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Ecclesia sine macula et ruga

Donatist Factors among the Ecclesiological Challenges
for the Reformed Church of Hungary especially after 1989/90

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door

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geboren te Szikszó, Hongarije

Dedicated to my wife, Pálma
and our children Emma, Olivér and Lujza.

... sicut et Christus dilexit ecclesiam
Eph. 5: 25

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István Csók: Lord's Supper (Úrvacsora), 1890, oil, canvas
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Abbreviations

ÁEH	(*Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal*) State Office for Church Affairs
ÁVO	(*Államvédelmi Osztály*) State Security Department
BSZ	(*Bibliaszövetség*) *Bible-Alliance*
FIDESZ	(*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége*) Young Democrats' Alliance
FIDESZ-MPP	(*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Magyar Polgári Párt*) Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party
FKGP	(*Független Kisgazdapárt*) Independent Smallholders' Party
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
MDF	(*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*) Hungarian Democratic Forum
MSZMP	(*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*) Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
MSZP	(*Magyar Szocialista Párt*) Hungarian Socialist Party
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P.Migne, Paris 1844-1890.
REMM	(*Református Egyházi Megújulási Mozgalom*) Reformed Church Renewal Movement
SZDP	(*Szociáldemokrata Párt*) Hungarian Social Democratic Party
SZDSZ	(*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*) Alliance of Free Democrats
THÉMA	(*Theológiai Élet Ma – Protestáns Tanulmányi Kör*) Theological Life Today – Protestant Study Circle

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The church without spot and wrinkle (*Ecclesia sine maula et ruga*) is often difficult to imagine according to our daily experiences, unless we are open to the transcendental Triune one God, who become flesh in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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1.

INTRODUCTION

My interest concerning the ecclesiological challenges for the Reformed Church of Hungary after the downfall of Communism began to develop in a lively way while I was a theological student of the Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy. The twentieth century history of our Seminary itself bears witness to those ecclesiological problems, which are also present in the wider ecclesiological context of the Reformed Church of Hungary. The Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy, as part of the 475 years old Reformed College of Sárospatak, was forcefully closed between 1951-1991 in order to support the church leadership's interest at that time, which was more in harmony with the Communist ideology rather than with the true nature and needs of the church.

I started my theological studies right after the reopening of the Seminary in 1991. In the intense situation of the changes in the Hungarian society the Reformed Church of Hungary also faced a number of internal and external challenges, which vividly call attention to how one can understand the definition of the church as *without spot and wrinkle* (*sine macula et ruga*). I believe that the pastors of my own age as well as the older generation are living and doing theology in a significant historical time for the church and for the Hungarian nation. Therefore I make an attempt in this study to reveal some of the theological and ecclesiological challenges of our situation, which are formative for the task and responsibility of my generation. I share the same experience as is basically common for the life of all the churches in the Middle European region, and often similar to the wider context of the western world. The church has to reorganize its life and service in such a way as to be able to define how it is possible to fulfil its special task among the many changes in the life of society and culture today. One begins to realize that since 1989 on many levels the Reformed Church of Hungary has not been ready to face the inner and outward expectations and while some challenges for the church have been well addressed, others have been pushed aside. To be able to confront these expectations and challenges a theological clarification is needed in relation to the identity of the church and the God-given task for the Reformed Church of Hungary today, in order to avoid the trap of a forced correspondence with the world. In order to reach such a clarification an encounter with the past is always helpful. We have to be aware of the fact that a clear distinction has to be made between sociological and theological demands. On the one hand, the Church always has to look backwards, primarily to Christ, thus preserving its God-given identity. On the other hand, it must also discover the fullness of its resources by responding to the course of its mission by the Spirit's activity. The church must look forward, remaining sensitive to the changing needs of the world. Challenges and problems are inevitable. The church has always faced and will face choices, of which some were and will be wrong. The following general questions will always be important: How is the church to choose the right means? How does it find and keep its identity and unity? How does it respond to

suffering, success and power? How does it deal with the tension – in modern terms – between individual rights and the establishment? The following short biblical theological consideration will link us to the heart of the problems in the Reformed Church of Hungary, and in the further parts of the introduction we will describe the focus and specific themes of this study.

1.1 A Mysterious Synergy - 1+1=1 and 2-1=0

Zsigmond Varga's expressive mathematical absurdity in the subtitle gives his comprehensive understanding of the (deutero) Paulinian text of the letter to the Ephesians, concerning chapter five's last analogy about the 'body', the theological meaning of which is significant in relation to the problems this dissertation is dealing with. Reality and analogy are bound together unbreakably, thereby creating the classic form of reciprocal definition: "...the two will become one flesh (v. 31). This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church." (v. 32)[1] The essence of God's creating power has the consequence of an unbreakable unity of the created world's potential dichotomies. On the battlefield of humanity's demonized tendencies, the focus of God's creating power declares a unity in the realm of social relationships (for example marriage) and in the realm of worldly structures between materialism and idealism; 1+1=1. As marriage was the chief metaphor of the above mentioned passage, the negative approach to the mysterious unity, which unites and provides the one flesh, the breaking of that unity can be expressed in a mathematical absurdity as well, 2-1=0.[2] The formula is just as true for the relationship of Christ and the church as well. The church and Christ together equal to one. This mysterious reality comes to the fore in this other analogy, namely: Christ and the church, whereby the inquisitive human nature arrives at the limit of its own comprehension of this enigmatic synergy.

The κεφαλη-σῶμα issue pertinently gives the core of the letter to the Ephesians, incorporating the Christological and ecclesiological elements of the letter.[3] In Eph. 5: 21-33 an analogy is drawn between (1) Christ - church and husband - wife; and (2) Christ - church and the husband – and his own body. The analogies arrive at a deeper meaning when the body of Christ is called the church as the bride of Christ. In the κεφαλη-Christology Christ stands over His church as Lord, leader and lover of it (v. 25). The church as the σῶμα of Christ is also compared to the human body in self-denying pure love and holiness, and is to be without blemish. The imperative tone and the following expressive words of Paul in verse 25 through 27 emphasize Christ's sacrifice as a central motive of his self-giving love. The message is emphasised with the help of five verbs by Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ *loved* the church and *gave himself* up for her (v. 25) to *make her holy*, *cleansing* her by the washing with water through the word

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[1] Eph. 5: 31-32. The Bible quotations are usually from the NIV translation, unless otherwise stated in the footnotes.
[2] Zsigmond Varga, "Az egyház jelölésére használatos fogalma, nyelvi elemzése és teológiai tartalma," *Református Egyház* XLV, no. 2 (February 1993), 32.
[3] Eph. 2: 16; 3: 6; 4: 4; 12: 15; 5: 23, 30.

(v. 26), and to *present her to himself* as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (v.27)." One may ask: what was the purpose of Jesus Christ's sacrifice? The answer tends to be clear: make the church holy (ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας). The formation of the grammatical tenses allows such a reasoning that the cleansing of the church happens before its sanctification (to make her holy having been cleansed). The sanctification of the church in its character and behaviour through the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit is the present work of Christ, while the '*present her to himself*' has an eschatological meaning.

The church is often repulsive, despised and persecuted, but one day it will be seen as what it is: *Ecclesia sine macula et ruga.* "...a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain." [4]

1.2 Hope and Reality

The gap between hope and reality may determinately be present on the view of the church. On the one hand, the experience of salvation gives irreversible trust and hope, on the other hand, one meets with the discouraging reality of the corrupted world and church, where "ever since our fathers died, *everything goes on as it has since* the beginning of creation"– as in the Second Letter of Peter, where poignant refrain[5] points to that. The facing of reality after the euphoria of conversion can be a heavy dose whereby one can realize that one's weakness and perversity have not disappeared. In the inglorious present, salvation and non-salvation are interwoven. The realization hardly can be ignored, that the evil one left behind in a conversion experience is still part of the individual's present reality, also in the community of the Church, which is God's model for humanity, the *communio sanctorum.*

The Reformed Church of Hungary after the changes of 1989/90 stepped into a gap between hope and reality. One of the most vivid examples of that is found in the following biblical metaphors, which tried to find an analogy for the four decades before the transition. "Then the forty years of Communist dictatorship began in the life of our church [the Reformed Church of Hungary] the Babylonian captivity, the sad time of the wandering in the desert"[6] Bogardi Szabó and Ferenc Szűcs rightly point out the incompetence of this analogy. The Babylonian captivity was a judgement; while during the wandering in the dessert there was a promise. If the forty years for the Reformed Church of Hungary were a wandering in the desert and it was a *promise*, then the Reformed Church of Hungary would have had to arrive at Communism, which also thought about itself as a Canaan, a

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[4] See Sg. 4: 12. Cyprian on the basis of Sg 4: 12 notifies: "But if His Church is a garden enclosed, and fountain sealed, how can he who is not in the Church enter into the same garden or drink from its fountain?" See Cyprian, *Epistle* 73, 10, 11. See A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, reprinted 1990.

[5] 2 Pet. 3: 4.

[6] Magyar Református Tanácskozó Zsinat (edt.), *Tíz esztendő után* (Budapest, 2000), first refered to by István Bogárdi Szabó "A MRE elmúlt tíz évének írásos értékelései," *Théma, Theológiai Élet Ma – Protestáns Tanulmányi Kör* (2002, special edition), 30-43, 33.

land of milk and honey. This analogy is wrong, not even mentioning the miscalculation that the Babylonian captivity lasted for seventy years.[7] Even if one would stay with the biblical picture of the wandering in the dessert as an adequate analogy to describe the forty years of Communism, it is hardly imaginable that after the four decades of Communism the Reformed Church of Hungary has entered into the Promised Land. The above mention analogies' deviances well demonstrate that any analysis of the ecclesiological situation since the changes of 1989/90 will be more difficult if one does not take into consideration the short and long-term past.

One of hottest points was arrived at when the democratic changes started for Hungary in 1989, and the Reformed Church of Hungary found itself in a new, although very ambivalent, situation. One of the key issues at that time was whether the Reformed Church of Hungary was ready to face the heretical status of its recent four decades (1948-89).

