
Institute of Ecumenical Studies (Lviv, Ukraine)

St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute (Moscow, Russia)

**DELM - Development of Ecumenical Leadership in Mission
Network**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE

**ACADEMIC THEOLOGY
IN A POST-SECULAR AGE**

Lviv 2013



**Institute of Ecumenical
Studies**
(Lviv, Ukraine)



**St. Andrew's Biblical
Theological Institute**
(Moscow, Russia)

DELM - Development of Ecumenical Leadership in Mission Network
with the support of
ICCO – Kerk in Actie (Utrecht, Netherlands)

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “ACADEMIC THEOLOGY IN A POST-SECULAR AGE”

The role of theology in the academic sphere and in society in general is currently being re-evaluated. On the one hand, there is a strong, based on the Enlightenment's ideology tendency to marginalize theology and push it away from academia. On the other hand, in recent years there has been a serious need in a properly theological thinking and reflection felt by many intellectuals.

The Enlightenment's attempt to remove theology from university and replace “faith” with “reason” has led in fact to dehumanization of the academic sphere and its transformation into a sort of intellectual factory producing knowledge and technology but unable to approach ultimate questions of human life. For this reason many intellectuals today would like to see theology as a partner in the academic (and not only academic) discourse. There is a great need for contemporary theology to be equipped both intellectually and spiritually. Today's theology is in a desperate struggle to prove its viability in the contemporary situation. In the course of the Conference which was held in Lviv (Ukraine) **9-12 November 2011**, the following questions have been discussed:

- *Is it correct to mark today's academic sphere as totally “secular”? or perhaps there is no “secular” at all as, for instance, Radical Orthodoxy movement affirms?*
- *How can theology be faithful to the Divine Revelation and at the same time accept critical reasoning required in the academic sphere?*
- *What language should theology employ in its dialogue with other academic disciplines?*
- *What can the scientist gain from the theologian today, and vice versa?*

Editorial board:

Fr. Roman Fihás – Chief Compiler

Fr.Dr. Oleh Kindiy – Theological Editor

Luba Markewycz, Fr. John Lucas – Literary Editors

Foreword

The discussion on the new role of religion in a post-secular age was raised at the annual meeting of the Development of Ecumenical Leadership in Mission network (DELM). Coming from different countries (usually Central-Eastern Europe) and belonging to different Christian denominations but heavily engaged in mission and ecumenical activity, DELM's participants organize an annual academic conference with the following discussion on many important themes. A similar conference organized by the Institute of Ecumenical Studies of the Ukrainian Catholic University and St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute was held in Lviv in 2011.

During the conference participants explored the significance of the new term Post-Secular age and its main symbols in science and society. They discussed the state and the role of theology in different contexts, what the main directions in its development are and who to cooperate with on other academic disciplines. It was acknowledged that the arrival of the post-secular age doesn't mean the revival of the religious worldview over the secular one or the disappearance of secularism. In post-secular society religion starts to raise its voice in public debates. Many begin to understand the significance and importance of theology in building an open and fair society. Theologians should be active "players" in academic and political spheres, proposing constructive initiatives in developing our common human home in new circumstances.

The proceedings of the conference you hold in your hands contain many positive but also some weak points. A reader of the book would be challenged with the variety of opinions and academic approaches in the articles written by speakers from different academic backgrounds and contexts. Some speakers such as Dr. Pantelis Kalaitzidis and Dr. Frank Bestebreurtje are well known theologians; some articles have been composed by a younger generation of theologians and philosophers. From the other side a reader can find their most appropriate answer to the number of questions raised during the conference and can discover a variety of approaches in understanding the theme.

It is worthy to note that the conference on the role of theology in a post-secular age was one of the first of its kind in Central-Eastern Europe, where theology appeared as an academic curriculum only 20 years ago. With this book we would like to foster further discussion about the role of theology in the modern world, how theology could cooperate with other academic disciplines and how Christians should proclaim the Good News in a changing modern context.

We would like to thank all conference participants for their important contributions to the debate. Such common events and academic work provides a solid base uniting us for further ecumenical engagement and friendship. Help us to become genuine witnesses of the Word of God to the ends of the earth (see Act. 1. 7).

Fr. Roman Fihás

Institute of Ecumenical Studies, Lviv, Ukraine

Dr. Pantelis Kalaitzidis

Director, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Greece

Orthodox Theology and the Challenges of a Post-secular Age: Questioning the Public Relevance of the Current Orthodox Theological “Paradigm”¹

One of the serious consequences for our topic of the sociological shift described by the “secularized theory” of the ‘50s and ‘60s was, starting from the end of the ‘60s, the move of many faculties of theology or university divinity schools, from Christian theology to Religious Studies. This shift took new forms and knew some recent developments in our post-modern, post-secular age under the pressure not only of the secularization but also of globalization and pluralism, challenging in new ways Christian theology. In the present paper, following the organizers’ instructions and expectations, I will first deal with the place of religion in the “secularization theory” and in a post-modern/post-secular context; I will then turn to the question if the theological paradigm of the “Return to the Fathers” may represent an Orthodox theological response to the challenges of modernity/post-modernity and post-secularity; finally, in the last part of my paper, I will deal with challenges and outlooks faced by Eastern Orthodox theology in the post-secular age, focusing mainly on the issue of public theology, and in the subsequent problem of the place of theological studies in the public university, and in broader academic context. While the perspective and the horizon of this paper are ecumenical, in my approach I hold the standpoint of an Eastern Orthodox theologian.

1 This paper is partly based on my previous writings, *Orthodoxy and Modernity: An Introduction*, Athens: Indiktos, 2007 [in Greek], under publication in English by St Vladimir’s Seminary Press (New York); “Orthodox Christianity and Islam: From Modernity to Globalization, From Fundamentalism to Multiculturalism and to the Ethics of Peace,” in: S. Asfaw-Al. Chehadeh-M. Gh. Simion (eds), *Just Peace: Orthodox Perspectives*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012, pp. 201-221; “Ist das orthodoxe Christentum in der Vormoderne stehengeblieben? Das Bedürfnis nach einer neuen Inkarnation des Wortes und das eschatologische Verständnis der Tradition und des Verhältnisses zwischen Kirche und Welt,” in: Fl. Uhl-S. Melchardt-Ar. R. Boelderl (Hg.), *Die Tradition einer Zukunft: Perspektiven der Religionsphilosophie*, Berlin: Parerga V., 2011, pp. 141-176; “From the ‘Return to the Fathers’ to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 54 (2010), pp. 5-36.

1. Religion in the Secularization Theory and in Post-modern/ Post-secular Context

One of the key ideas of the secularization theory, which flourished in the West especially during the '50s and the '60s, and which can indeed be traced to the Enlightenment, was the expectation that modernization and secularization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals.² As a result, many sociologists of religion, philosophers, and even Western theologians made the assumption that we live in a secularized world, in which religion will unavoidably decline and will not have an important role to play in society and public sphere, and must therefore accept its privatization as the only possible and legitimate place in modern societies. Classical books such as the *Secular City* by Harvey Cox (1965)³, or the *Sacred Canopy* by Peter L. Berger (1967),⁴ are very characteristic of this point. More recently (2007), Charles Taylor, after he has studied the genealogy of the emergence of the Self (1989),⁵ proceeded with his impressive study on *The Secular Age*, to offer a genealogy of modernity and of secularization. With this book Taylor traces in addition a whole picture of the premises and consequences of secularization, but also points out the room left open, in the immanent frame – which is irreversible in the secular age we are living – for a constructive dialogue or even the encounter between religious beliefs and secular society.⁶

This Western secular model was expanded to and imitated from different parts of the world (in Middle East, Africa, and Asia) under Christian, Islamic or Jewish cultural and religious predominance, while Russia and the Eastern part of Europe have experienced a peculiar secularization imposed from the above, i. e., from the communist power and the Marxist/Leninist ideology.

But starting from the mid 1970s, with the “return of God,” the “return of religion,” or the “revenge of God” phenomenon, to recall a well-known book by the French sociologist Giles Kepel,⁷ extreme politico-religious movements in the Muslim, Jewish, and Western

2 P. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and the World Politics*, Washington, D.C.-Grand Rapids, MI: Ethics and Public Policy Center-Eerdmans, 1999, pp. 2-3. Cf. idem, *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1967, especially part II, pp. 103-171; idem, *A Rumor of Angels. Modern Society and the Rediscovery of Supernatural*, New York: Doubleday, 1969.

3 H. Cox, *The Secular City. Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, revised edition, New York: Macmillan, 1966. For discussion and debate provoked by this book, cf. D. Callahan, *The Secular City Debate*, New York-London: MacMillan, 1966 (pp. 85-88, 179-203, and 205-214, responses and related texts by Cox himself). Cf. also H. Cox, *Religion in the Secular City. Toward a Postmodern Theology*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984; idem, “Religion and Politics after *The Secular City*”, in J. Neusner (ed.), *Religion and the Political Order: Politics in Classical and Contemporary Christianity, Islam, and Judaism*, Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press, 1996, pp. 1-10.

