐτῶν ἑνάκοι τῷ πείθεται τῇ λατινικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. οἱ δὲ τούτοις ἀφορίζοντων μιᾶν ἑπαναστρέφει, ὅτι καὶ σκανδάλων γεγονοῦσα πρόεξει τῷ λαῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καταπατήσαντες τὴν τῶν ἔρευν ἑκάστου ἀνθρώπου,
Theodor Agallianos, one of the theologians who opposed the unionist Council of Ferrara-Florence, a follower of Mark Eugenios of Ephesus, who wrote two treatises against the Latins, in one of them “Dialogue cum monacho contra Latinos” written in 1442, he condemned the dogmatic deviations of the Latins, but he used the phrase “the Latin Church (ἡ λατινικὴ ἐκκλησία)” to designate the Catholic Church, showing that it created new customs and dogmas and thereby a third Testament.
There is even a passage from the work of Saint Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus, who rejected the unionist Council of Ferrara-Florence, where he is quoting the 15th question of bishop Mark to Theodoros Balsamon (1195) speaking about the “Western Church of Rome (τῆς δυτικῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ῥώμης)” that had separated itself from the Orthodox Church through different dogmatic teachings.

“Ἐπεὶ οὖν πρὸ χρόνων πολλῶν ἀπεσχίσθη τῆς δυτικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τῆς Ῥώμης φαμέν, τὸ περιώνυμον ἄθροισμα ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἐτέρων τεσσάρων ἀγωτάσσων πατριαρχῶν κοινωνίας, ἀποσχοινισθὲν εἰς θή καὶ δόγματα τῆς καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἀλλότριων (διὰ γὰρ τούτῳ οὐσί ἐν ταῖς θείαις ἱεροτελεστίαις κοινῆς τῶν πατριαρχῶν ἀνομάτων ἁγιοματών άναφοράς ο πάπας ήξείωται), οὐκ ὀφείλει γένος λατινικὸν ἐκ χειρὸς ἱερατικῆς διὰ τῶν θείων καὶ ἀχράντων μυστηρίων ἁγιάζεσθαι, εἰ μὴ κατάθηται πρότερον ἀποσχέσθαι τῶν ἀλλοτριών κατάθηται πρότερον ἀποσχέσθαι τῶν λατινικῶν ἀλλοτριών τε καὶ συνήθειας καὶ ἀπέκτηται τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἀλλοτριών ἁγιοματών τε καὶ συνήθειας καὶ κατὰ κανόνας κατηχηθῆ καὶ τοὺς ὀρθοδόξους ἐξισωθῆ” ⁴⁸.

The title refers to the Church of Rome fallen into heresy, because this Church is considered as „being separated by foreign customs and dogmas from the Catholic Church and the orthodox people (ἀποσχοινισθὲν εἰς θή καὶ δόγματα τῆς καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἀλλότρια)“. If the phrase „τῆς δυτικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τῆς Ῥώμης” had referred to the Church of Rome that guarded the true faith then Saint Mark of Ephesus would not have called her a Church fallen into heresy.

Another indirect evidence of the use of the word “Church” for the Roman Catholic Church by Saint Mark of Ephesus can be found in the memories of Silvestros Syropoulos from his participation in the council of Florence: “Εἴπεν οὖν ὁ Ἐφέσου, πρώτον μὲν ὅπως ἐστὶν ἀναγκαιωτάτη ἡ εἰρήνη, ἣν κατέλιπεν ἡμῖν ὁ δεσπότης ἡμῶν ὁ Χριστός, καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη. Δεύτερον, ὅτι παρέβλεψεν ἡ Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἐκκλησία τὴν τότε καταλειφθεῖσαν ἁγάπην, ἐσπούδασεν ἵνα ἐλθωμεν ἑνταῦθα καὶ ἐξετάσωμεν τὰς μεταξὺ ἡμῶν διαφοράς” ⁴⁹. If Saint Mark of Ephesus had considered the Catholic Church from the beginning as fallen into heresy, even before the Council of

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Ferrara-Florence, how is it possible to address the Pope of Rome, a community that ceased the communion with the Orthodox Church by „foreign customs and dogmas”, with these words: „ ἁγιώτατε πάτερ, ὑπόδεξαι τὰ σὰ τέκνα μακρόθεν ἐξἀνατολῶν ἥκοντα περίπτυξαι τοὺς ἑκ μακροῦ διεστῶτας τοῦ χρόνου, πρὸς τὰς σὰς καταφυγόντας ἀγκάλας“ and not calling him a heretic?