We cannot disconnect the present ecclesiological problems from the past. The risk of such an evaluation cannot be avoided. We are obligated to look back and ahead, at the same time. Imbalance, always is a dangerous trap. On the one hand, we may put too much emphasis on the past, while we are uncertain of the future. On the other hand, we may only focus on the future, without taking the past into account. There is a third way, namely, when the strategy is merely to survive the ecclesiological crisis. In that case, which is the worst, we always wait for external solutions which are alien to our Christian and our Reformed identity.

To be able to give a general view of the challenges of Reformed Church of Hungary one will need to examine the subject of its *hope* and the true facing of its *reality*. The Reformed Church of Hungary just as any Christian church is facing a paradox regarding its God given task which is in relation to its worldly surrounding. Any renewal of the church postulates the decrease of its power in the world, while the power of the Gospel also needs to be increased through the church in the world. The principle of the *ecclesia semper reformanda* on the one hand, cannot neglect the given circumstances of the present, otherwise the orientation of the church will be in danger, while on the other hand, the context of the church cannot be the subject of its orientation because the message of the Gospel will then be in danger.

In our voyage of discovery in the ecclesiology of the Reformed Church of Hungary after 1989/90, the organising paradigms will be the Donatist movement's theological elements in the fourth century and their relevance to the situation today. We believe that the analogies with the first notable church dissent will give us a useful guidance to the Hungarian situation and a broader view for analysis and evaluation from a historical distance.

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[7] Bogárdi Szabó, "A MRE elmúlt tíz évének írásos értékelései," 33, and Ferenc Szűcs, "Az elmúlt 10 év teológiai értékelése," *Théma, Theológiai Élet Ma – Protestáns Tanulmányi Kör* (2002, special edition), 44-45.

1.3 Ubi Ecclesia?

Donatism, as a schismatic movement, originated after the *Great Persecution* (303-305) of Emperor Diocletian and continued in North Africa until the overwhelming of the whole region by the Muslim invasions of the seventh century. A number of complicated issues emerged during the long history of the Donatist movement, in polemic with the Catholic Church. In the fourth century, North West Africa became a "laboratory of experiments"[8] for the most extreme variations of the possible answers which have determined church history until the present days.

The complex nature of the Donatist dissent's issue is most evidently clear from the pastoral, polemical and other theological writings of Augustine.[9] Basic theological issues are at stake, which reveal the nature of and perspectives on the church, and its situation in the world when a hostile environment and even persecution are present. Major ecclesiological themes are present in this Donatist debate, which try to define the essence of the Christian Church according to its holiness and catholicity, as the body of Christ on both a universal and local level. The major issue of the debate can be compacted in one short question: *Ubi ecclesia?* - which from time to time has reappeared in the life of the Christian church, paving the road of ecclesiological challenges.

First of all, two distinct views of the role of religious groups in society are on the ecclesiological *battlefield*: the one aims above all to defend its identity – to preserve its divinely given mandate, while the other is able to absorb the society in which it is placed.

The patristic centuries' struggle about the holiness of the church clearly comes to a strong focus in the Donatist-Catholic debate. The different theological approaches in the debate are not always so far from each other. Donatism laid a chief emphasis in the argumentation with the Catholics on the fact that the subjective holiness or personal worthiness of the members of the church makes participation in the church, which is pure and holy, possible. On the Catholic side sometimes uncertainty is perceptible in their theological inquiry concerning this topic, for example, at the use of the phrase of *ecclesia sine macula et ruga,* by Augustine. In most cases the phrase: *the church without spot and wrinkle,* seems to be an eschatological reality. At other times the phrase seems to apply to a present reality, as we can see in the following Augustinian quotation, which is not to be completely identified with the *ecclesia visibilis.* "The Church as a whole says: Forgive us our trespasses! Therefore she has blemishes and wrinkles. But by means of confession the wrinkles are smoothed away and the blemishes washed

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[8] The expression is borrowed from Peter Brown. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, first ed., 1967).

[9] On anti-donatist works of Augustine, see P. Monceaux, Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne VII: Saint Augustin et le Donatisme (Paris : Leroux 1923).

clean. The Church stands in prayer in order to be purified by confession and, as long as men live on earth it will be so."[10]

Careful attention needs to be made to the fact that the Donatist church also vividly presented the sensitivity of the socio-political and cultural aspects of the indigenous people in North Africa after the union of the Catholic Church with the Roman Empire, which gives an important insight to the analysis of the Donatist dissent at the heart of the ecclesiological questions which can be raised.

We believe that by going deeper into the Donatist problem one can find many surprising elements, which will warn us to not take sides too quickly in this kind of dissent. The trends and major characteristic elements have never disappeared from the life of the Church. The issues raised during the Donatist-Catholic debates also have relevance for the ecclesiological situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary today. These issues touch fundamental teachings on ecclesiology, Christology, mission and the theology of reconciliation.

1.4 Historical and Theological Questions

One of the key historical and theological questions in the first part of the dissertation basically circles around the negative connotation which accompanied Donatism for most of the history of theology. The history of theology did not ease the often one-sided evaluation and fierce emotions towards the movement, which were ensured by the writings of their famous opponent, Augustine. The second half of the twentieth century has opened a way of new scholarly treatment on Donatism[11] which allows for reconsiderations on its ecclesiology.

We sum up our understanding of Donatism in a generalized form by using the expression: *Donatist factors*, by which we mean those elements which make up the Donatist identity. We shall explain these elements in the next chapter. The complexity of the number of elements in the Donatist factors are not always present in the same composition in ecclesiological problems and as the history of Donatism shows they can cause a split among the Donatists, just as well as the

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[10] „Ecce tota Ecclesia dicit: *Dimitte nobis debita nostra*. Habet ergo maculas et rugas. Sed confessione ruga extenditur, confessione macula abluitur. Stat Ecclesia in oratione, ut mundetur confessione; et quamdiu hic vivitur, sic stat." Augustine, *Sermo* 181, 5, 7: PL 38, 982.

[11] R.B. Eno, "Some Nuances in the Ecclesiology of the Donatists," *Studia Patristica* 14 (TU 117) (Peeters Publisher, 1976), 417-421. R.B. Eno, "The Significance of the List of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist polemic," *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 158-169. Peter Iver Kaufman, "Note; Augustine, Evil, and Donatism: Sin and Sanctity Before the Pelagian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 51 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 115-126. T.D. Barns, "The Beginnings of Donatism," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 26 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 13-22. Robert F. Evans, *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK [Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge], 1972), 65-129. M.A. Tilley, *The Bible in the Christian North Africa, The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1972). Emin Tengström, *Donatisten und Katholiken. Soziale, wirtschaftliche und politische Aspekte einer nordafrikanischen Kirchenspaltung* (Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Göteborg, 1964). Hans-Joachim Diesner, *Kirche und Staat im spätrömischen Reich. Aufsätze zur Spätantike und zur Geschichte der Alten Kirche.* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964). Charles J. Scalise, "Exegetical Warrants for Religious Persecution: Augustine Vs. the Donatists," *Review and Expositor* 93 (1996).

Catholic theologians were able to modify their thoughts in relation to these factors.

On first sight, one of the most obvious parallels between the time of the Donatists and the Middle – Eastern European countries' ecclesiological situation after the changes of 1989/90 could be the question of the *lapsi* of the church, who had betrayed their faith by one way or another cooperating with the Communist regime. Some were no doubt convinced Marxists; others were ignorant stooges of the Communist rulers; others were to weak to live a life of dissent; still others defended their actions by saying that their minimal cooperation gave them opportunities to minister that would not otherwise have been available. The question of *lapsi* was a complex theological problem in the light of the given circumstances in the time of the Donatists and it is even more complicated in the case of the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the transition of 1989.

However, as we look more closely, we find that there is much more to recall from the Donatist dissent than the *casus belli* of their separation. The following pages will make an attempt to analyse the situation, also revealing the nature of the Donatist identity in both cases: in the time of the Donatist and in the time of the Reformed Church of Hungary after 1989/90.

The research method of the study will have a historical perspective and also take into account the social-political and cultural dimensions, although the main line of thought will stay in the area of systematic theology, especially ecclesiology. The actual consequences in relation to the theological existence of the Reformed Church of Hungary are the primary aim of the analysis of the past in relation to the present. Some of the theological problems of the Donatist dissent will give the focus for the research. The research is based on primary and secondary sources in relation to the Hungarian situation, and mainly on secondary sources on the Donatist part. Through the new approach to the perspectives on the Donatist movement, the Donatist factors in ecclesiology can be pictured in the constellation of the following themes.

1) The persecution of Christianity offers a crucial question, which every religious community has to face. Is faith best expressed through confrontation or through compromise with hostile secular powers? Should believers choose paths of valour and even martyrdom, or paths of accommodation and discretion? One has to also take into consideration the theology of penance and the possible ways for development after persecution.

2) Holiness and separation in the church. Considering the holiness and unity of the church or denomination: What role do Christology and Eschatology have? Unity is contrasted with two concepts that stand on either side of it: uniformity and union. Uniformity is to deny individuality and the uniqueness of personality. Union is a limited degree of unity. How is this unity is best understood? What role does tradition have in these questions? What role does diversity play in maintaining unity? How can the church remain part of the one body of Christ, and be the spiritual home for the indigenous people of a particular place? Can conflict be a key element for understanding the nature of the church? The question of church leadership is crucial in these matters.

3) Church and state, and church and society. How does the church as the body of Christ relate to society? How does ministry deal with the collective evil present in the world? What is the task of the Christians? Does the church have the aim of transforming society or does it rather offer an alternative society? Can the church make the sick world well? How does the Christian self-identity help the church truly be the church, while the members of the church are also members of the state?

4) What role can ethnicity play in ecclesiologically especially in the context of foreign imperial dominion? How is one's national identity interrelated with one's Christian identity in the church?

These themes as structural parts of the Donatist struggle with the Catholics will guide us in the case of the situation of Reformed Church Hungary since the fall of Communism in 1989-90 and afterwards.