4 P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit.

5 Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

6 Ch. Taylor, *The Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA-London: Harvard University Press, 2007. There are some seminars and publications initiated by this already classical study. I mention here just a few: M. Warner-J. VanAntwerpen-Cr. Calhoun (eds), *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010; I. Leask e. a. (eds), *The Taylor Effect: Responding to a Secular Age*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010. Cf. the special issue of *Modern Theology* dedicated to a theological lecture of *The Secular Age* (vol. 26, issue 3, 2010); cf. also, F. B. A. Asiedu, “Theology in a Subjunctive Mood: Reflections on Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*”, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 66 (2013), pp. 230-240.

7 See, G. Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994. Especially on the “return of religion” phenomenon see, J. Benthall, *Returning to Religion: Why a Secular Age is Haunted by Faith*, London-New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008.

Christian world appeared, which were characterized by many as fundamentalist, and which moved vigorously to recapture the world. The emergence of these movements is connected, on the one hand, with the end of ideologies and secular visions of general happiness (especially those of an eschatological or millennial origin and orientation, such as Marxism), and on the other hand with the contestation of the meaning and significance of the progress offered by modernity in recent centuries. Conversely, the above version of religion – or, more precisely, the extreme religious movements that are inspired by this version of religion – aspire to occupy the place of secular ideologies by being transformed into ideologies themselves or competing with the secular ones. The most characteristic case of such a replacement, but not the only one, is taking place in Islam where, since the middle of the 70s, the failure of the visions for Arabic nationalism and socialism have given rise to a militant religious revival and the dynamic appearance of political Islam.⁸ Additionally there was, especially in the developed world, a general storm or crisis of identities which was caused by the devolvement from modern to post-modern, from the complicated but structured world of modernity to the *everything goes* of the chaotic and colorful post-modernity.

This post-modern environment is one that a number of Eastern Orthodox theologians are quick to characterize as the end of modernity or a stage beyond modernity (a conclusion that would render such a dialogue altogether superfluous and largely outdated), as the eminent Greek Orthodox theologian and philosopher Christos Yannaras characteristically (and representatively) claims.⁹ Characteristic of this point is the fact that distinguished representatives of American ultra-conservative Protestant theological movements, such as the much-vaunted Francis Schaeffer, have no problem with incorporating post-modernity into their theological system with certain preconditions, but in that case they distinguish it radically from modernity, which is regarded as the absolute evil and therefore rejected wholesale.

This move from modernity to post-modernity, from secularization to de-secularization or to something different, is related by many thinkers and sociologists to the “post-secular age” we are now experiencing. But Jürgen Habermas, who apparently borrowed the term “post-secular” from K. Eder,¹⁰ made it clear from the beginning of his same-title

8 Professor Olivier Roy, an internationally recognized authority of religious phenomenon and of contemporary Islamist movements, claims from his part, in one of his books, the failure of political Islam. See, Ol. Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, translated from French by C. Volk, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

9 See, C. Yannaras, “The dilemma: modernization-fundamentalism,” in *idem*, “*Generous in little*”: A user’s guide, Athens: Patakis, 2003, pp. 264-276, esp. p. 271 [in Greek]: “One could maintain that the brightest minds in the West are now gathering up their belongings and getting ready to leave the train of Modernity, which is plainly heading for a complete dead end. And it makes no sense at all for us, the peoples of the Balkans and the Middle East, to insist even today on belatedly joining the train of Modernity which intelligent people are hastening to abandon.” Similar ideas can be found in the writings of distinguished Russian hierarchs and theologians, like in many of the essays of the book by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Witness Today*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2006. For a critique of such a thesis see, Assaad Elias Kattan, “La théologie orthodoxe interpellée par l’herméneutique moderne,” *Contacts*, issue 234, 2011, pp. 180 ff.

10 Cf. K. Eder, “*Europäische Säkularisierung – ein Sonderweg in die postsäkulare Gesellschaft?*,” *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 3 (2002), pp. 331-343. It seems that Habermas used the term “post-secular” in the text of his 2004 dialogue with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), published in German in 2005. Cf. J. Habermas-J. Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, edited with a Foreword by Fl. Schuller, translated by Br. McNeil, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006, pp. 46-47; cf. also the sequel of the text of Habermas, pp. 48-52. For critical remarks on this dialogue cf. Ol. Hovdélien, “Post-secular Consensus? On the Munich-dialogue Between Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas,” *Australian eJournal of Theology*, 18.2 (August 2011), pp. 107-116. Since

article that “a ‘post-secular’ society must at some point have been in a ‘secular’ condition. Thus this controversial term,” Habermas continues, “is only applicable to the affluent societies of Europe or to countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where people’s religious ties have steadily loosened, and quite dramatically so since the end of the Second World War,”¹¹ thus implying at some point in his analysis a certain degree of continuity rather than discontinuity between post-secular age, on the one hand, secular age and secularization, on the other. However, the German philosopher takes seriously in account the “revised” narrative of secularization proposed by sociologists like José Casanova,¹² who claims that “the loss of function and the trend towards individualization do not necessarily lead to a loss in the *influence and relevance* of religion, either in the public arena and culture of any single society or in the personal conduct of life.”¹³ Habermas maintains from his side, without yet providing a structured definition of the “post-secular,” that “quite apart from their weight in numbers, religious communities can still claim a ‘seat’ even in the life of societies where secularization is far advanced. Today the description ‘post-secular society’ can be applied to public consciousness in Europe in so far the time being it has to ‘adjust itself to the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment’.”¹⁴ Far from any sectarian or polemical stance, avoiding to be involved in any kind of “*Kulturkampf*” between radical multiculturalism and militant secularism, our philosopher tries to answer from his own perspective the question which all European societies are facing today, i. e., “why largely secularized societies can nevertheless be described as ‘post-secular’?” Habermas reminds us that “in these societies religion retains a certain public influence and relevance, while the secularistic certainty that religion will disappear everywhere in the world as modernisation accelerates is losing ground. A very different, Habermas continues, “namely a normative, question demands our attention from the perspective of *participants*: How *should* we understand ourselves as members of a post-secular society, and what *must* we expect from one another if we want to ensure that social relations in firmly entrenched nation-states remain civil in spite of the growth of cultural and religious pluralism?”¹⁵

In order to answer these questions, in the sequel of this pioneering text the German philosopher puts forward the concepts of “a balance between shared citizenship and cultural difference,” as well as “complementary learning process,” a process which describes the dialogical readiness as well as the mutual epistemological humility of both

the beginnings of 2000, Habermas showed an intense interest on issues of religion, its place in public sphere, and its relationship with reason, modernity, and politics. See for example his works: “Faith and Knowledge,” in: *The Future of Human Nature*, translated by H. Beister & W. Rehg, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2003, pp. 101-115 (the German original was published in 2001); *Religion and Rationality. Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*, edited with an introduction by Ed. Mendieta, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002; *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, translated by C. Cronin, Cambridge, U.K.-Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008. There are several works studying the relationship of Habermas with religion and theology. I notice here just two: D. S. Browning-Fr. Schüssler Fiorenza (eds), *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, New York: Crossroad, 1992; N. Adams, *Habermas and Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

11 J. Habermas, “What is Meant by a ‘Post-secular Society’? A Discussion on Islam in Europe,” in: *Europe: The Faltering Project*, translated by C. Cronin, Cambridge, U.K.-Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009, p. 59.

12 J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

13 J. Habermas, “What is Meant by a ‘Post-secular Society’?,” op. cit. p. 63.

14 J. Habermas, “What is Meant by a ‘Post-secular Society’?,” op. cit. p. 63.

15 J. Habermas, “What is Meant by a ‘Post-secular Society’?,” op. cit. p. 65.

the religious and seculars. Habermas had already used these concepts few years earlier, in his essay on “The Secular Liberal State and Religion.”¹⁶ In this dense and profound text, in which also he provides a kind of definition for the term “post-secular,” without nevertheless making a detailed account of it, Habermas maintains that,

“This term [sc. ‘postsecular society’] refers not only to the fact that religion continues to assert itself in an increasingly secular environment and that society, for the time being, reckons with the continued existence of religious communities. The expression *post-secular* does not merely acknowledge publicly the functional contribution that the religious communities make to the reproduction of desired motives and attitudes. Rather, the public consciousness of post-secular society reflects a normative insight that has consequences for how believing and unbelieving citizens interact with one another politically. In post-secular society, the realization that ‘the modernization of public consciousness’ takes hold and reflexively alters religious as well as secular mentalities in staggered phases is gaining acceptance. If together they understand the secularization of society to be a complementary learning process, both sides can, for cognitive reasons, then take seriously each other’s contributions to controversial themes in the public sphere.”¹⁷

Trying to make more clear the implications of the above definition and of the previous quotations from Habermas, and to describe some fundamental features of post-secular age according to the German philosopher, for the economy of this paper I will lean on the insights provided by Massimo Rosati (who argues on the basis of this definition),¹⁸ and Kristina Stoeckl.¹⁹ First of all, it is important to understand that “post-secular” does not mean a regime-change in respect to modernity that brings society back to religion, to pre-secular condition, and to pre-modernity. This may be the interpretation that religious people might appreciate, but it is far from Habermas’ own perspective. Therefore post-secular does not refer to de-secularization, and to the “return to religion;” it rather reflects the co-presence or co-existence within the same public space of religious and secular world-views, ideas, outlooks on society, and politics, which are called to live together, and to live together differently, in a “complementary learning process.” De-secularization, as it is usually understood, means that religion and modernity are incompatible, while the post-secular makes room for their co-existence.