Gennadius Scholarius, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (the first under Turkish rule) from 1454 to 1464, the one who accompanied his Emperor to the Council of Ferrara-Florence, but abandoned the Council early on and never signed its decree of union (horos), under the influence of Mark Eugenikos, he developed an anti-Latin theology. Despite this fact, he was speaking about “the Latin Church (τὴν λατινικὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ δόξαν)” or the “Roman Church (καὶ ἡ Ρωμαϊκὴ ἐκκλησία)”.

The Synod of Constantinople (1484), attended by representatives of the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, being the first Synod to condemn the Council of Ferrara-Florence and its heresies, uses in the service (Acolouthy) for the reception of the Latins into the Orthodox Church the word “church” for the Western Church of Rome:
"Do you want, o man, to become Orthodox, and do you renounce all the shameful and alienated dogmas of the Latins, i.e. concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit, namely that they think and declare erroneously that he also proceeds from the Son; and besides, concerning the azymes which they use in the liturgy, and the rest of the customs of their Church (καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐθῶν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐκείνων), which are not in agreement with the Catholic and Orthodox Church of the East?"\(^{52}\)

Not only can we find the word "church" used for the Latin Church in a document adopted by a General Council of the Orthodox Church, but it appears in a liturgical text, used in the Church for centuries, that was the service for reception of the Latins into the Orthodox Church. Unfortunately in his paper Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos refused to mention the use of the word „Church“ in this question addressed by the priest to the Latins, who were coming to the Orthodox Church\(^{53}\). In light of this, Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos fails in his own accusation: "I consider it unscientific and ultimately misleading to claim as some do that even at the Council of 1484 which condemned the Council of Ferrara-Florence, there is reference to Western Churches."\(^{54}\)

Anastasios Gordios (1654 - 1729), another Orthodox Theologian with writings against the Latins, used the word "Church" for several times to describe the "Roman Church"\(^{55}\), "Western Church"\(^{56}\) of "Latin Church"\(^{57}\).

\(^{52}\) I. Karmiris, Τα Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεία της Ορθοδόξου καθολικής Εκκλησίας, τόμ. II, (ἐν Ἀθήναις, 1953), 988. For the English translation of the service, see: George D. Dragas, "The Manner of Reception of Roman Catholic Converts into the Orthodox Church with Special Reference to the Decisions of the Synods of 1484 (Constantinople), 1755 (Constantinople) and 1667 (Moscow), The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 44, no. 1-4 (1999): 235–71 (239).

\(^{53}\) The only example that Metropolitan Hierotheos is giving in his paper is the following: "In another question the Latin is prompted to turn away "completely from the gatherings of Latins in their churches, or of those who are Latin-minded". Here the phrase "the gatherings of Latins in their churches" obviously means the gatherings in church buildings, without attaching an ecclesiological meaning. The Latins are heretics and the gatherings in churches are the gatherings in church buildings, and it does not mean the Church of the Latins, as advocated by some." Hierotheos, Vlachos. "Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece" (November 2016 Regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete: https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council; Hierotheos, Vlachos. "Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece" (November 2016 Regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete: https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council; Hierotheos, Vlachos. "Intervention and Text in the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece" (November 2016 Regarding the Holy and Great Council of Crete: https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council;

The Patriarch Jeremias II (Tranos) of Constantinople, in his correspondence with Lutheran theologians of the University of Tübingen, used the word "Church" not just for the Catholics but for the Lutherans as well. In the end of his first letter sent on May 15, 1576 he wrote to the Lutheran theologians: "In this way the two..."
churches will become one by the grace of God, we shall live together hereafter and we will exist together in a God-pleasing way until we attain the heavenly kingdom”59.