The specific research question of the study can be articulated as follows:

How do the issues raised in the Donatist-Catholic debate help to understand the ecclesiological situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the downfall of Communism?

The structure of the study can be outlined as follows:

1) After the introduction in chapter two we introduce Donatism, taking into account its main tendencies and the historical and sociological context of the movement. We also find it important to include those scholarly treatments - mainly from the second half of the twentieth century – which reveal another side of Donatism. After an evaluation of the different issues raised in the debates which were set in the context of general ecclesial views from Tertullian through Cyprian, the Donatist, until Augustine, we then make an attempt to highlight the most characteristic elements (called: *Donatist Factors*), which will guide us in the analysis of the Hungarian Church's ecclesiological situation.

2) In chapter three we shortly describe the major historical lines (from the sixteenth to the first half of the twentieth century) of the Reformed Church of Hungary in relation to our special focus.

3) In chapter four we elaborate on the recent past (1945-1990) of the Reformed Church of Hungary during the time of Communism, taking into account the historical, political, socio-cultural and theological stances of the official church-leadership.

4) In chapter five we give a general overview and analysis of the ecclesiological context of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the downfall of Communism, concentrating on the years 1990-2000, in relation to the political, socio-cultural and theological areas.

5) In chapter six, we analyse how the *Donatist Factors* can help to understand the challenges of the Reformed Church of Hungary, especially after the time of 1989/90.

Each chapter starts with an introduction and ends with a short conclusion, all of which we bring together showing the results of the research in the final, sixth chapter.

THE DONATIST DISSENT AS A SIGN-POST IN THEOLOGY
- An Analysis through the *New Approach* to the Donatist Factors'
Perspectives in Ecclesiology -

2.1 Introduction

For the reconsideration of the Donatist movement and its theological elements it is important to highlight their complexities, which have several layers. Talking about the Donatist factors on the basis of the history of the Donatist movement, one can distinguish a theological, sociological, cultural and political layer. On first sight, it does not seem too complicated to describe and evaluate the Donatist movement. We would not like to lay too much stress on the most common view of the movement, which mainly has negative connotations, such as that the Donatist movement was a group of violent lower class revolutionaries who admired martyrdom, and considered themselves holy and perfect.

Generally speaking, the main issue is the following: the holiness and the catholicity of the Church, as stated in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. The church's confession of the 'Holy Catholic Church' can be articulated because the Church is the body of Christ, which shares the holiness of God. One can also know, however, that the church on earth is composed of people who are on a variety of stages in their pilgrimage towards ultimate holiness. Evil is present in this world, and it dwells in the members of the Church as well. From the earliest days the Church has been facing the problem of disciplining its members. There were two kinds of solutions. The first focuses on the complete actual holiness of the members of the church: whoever does not fulfil the requirements cannot be part of the Church. The second solution is to become careless as to the quality of the church members' lives. Neither of these extreme answers can be satisfactory. The problem of finding a balance between the two extremes was always a great challenge for the Church. Where is the line between true and untrue Christians? The answer one gives depends on one's temperament and background, and on how one sees the relationship of the Church and the world. The general point of view of the possible answers can be collected in two main groups. One is called the "rigorist," on a moral and doctrinal level. The rigorists deny any restoration of those who were guilty of grave sins. The other is the so-called "liberals," who allow restoration after grave sins if the sinners show penitence and desire restoration. However we meet several other problems beyond the above mentioned general ones. A closer look at the Donatist movement will show more about this.

We also have to take into account that Donatism will never be perfectly known, since we have very little from their original writings.[12] What we know about Donatism is from the statements of Optatus and Augustine.[13] In the case of Augustine's writings against the Donatists, one should take into account the opinion of the group of scholars[14] who say that many particular points were taken out of context. They suggest that Augustine's crucial role against the Donatists, by which he accused them of heresy, was more the result of the imperialization of the Christian religion, rather than an inconsistency of the Donatists.[15] Further elaboration will be made on this, as one important element of the Donatist movement.

2.2 The Uniqueness of African Christianity in the Early Church

It is a commonplace for Western thinkers to regard the following church leaders from North Africa – Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen and Augustine – as the paradigmatic figures for the early church's theological construction. Therefore, we should ask what is so extraordinary in African Christianity, also especially in Donatism, that it became an important theological concept in ecclesiology. Many changes occurred during the first six hundred years of the Church. The most dramatic and remarkable changes were connected to the shift from being a persecuted sect, to becoming a universal faith, which was not tied to a particular race but still had a strong connection to Judaism. Henry Chadwick [16] points out that the aspiration of being universal is rooted in monotheism itself, although every religion has a tendency to become tribal, when each tribe is focussed on its protecting god to whom sacrifice can be given. The universalisation of faith is always attractive for ideologies, especially when such an ideology (like

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[12] These are those few additional Donatists writings, which were identified by the Italian scholar, Pincherle (A. Pincherle in *Bilychnis* xii, 1923 and in *Ricerche religiose*, i-iii 1925-7.; see W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), xiv. One should also mention those writings, like sermons and pamphlets, records of the gatherings of the bishops and the martyrs' stories which gave the basis for Tilley's research. See Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa - The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

[13] The authenticity of these statements is not questioned anymore, and the scholarly treatment of Donatism has a tendency to concentrate on a broader realm of questions.

[14] They are Peter Brown, M.A. Tilley, Murvar Vatro, P. Bright, C. J. Scalise and so on.

[15] See Brown, *Religion and Society*, 41. Here, Brown compared Augustine with Hobbes' political philosophy and stated that both of them had a pessimistic view on the ability of mankind to live according to democratic values and both shared a view that an excessive fear of violence comes from the masses. Therefore both of them endorsed the monastic power structures and they disregarded the destructive violence of rulership. See also Peter Brown, "Religious Dissent in the Later Roman Empire: The Case of North Africa "Christianity and Local Culture in Late Roman Africa," *Religion and Society* (Faber: London, 1977), 279-300. He interprets the African schism of the church as a part of the Constantine problem. See also R.A. Markus, "Christianity and Dissent in Roman North Africa: Changing Perspective in Recent Work," *Studies in Church History* 9 (1972), 21-36, and Brent Shaw, "African Christianity: Disputes, Definitions and 'Donatists'," Malcom R. Greenshields, Thomas A. Robinson and Lampeter, Edwin Mellen (edt.), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Religious Movements? Discipline and Dissent* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 7. For both scholars (Markus and Shaw) Donatism was closer to African Christian ecclesiastical tradition represented by Cyprian.

[16] Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society, From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-3.

the Roman Empire) has a tendency to rule the world. When one gets closer to the history of the Donatist movement and the struggle of Christianity in the time of the Roman Empire - especially in the time of persecution - the problems of North African Christianity seem more deeply rooted.

North African Christianity had a distinguished place in the Roman Empire. No other sections of the Empire were so adversarial regarding the Caesar cult, as the church in North Africa. Probably the Christian church came to existence in this area with the Roman colonisation of the Province.[17] The first documentary evidence of the existence of Christianity in Africa is found in the Acts of the Scillitian Martyrs (180 A.D.), which is followed by the Passio Perpetua (203 A.D.) Both documents radically show how North African Christianity rejected the importance of Roman culture, family ties and lifestyle, and emphasised their high regard for the Christian brotherhood. Africa itself developed its own theological tradition starting with Tertullian, continued with Cyprian of Carthage and then Donatus. Certainly, Augustine also has a distinguished place among African theologians, but his position and part is not equal to the others', since they were more radical in the rejection of the Roman lifestyle. The only safe place, according to their theological view, was the ark of the church where Christ safeguards his faithful people against all powers of evil. In the fourth century, Africa became a stronghold of Christianity, and it remained so until the seventh century. North Africa played an important role in Latin Christianity; therefore the schism which divided African Christianity has a great significance with regard to the understanding of that time. W.H.C. Frend's book, *The Donatist Church*, highlights the importance of those events. Frend states that the schism between Catholics and Donatists was far more tenacious than a similar division elsewhere. Frend has pointed out that the Donatist schism has a much greater importance than the Melitian schism because it was strongly connected to ethnic, social, economic, climatic and cultural division.[18]

The schism's background has to be studied from another point of view as well, namely that of the language. On the one side, the local culture was associated with two native languages, Punic and Libyan (which is often called "Ber-

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[17] The accepted view - stressed by English speaking historians is that Christianity was exported by a colonial experiment of Imperial Rome. See Charles Pelham Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa* esp. vol. 1 (4 Volume Set), (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2003), 130. Some assume that Christianity 'entered' Africa through Rome or through Libya and Egypt by means of Greek traders, although inscriptional, archaeological and literary evidence is not decisive in the matter, see W.H.C. Frend's discussion, *Archaeology and History in the Study of Early Christianity* (London 1988), 261–71. Another view assumes that the fractured reality of dispersed synagogue Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in 70, contained within it some rigorist cells, often loosely referred to as the 'Encratites'. This movement was an early ascetic sect, being a primitive form of Syrian Christianity, which survived in the gravity of political centres of Rome and Constantinople, while failing to achieve its own voice or political (as opposed to intellectual) identity. The name, *Encratites* refers to a variety of sects, including the Judaeo Christian Ebionites, active both in the North African church and in Alexandria. They are mentioned by Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* 1. 28), by Jerome (*Epistles* 48.2) and by Justin (1 Apology 29). See (also for the above mentioned sources) R. Joseph Hoffmann, "Beyond the Discontinuity Paradigm: Towards a Pan-African Church History," *The Journal of Religious History* vol. 21, No. 2 (June 1997), 136-138.