It is also important to have in mind that the post-secular is linked with the de-privatization of religion, insofar as religion cannot be considered only as a private, strictly individualized, matter. Of course religious individualization is one of the expressions of

16 J. Habermas, “The Secular Liberal State and Religion,” in: H. de Vries & L. E. Sullivan (eds), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-secular World*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2006, pp. 251-260.

17 J. Habermas, “The Secular Liberal State and Religion,” op. cit. p. 258. Cf. the sequel of his argument, pp. 259-260.

18 M. Rosati, “Longing for a Postsecular Condition. Italy and the Postsecular,” published in the portal: <http://www.pecob.eu/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/EN/IDPagina/3100> (last accessed, October 12, 2012).

19 Kr. Stoeckl, “Defining the Postsecular,” published in the portal: <http://www.pecob.eu/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/EN/IDPagina/3100> (last accessed, October 12, 2012). Both papers are from the workshop “Politics, Culture and Religion in the Postsecular World,” which took place in Faenza (Italy), and was co-organized by the Centre for the Study and Documentation of Religions and Political Institutions in Postsecular Society (CSPS), University of Rome Tor Vergata, the Institute for East-Central Europe and the Balkans, University of Bologna (IECOB), and the Department for Politics, Institutions and History of the University of Bologna, in collaboration with the Department of Linguistics at the University of Florence, the Department of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of Synergetic Anthropology, Moscow.

modern Western individualism (cf. “believing without belonging”). However, traditional or new de-privatized religions (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, Pentecostalism) very often challenge with their communal structure and spirit, the philosophical and anthropological presuppositions of Western modernity. They challenge the Western idea of the autonomous Self, the idea of a secular, neutral public space. A post-secular society is a society that considers it a part of the democratic vitality of its public sphere that religious voices are within the public space, that they may challenge the self-referentiality of modern differentiated subsystems and try to make pressure on them from a normative point of view.

But this de-privatization of religion does not mean a simple return to the mono-religious medieval model of a “Christian society.” Post-secularity refers to a religious plurality, to the end of religious monopoly. A truly post-secular society is a multi-religious society, where “indigenous” traditions are nowadays together with religious communities living in “diaspora” or in immigration, as it is today the case in many European countries, and in this regard “post-secular” refers also to “post-Christian.”

This approach is in line with the deeper sense of Habermas’ argument on “post-secular age,” which is not aiming to favor one religion over another, or to value secular worldviews over religious or *vice versa*. When therefore Habermas argues for the legitimate place of religion in the public sphere, he does not make it because he is convinced of the superiority of the religious viewpoints, or because he is religious himself. He is simply making a democratic argument: a public sphere which privileges the secular over the religious discourse risks excluding religious citizens and the values they carry with them and they could translate in the public debate, and that for the German philosopher would be undemocratic. In the words of Habermas himself,

The ideological neutrality of state authority, which guarantees the same ethical freedoms for every citizen, is incompatible with the political generalization of a secularistic world view. Secularized citizens, insofar as they act in their role as citizens of a state, may neither deny out of hand the potential for truth in religious conceptions of the world nor dispute the right of believing fellow citizens to make contributions to public discussions that are phrased in religious language. Liberal political culture may even expect its secularized citizens to participate in efforts to translate relevant contributions from a religious language into a publicly accessible one.²⁰

The above arguments of Habermas on “post-secular society” fits perfectly with his broader position concerning the presence of religion in the public sphere; a position in direct dialogical and dialectical relationship with John Rawls’ *Political Liberalism*,²¹ mainly developed in his book *Between Naturalism and Religion*.²² Habermas’ concern right from the

20 J. Habermas, “The Secular Liberal State and Religion,” op. cit. p. 260.

21 J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, expanded edition, with a new introduction and the “Reply to Habermas,” New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

22 Cambridge, U.K.-Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008, pp. 130 ff. (German original 2005). I follow here the analysis I provided in my book, *Orthodoxy and Modernity: An Introduction*, Athens: Indiktos Publications, 2007, pp. 143-146 [in Greek; English translation (by Elisabeth Theokritoff) forthcoming by St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York].

start is that the necessary institutional separation of religion and politics, characteristic of the modern liberal state, should not turn into an onerous mental and psychological burden for its religious citizens, for those citizens who consistently follow a faith or religion. Those citizens, according to Habermas, should accept and respect the neutrality of the state authority towards every religion and world view, and be aware that only secular values and criteria count in that field of political/state authority which in the view of the German philosopher lies outside the public sphere. In parallel, however, Habermas recognizes the possibility for citizens who practise a religion to express and formulate their convictions and beliefs in the public sphere in religious language, if it is impossible for them to “translate” these beliefs or reformulate them in secular language; they are not compelled to split their identity into public and private sections when they want to speak in public or participate in the public sphere, which is explicitly distinguished from the institutional/state sphere. According to Habermas, as we have it already seen in previous paragraphs, non-religious people should also participate in this attempt to “translate” or reformulate religious reason and discourse into secular, since the work of “translating” must be regarded as a shared and collaborative task requiring continuing dialogue from both sides. Non-religious people must further be aware of the asymmetrical burden placed on religious believers, since only the latter are obliged to reformulate or “translate” their discourse if they want it to meet with general acceptance and agreement. Secular citizens should therefore, following Habermas, be positively inclined towards dialogue with believers, and indeed should be open to the possible truth content of religious reasons.

Going still further, Habermas recognizes functional reasons for the polyphony and multiplicity of public voices and maintains that it is to the advantage of the liberal state that religious voices should be able to be heard in the public and political arena, as well as for religious organizations to have the right of political participation; but he preserves for secular voices alone the right to go beyond the public sphere, to enter the legally established domain of political/state authority. This is, on the one hand, to protect the neutrality of that authority with respect to religions and world views, and on the other hand, to ensure equality both between different religious doctrines and between religious and non-religious doctrines on the strength of secular reasons and criteria alone. A public voice or the presence of religion in the public sphere must not mean, according to Habermas, that religion also creeps into the domain of governmental authority and institutional compulsion, even in the case where there is a clear religious or confessional majority. What Habermas considers illegitimate and to be rejected is not of course the principle of majority rule *per se*, but the violation of the principle of the civil authority’s neutrality between world views and ideologies if the majority deploys religious arguments to reach decisions binding on the minority. That is why Habermas insists so much in this book, as well as in other works of his, on the fact that political decisions must be formulated in a language equally accessible to all citizens, believers and non-believers alike, reflecting a shared understanding. But neither can secular majorities make decisions without taking any account of the sensitivities of religious people on certain issues. Thus, according to

Habermas, religious citizens and religious communities should not feel discouraged about expressing themselves politically, because then secular society would be cutting itself off from the key resources for the construction of meaning and identity represented by the religious tradition. Even secular people or adherents of other religions, according to Habermas, could under certain conditions gain much from this religious contribution and participation, or even recognize something of their own, their own sensibilities and inspirations.²³ Finally, we should note that according to Habermas, post-Christian and post-secular society has its philosophical counterpart in post-metaphysical thinking.²⁴

We cannot, in the framework of this paper, deal with all the above issues and resolve the question of the relationship between modernity and post-modernity, between secularization, de-secularization, or post-secularity which are still going on.²⁵ But as we have to speak on Orthodox theology in a post-secular age, we must pay special attention to a particular aspect of this question and not be trapped in a very optimistic approach, which considers that modernity and secularism are now gone, and that we are experiencing now the “return to religion,” or the “return of God.” Besides, this return – to the extent that it conceives religion as an element of national or cultural identity, as part of historical memory and tradition – cannot also mean a return or rediscovery of faith because this continues to be a personal decision, a way of life, which has, as its basic features, obedience and reliance on God’s will, observance of His commandments, and the analogous meaningful change of our lives, actions, and values.²⁶

As one of the main concern of this conference and of this paper, is the place and the future of academic theology, it is worth noting that according to preeminent sociologist of religion Peter L. Berger (who, after having formulated the “secularization theory” in the ’60s, he later had to accept that we live now in a de-secularized world²⁷), in this de-secularized or massively religious world in which we live today, there are two exceptions: the first is Western Europe (followed in some cases by a number of countries of the formerly Communist bloc), where the old secularization theory would seem to hold,²⁸ the second, and more relevant to us, exception to the de-secularization thesis is represented by what Berger calls the “international subculture composed of people with Western-type higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences.”²⁹ Berger reminds that:

23 For the preceding explanations see Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, pp. 130-135. Cf. idem, “Faith and Knowledge,” in: *The Future of Human Nature*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, pp. 101-115.

24 J. Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, pp. 140-143.

25 For further readings on the implications of the concept of “post-secular,” see: M. Barbato & Fr. Kratochwil, *Habermas’s Notion of Post-secular Society. A Perspective from International Relations*, European University Working Paper, Max Weber Program, No 2008/25. Cf. an account of this discussion, regarding mainly the Anglo-Saxon world, in the book by M. King, *Postsecularism: The Hidden Challenge to Extremism*, Cambridge: James Clarke, 2009.

26 See on this point, St. Zoumboulakis, “God Returns to Europe? An Essay on the Religious Possibility of Godless Religion,” *God in the City: Essays on Religion and Politics*, Athens: Hestia, 2002, pp. 11-47 [in Greek].