Likewise, in the Encyclical Letter of the Eastern Patriarchs written in 1848 in reply to Pope Pius IX’s Epistle to the Easterns the Western Catholic Church fallen into heresy after the Great Schism is called: “The Roman Church (῾Ρωμανά Ἐκκλησία)”60, “The Church of Rome”, “The Western Church”61. Moreover, this Encyclical letter states: “we have a right to expect from the prudent forethought of his Holiness, a work so worthy the true successor of St. Peter, of Leo I, and also of Leo III, who for security of the orthodox faith engraved the divine Creed unaltered upon imperishable plates—a work which will unite the churches of the West to the holy Catholic Church, in which the canonical chief seat of his Holiness, and the seats of all the Bishops of the West remain empty and ready to be occupied. For the Catholic Church, awaiting the conversion of the shepherds who have fallen off from her with their flocks, does not separate in name only, those who have been

59 “Καὶ ὑμῶν, οὖν, ὦ ἄνδρες Γερμανοὶ σοφώτατοι καὶ τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ τῆς ἡμῶν μετριότητος, βουλομένων, ὡς νουνεχῶν, ὅπως τὴ ἡμετέρα προσελθῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἡμεῖς, ὦς πατέρες φιλόστοργοι, προθύμως τὴν ἡμετέραν ἁγάπην καὶ φιλοφροσύνην ἀποδεξόμεθα, ἐὰν θελήσητε τὰς ἀποστολικὰς καὶ συνοδικὰς συμφώνοις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆναι καὶ τοιτοὺς ὑπεξέλῃ. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησοτε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γίνεται καὶ τοιτοὶς ὑπεξέλουσι. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γίνεται καὶ τοιτοὶς ὑπεξέλουσι. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γίνεται καὶ τοιτοὶς ὑπεξέλουσι. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γίνεται καὶ τοιτοὶς ὑπεξέλουσι. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γίνεται καὶ τοιτοὶς ὑπεξέλουσι. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γίνεται καὶ τοιτοὶς ὑπεξέλουσι. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γίνεται καὶ τοιτοὶς ὑπεξέλουσι. Τηνικαύτα γὰρ τῶν ὅστις συγκοινών ἡμῖν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ ὡς παρρησία ὑποταγέντες τῇ καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀγίᾳ καὶ καθολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποτὲ πάντως τῶν νουνεχῶν ὑπακοήθησε καὶ ὡστὶ ταῖς ὑπακοήσεις ἡμῶν ἀποκληθῆ γί

Article 13: “Father, Sr. Irenaeus, were alive again, seeing it was fallen from the ancient and primitive teaching in so many most essential and catholic articles of Christianity, he would not be himself the first to oppose the novelties and self-sufficient constitutions of that Church which was lauded by him as guided purely by the doctrines of the Fathers?” Article 16: „From these things we estimate into what an unspeakable labyrinth of wrong and incorrigible sin of revolution the papacy has thrown even the wiser and more godly Bishops of the Roman Church, so that, in order to preserve the innocent, and therefore valued vicarial dignity, as well as the despotic primacy and the things depending upon it, they know no other means shall to insult the most divine and sacred things, daring everything for that one end”; He will find, also, flow many modern papistical doctrines and mysteries must be rejected as “commandments of men” in order that the Church of the West, which has introduced all sorts of novelties, may be changed back again to the immutable Catholic Orthodox faith of our common fathers.” Article 17: „How becoming and holy would be the mending of the innovations, the time of whose entrance in the Church of Rome we know in each case; for our illustrious fathers have testified from time to time against each novelty”.
privily introduced to the rulership by the action of others, thus making little of the Priesthood.62" The Encyclical also uses the expression "the apostate churches": "But until there be this desired returning of the apostate Churches to the body of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of which Christ is the Head".

These are only a few patristic texts and synodal documents recognized in the Orthodox Church that have used the name "church" for other Christian communities, but they have in no way given any ecclesial status or recognised their ecclesiasticity. Therefore, the Holy and Great Council of Crete, by accepting "the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her" follows the patristic and synodal Tradition of the Orthodox Church. If we reject the use and the acceptance of the historical name of other heterodox Churches and confessions, we have to reject all the documents and texts that we have quoted.