[18] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 52.

ber"), and on the other side, there was the Latin world.[19] Did the language issue play any role in the schism? We also have to ask: Is Donatism part of a continuous native religious tradition? If we take into account the fact that the schismatic Church relied on the support of those who had little or no interest in the Roman society, we can see this schism as a social revolution as well. Similary to Frend, others[20] also suggest that more than mere religious differences were the sources of the schism. Diesner[21] places the Donatists in relation to the circumcelliones, while Brisson[22] claims that the Donatist Church was the Church of the poor and dispossessed. Also, Jones' view has to be taken seriously:

> The Donatist claim was that: "The Donatist Church is the true Catholic Church, and we will never communicate with traditores," but what they thought, we are asked to believe was: We are Africans and hate the Roman Government, we will have nothing to do with the Romans, and we will maintain our African Church and if possible our African state. This is the thesis which is obviously difficult to prove or disprove, for one cannot easily read the secret thoughts of men who lived 1500 years ago.[23]

Although Jones' contribution to the discussion does not deny the possibility of any 'nationalism', he recognises that we have to be careful about reducing the Donatist problem merely to a socio-political level. It is necessary to investigate on what level and basis both the Latin and the Donatist church could claim to be the true Catholic Church. We are facing two views in the elaboration of the Donatist movement. The first view is that the group existed, above all, to defend its identity and to preserve the divinely given law. The other view is that it was rather the result of its socio-cultural context.

Tilley has opened up an exciting new line of research toward the Donatist church. Her new insights on the Donatists' self-understanding and development in their theology according to the changing historical circumstances, will reveal another side of the Donatist church which is not viewed only through the lens of Optatus' and Augustine's polemic.[24]

It is also important to note that the church in North Africa was one of the most flourishing among the Christian communities, and remained so until the seventh and eighth century. Several approaches were made in order to find out the cause of their disappearance.

The first set of causes comes from the sociological and cultural background. The church of North Africa remained alien to the Roman Empire, and never

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[19] Brown, "Christianity and Local," 279-300.
[20] Like Gottfried Arnold, F. Martroye, Llewellyn Woodward and Poul Monceaux.
[21] H.J. Diesner, *Kirche und Staat im spätrömischen Reich* (Berlin, 1963).
[22] J.P. Brisson, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l`Áfrique romaine* (Paris, 1958).
[23] A.H.M. Jones, "Were the ancient heresies national or social movements in disguise?" *Journal of Theological* Studies 10 (1959) 280-286, 281.
[24] M.A. Tilley, *The Bible in the Christian North Africa, The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

truly became the church of the Berbers. The church failed to penetrate the nomadic Berber tribes. The only support they won was from the Roman-Berbers inside the provinces but not from the nomadic groups living in the mountains. The political instability did not allow the peaceful settlement and expansion of the church. The church was unable to disentangle itself from the Roman culture and the resistance of the Berbers became fiercer. The start of the universal recognition of Christianity as a state religion in the time of Constantine was just fuel on the fire.

The second set of causes is ecclesiological. The episcopal structure of the churches did not suit the nomad society of the Berbers. The church never produced an African liturgy (Punic or Berber). The Bible was not translated into the native language of the indigenous population. The unstable state of the Catholic Church resulted in the fact that the Vandals brought the teachings of Arianism to Africa, serving as bridge towards Islam.[25]

The political causes also played a role. From the time of Constantine the Catholic Church got support and protection mainly from the state. When the Roman Empire collapsed the church was not able to withstand the conquest of Islam, and after the Arab invasion of North Africa the church could not survive and simply faded away.

At this point we may already begin to notice that the above mentioned causes point to some characteristics of the Donatist dissent and the debate between the Donatists and Catholics. Having evaluated the struggle of the Catholic Church in North African Christianity, we begin to arrive at certain theological elements which will guide us in our evaluation of the modern ecclesiological situation in the Reformed Church of Hungary after the collapse of Communism in 1989. There are important implications beneath the surface, which may later in this study give us considerable insight in the theology of the twenty-first century, which beyond its own uniqueness also shows similarities to the time of the Hellenized world.

2.3 Short Introduction to the Antecedents of the Donatist Movement

There were several similar movements to Donatism with the same endeavour. The most important were the Montanists and the Novatians, the Melitians in Egypt and the Luciferans in Spain. From the above mentioned movements Montanist and Novatianism show a closer relationship to Donatism. A summary of their characteristics will create a link to history and the former theological tradition, helping to understand the Donatist dissent problems.

Before referring to some major theological characteristics of the Montanist movement, it is important to draw attention to some elements of the Apostolic church and the Early Church before the time of both the Montanism and the Novatian movements.

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[25] Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture," 279-300.

2.3.1 The Characteristic Elements of the Apostolic and Early Church

The time of the early Church was not only the time of saints and martyrs as we often find purposely expressed in the apologetic literature. The time of the early church was also characterised by the promised salvation of the Gospel, which is evidently a salvation from evil. This involves conversion, which is usually a radical turning away from the things that lead to destruction. Then sooner or later there is a realisation of some evil apparently remaining in the new situation of salvation and also in the Church. The old weakness has not disappeared. Non-salvation is not something of the past. It is intertwined with the present salvation.

Holiness and unity were the basic characteristics of the Church. The main question was what the contrast between sanctity and corruption is, and how the apologists and preachers were able to deal with it.

In the Acts of the Apostles it is clearly indicated that the apostolic Church of Christ had important insights that help us give an explicit definition of the Church. These marks of the church are the following: 1) oneness in the heart and soul, 2) the simplicity of heart, 3) a desire to fulfil the holy commandments, which requires a love for God.[26]

1) "Oneness in the heart and soul." This refers to the common spiritual struggle, the common purpose and hope for eternal life, the common enemy and the mutual struggle in opposing evil. The oneness of spirit and heart, i.e. to be of the same mind and spirit, is a required condition for the promotion of every serious issue, whether political or religious. The indivisibility and unity displayed in the book of Acts demonstrate how the first Christians accomplished many things in their awareness of oneness. "And all that believed were together (Act. 2: 44.) [...] Continuing daily with one accord (Act. 2: 46) [...] And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. (Act. 4, 32.)" [27]

2) The simplicity of heart. "And had all things common (Act. 2: 44.)[...] did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart (Act. 2: 46.)[...] neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own. (Act. 4: 32.)" Indeed, the position of the apostolic church was simplicity and obedience and not naiveté. This is necessary for the attainment of joint ownership when dealing with the union of interests, purposes and responsibilities among the members of a group. Just as it is specifically represented in the book of Acts, true unity and harmony did and can exist only with joy and the simplicity of the heart. In 2 Corinthians 9, having counselled the brothers to give cheerfully (v. 7), the apostle Paul concluded (v. 11), by speaking about modesty (in the original Greek text) on behalf of the one who gives, which prompts thanksgiving to God.[28] It is worth examining therefore how the ap-

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[26] Jn. 14: 15.

[27] Acts. 2: 44-47 (KJV).

[28] ἐν παντὶ πλουτιζόμενοι εἰς πᾶσαν ἁπλότητα, ἥτις κατεργάζεται δι' ἡμῶν *εὐχαριστίαν τῷ θεῷ* (quotations from the Greek text of the New Testament: Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

ostolic church managed many things, also in the domain of simplicity – sincerity of heart.

3) The third characteristic of the early Church was "the desire to fulfil the holy commandments," which requires love for God. It is a fact that the other two characteristics, oneness of spirit and simplicity of heart, could not exist without this desire to fulfil God's will.

We may wonder how one's desire to fulfil the holy commandments is to be expressed, when one agrees with the position of the apostolic church as seen in the book of Acts. It obviously requires a way of life and more importantly a positioning of one's heart before God. It is clear and obvious from Paul's theology – even if it sounds harsh – that the Church should make it clear for itself and others what it stands for in thought and action. It has to develop the institutions proper to its nature and mission, and should be different from the world, while finding its place in the world. It has to manifest a single entity, one Church. In a pagan environment one important biblical text, balanced with others, will be: "Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean..."[29] No moral compromise, no doctrinal syncretism. This was not a sociological aspiration, but a theological demand.

What is the Church? It is the body of faithful Christians, men and women, dedicated to Christ, surrendered to Him, and living in compliance with the eternal Word of God. A body whose head is Christ, whose presence is fulfilled in his church.[30] We have to stay within the church, for "whoever has God as their Father, has the Church as their mother."[31] We should also testify along with the creed of faith, "I believe in the one holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church." And yet from the earliest days of the church, schisms began to appear as the result of human pride, irrationality and lack of charity. After the splits, it became necessary to have standards by which it can be decided whether a community or an individual is part of, or outside, the fellowship of Christ.[32] The question then arose naturally: How can it be known which was the true church?

One of the early martyrs, Ignatius of Antioch, who later was killed in the Colosseum, wrote memorably about the clergy of Ephesus in his time (the end of the first century when the voice of the Apostles still resounded in the Church): "Your justly respected clergy, who are a credit to God, are attuned to their Bishop like the strings of a harp, and the result is a hymn of praise to Jesus

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[29] 2 Cor. 6: 17 citing Isa. 52: 11.

[30] Eph. 1: 22-23.

[31] Cyprian, *De Unitate Ecclesiae* VI. In A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, reprinted 1990.

[32] For example in the Nicene Creed we find much stricter definitions of the Church than those used in the earlier baptismal creeds. In the *Nicene Creed*, the Christian Church is described as being "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." These are known as the four marks of the Church. It has to have unity with itself and with her Lord. It has to be holy as the body of Christ and through the sacraments as the means responsible for the sanctification of souls. It has to be catholic, universally extended, and it has to be apostolic, the follower and maintainer of the teaching of the apostles, having it ministry recognized as deriving its authority from Christ through the Apostles.

Christ from minds that are in union, and affections that are in harmony."[33] The Christian community or the Church, consequently, has to be that realm where the life of the Trinity is located on earth, and earth is located in the Trinity through men and women who are authentic Christians. In Ignatius' theology the ecclesial unity is maintained by the bishops, who became the centre of the church. The true church in any particular (local diocese) place should be the microcosm of the whole church, which was understood as the body of Christ. Ignatius maintained the unity of the church in the visible sense, the idea of the invisibility of the church not having yet appeared.[34]

Two generations later in Irenaeus' ecclesiology, the office of the bishop slightly changed, and he was more like the custodian of the teaching and the faith of the apostles. The church in Irenaeus' theology meant the following:

> Neither do the churches in Germany believe any differently, nor those in Spain, nor among the Celts, nor in the east, nor in Egypt, nor in Libya, nor in Jerusalem. But just as the sun is one and the same all over the world, so also the light, the proclamation of truth, shines forth everywhere.[35]

Irenaeus thought that the church had to shine on everyone "heretics and evil-thinkers, self-pleasing and self-satisfied schismatic hypocrites actuated by love of money or reputation."[36] In relation to the bishops he said that whoever became unworthy of their ministry must be excluded from the church. The above-mentioned theologians were not connected to the land of North Africa, but common Christian theologies without doubt, left their marks on the great theologians of the North African Christianity.