27 Cf. P. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and the World Politics*, op. cit. Cf. idem, *A Rumor of Angels. Modern Society and the Rediscovery of Supernatural*, op. cit. According to the remark by Kristina Stoeckl, “Defining the Postsecular,” op. cit., “Berger’s religion is, if we look at the religious movements he is studying, first and foremost a fundamentalist religion. He is worried about the attack of fundamentalist religion on the modern order, the return of pre-modernity into our contemporary world. In this sense, Berger speaks about ‘desecularization.’”

28 P. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview,” in: Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the world*, op. cit., pp. 9-10. Cf. P. Berger-Gr. Davie-Ef. Fokas, *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variations*, Aldershot, U.K.-Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2008; Gr. Davie, *Europe, the Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002.

29 Berger, op. cit., p. 10.

This subculture is the principal carrier of progressive, Enlightened beliefs and values. While its members are relatively thin on the ground, they are very influential, as they control the institutions that provide the 'official' definitions of reality, notably the educational system, the media of mass communication, and the higher reaches of the legal system.³⁰

This is said in order to understand that, even in the post-modern and post-secular age, secularization is highly appreciated and supported among academic circles – especially in the humanities, while post-secular, as well as post-modern, does not necessarily lead to the annulment or the negation of secularization and modernity, as many clerics, theologians, and believers do think; on the contrary, some distinguished thinkers such as the philosophers Habermas, Lyotard, Vattimo, and the Greek theologians Vassiliadis and Petrou, prefer to discern in the “post-modern” more elements of continuity, seeing it as a new version of modernity rather than a movement that annuls and transcends modernity, and for this reason many of them prefer to talk about “late” or “second” modernity, to the extent that the latter keeps some fundamental features of Modern Times (human rights, separation of Church and State, religious pluralism, etc).³¹ What is therefore needed, is the dialogue – even a belated one – of Orthodoxy and modernity, and not the negation of the latter in the name of post-modernity and of post-secularism.

To this point, we have to recognize that in the Orthodox world the creative encounter and critical dialogue with modernity has not really taken place, with the possible exception of Russia³² in the period following Peter the Great (an “encounter”, however, that was largely imposed from outside and by force) and during the communist period (when again a peculiar regime of forced “modernization” was imposed by the Marxist-Leninist power in Russia and other Eastern European countries, usually of Orthodox majority),³³ or the premature and incomplete encounter that occurred as part of the Greek Enlightenment.³⁴ Indeed, we should not be far from the truth in maintaining that the renaissance of Russian religious philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and

30 Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

31 See J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by Fr. G. Lawrence, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987; idem, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project”, in M. Passerin d'Entrèves and S. Benhabib (eds), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, pp. 38-58; J.-Fr. Lyotard, *The Post-modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, transl. from the French by G. and Br. Massumi, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1979; G. Vattimo, *La fin de la modernité: Nihilisme et herméneutique dans la culture post-moderne*, traduit de l'italien par C. Alunni, Paris: Seuil, 1987; I. Petrou, “Tradition and cultural adaptation in secondary modernity”, *Synaxi*, issue 75, 2000, pp. 25-35 [in Greek]; idem, “Post-modern and Post-modernism”, in his *Social theory and contemporary culture*, Thessaloniki: Vnias, 2005, pp. 112-134 [in Greek]; Petros Vassiliadis, *Post-modernity and the Church: The Challenge of Orthodoxy*, Athens: Akritas, 2002, pp. 21-25 [in Greek]. Cf. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Modernity: An Introduction*, Athens: Indiktos, 2007, pp. 24-25 [in Greek].

32 See A. E. Buss, *The Russian-Orthodox Tradition and Modernity*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2003. Cf. L. Wolff, *The Enlightenment and the Orthodox World: Western Perspectives on the Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe*, Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2001.

33 See for example P. Froese, *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008; R. Preda, *Communism. A Failed Modernity*, Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2009 [in Romanian]. Cf. also the paper by A. Kyrlezhov & A. Shishkov, “Postsecularism in Post-atheist Russia”, published in the portal: <http://www.pecob.eu/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/EN/IDPagina/3100> (last accessed on October 12, 2012).

34 Except the book of L. Wolff mentioned above in footnote 32, see among others, P. M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe*, Aldershot, UK-Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1994. Cf. also our study, “Orthodoxy and Enlightenment. The Question of Religious Toleration”, in: P. Kalaitzidis-N. Ntontos, *Orthodoxy and Modernity*, Volos Academy for Theological Studies 2001-02 Series of Lectures, Athens: Indiktos, 2007, pp. 79-166 [in Greek], for further discussion and bibliographic evidences.

the theology of the Russian emigration with its characteristic variety and rich coloration, would be incomprehensible without their relationship and acquaintance with certain trends or ideologies belonging to modernity,³⁵ even though in some cases, as with the Slavophiles, this encounter lapsed into anti-Westernism or even anti-Europeanism.³⁶ Similarly, outside the horizons of modernity one cannot understand either the movement of the Greek Enlightenment and its opponents, or modern currents in theology such as the theology of the person (mainly with Yannaras and Metropolitan John Zizioulas)³⁷ and the Greek theology of the '60s,³⁸ trends which in their turn were influenced to some degree both by the Slavophile movement and by Russian émigré theology.

2. The Theological “Paradigm” of the “Return to the Fathers” as an Orthodox Response to the Challenges of Modernity/Post-modernity and Post-secularity?³⁹

While facing this new socio-cultural data of Postmodernity and Post-secularism described above, many Orthodox theologians and clerics seem to believe that the appropriate and everlasting Orthodox response to all these challenges must be looked for and found into the writings of the Fathers, confirming thus the persistence of the “Return to the Fathers” theological paradigm. This theological paradigm was for the most part of the 20th century, the dominant theological paradigm for Orthodox theological education, both in traditional Orthodox countries and Diaspora, in the East as well as in the West, transcending political and social systems, cultural and educational milieu.

In fact, as it is well-known, in the First Orthodox Theological Conference, which was held in Athens in 1936, Fr. Georges Florovsky, proclaimed Orthodox theology’s need to “return to the Fathers” and to be released from its “Babylonian captivity” to Western theology in terms of its language, its presuppositions, and its thinking.⁴⁰ His call was quickly adopted and shared by many theologians of the Russian Diaspora, and gathered fervent supporters in traditionally Orthodox countries, such as Greece, Serbia, and

35 A characteristic example is the case of Soloviev; see to this point the analysis by Olivier Clément, “Vladimir Soloviev, théologien de la modernité” *Contacts*, issue 169, 1995, pp. 35-45.

36 See for example, Al. Besançon, *Les origines intellectuelles du Léninisme*, Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1977. Cf. V. Shevzov, “The Burdens of Tradition: Orthodox Constructions of the West in Russia (late XIX-early XX cc.),” in: G. Demacopoulos & Ar. Papanikolaou (eds), *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013, pp. 83-101

37 See the study by Theofilos Abatzidis, “Theology of the person and modern individualism,” in: P. Kalaitzidis-N. Ntontos, *Orthodoxy and Modernity*, op. cit., pp. 211-262.

38 See the collective volume: P. Kalaitzidis-Ath. N. Papathanasiou-Th. Abatzidis (eds), *Turmoil in post-war theology. The “theology of the 60s,”* Athens: Indiktos, 2009 [in Greek].

39 For more detailed analysis of my argument see my papers, “From the ‘Return to the Fathers’ to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 54 (2010), pp. 5-36; “Orthodox Theological Education in the Postmodernity Era: Challenges, Questions and Ambivalences,” in: D. Werner-D. Esterline-N. Kang-J. Raja (eds), *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Regional Surveys, Ecumenical Trends*, Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010, pp. 614-622.

40 Cf. G. Florovsky, “Westliche Einflüsse in der russischen Theologie”, in: Ham. S. Alivisatos (ed.), *Procès-Verbaux du Premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe à Athènes, 29 novembre-6 décembre 1936*, Athènes: Pyrsos, 1939, pp. 212-231; English translation (by T. Bird and R. Haugh): “Western Influences in Russian Theology” in: Georges Florovsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 4: *Aspects of Church History*, Bûcherer-Vertriebsanstalt, 1987, pp. 157-182.

Romania. The theological movement of the “return to the Fathers” became the hallmark of and the dominant “paradigm” for Orthodox theology for the better part of the 20th century, and for many its primary task, to such a degree that this celebrated “return to the Fathers” and the effort to “de-westernize” Orthodox theology overshadowed all other theological questions, as well as all the challenges the modern world had posed – and continues to pose – to Orthodox theology, while other Orthodox theological trends, such as the Russian school theology, faded from view. While the emblematic figure of this movement was, without question, Fr. Georges Florovsky, we must not ignore or underestimate the decisive contributions of other theologians, in its crystallization – to such a degree, in fact, that many of the positions which ultimately prevailed stand in stark contrast to the known theological sensibilities of Florovsky himself (e.g., “ahead with the Fathers,” the openness of history, etc.), thus attributing even more conservative features to a movement that already by its very nature (“return,” etc.) included such elements.