Even Hierotheos Vlahos in his recent book, "Old and New Rome", after analysing the Encyclical Letter of the Eastern Patriarch (1848), the text that condemned the wrong teachings of Catholicism, he himself uses the term "Church" to designate the other Christian confessions, by saying:

"This Encyclical - the Pan-Orthodox decision - shows that the Church is the Body of Christ, that it remains united and preserves the dogmas and sacraments given to it, while the churches that have departed from the true faith are apostate Churches".63

What does the phrase “apostate Churches” used by Hierotheos Vlahos mean? Why did Hieroteos Vlachos, the protector of the orthodox faith, name other Christian communities with the word “Church”, and after that he condemns the Holy and Great Council because the Council used the term "Church" for other Christian communities and that it is illegitimate to use the term "Church" for them, even though he himself used it? Moreover, does it offer some ecclesiality to these Christian communities when they call them "apostate Churches" using for them the word "Churches", despite the fact that they are apostate? Is Hieroteos Vlahos falling into the same “ecclesiological nominalism” that he is accusing others of64? If he refers only to the historical name of "Church" without attributing the character of

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62 I. KARMIRIS, Τα Δογματικά, II, p. 918. For the English translation see: http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1848.aspx
64 “The phrase “the historical existence” was replaced by the phrase “the historical name”. There is no name without existence, because otherwise an ecclesiological nominalism is expressed”. https://orthodoxethos.com/post/intervention-and-text-in-the-hierarchy-of-the-church-of-greece-november-2016-regarding-the-cretan-council
ecclesiality to these communities, as can be seen from its entire exposure, then Ierotheos Vlahos also is in full agreement with the decision of the Holy and Great Council. Furthermore, the words of Ierotheos Vlahos are more “ecumenist” and more permissive than the document of the Holy and Great Council. If the Council states that it “accepts the historical name”, Ierotheos Vlahos said that “they are”, and if the Synodal document identifies two realities: “non-orthodox Churches and Confessions”, Ierotheos Vlahos calls all of them “apostate Churches”, but still “Churches”. Likewise, even the other supporters of the writings of Ierotheos Vlahos and detractors of the formulation of the Holy and Great Council, such as Gheorghios Metallinos, Kotsopoulos, or Theodoros Zisis, the promoter of the final phrase of the pre-conciliar document, used in their writings both before and after the Council of Crete the term “Church” for the Catholic Church, in the expressions: “The Latin Church”, “The Papal Church”. Even Metropolitan Irinej of Bačka said in his letter: “Why I did not sign the document of the Council of Crete about the relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world” that: „personally, I considers that … the word „Church” should remain just for the Roman Catholicism (Προσωπικῶς φρονῶ, ὅτι τὸ ἐνδεδειγμένον ἐν προκειμενῳ ήτο νὰ μείνῃ ὁ ὄρος Ἐκκλησία μόνον διὰ τὸν ρωμιακοκαθολικισμὸν)”

65 Theodoros Yangou gives more quotes from the works of Theodoros Zisis where he used the word “Church” for the Roman Catholic Church. For example: “Τὴν υποτίμησιν του λαού από την Εκκλησία της Ρώμης ενισχύει επίσης ο αποκλεισμός των λαών από την κοινωνία του ποτηρίου ...” [Θεολογικά Κεφάλαια το 2002, σ. 133]. "Ολα αυτα τα μέτρα, κατάλοιπα της απολυταρχίας και φεουδαρχίας μέσα στην Δυτική Εκκλησία" [ίνα: Πρακτικά Θεολογικῆς Βῆμας Πρωτεῖον, Συνοδικότης και Ενότης της Εκκλησίας, Πρεβελόνες (Πιέρου), 2011, 73-106].

66 In his article: Γεώργιος Μεταλληνός, ‘Μόνος κερδισμένος ο Πάπας από τους θεολογικούς διαλόγους’, Ορθόδοξος Τύπος Εβδομαδιαία έκδοση της Ανατολικής Ορθοδοξίας Περιόδου, Συνοδικιότης και Ενότης της Εκκλησίας (Πιέρου, 2011, 73-106).