The result of the growth of Christianity was the increasing moral laxity and formalism in the second century. The church's relationship to the world also won significance. Should the Church take a radical step into the world in an attempt to conform the world to the church and make it acknowledge the church's authority? Or should the church continue to recognise that its obligation is to separate itself from the world and remain a devoted religious society?

2.3.2 Tertullian and the 'New Prophecies'

The ascetic and rigorist elements of the early church were combined in Montanism also in Asia Minor (Phrygia) in the same way as later in the West. The interpretation of church history from ancient to modern times reveals a great number of uncertainties. This is indeed true for understanding Montanism[37], in regard to the shortage of information and the biased nature of the existing sources. It is possible to assume that Montanism was considered to be a hereti-

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[33] Ignatius of Antioch, "Epistle to the Ephesians," *Early Christian Writings* (London, 1968), 76.

[34] Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, (London: SPCK [Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge], 1950), 4.

[35] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.10.2.

[36] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.24.1.

[37] Adolf von Harnack, "Montanism," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* vol. 16, 13th edition (New York: The Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1886), 776.

cal teaching, whereas other places were open to the "New Prophecies." In reality it is almost impossible to make an objective evaluation of the movement.[38] Montanism today would be regarded as pentecostal.

Turning our attention to Tertullian before he became interested in Montanism, we have to indicate that there was a gradual shift in his ecclesiology. By the time of his *De praescriptione haerticorum* (written around 197), Tertullian can be considered strictly orthodox in his theological thinking. When he wrote the *Adversus Praxean* and the *De Pudicitia*, the main issues in those days of the church were a variety of heresies. One of the major questions was how one can be sure of the verity of one's catholic faith. Tertullian did not tolerate his opponents' use of Scripture. He thought that Scripture rightfully belongs to the church. He believed that heretics have no valid claim to use Scripture. Tertullian insisted that the view of orthodoxy was proved by the adherence to the rule of faith. According to his argument the rule of faith was inherited from the apostles. Basically, in Tertullian's view the *regula fidei* was the major criteria to preserve the apostolic and post apostolic church, the consequences of this being the preservation of authority, discipline and seriousness in the church. This view was already present at Ireneus' teachings. Tertullian's ecclesiology depends on the above mentioned concept of *regula fidei*, which would have further implications for the ecclesiology of the North African Christianity.[39]

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[38] Eusebius referred to them as the "enemy of God's church," the "machination against mankind," "poisonous reptiles" or a "heretical sect." See Pamphilius Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine,* translated by G. A. Williamson, (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967), 217. Eusebius also mentions a number of learned men who were against the Montanist movement: Abircius Marcellus, Miltiades, Apollonius, Serapion, Irenaeus. See in Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, 217-228.

Bonwetsch defined primitive Montanism as follows: "An effort to shape the entire life of the church in keeping with the expectation of the return of Christ immediately at hand; to define the essence of true Christianity from this point of view; and to oppose everything by which conditions in the church were to acquire a permanent development". See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1905, eighth edition), 417.

Schaff, on the contrary, speaks about Montanism as a remarkable phenomenon. "It was an excessive supernaturalism and puritanism against the Gnostic rationalism [...] It is the first example of an earnest and well meaning, but gloomy and fanatical hyper-Christianity, which like all hyper-spiritualism, is apt to end in the flesh."[38] Ritschl also gave credit to the significance of the Montanist movement. (A. Ritschl, *Entstcehung der altkatholischen Kirche* (2nd edition Bonn, 1857) see Harnack, "Montanism," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Knox says that the Montanist movement was taken too seriously and even exaggerated by historians. The genius of Tertullian, who himself became a follower of the movement, made Montanism famous. R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), 25.

[39] See J.E. Merdinger, *Rome end the African Church in the Time of Augustine*, (London: New Haven and Yale University Press, 1997), ch. 2, and also see Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society, From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), ch. 17.

In the end of the second century Montanism[40] became quite popular in Africa. Tertullian favoured it the most,[41] which also caused a shift in his views. His interest in Montanism never reached an abrupt turning away from the Catholic church, although his strong conviction about tradition in his earlier ecclesiological thoughts leads to a view where the Spirit plays a central role. Various problems are indicated in his treatises after getting acquainted with the movement of the New Prophecy:

1) The holiness or purity of the Church as one of the major features.
2) How to relate the society of that kind of Church to the wider society in such a way that the special character of the Church would not be lost?

These main problems are related to two further ones:

3) What is the implication for the Church as a historical community (institute) where the Spirit of God dwells?
4) What is the position of the Church in relation to the immanent end of all things?

These themes for him are simply connected to the Spirit and eschatology.[42] For Tertullian the church was an eschatological community, which was already present in time, and will be fulfilled in the Kingdom of Heaven. The fact that the church in its eschatological character was present, also implied that law must ensure structure.[43] This also explains Tertullian's strict rigorist attitude and his rhetoric which often contained military expressions in relation to the church. He identified the church with Christ, and saw it as an extension of the Incarnation itself, which could only assure the holiness and unity of the church.[44] He thought that this was only possible because the Spirit was present in the midst of the church. Having analysed Tertullian's writings, Rankin calls attention to the fact that throughout both major periods of Tertullian's theological thinking the necessary unity of the church was consequently stressed. As a matter of fact, it will be interesting also to see what role eschatology played in the further development of the ancient North African ecclesiology. The eschatology of the early church itself was a challenge to the 'eternal' Roman Empire.[45]

According to Evans' terminology, Tertullian was revolutionary concerning the problems in the church. His revolutionary attitude consisted in that

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[40] Phrygians, Cataphrygians and Priscillianists were also names for the movement, which can indicate the movement's national character.

[41] There are scholars who questions Tertullian's close relationship to the Montaniansm. Such as R.H. Ayers, "Tertullian's "paradox" and "contempt for reason" reconsidered," *Expositori Times* 87, (1976), 308-311. H. von Campenhausen, "Tertullien," M. Greschat (edt.) *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte in Alte Kirche I,* (Stuttgart, 1984), 97-120. F.E. Vokes, "Montanism and Ministry," *Studia Patristica* (Berlin, 1966), 309-316. G.L. Bray, *Holiness and the will of God* (London: SPCK, 1979). T.D. Barnes, *Tertullian: a historical and literary study*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[42] Evans, *One and Holy,* 4.

[43] The rejection of Marcion's teachings supports Tertullian's strictness as well. Evans, *One and Holy*, 20-21.

[44] David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 4-5.

[45] Evans, *One and Holy*, 6-8.

"...Tertullian either directly or indirectly not encouraged Christians to begin violent tactics for the overthrow of the Roman imperial government."[46] Evans also mentions Tertullian's attitude towards the Roman State, its politics and religion, which for Tertullian was simply idolatry. This was also one of the major reasons for Tertullian to favour Christian martyrdom. He thought that martyrdom was a divinely appointed task, which could be even understood as a second baptism with blood. We also have to note here that Tertullian denied that the martyrs could have any authority with regard to the forgiveness of sins.[47] It is important to focus on one of the documents from this period, namely the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, which appears in Tertullian's *Ad Martyres.* Perpetua and Felicitas were executed in 203. The editor of their story was Tertullian, who after their death was committed to the 'New Prophecy'. Their stories illustrate well Tertullian's attitude towards the lukewarm Church and martyrdom. A number of complex difficulties have occurred with this high expectation of Christianity and in the relationship to the surrounding social life. A great number of evidences are given in Tertullian's writings[48] about the challenges for the Christian believers' participation in Roman society and culture, such as: the fulfilment of civic offices; service by Christians in the Roman military; participation in business, marriage, and so forth. The significance of boundaries for Christian communities is revealed by these issues, concerning which Tertullian took a particularly rigorous position. For Tertullian the church as Christ's bride must be *sine macula et ruga* (without spot or wrinkle).

We can assume that Tertullian's 'tolerance' towards the Roman State also meant the maintenance of the unity of the church, in spite of Evans' denial of this[49] in relation to Montanism. It is also important to note that beyond Tertullian's hostile attitude against the secular state, he showed some 'tolerance', which however was sometimes even closer to patience as a 'critical solidarity' – as Roldanus phrases.[50] He favoured patience as a Christian virtue, which simply meant inactivity towards the secular and idolatrous surrounding.[51] He believed that New Prophecy was a genuine movement whose purpose was the purification of the church. Tertullian fiercely attacked those who were against the 'New Prophecy'.

A clear distinction was made between orthodox and non-orthodox in the second and third centuries in North African Christianity. The Catholic Church (*ecclesia numerus episcoporum)* was the orthodox church, which was ready to make compromises with the evil world in order to make progress and sustain

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[46] Evans, *One and Holy*, 5.

[47] Tertullian, *De Pudicitia 22*, translated by S. Thelwall, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo: American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, 1885), vol. 4, 100-101.

[48] Tertullian, *De idololatria, De Corona, De Spectaculis.*

[49] This approach of Tertullian "...finally moved him outside the Catholic Church to join himself to the rigorous and Spirit-conscious Christian sect, the Montanist"; Evans *The One and Holy*, 5.

[50] Johannes Roldanus, *The Church in the Age of Constantine* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006), 16.