The 20th century was, therefore, a time of renewal for Orthodox theology, which for the first time in many centuries, due to the influence of the Orthodox Diaspora and the ecumenical dialogue, ventured out from its traditional strongholds and initiated a discussion with other Christian traditions. It thus attempted to move its identity and self-consciousness beyond the dominant academic scholasticism and pietism of the late 19th century by adopting the form of a “neo-patristic synthesis,” the distinctive mark of which was the “existential” character of theology,⁴¹ and the definition of which contrasts repetition or imitation to synthesis, while combining fidelity to tradition with renewal.⁴² But, despite its innovative moments, it seems that the 20th century – precisely because of the way in which this “return to the Fathers” was perceived and of the corresponding program to “de-westernize” Orthodox theology – was also for Orthodox theology a time of introversion, conservatism, and of a static or fundamentalist understanding of the concept of Tradition, which very often came to be equated with traditionalism. Thus, just as some Protestant Churches still suffer from a certain level of fundamentalism regarding the Bible or biblical texts, the Orthodox Church, for its part, often finds itself trapped and frozen in a “fundamentalism of tradition” or in a “fundamentalism of the Fathers,” which makes it hard for it to work out in practice its pneumatology and its charismatic dimension. This prevents it from being part of or in dialogue with the modern world, and discourages it from displaying its creative gifts and strengths.

41 Cf. for example G. Florovsky, “Patristic Theology and the Ethos of the Orthodox Church,” in G. Florovsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 4: *Aspects of Church History*, Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1987, p. 17. According to Metropolitan John Zizioulas (“Fr. Georges Florovsky: The Ecumenical Teacher,” *Synaxi*, issue 64, 1997, pp. 14-15 [in Greek]): “The main goal of theology was, for him (sc. Florovsky), the “neo-patristic synthesis,” which means, as we shall see, a deeper quest for the existential sense of patristic theology and its synthesis, which requires rare creative skills and a gift for synthesis.”

42 Cf. for instance Fr. Florovsky’s “theological testament,” published by A. Blane, *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual, Orthodox Churchman*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993, p. 154: “It is by that way that I was led quite early to the idea of what I am calling now ‘the Neo-Patristic Synthesis’: It should be more than just a collection of Patristic sayings or statements. It must be a *synthesis*, a creative reassessment of those insights which were granted to the Holy Men of old. It must be *Patristic*, faithful to the spirit and vision of the Fathers, *ad mentem Patrum*. Yet, it must be also *Neo-Patristic*, since it is to be addressed to the new age, with its own problems and queries.”

It is true, as we already noted above, that Florovsky always emphasized that the “return to the Fathers” did not mean the repetition or imitation of the past, confined to its various forms, or an escape from history, a denial of the present and history. On the contrary, what he continually stressed and highlighted was a creative return and meeting with the spirit of the Fathers, the acquisition of the mind of the Fathers (*ad mentem patrum*), and the creative fulfilment of the future.⁴³

We should note here that the movement to “return to the Fathers” is not a unique phenomenon that has taken place only among the Orthodox. As I demonstrated in a quite recent paper,⁴⁴ the starting point for every church reform movement has been a movement to “return to the sources,” and this is precisely what we see in the same period in the Protestant world with dialectical theology, and in the Catholic milieu with the biblical, patristic, and liturgical renewal movements. But while these Western movements are inconceivable outside of the challenges posed by modernity, the corresponding Orthodox movement of “return” that was represented by the neo-patristic school – which won out over the Russian school theology – seems finally to serve as a bulwark against modernity.

Looking to the consequences of this “return to the Fathers” and of the subsequent over-emphasis on patristic studies, we have to briefly and schematically list the followings: 1) the neglect and devaluation of biblical studies; 2) an ahistorical approach to patristic theology and a subsequent exaltation of traditionalism; 3) a tendency toward introversion and Orthodox theology’s near total absence from the major theological developments and trends of the 20th century; 4) the polarization of East and West, and the cultivation and consolidation of an anti-western and anti-ecumenical spirit; and 5) a weak theological response to the challenges posed by the modern world and, more generally, the unresolved theological issues still remaining in the relationship between Orthodoxy and modernity.

Especially on the third point, we have to notice that concerned as it was with the very serious matter of liberating itself from Western influence and “returning to the Fathers” – dealing, in other words, with issues of self-understanding and identity – Orthodox theology, with a few exceptions, was basically absent from the major theological discussions of the 20th century and had almost no influence in setting the theological agenda. Dialectical theology, existential and hermeneutical theology, the theology of history and culture, the theology of secularization and modernity, the “*nouvelle théologie*,” contextual theologies, the theology of hope and political theology, liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, ecumenical theology, the theology of mission, the theology of religions and otherness – this whole revolution that occurred in the theological work of the 20th century barely touched Orthodox theology. Rather, during this period, Orthodox theology was concerned with its own “internal” problems; escaping “western influence” had become one of its priorities. These theological trends, with the exception perhaps of ecumenical

43 Cf. for instance, Georges Florovsky “Patristic Theology and the Ethos of the Orthodox Church,” in Florovsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 4: *Aspects of Church History*, op. cit. p. 18, 20-22 *ibid.* “Western Influences in Russian Theology,” pp. 180-182 *ibid.* “The Ways of Russian Theology,” pp. 208-209.

44 Pantelis Kalaitzidis, “Challenges of Renewal and Reformation Facing the Orthodox Church,” *The Ecumenical Review*, 61 (2009), pp. 136-164, especially pp. 144-146.

theology, the theology of mission, and the movement for patristic and liturgical renewal, do not appear to have been influenced by or to have influenced Orthodoxy, despite the fact that important Orthodox theologians actively participated in the ecumenical movement from its inception.⁴⁵ Orthodox theology's silence and absence from the contemporary theological discussions does not seem to have gone unnoticed by modern Western theologians, who have not failed to point out Orthodoxy's inability to be expressed in contemporary terms and its continued invocation of the authority of the Fathers and of tradition.⁴⁶

As for the fifth point, we must admit that the "return to the Fathers" and "Christian Hellenism," as a proposal for a theological agenda, is basically a conservative choice, inasmuch as they ultimately refer more to theology's past than to the present and the future. And while this theological movements' intention is to push Orthodoxy out of its inertia and into a dialogue with the contemporary world on the basis of the neo-patristic synthesis, the broader historical context of this dialogue, *viz.*, modernity and late modernity, is essentially absent from its theological agenda.

We usually remark that the reinstatement of scholastic philosophy and theology in the second half of the nineteenth century, with Neo-Thomism at the forefront, was meant *inter alia* to be a defence against the challenges that modernity posed to the inflexible theological realities of the Roman Catholic Church at that time. But then, has not the famous "return to the Fathers," as it was understood and applied, served equally in our Orthodox context as a bulwark against modernity and the challenges it posed, despite itself and contrary to its programmatic aim of renewal? Has it not thus hindered both the word of God in its Incarnation and Revelation within each particular social and cultural context, and the development, within Orthodox theology, of hermeneutics, biblical and historical research, systematic theology, anthropological and feminist studies, political and ecumenical theology? Has it not contributed in its own way to making our entire church life a prisoner to pre-modern structures and practices and to a conservative mentality, just when some of the most renowned Orthodox theologians are dreaming of a direct leap into post-modernity?

We should, of course, remember that, for primarily historical reasons, the Orthodox world did not organically participate in the phenomenon of modernity. It did not experience the Renaissance, the Reformation, or the Counter-Reformation, religious wars or the Enlightenment, the French and the Industrial revolutions, the rise of the subject, human rights, or the religiously neutral nation-state. What has been recognized as the core of modernity seems to have remained alien to Orthodoxy, which continues to be suspicious of modernity. This uncertainty helps explain Orthodoxy's and its theology difficulty in communicating with the contemporary (post-)modern world, and it raises at the same time the question of whether or not Orthodox Christianity and (neo)patristic theology came to an end before modernity.

45 It is noteworthy that not even one Orthodox theologian is mentioned in the voluminous classic work of R. Gibellini, *La teologia del XX secolo*, Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 1999. The same seems to happen with the volume, *Modern Christian Thought*, vol. II: *The Twentieth Century*, second edition, by James C. Livingston, Francis Schussler Fiorenza, Sarah Coakley and James H. Evans Jr., Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2006.

46 H. Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium. An Ecumenical View*, transl. by Peter Heinegg, New York: Doubleday, 1988, pp. 57-59.

If the Orthodox theology of the last few decades was inspired and renewed by the call to “return to the Fathers” and the call of liberation from the captivity of academicism and scholastic theology – without, however, ever managing to avoid its identification with the caricature of traditionalism, patristic archaeology, and confessional entrenchment – today, in the globalized, post-modern, post-secular, pluralistic world, there is a clear and imperative need for a breath of fresh air, for the overcoming of a certain provincialism and a complacent introversion within Orthodox theology. There is a need for openness to the ecumenicity of Christianity, to the challenge of religious otherness, and the catholicity of human thought. Theology’s prophetic function calls it to continually transcend itself, to continually transform and renew every kind of established expression and creation – even those inherited from patristic thought – to make a new leap similar or perhaps even greater than what Greek patristic thought needed to make in relation to primitive Christian thought.