67 In his article: Γεώργιος Μεταλληνός, ‘Μόνος κερδισμένος ο Πάπας από τους θεολογικούς διαλόγους’, Ορθόδοξος Τύπος Εβδομαδιαία έκδοση της Ανατολικής Ορθοδοξίας Περιόδου, Συνοδικιότης και Ενότης της Εκκλησίας (Πιέρου, 2011, 73-106).

Those who condemn the sixth article of the document unfortunately do not realize that they have to condemn as well the document “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions, adopted by the Jubilee Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 14, 2000, in which the text of the document of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference (1986) is cited. In the Russian Document we can read in the chapter: “The Orthodox Church has always sought to draw the different Christian Churches and confessions into a joint search for the lost unity of Christians, so that all might reach the unity of faith.” The detractors of the Council of Crete have to ask themselves why is the Jubilee Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church using the word “Church” for other Christian communities. The answer can be found in the same document of the Russian Orthodox Church:

“1.15. The Orthodox Church, through the mouths of the holy fathers, affirms that salvation can be attained only in the Church of Christ. At the same time however, communities which have fallen away from Orthodoxy have never been viewed as fully deprived of the grace of God. Any break from communion with the Church inevitably leads to an erosion of her grace-filled life, but not always to its complete loss in these separated communities.” “2.4. The Orthodox Church cannot accept the assumption that despite the historical divisions, the fundamental and profound unity of Christians has not been broken and that the Church should be understood as coextensive with the entire “Christian world”, that Christian unity exists across denominational barriers and that the disunity of the churches belongs exclusively to the imperfect level of human relations. According to this conception, the Church remains one, but this oneness is not, as it were, sufficiently manifest in visible form. In this model of unity, the task of Christians is understood not as the restoration of a lost unity but as the manifestation of an existing unity. This model repeats the teaching on “the invisible Church” which appeared during the Reformation.”

In the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia signed in Havana on February 12, 2016, the term “Church” is used not only for the Orthodox Church but also for the Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics. We can even find the expression “Christian Churches.” Does this mean that the Russian Orthodox Church recognizes by signing this statement the ecclesial character of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Church? An affirmative answer would be totally meaningless, since Eucharistic communion was not restored

72 Art. 1 “to discuss the mutual relations between the Churches”, Art. 11: “so that fraternal co-existence among the various populations, Churches and religions may be strengthened”, art. 12: “these martyrs of our times, who belong to various Churches”, Art. 18: “The Christian churches”; Art. 24: “to pass from one Church to another”; Art. 26: “our Churches in Ukraine”
between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Those who reject the document of the Holy and Great Council unfortunately do not comment on this Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill.

After the Holy and Great Council all the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, with the exception of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria signed the document „Synodality and Primacy during the first Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding on Service to the Unity of the Church” of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, held in Chieti, September 21, 2016⁷³. If the Orthodox Church had refused to call other Christian communities „Churches”, all the 13 Orthodox Autocephalous Churches should have refused to take part in a Commission with a Christian Community that considers itself a „Church” and to sign the Chieti Document.

Conclusions

In this paper I have emphasised the genesis and the development of the phrase: “the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions”, by finding that this highly controversial formulation emerged in the pre-conciliar debates and hat the direct promoter of this formulation of the final document of the Third Pre-conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference was none other than Theodoros Zisis, at that time a consultant member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In the paper we gave a lot of quotes from is the patristic, synodal and canonical Tradition of the Church where certain heterodox communities were called "Churches" without recognizing their ecclesiality or an ecclesial status. By emphasising the diachronic development of the use of the word “church/ἐκκλησία”, we saw that the word "Church" was applied to other Christian communities in some synodal decisions and works of the Holy Fathers in order to designate certain communities that ceased the communion with the Orthodox Church and departed from it, but by the use of the word "Church" they did not give an ontological ecclesial status to other Christian communities.

In conclusion we can affirm that the phrase: "the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions" is not in contradiction with the doctrinal Tradition of the Orthodox Church, but it can be extended and improved.

⁷³ For the Chieti Document see:
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20160921_sinodality‐primacy_en.html
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