[51] Patience as one element of the Christian life can be derived from Stoic philosophy, which Tertullian combined with martyrdom. Evans, *The One and Holy*, 15-17.

the unity, while the non-orthodox (*ecclesia spiritus*) 'new' movements, which were in many cases orthodox in modern terminology, were enthusiastic and openly hostile and intolerant to the secular world.[52]

We also have to be aware of the fact that this ambiguity of the church was often not as drastic as it appears. Dougles Powell examines the Montanist movement carefully and makes some very considerable points:

1) On the basis of the distinction between Montanism and non-Montanism, he draws attention to the conclusion that Tertullian knew nothing about Montanism. He was only familiar with 'New Prophecy', which was at least a generation older than Montanism.

2) According to Powell, the New Prophecy's turning into Montanism was only a Phrygian phenomenon (which was resisted by bishop Eleuthreus in 177, in Rome[53]).[54] These evidences support the idea that we cannot really think of any schism in the church in practice in North Africa at the time of Tertullian. These evidences are the following:

  i. Tertullian never referred to the Montanist bishops in his writings that are available for us.

 ii. He never said that the *ecclesia numerus episcoporum* was not the true church, and the only true church would be the one which followed the New Prophecy. His teaching about the relationship of the church and the Spirit highlights this. He stated that the true *antecessor* was only the Spirit who came from Christ. Neither the church in history nor the bishops could claim themselves to be the true successors without being filled with the Spirit of God. This concept led him to see the church as the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, which is the *Vicar of Christ*. Tertullian put emphasis on doctrinal and disciplinary matters. The work of Christ was revealed in the ongoing activity of the Spirit, which leads Christians to ethical purity.[55]

iii. The Montanists were never withheld by a definitive sentence of a bishop from receiving the Catholic Eucharist.

 iv. Beyond Tertullian's vagueness about some standpoints, he lays an emphasis on his refutation of any rival papacy, which simply means that he was against the idea of any formal schism in the African Church.

  v. A connection between Tertullian's and Cyprian's teachings is suggested by Jerome. He claimed that there was not a single direct reference to Tertullian's attitude towards schism in Cyprians's writings. It is difficult to imagine that Cyprian regarded Tertullian as his master if he were the maintainer of any schisms. We can rather imagine that Tertullian formed a different movement within the Church as a kind of *ecclesiola in ecclesia*,

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[52] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 112-113.

[53] See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5, 16.

[54] D. Powell, "Tertullianists and Cataphrygians," *Vigiliae Christianae* 29 (1975), 33-54, 42.

[55] "None was perfect before the discovery of the order of faith; none a Christian before the resumption of Christ to heaven; none holy before the manifestation of the Holy Spirit from heaven, the Determiner of discipline itself." See Tertullian, *De Pudicitia,* Translated by S. Thelwall, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, Buffalo, 1885), vol. 4, 85.

which is not equal to any formal schisms.[56] Bigg even supports the idea that Montanism was not only orthodox in doctrine but it also contributed to the formation of the Creed. The Montanists were the first to bestow the title 'God' to the Holy Spirit. They were the first to enunciate the 'homoousion'.[57] There is an attempt along with Bigg and Powell to see Montanism as an orthodox movement whose belief and practice differed only in the emphasis of certain aspects of their faith. In particular, they were marked by their asceticism, expressed in fasting and in their attitude to marriage, as well as in their moral rigorism.

Coming to the conclusion of the Montanist movement's significance in relation to Donatism, the verses of Peter's epistle is significant. "They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." (2 Pet. 3: 4) Christian exhortation, the assurance of salvation and the submission to rulers are present in the epistle. The church in North Africa lived between hope and reality in the second and third century, just as the church does in any time and any place. The effectiveness of the early church lies in its apologetic literature. The church's intention was to paint the most favourable portrait possible of the Christian community. Different tones and priorities can be detected in the East and West or anywhere. The same attitude prevailed in the realm of piety and morality.

Concerning the 'New Prophecy' or Montanism, it is difficult to decide if they were closer to the notion of heresy, or closer to a 'healthy' revival. In their doctrine they overemphasized certain aspects of faith and gave more authority to prophecy.

Tertullian made a distinction between the *ecclesia numerus episcoporum* and *ecclesia spiritus,* when he was explaining about the forgiveness of sin, because of his understanding of these concepts.[58] If we see Montanism as a formal schism, we would need to think of a separate institution on both sides, which would have required their own bishops, clergy and gatherings for worship.[59] We can suggest with the earlier mentioned scholarly treatment that there was no doctrinal division between the rigorists and their more liberal fellow Christians.

The following points summarize some of the characteristic elements of the Montanist movement in relation to Donatism in North Africa in the time of Tertullian, when the rigorists and liberals could be distinguished in the church.

1) We saw the ambiguous nature of the movement, which can also be detected in Tertullian's teaching, which caused division as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia,* rather than a formal schism. We can list those types of troubles, which later also played a role in the Donatist movement.

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[56] D. Powell, *Tertullianists and Cataphrygians*, 38-39.

[57] C. Bigg, *The Origins of Christianity* (Oxford: Calderon, 1909), 194.

[58] "Accordingly 'the Church' it is true, will forgive sins: but (it will be) the Church of the Spirit, by means of spiritual man; not the Church which consists of a number of bishops." See Tertullian, *De Pudicitia,* 21. Translated by S. Thelwall, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, 100.

[59] See Powel, "Tertullian and Cataphrygians," 34, where he refers to Eusebesius' Ecclesiastical History (book 5, ch. 28) which describes a contemporary Theodotian heresy in Rome.

2) Tertullian's Montanist aspects towards the Catholic Church was very similar to what has appeared later in Donatism. The following points will create a link to see how the time of Tertullian was a forerunner to the problems in Donatism:
   a) The Catholic Church was considered a community ready to compromise with the evils of the world.
   b) In the eyes of the followers of the New Prophecy and Tertullian, the priorities in the Catholic Church were its peace and unity at any price in spite of the increasing destruction of Christian morals, holiness and church disciplines.
   c) The centralised urban episcopates were very much in focus.
   d) The authority of the Catholic Church leaders seemed to be restricted to the visible church's powers of administration.
   e) The Catholic Church was lacking holiness and (positive) enthusiasm.

The possible solutions given by the Montanists and Tertullian also continued to show some similarities to the Donatists:
1) The church is viewed as the church of the Holy Spirit.
2) Their enthusiasm which resulted in hostility towards the world, which had positive and negative sides both in Montanism and in Donatism.
3) The individual's desire to unite with the Divine, which resulted in a special emphasis on baptism assuring the believer of a pure status.
4) The dispensation of the sacraments could be done by any Christian person, as was suggested by Tertullian. This doctrine went through a unique development by Cyprian and later the Donatists.
5) Witness to faith through martyrdom under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
6) Doctrinal teachings on the purity of the Church and strictness in Church discipline.

The above mentioned similarities between the two movements play an important role in the analysis of the Donatists' teachings, which are often referred to as the old tradition of North African Christianity.

2.3.3 The "Cathari"[60]

The Novatian schism is important for various reasons. First of all the context of the struggle of the Catholic Church took place during the time of persecution against the Christians under Decius' rule, and it will be important to see the different theological solutions according to the wide range of Christian behaviours under the hard times of persecution and also how they reacted when the Christian persecution was eased or even stopped. Secondly, Cyprian's theology in relation to schismatic attempts will be important as a source and reference for both parties in the Donatist dissent. Let us shortly see the (pre)context of the events.

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[60] The 'pure Christians,' as the Novatians called themselves.

From the final years of Emperor Lucius Septimius Severus, (146-211; Roman emperor from 193-211) until the Death of Emperor Alexander Severus (208-235; Roman emperor from 222-235), there was a quasi-toleration for Christians in regard to their religious practice.

Problems started to occur in the year 248 when the Christians were blamed for the instabilities of the times.[61] The Empire was also threatened on the Danube frontier by the federation of the German tribes and the Goths. In 249, the Senate recognized Decius to be the emperor, giving him the attribute *Traianus* as a reference to the illustrious emperor Trajan. One of Decius' main goals was the restoration of the strength of the State basically in two ways: 1) militarily and 2) by a programme of State (Roman) religion, creating in this way a public piety. This way a local citizenship could be replaced by a homogenous citizenship in order to strengthen the State position. In the first month of his reign he issued a decree ordering all habitants to sacrifice to the Roman Gods, eat from the sacrificial meat and give an oath that they practiced this kind of sacrifice. With the attempt of the restoration of the old form of the Roman religion the number of local cults were being transformed into a single religious cult built on the often forgotten ancient Roman gods - according to the *traditionalist* Decius' view. Decius' decree was not aimed especially at the Christians in the Empire - but the Christians, being a non-conformist religious group in the Empire, soon became the subjects of sanctions because they did not want to 'recognize' the Roman gods. In most cases the edict threatened torture, confiscations, exile, periods of imprisonment and the death penalty for the Christians.[62]

The Christians had a choice to obey the Emperor or obey the church. A number of Christians were caught in this dilemma. The *honestiores* were threatened with losing their properties and their status as well, while the *humiliores* were mainly sentenced to imprisonment. Some members of the Christian communities faced death rather than

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[61] In the time of 250 A.D. the Roman Empire had to face much distress on many levels of its existence. The 'barbarians' attacked the Empire in the East, West and North and in most cases the armies of the Empire were defeated, which caused rebellions in the army, and also had negative effects in society. The danger of anarchy was frightening the Empire. Only a complete change of perspective on the role of the army could have saved the Empire. Decius, in relation to the new aims of the Empire, was the first who ordered the universal worship of the old gods of the Romans. (We can see the same attempt in the disposition of Caracalla in 212 A. D., who gave Roman citizenship to all free men throughout the Empire in order to have more qualified men who could offer sacrifice and prayers for the old gods of the Empire.) Certainly, the Christians were attacked by this policy. See Roland Bainton, *The Penguin History of Christianity* ch. 3, and also see Graeme Clarke, *Christians and the Roman State 193-324 A. D.* (Document by an 'Interdisciplinary Working Group for the Study of Christianity in Roman Africa between the Second and the Seventh Centuries.'), 7. See also W.H.C. Frend, "Persecutions: genesis and legacy," Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (edts.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 513-516.