3. Challenges and Outlooks

In any case, modernity and post-modernity (or late modernity) and the framework they provide constitute the broader historical, social, and cultural environment within which the Orthodox theology is called to live and carry out its mission; it is here that theology is called upon time and time again to witness the Christian truth about God, the world and humanity. Certainly, modern Orthodox theology, inspired mainly by the spirit of the Fathers, reformulated during the 20th century an admirable theology of the Incarnation, of “assuming flesh.” However, its position on a series of issues revolving, essentially, around aspects of the modernist phenomenon, but also the core of its ecclesial self-understanding, has often left this otherwise remarkable theology of Incarnation in abeyance and socially inert. Such issues include human rights, the secularization of politics and institutions, the desecralization of politics and ethnicity, the overturning of established social hierarchies in the name of a fairer society, the affirmation of love and corporeality and the spiritual function of sexuality, the position of women, social and cultural anachronisms, and so forth. Yet theology at least ought to be incarnate, to remind us constantly of the antinomic and idoloclastic character of the ecclesial event, but also to commit itself to the consequences and repercussions of the theology of the Incarnation.⁴⁷

In the wake of modernity, there is a tendency to marginalise the Church in the cultural and social spheres; and the Church’s response, even in the context of post-modernity and

47 It is worth noting that the questions raised above with regard to *the Orthodox Church and Modernity* were discussed, considered, and researched as part of the program at the Volos Academy for Theological Studies of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias (Volos, Greece) in the 2001-2002 academic year. The lectures and presentations were compiled and published by Indiktos Publications, Athens, in 2007 [in Greek]. In addition, the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology at the University of Balamand in Lebanon, organized an international symposium on “Thinking Modernity: Towards a Reconfiguration of the Relationship between Orthodox Theology and Modern Culture” on 3-5 December 2007, in conjunction with the Chair of Orthodox Theology at the Center for Religious Studies of the University of Münster in Germany. The volume of the proceedings from this Symposium is now published: As. El. Kattan-F. Georgi, (eds), *Thinking Modernity. Towards a Reconfiguration of the Relationship Between Orthodox Theology and Modern Culture*, Tripoli, Lebanon-Münster: St John of Damascus Institute of Theology, University of Balamand-Center for Religious Studies, University of Münster, 2010.

post-secularity cannot be an attempt to conquer or reconquer the world, nor can it aspire to return to a supposed “Christian” society, because any such attempt is either doomed in the long term to fail and to provoke an even greater anti-religious reaction, or it risks leading to an upsurge in fundamentalism, a retreat into one’s own identity and a lack of tolerance towards those who are different.

We cannot stake Orthodoxy on an anti-modernist metaphysical/religious revival and a return to the public sphere which would roll back the given realities of secularization and modernity, like the return proclaimed by some of the representatives of the “Radical Orthodoxy” movement which seems to be gaining ground among many Western Christians (mainly Anglicans and Roman Catholics) and apparently exercises a fascination for some Orthodox theologians as well.⁴⁸ It is imperative to understand that post-secular does not mean anti-secular or pre-modern, nor is related to any religious or Christian revival. It rather means post-Christian, and it is related to religious and cultural pluralism.

Far from any theological minimalism or shallow modernism, what we should be seeking is indeed an Orthodoxy rooted in the tradition and the Fathers, but an Orthodoxy that is open and in dialogue, conversing and understanding. An Orthodoxy that will not be subordinate to the “flesh” it takes on (social and cultural conditions at a given time), but will also not ignore or disregard and scorn societies and cultures or new cultural forms (whatever the currently “new” might be, whether we are talking about modernity, post-modernity/late modernity or post-secularity); for in the final analysis everything is of God, everything bears the seal of the gift and the breath of the Holy Spirit who “blows where It wills” (cf. Jn 3:8) and is not restricted only to the socio-cultural models of the past.

The boundaries of society have long since ceased to coincide with those of the Church, whereas our societies are now characterized by the otherness and difference of diverse backgrounds and expressions. In responding to the challenges of modern and post-modern/post-secular society, the Church will need first and foremost to pass through a theological, liturgical and spiritual renaissance and a reconstruction of its Eucharistic communities. This first significant and fundamental step has to be taken; church people need to show at least some rudimentary consistency with what they are supposed to believe; and there has to be an awareness that the Church is not identified with any period in history, any society, any given form, and the essential core of its truth cannot be confined to or exhausted by earlier examples of the relationship between world and Church. Only then can the Church address itself to the world and speak to the outside world and secular/post-secular society or the community of citizens, to “those near and those far” from its faith, its experience and its tradition, in order to proclaim that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb. 13:8).

48 The crowning and representative work of this radical theological movement, which comprises essays by seven Anglicans (of ‘conservative’ High Church leanings) and five Roman Catholics, and proclaims the end of modernity and the forceful return of Christianity to the public sphere, is the collective volume, J. Milbank-C. Pickstock-G. Ward (eds), *Radical Orthodoxy. A New Theology*, London-New York: Routledge, 1998. For a comprehensive/succinct evaluation of this movement see A. Pabst-Ol-Th. Venard, *Radical Orthodoxy. Pour une révolution théologique*, Genève: Ad Solem, 2004. Especially for the relationship between Radical and Eastern Orthodoxy cf. the volume, A. Pabst-Chr. Schneider (eds), *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*, Farnham, UK-Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009.

In today's post-modern/post-secular (but not anti-modern/anti-secular) socio-cultural environment, theology is called to undertake its prophetic and critical function, and witness on the antinomic and idoloclastic character of the ecclesial event, but also to commit itself to the consequences and repercussions of the theology of the Incarnation, which imply its inherent dialogical and relational character, employing the today's social, cultural, scientific and other realities, as the material for today's God's Revelation.⁴⁹

In light of the above analyses, I will specify two particular issues to be debated by contemporary Orthodox academic theology, which are closely related to what we discussed previously, and to the challenges it has been experiencing in the present and in the coming years:

a) *The Challenge of a Public Theology*

Orthodox theology has to be aware of the crucial significance of the question of the place of the Church and theology in a liberal secularized or religiously neutral society, as it has to discuss the legitimacy or the possibility of the Church and theology having a voice in the public sphere, in which other religious communities are also involved, as well as individuals with other religious perspectives or even without any religious affiliation. Theology, principally in the West, and especially in the second half of the twentieth century, seems to have become aware of the new cultural and social reality formed under the pressure of secularization, and developed a rich body of thinking on the imperative need to articulate theological reason in a secularized society, and on the possibility of a public theology, which seems inseparably bound up with the various versions of theology of culture and political theology, as well as of liberation theology. The crucial question which raises up in the context of our discussion is what could or should be the public theological discourse in a post-secular age, when we see a forceful reappearance (but not a domination over society) of religion? More specifically, in regard to Eastern Orthodoxy, we have to ask which answers and what kind of theological reflection Orthodox theology could provide to the challenge of public theology?⁵⁰

In my opinion, the Orthodox Church and theology's first and foremost concern in the present context cannot be to preserve at all costs the "Christian" or "Orthodox" character

49 Cf. P. Nellas, "The Light of the Word. Theological perspectives on overcoming the crisis in the teaching of Religious Education," *Synaxi*, issue 14, 1985, p. 101.

50 On the public voice of theology in a secularized society see J. Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society. The Public Relevance of Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999. Specifically on "public theology" see the classic works of R. F. Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology. The Church in a Pluralistic Culture*, Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991; idem, *Religion and Public Life. A Dilemma for Democracy*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996. Cf. J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1994. For an initial Orthodox approach to these issues see E. Clapsis, "The Public Witness of His Church," *Orthodoxy in the New World*, Thessaloniki: Pourmaras, 2000, pp. 187-193 [in Greek]. Cf. also a brief presentation of this question in my book, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, "Doxa & Praxis: Exploring Orthodox Theology" series, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012, pp. 81-86, and in a more extended form in my book, *Orthodoxy and Modernity: An Introduction*, Athens: Indiktos Publications, 2007, pp. 127-161 [in Greek; English translation (by Elizabeth Theokritoff) forthcoming by St Vladimir's Seminary Press]. Unfortunately, I cannot recapitulate here this otherwise very interesting discussion taking place today between intellectuals, philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, and theologians (e.g., José Casanova, Ronald F. Thiemann, Richard Falk, John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Jürgen Moltmann, Emmanuel Clapsis, Jean Baubérot, Régis Debray), along with analyses and critical remarks on the public role of the Church and theology, as I did in my book on *Orthodoxy and Modernity*. On the public voice of Orthodoxy in regard to the issue of post-secular society, cf. Nikos Kokosalakis, "The Eastern Orthodox Tradition in Non-secular, Secular and Post-secular Context," in: Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel (eds), *Europe: Secular or Post-secular?*, Berlin, LIT Verlag, 2008, pp. 93-109.

of the state, nor the utopian and seductive illusion of a “Christian” society or a “Christian civilization.” It must instead engender the call to repentance, humankind’s preparation to receive the preaching about the kingdom of God, a creative, spiritual fruitfulness, and the Christ-centred healthiness of Christian communities. The public ecclesial and theological discourse ought to embody the ethos of the Cross which is that of Christ: it should be a word of witness to the new reality experienced by the Church, a word of protest concerning social and institutional evil, the violation of human freedom and dignity; a word of support for the “others,” the “least of the brethren,” the weak and the victims of history who are an image of the “Other” *par excellence*.

In every case, we should note that this whole discussion concerning a conditional public presence for the Church and theology began in the West, where secularization, the privatization of religion and the separation of Church and State prevailed. There is the possibility that this discussion may signal the quest for a new balance and a new synthesis between secular and sacred, public and private. Unfortunately, the discussion in question has no yet substantial relevance to the traditional settings of Orthodoxy as long as the Church there clings stubbornly to its phobic imprisonment in the forms and models of the Constantinian era, remaining trapped in its character as a state Church and its national-patriotic role; and ultimately, as long as it remains blithely devoted to the model of a “Christian society” of which it imagines itself the spiritual leader and exclusive representative/administrator, even in today’s conditions of pluralistic democracy. The dialogue about the Church’s place in the public sphere concerns Churches that have accepted modernity, pluralism, criticism and self-criticism, as well as the principles of an open society; those Churches that understand the challenges, the gaps and the contradictions of post-modernity and post-secularism. The Orthodox Church will finally have to decide what world, what society and what epoch it is living in!

b) *The Theology-Religious Studies Debate, and the Increasing Tendency to Convert Theological Faculties or Divinity Schools into Religious Studies Departments*

As I said in the beginning of this paper, one of the serious consequences for our topic of the sociological shift described by the “secularization theory” of the ‘50s and ‘60s was, starting from the end of the ‘60s, the move of many state faculties of theology or university divinity schools, from Christian theology to Religious Studies. In recent years, in our post-modern, post-secular context, as a result not only of secularization but also of institutional differentiation, globalization, and the increasing religious and cultural pluralism, the model of Religious Studies tends to become the dominant one, thus challenging the legitimacy and the status of theology within the secular university, while both in Western Europe and the U.S. the departments of Religious Studies are gaining more and more in research grants and projects, and in teaching positions.⁵¹

51 See Dietrich Werner, “The Future of Theology in the Changing Landscapes of Universities in Europe and Beyond,” *The Ecumenical Review*, 64 (2012), especially pp. 398-399.

As it is well-known, a significant part of the progressive and secular intelligentsia in both “Orthodox” and Western countries, with clearly recognizable influences either from the French “*laïcité*” or from the most radical version of modernity and the principle of the strict secular state and religious neutrality, makes no bones about its intention of excluding theological studies from the university and the broader academic community. Already at the ‘90s, the situation was described by the perceptive and blunt comment of German progressive theologian Jürgen Moltmann: “For the moment, atheists and fundamentalists in Germany have created an unholy alliance in order to divide Theological Schools into Religious Studies on the one hand and ecclesiastical studies on the other. The former [atheists] want to get away from Theology; the latter [fundamentalists] want to bring it under their control,” both groups being seemingly unaware that “it is only in the context of the Christian tradition that this secularized modern society has emerged, a society that separates religion from the state and at the same time guarantees religious freedom.”⁵² Religious Studies are therefore described as aiming at the scientific objectivity, using the descriptive method, and doing free and independent research; while theology is considered to be confessional, partisan and subjective, operating from a concrete religious perspective, and according to a specific ecclesial tradition, following in its research normative methods and extra-scientific facts or criteria (like Revelation).⁵³

Few people will accept today this simplistic and reductionist divide. But, on the other hand, there has to be awareness that the above comment by Moltmann could neither provide an adequate account of the phenomenon nor prevent the general trend. The latter is the result of broader socio-cultural changes inaugurated by Enlightenment, Secularization, and Modernity and accentuated after the cultural revolution of the ‘60s, and the progressive transformation of Christian West in multicultural pluralistic societies, along with the restrictive and austerity measures taken in nowadays by the secular governments as part of the neo-liberal financial agenda who questions state contribution for expenses covering “private” or “minority” purposes (like theological formation).⁵⁴

Today, in the Christian theology-Religious Studies debate we can behold a multiplicity of voices forming a whole spectrum of arguments and approaches regarding the model to follow: from the praise or support of the Religious Studies model,⁵⁵ to the defense of the pre-Enlightenment traditional model in which, in the framework of a “Christian University,” confessional theology has to gain again its position as “queen of

52 J. Moltmann, “Öffentliche Gotteserinnerung. Theologie ist eine Funktion des Reiches Gottes,” *Evangelische Kommentare*, 29 (1996), pp. 273-274.

53 See for example, R. Kloppenborg, “Gottesdienstwissenschaften,” in W. van Asselt, e. a. (ed.), *Wat is theologie? Oriëntatie op een discipline*, Zoetermeer, 2001, pp. 93–103, 94; cf. D. Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies: the Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999, cited in E. Eynikel, “Western European Theological Education: Challenges and Prospects,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Theologia Catholica Latina*, 52 (2007), pp. 50-51.

54 For the background of this shift see, among others, the paper by H. M. Vroom, “Theology and Religious Studies: Progress and Relevance,” in: M. E. Brinkman e. a. (eds), *Theology Between Church, University, and Society*, Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003, pp. 88-105 (with special focus in Netherlands). Cf. J. C. Hough Jr, “The Marginalization of Theology in the University,” in: J. M. Kitagawa (ed.), *Religious Studies, Theological Studies and the University-Divinity School*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992, pp. 37-68.

55 See for example the paper by D. Cush, “Religious Studies versus Theology: Why I’m still Glad that I Converted from Theology to Religious Studies,” in: D. L. Bird and S. G. Smith (eds), *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*, London-New York: Continuum, 2009, pp. 15-30.

the sciences.”⁵⁶ If the approaches of Denise Cush and (especially) Gavin D’Costa go more or less in the direction of exclusivist models, a large consensus seems to be reached today in the theoretical level – despite the predominance of the tendency towards Religious Studies – for an inclusive model and complementarity between theology and Religious Studies, without the one being reduced to the other.⁵⁷

Some scholars, like Konstantin Delikonstantis from the Faculty of Theology in Athens, Greece, to mention one example, dare even to speak or to dream on the “common” or “shared” future between theology and Religious Studies, and of two neighboring disciplines which do not contest one another’s legitimacy. He considers then, that the presence of the faculties of both theology and Religious Studies in the house of knowledge helps each of them to do its indispensable work effectively, whereas, according to the same scholar, their academic communication with, and healthy antagonism towards, one another only promotes the cause of truth.⁵⁸ Delikonstantis, who believes that “the future is in openness,”⁵⁹ makes no bones, however, about his feeling that “theologians value the presence of Religious Studies in the university, whether as an independent discipline or as a subject within various disciplines, and the contributions made by its researchers, more than the scholars of Religious Studies value theology and theological knowledge,” deploring furthermore the spirit of self-sufficiency and the lack of true communication between different disciplines.⁶⁰

Delikonstantis’s approach has the advantage to be rooted in Orthodox tradition and spirituality, and at the same time to be in dialogue with Western theologians, especially his teacher in Tübingen, Max Seckler. Thus, to the claims that theology does appear as a foreign element within the modern university because of its “ideological” commitment, and that only Religious Studies may find a place in it, the Greek Orthodox scholar answers by developing an interesting argumentation. According to Delikonstantis, the fact that the theologian’s work concerns a particular faith community,

56 See on this the papers and books by G. D’Costa, “Theology and Religious Studies OR Theology versus Religious Studies?,” in: D. L. Bird and S. G. Smith (eds), *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*, op. cit., pp. 44-54. Cf. idem, “The End of ‘Theology’ and ‘Religious Studies’,” *Theology*, 49 (1996), pp. 338-351; *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation*, Malden, MA- Oxford, UK, Blackwell, 2005.

57 Cf. the majority of the papers of the collective volume, D. L. Bird and S. G. Smith (eds), *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*, op. cit. Cf. also, E. Eynikel, “Western European Theological Education: Challenges and Prospects,” op. cit., pp. 51-55; K. Delikostantis, “Theology and Religious Studies. Sense and Nonsense of a Conflict,” in: V. Ionita-G. Larcher-Gr. Larentzakakis (eds), *The Future of Theology in Europe. Report on the Consultation of the Theological Faculties in Europe*, Graz, Austria, 4-7 July 2002, Geneva: Conference of European Churches, 2003, pp., 53-65. But controversy on this topic is still ongoing – as it becomes clear from a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (vol. 80, number 3, September 2012). In this issue Luther H. Martin and Donald Wiebe are initiating the debate by their paper entitled, “Religious Studies as a Scientific Discipline: The Persistence of a Delusion” (pp. 587-597), in which – reviewing their previous theses – argue from the outset that “it is delusory to think that ‘religious studies’ has ever achieved, or can achieve, a full emancipation from religious concerns,” confessing that they have been overly optimistic and deluded on this point (p. 587). In the same issue, N. Frankenberry, A. Taves, R. N. McCauley, and Ed. Slingerland, are giving their responses to the paper by Luther H. Martin and Donald Wiebe, mostly defending the scientific reliability of the Religious Studies model (pp. 598-617), while at the end of the debate they are giving their rejoinder to the criticism directed at them (pp. 618-622).