[62] As we have noted, the main intention of the Emperor was not the liquidation of the Christians, but it was rather the conversion to the honour of the Roman gods. Therefore death was relatively uncommon and it was rather a side-effect of the persecution. It is beyond doubt that the martyrs who remained faithful to death attracted the attention and admiration of their brethren. See J. Patout Burns, "Confessing the Church: Cyprian on Penance"*, Studia Patristica* 36 (Leuven, Peeters, 200), 338-48. See also Graeme Clarke, *Christians and the Roman State 193-324 A. D*. See also. W.H.C. Frend, "Persecutions: genesis and legacy," 513-516.

forsake their faith. The persecution was successful because it attacked the church government, which became paralysed by the execution and exile of the bishops. Cyprian, who became a bishop of Carthage just a month before Decius' edict, had to leave Carthage for safety reasons, for which he was often reproached by his enemies. Some from the clergy lapsed, others fled, and some were imprisoned or died as martyrs.

Among the nominal Christians there were also *sacrificati*, those who had actually offered a sacrifice to the idols, and *turificati*, those who had burnt incense on the altar before the statues of the gods. In the case of Carthage and in most parts of North Africa the majority of the Christians were not confessors and martyrs but *lapsi*, apostates.

We also have to see that there was another side to the picture. Some of the terrified Christians had to find another way between apostasy and remaining faithful to their beliefs, in order to save themselves from the consequences of Decius' edict. They were called *libellatici*, those who had drawn up an attestation (*libellus*), or had bribed the authorities to draw up such certificates for them. These certificates represented them as having offered sacrifice, without, however, having actually done so, with the hope of saving themselves and their families from torture. After the first 'General Persecutions' most of the *libellatici* asked for forgiveness and restoration, and some of them even performed canonical penance.

When Decius and his son died in a battle against the Goths in 251, afterwards during the rule of Valerian (51-260) the persecution of the Christians stopped. During the two years between Decius and Valerian the Christians suffered from persecution under the rule of Gallus (251-253). For example, during the short rule of Gallus, Cyprian was put in exile and Pope Cornelius died in exile at Centumcellae (Civita Vecchia) in 253.[63]

Simultaneously in Carthage and Rome the issue of how to deal with the lapsed members of the church after the persecution was at the focus of ecclesiological concerns. In Carthage while Cyprian was still in exile, some of the *sacrificati*, *turificati*, and *libellatici* sought pardon from the church, not waiting for Cyprian to be involved with events, nor letting him judge personally each individual's case and impose an appropriate penitence. The laxist group in the Carthagian church was promoting a rather speedy readmission under the leading of a presbyter, called Novatus and a deacon, named Felicissimus.

Novatus and Felicissimus' opposition to Cyprian originated in earlier events. Novatus and Felicissimus and another three presbyters were dissatisfied with the election of Cyprian as bishop, which was considered too hasty after his baptism in 248.[64] Novatus became the leader of the opposing party; he was of an insubordinate spirit and a noto-

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[63] Frend, "Persecutions: genesis and legacy," 514.

[64] Cyprian wrote: "For it weighs me down and saddens me, and the intolerable grief of a smitten, almost prostrate, spirit siezes me, when I find that you there, contrary to ecclesiastical order, contrary to evangelical law, contrary to the unity of the Catholic institution, had consented that another bishop should be made. That is what is neither right nor allowable to be done; that another church should be set up; that Christ's members should be torn asunder; that the one mind and body of the Lord's flock should be lacerated by a divided emulation." Cyprian, *Epistle 48*. See *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, (translated by Ernes Wallis, American Reprint of the Edinburgh edition, Buffalo, 1885), vol. 5, 321.

rious character – according to Cyprian's description.[65] The opposition was kindled when Novatus ordained Felicissimus to be a deacon without bishop Cyprian's knowledge or permission; therefore it was illegal. The opposition of this faction, however, did not become an open dispute until the time of the Decian Persecution. When Cyprian left Carthage, his absence gave an advantage to his adversaries.

Cyprian followed an extremely rigorous policy dealing with the lapses group. The crisis increased when Cyprian became informed about a number of problems in his church. He sent two delegates to solve some of the problems, but the messengers were frustrated in their mission and met with resistance from Felicissimus and the presbyter Novatus, who were roused to indignation against their bishop. Finally, Cyprian excommunicated Felicissimus and six of his followers. In his letter to the church members in Carthage, Cyprian admonished all not to separate themselves from the unity of the Church, to be subject to the lawful commands of the bishop and to await his return. This letter kept the majority of Carthaginian Christians faithful to the Church. After Cyprian's return to Carthage (251) Felicissimus' excommunication was reaffirmed by the synod of bishops, priest and deacons.[66]

Here we have to call attention to a unique phenomenon concerning the differences and relationships between the three characteristic groups of people in relation to the persecutions. We shall make some distinctions about this according to a theological basis and on the level of church discipline. This short overview will have a special implication for understanding the background of the problem of the Donatist dissent.

The martyrs of the church held a unique theological position during the persecution, as we have already seen in Tertullian's theology. African Christianity believed that the martyrs had the power to obtain forgiveness from Christ for the sins of others.[67] During the Decian persecution, the confessors who were imprisoned promised that when they met Christ they would intercede for forgiveness for their friends and family members.[68] The theological understanding of martyrdom later produced difficulties in church discipline in relation to episcopal rights: the lapsed claimed during their reintegration to the church that they had heavenly patronage which was beyond the authority of the earthly clergy. Therefore the bishops of the church were forced to forgive the lapsed after their apostasy without even practising public penance. The differences between the confessors, the lapsed and *libellatici* are clear. Their relationship after the persecution goes mainly in two directions regarding the interpretation of the true essence of the church and the new place for the two problematic

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[65] Cyprian, *Epistle 48*. See *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, 325, where he refers to Novatus charging him with committing crimes such as robbing widows, abusing his father and wife during her pregnancy.

[66] John Chapman, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. 11 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

[67] "If Christ is in the martyr for this reason, that the martyr may absolve adulterers and fornicators, let Him tell publicly the secrets of the heart, that He may thus concede (pardon to) sins; and He is Christ." See Tertullian, *De Pudicitia*, translated by S. Thelwall, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 4, chapter, 22 (American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, Buffalo, 1885), 100.

[68] Cyprian, *Epistle 22*. See *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Cyprian* vol. 5, translated by Ernest Wallis (American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, Buffalo, 1885), 299-300.

groups. According to a more liberal understanding of the role of persecution and its consequences, there was no major hindrance to become a church member again for those who were not strong enough to be faithful to Christ unto death. The more conservative were more sensitive to the divine intention behind the persecution, which was allowed by God. They thought that persecution was a way of correction in God's hand because the Christians failed to obey God's command to maintain the unity of the church. Cyprian was strongly devoted to this conservative view.[69] He was convinced that the theology of 'forgiveness through the martyrs', was wrong. He argued that the readmission of the lapsed on that basis would mean that while God is cleansing the church by removing the unfit members, the church itself would be a hindrance to her purification. He strictly believed that the reintegration of those people without penance and true conversion was inappropriate and extremely dangerous for the church. We also have to add that some of the lapsed tried to create a new formation, which was against the unity of the church and kindled the persecution. Cyprian's solution was straightforward: the whole church had to repent. From his line of argumentation we see his clear position towards the lapsed: namely, for the lapsed penance was essentially a basic requirement of reentering the church.[70] The lax clergy, in contrast to Cyprian, did not think that the practice of such a serious penance was necessary.

In Rome something very similar was happening. During the Episcopal vacancy after the death of Pope Fabian, who died as a martyr during Decius' Persecution, a year went by without a bishop. The lapsed members of the church were attempting to return to the church. When the new pope Cornelius was elected (March, 251), he favoured a rather speedy readmission policy toward the lapsed members. Cornelius was much concerned for the unity of the church in those difficult years. In the eyes of some of the members of the Roman Church, Cornelius' behaviour was considered as "laxist." The Roman presbyter Novatian opposed Cornelius fiercely. (Here we may note that paradoxically the Roman Novatian was took a rigorist view, while the Carthagian Novatus was considered to be a laxist. Besides this, Novatus [the Carthagian laxist] even went to Rome to find support from Pope Cornelius, to elect Felicissimus to be an anti-bishop over against Cyprian. Such a support was refused by Cornelius.) The debate between the party of Cornelius and the Novatians went so far that Novatian set himself up as a rival bishop of Rome. After the schism in the Roman Church, both Cornelius and the Novatians sent delegates to announce their respective claim. Interestingly, Cyprian's correspondence, in an agreement with the Carthagian Synod and episcopates, supported Cornelius. The main concern behind the North African support was the unity of the church, even though Cyprian and his fellow bishops announced the need to practice stricter policies in the matter of readmitting the lapsed members, than was

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[69] Cyprian, *Epistle 55, 11.* See *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Cyprian* vol. 5, translated by Ernest Wallis (American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, Buffalo, 1885)

[70] Cyprian, *Epistle 24, 25.* See *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Cyprian* vol. 5, translated by Ernest Wallis (American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, Buffalo, 1885)

practiced in Rome. Finally, Novatian was considered to be a heretic not only by Cyprian, but throughout the church. Novatian was formally excommunicated by a synod of 60 bishops at Rome, whose leader was Cornelius. Then he began to organise a distinct church and rebaptism for all who came over to his side. The Novatian church existed side by side with the Catholic Community for many years. Novatian consistently held that apostasy of the lapsed members of the church was equal with idolatry, and it was an unforgivable sin. Therefore the church has no authority to restore to communion someone who had fallen into this sin. Repentance and a life long penance were to be the way for the lapsed members, and their forgiveness should be left to God alone.[71]

The circumstances shortly after the persecution resulted in that Cyprian changed his rigorist position on the question of the *lapsi*, and became more moderate. He modified his previous position, in which he refused to grant reconciliation to penitents even at the hour of death. His earlier view was that he could not assume the possibility of someone asking forgiveness in front of Christ's tribunal without belonging to the fellowship of the church. The Roman presbyters and his Episcopal colleagues conceded that all penitents had to be reconciled before their death. Therefore, two years later in 253 A. D., Cyprian insisted that all penitents should be reconciled before death if they had been accepted by their bishop and admitted to communion with the church.[72] Cyprian's new opinion, which declared loyalty to the church as an effective form of being faithful to Christ, helped him to solve the problem of the reconciliation of the lapsed without giving too much credit to the power to forgive sin or lowering the standard of church membership. Cyprian even went so far in the theory of satisfaction that he believed that penitence, prayer and fasting can be satisfactions for sins along with the giving of alms to the poor. It would be misleading to examine Cyprian's concept while ignoring its context. Cyprian as a moral theologian was deeply devoted to caring about his people at every level. The Roman law and the Jewish heritage were allied to the Christian thoughts at the time when people had to suffer from plague and famine. Cyprian as a bishop and a pastor of his congregations was greatly affected by the contrast between the poor and rich people, and the blindness of those who had better circumstances, toward the need of the poor.