58 See K. Delikostantis, “Theology and Religious Studies. Sense and Nonsense of a Conflict,” p. 59.

59 Ibidem, p. 62 ff.

60 Ibidem, p. 59.

does not mean that theology serves the concrete faith community uncritically, for theology is neither the proclamation of the faith, nor propaganda on its behalf. Instead, it is a 'critical partner' of faith and of the Church; it practices its criticism within the faith and on its behalf. It could be called the critical theory of Christianity, in its Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox form.⁶¹

In virtue of its critical function, theology is therefore combining both the prophetic self-consciousness and the historico-critical study of sacred, patristic and liturgical texts, and of the life and history of the Church. And without being reduced to a positivist project, academic theology is fully aware of the scientific critical paradigm of modernity which is still prevailing in academic circles and as such could have its own place in the university, and may be the "critical partner" of the other sciences and disciplines.⁶²

For Delikonstantis therefore, "the argument that the view of religion taken by Religious Studies, in contrast to that taken by theology, represents a wider horizon and the openness to the universality of religious phenomena does not appear to be sustainable. In Religious Studies, to the contrary," Delikonstantis continues, "there appears to be a narrower vision, which does not go beyond understanding religion as a special area within the culture and is usually trapped in a functionalist point of view. Certainly," according our theologian, "no one would want to dispute the necessity, the meaning and value of research in Religious Studies, least of all theologians, who derive more benefit from it than anyone else. Research in the history of religions, comparative religion, and in the phenomenology, the psychology and the sociology of religion surely performs an inestimable service to the truth. Serving the truth, however, is something entirely different from monopolizing it. At one time it was theology which was accused of wanting to monopolize the truth, but today it seems to fit better the scientific pretensions in Religious Studies. In any case," Delikonstantis concludes, "religious studies cannot replace theology, but neither can theology make the study of religions superfluous."⁶³

Moreover, many voices have been recently raised to remind that Christian theology – being part of European cultural heritage – should continue to have a visible presence in public universities and higher education, as a fundamental task of the universities is to relate to the whole of human knowledge present in society.⁶⁴ In the words of Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC): "Christian theology has a public responsibility and needs to be visible in the landscapes of higher education in the future. While the 'religious factor' is on the increase globally and in many regions of the global South, universities in the European context cannot risk marginalizing or

61 Ibidem, p. 57. Cf. M. Seckler, "Theologie, Religionsphilosophie, Religionswissenschaft. Versuch einer Abgrenzung," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 157 (1997), pp. 163-176, especially p. 169.

62 K. Delikonstantis, "The Future of Academic Theology in the Age of Post-modernity and Multiculturalism," in: P. Kalaitzidis-N. Asproulis (eds), *Orthodox Christianity and Multiculturalism*, the 2003-04 Volos Academy's Series of Lectures, Volos: "Ekdotiki Demetriados" Publications [under publication; in Greek]

63 K. Delikonstantis, "Theology and Religious Studies. Sense and Nonsense of a Conflict," p. 58.

64 See Dietrich Werner, "The Future of Theology in the Changing Landscapes of Universities in Europe and Beyond," op. cit., pp. 399-400. To this respect, the same document contends that with the growing significance of other religious traditions in Europe (mainly Islam and Judaism), the relevance of theology—understood as the presence and critical reflection of a living religion in an academic setting—certainly applies also to other religious traditions (op. cit., pp. 395, 400, 404).

downplaying the role Christian theology has – in cooperation with religious studies – to look into issues that are of fundamental importance for our societies like the ethical and spiritual values which are guiding our social and political developments.”⁶⁵

But the divide between inclusive-exclusive approach in regard to the Christian theology-Religious Studies debate does overlap with another crucial divide, related this time to the ways in which theology must respond to the supremacy of the secular/liberal paradigm: the so-called “revisionist” paradigm, which, according to the analysis of Plancher and van Prooijen, tries to adapt and to reformulate theological discourse in such a way that it becomes acceptable for and could be brought into the public debate (e. g. David Tracy); and the so-called “post-liberal” paradigm, which, according to the same analysis, seems ready to accept the definite withdrawal of theological discourse from the public life, in order to clearly focus on faithfulness to Christian self-description and identity (e. g., George Lindbeck, but also Stanley Hauerwas, and even Gavin D’Costa).⁶⁶

Eastern Orthodox theologians did not pay so much attention to this issue and did not get involved in the above debate – Professor Delikonstantis is just an exception to the general rule. Not only because they have other priorities, like the everlasting East-West divide, according to which the former is witnessing of an experienced-based liturgical, Eucharistic, and patristic theology, while the latter is facing impasses and dead ends due to its rationalistic and dry academic character; but also because Orthodox theologians are thinking that they do not yet face nor experience the same challenges (e. g., Religious Studies) with their Western colleagues. But insofar these challenges are primarily rooted to sociological and political – and not just to theological or ecclesial reasons – it is sure that in the Orthodox context also, we will have very soon to face similar challenges and problems.⁶⁷

65 Olav Fykse Tveit, “Theology and Unity in World Christianity,” *The Ecumenical Review*, 64 (2012), pp. 381-382

66 See W. C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989, p. 155; T. van Prooijen, “Identity in Non-identity? Taking a Few Steps on Jürgen Moltmann’s Road towards a Public Theology,” in: M. E. Brinkman e. a. (eds), *Theology Between Church, University, and Society*, op. cit., pp. 205 ff.

67 For further readings on the situation of theological studies, especially in Europe, except the previous references cf. A. Loretan (Hg.), *Theologische Fakultäten an europäischen Universitäten. Rechtliche Situation und theologische Perspektiven*, Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2004.

In Place of the Conclusion

What has been said in previous sections and paragraphs implies a series of reconsiderations toward the future of academic theological education in Orthodox context. We mention below just some of them, without claiming any exhaustive character or exclusivity.⁶⁸

- The curricula and the programs of theological education in Orthodox faculties have to be reconsidered. While patristic and liturgical studies will continue to keep a privileged place, a special attention has to be paid to biblical theology and biblical studies, as well as to modern and contemporary theological and philosophical trends. In addition, the study of the Fathers has to be more historical, more hermeneutical, more contextual, while systematic theology seen from this perspective needs to be something more than a simple class of Dogmatics.⁶⁹

- Theological reflection on and dialogue with contemporary issues in society needs to be increased and reinforced. Time has come that liberation, political, and feminist theologies among other things find their proper place within the Orthodox theological curricula. Research on anthropological and bioethical topics should gain a renewed interest in the Orthodox context, while the theological approach to secularization, modernity and post-modernity as well as to post-secularity, globalization and pluralism has to be an urgent priority for Orthodox schools and academies.

- The departments for teaching Ecumenical theology and promoting dialogue with other Christian denominations should be more supported. The new reality created by the religious otherness and diversity of our multicultural societies inevitably poses the challenge of the pluralism and leads to the necessity of a theology of religions.

- Theological faculties and institutes in the Orthodox world have to reflect seriously on the on-going debate and dilemma Christian theology-Religious Studies, and take in consideration for the development of their future plans the major move it happened to many places in Western European and American universities, which finally led to the conversion of many theological faculties or divinity schools into Religious Studies departments.

- Relevant to the above points is the need for Orthodox Church and theology to realize at last what is their place and mission in the today's globalized pluralist world, and what kind of discourse they have to articulate when they intervene in the public sphere, in which other religious communities are also involved, as well as individuals with other religious perspectives or even without any religious affiliation.

- In other words, the Orthodox Church and theology have to respond to the challenges and demands of the 21st century and abandon the "safe" shelter where they used to live for decades, even after the famous and celebrated "return to the Fathers."

68 Cf. also, P. Kalaitzidis, "Orthodox Theological Education in the Postmodernity Era: Challenges, Questions and Ambivalences," *op. cit.*, p. 622.

69 Using the distinction between *Church dogmatics* and *Church and World dogmatics*, Nikolaos Asproulis in his paper, "Church and World Dogmatics: The Ecumenical Need for a Paradigm Shift in Modern Orthodox Theology and Education. A Reflection," *Review of Ecumenical Studies*, 5 (2013), pp. 154-161, regards that it is time for contemporary Orthodox theology to overcome a new form of "Babylonian captivity", i. e. its one-sided entrenchment in the glorious patristic and Byzantine past, and to articulate a renewed theological curriculum.

Foreword	3
<i>Dr Pantelis Kalaitzidis</i> Orthodox Theology and the Challenges of a Post-secular Age: Questioning the Public Relevance of the Current Orthodox Theological “Paradigm”	4
<i>Dr. Frank Bestebreurtje</i> Limits of Reason and Limits of Faith. Hermeneutical Considerations on Academic Theology	26
<i>Dr. Jakub Gomułka</i> Wittgensteinian Philosophy of Religion: Looking for A Common Ground	36
<i>Dr. Iryna Khromets</i> Teaching Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology: A Ukrainian Case	51
<i>Dr. Grigory Gutner</i> What Does It Mean for Theology to be Academic?	54
<i>Dr. Andrei S. Desnitsky</i> Biblical Studies, Biblical Translation and Denominationalism	60
<i>Nadezhda Ilyushenko</i> Transformation of Religious Consciousness in Post-Secular Society	65
<i>Dr. Mykhailo Cherenkov</i> The Theology of Post-Soviet Evangelical Churches in the Intellectual Context of Postmodernity: From Historical Reconstructions to Future Projects	69
<i>Dr. Vitalii Khromets</i> The Situation and Perspectives of Theological Education in Ukraine	77
<i>Pavlo Smytsnyuk</i> Academic Theology and Ecumenical Formation	80
Program of the conference	86
Information about Organizers of the Conference	88