After gaining recognition and having their own bishop, the dissenting clergy started their own teaching, which was very similar to Tertullian's view of the lapsed and which was strikingly close to Cyprian's earlier teaching. Harnack remarks that there were continuous changes in views on both sides. The most important question for both groups lay in the power of the church.[73]

The basis of Novatian's teaching about two kinds of sin was as follows: (i) certain sins cannot be considered sins committed against God. Those who were involved in such sins after baptism needed to submit themselves to penitential

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[71] John Chapman, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. 11 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

[72] Cyprian, *Epistle 59*. See *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Cyprian* vol. 5, translated by Ernest Wallis (American reprint of the Edinburgh edition, Buffalo, 1885)

[73] Adolf von Harnack, "Novitian, Novitianism," Samuel Macauley Jackson (chief ed.), *The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia* vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1950), 197-202.

discipline by the church, and needed to depend on the mercy of God. However, (ii) the sins against God could not be forgiven by the church. At the beginning of the controversy both parties believed that apostasy did not involve eternal condemnation. The differences only appeared between Cyprian and the Novatians when Cyprian modified his teaching on the lapsed, while the Novatians held theirs without any changes. We also have to give voice to Evans' observation, namely that Cyprian's main problem with the Novatians was not basically about church discipline. Several examples prove that he was even willing to tolerate them among the Catholic bishops.[74] His main struggle was that they had departed from the unity of the church.[75] In Cyprian's consideration of the unity of the church the law played a major role. The empirical church became an alternative society in the Roman Empire, and its relation to a wider population had to be viewed from the necessary connection of the civil and criminal law, which was also stated earlier by Tertullian. Evans emphasises that in Tertullian's thinking about the constitutional conception of the church, he goes as far as to base his view of the *local* church (composed of clergy and people) on the model of *ordo* and *plebs.* The succession of bishops depended on their ability to apply the civil law to the church. Therefore, on one hand, the authority of the bishop was a crucial point in which the apostolic succession was the basis for the episcopal juridical rights (*vicaria ordinatione*);[76] and on the other hand, a new model appeared which was separated from the state. In the structure of the state there were the provincial governors who could not practice their office with full autonomy and were always dependent on the Emperor's commission. In Cyprian's view we find a position in the church parallel with that of the Emperor. Cyprian was consequential in his reaction to Tertullian's teaching, which led him to develop the concept of the 'Catholic Church'.[77] The 'Catholic Church' meant a *corpus* of the episcopacies and their cathedra as well. However, Cyprian's view on the authority of the church was slightly different from Tertullian's. Namely, Tertullian represented a belief that the church is unable to provide forgiveness of sins committed against God, such as idolatry, as well as adultery committed by fellow Christians against each other. Cyprian tried to show that penance itself could not guarantee the forgiveness of the sin of apostasy. As a preparation of sinners, it can only be an important step towards forgiveness; therefore the church plays a role in the forgiveness of that particular sin. His conclusion comes from the following argumentation: during the perse-

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[74] Evidences of Cyprian's attitude towards the Novatian bishops can be seen in: Cyprian, *Epistle* 55, 57, 48, 49

[75] Evans, *One and Holy*, 47.

[76] The doctrine of the apostolic succession had already been present before Cyprian in the theology of Irenaeus and Tertullian.

[77] Evans, *One and Holy*, 47. It has been emphasized that the Cyprianic concept about the Catholic Church harmonized with the laws of the Empire, which was also in full correspondence with the Roman Empire's political intention, whose major (theoretical) position was that the well-being of the Empire depended on the peace and the concord the empire was able to provide. Certainly, Cyprian believed that the Catholic Church was also autonomous in her administration and governors, just as we see the same example in the provincial governors of the different territories in the Empire.

cutions Christians had their opportunity to confess Christ in front of the imperial authorities. After the death of Decius the persecution stopped and the Christians lost their chance for confession in such a special and difficult context.

Novatian and his party declared that the church had to be responsible for excluding those who could be charged with grievous sins in spite of still following the teaching. Although this view gave the final decision to God it did not empty the conception of the church of all significance. They simply applied this view in the strictest religious understanding, therefore their conclusion was that the church is the body of Christ and must be kept holy, as Christ is holy. Their argument followed on the basis of baptism. After baptism there is penance for all sins except idolatry, which was considered sin against God. Following their logic, it was obvious that the church could not forgive those sins. In the eyes of the Novatians the Catholics were destroying the constitution of the church by restoring those who committed idolatry. [78]

Greenslade's explanation and evaluation in relation to the theological treatments of the lapsi in the years of Cyprian, answers the seemingly ambiguous nature of Cyprian regarding these issues. According to Greenslade, Cyprian accused the Novatians of not following the Catholic Church's *lex*, therefore when they profess belief in the Holy Catholic Church, they lie, not professing the true *lex* of the church.[79] Geoffrey Dunn deepens our understanding of Cyprian's decisions when he state that: "For Cyprian what one believed and how one related to the rest of the ecclesial community were not separable questions."[80] In other words *heresy* and *schism* were inseparable from each other in Cyprian's view. However, a certain amount of inconstancy is detectable in Cyprian decisions, as being a North African rigorist and at the same time supporting Cornelius. In Cyprian's thinking the concern about the *unity of the church* became stronger than his view on the *purity of the church*.[81] As we have seen from Cyprian's viewpoint, the schismatics' position was not different from those who were apostates. This was especially true for the Novatians' practice of baptism. On the basis of Tertullian's teaching of rebaptism of the heretics, which cannot be considered the same as baptism in the church (which only takes place once), the African church nullified the baptism of the Novatians. Cyprian's hostile attitude toward rebaptism of the heretics put his position under risk. The Roman bishop Stephen ordered him to accept the baptism of the splinter groups as long as it was done in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Cyprian first

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[78] See John Alfred Faulkner, *Cyprian: The Churchman* (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), chapter XI.

[79] S.L. Greenslade, "Heresy and Schism in the Later Roman Empire," Derek Baker (edt.), *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest: Papers Read at the Tenth Summer Meeting and the Eleventh Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1972), 1-20, at 7–8. See also M. A. Tilley, "When Schism Becomes Heresy in Late Antiquity: Developing Doctrinal Deviance in the Wounded Body of Christ," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15:1 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) 1-21; 10.

[80] Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Heresy and Schism According to Cyprian of Carthage," *Journal of Theological Studies* 55 (2004), 551-74, 574. See also Tilley, "When Schism Becomes Heresy," 10.

[81] Tilley, "When Schism Becomes Heresy," 1-21.

protested, but later had to obey under the threat of excommunication. As seen later at Arles and in the Council of Nicea, Stephan's decision was upheld. In Stephen's and Cyprian's controversy we see the origin of a problem which will appear again in the Augustine-Donatist argument. The quarrel about rebaptism was about disciplinary and doctrinal matters on Cyprian's part. According to Cyprians understanding, the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit is established with the office of the bishop, and the office of bishop is the source from which the service of Christ and of the Holy Spirit comes. As an office established by Christ in and with the church, the office of bishop is holy and is empowered to bestow the Holy Spirit. Those not lawfully, according to Christ's ordination and judgment, placed into the office of bishop do not hold the Spirit's office and, therefore, they cannot give the Holy Spirit. This is the meaning of Cyprian's often repeated phrase that one cannot give that which one does not possess. The false and unlawful bishops of the schismatics and the heretics are not in the church, do not possess the Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot give the Spirit in their baptisms.[82]

Cyprian's line of argumentation comes from his notion of the unity of the church, while Stephan's follows a different line, which says if baptism is given in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the effect of baptism will be due to the majesty of the Name. This will be the basic element of Augustine's treatment of the sacraments as well: since Christ is always the principal agent, the validity of the sacrament is independent from the unworthiness of the minister (*Ipse est qui baptizat*). [83]

If we consider, on the one hand, this major element of the Novatian teaching, namely that the church must exclude great sinners such as the idolaters, then we come to see an interesting picture which, without doubt, reveals the ambiguous nature of the Novatian movement: The Novatians did not deny the eternal salvation of those who were *lapsi*, as we saw earlier, nor did they deny the efficiency of penitence. What they fully emphasised was that according to the Scriptures the final decision was left to God, and the church had no right to anticipate this judgement. They also believed that the mortal sins of any members spoiled the whole church.[84] The chief matter was the union with Christ, so that the church had to be really what it was ostensibly: the church of the saints.

We are fully in accordance with Tilley's remark that the history of Novatianism in parallel with the events of Carthage, does not easily allow categorisation, saying who was wrong or who was right. Nor can we easily say who was simply a laxist and who was simply a rigorist (or purist). It would be easy to firmly suggest that the rigorist were the predecessors of the Donatists and the laxists were the predecessors of Augustine, who represented the Catholic Church's position. But the situation was far more complicated. This is evident from Cyprian's position, which we saw in the above elaboration and which we can sum-

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[82] Cyprian, *Epistle* 69. 7; 70. 1, 2.

[83] Harnack, "Novitian,"197-202*,* and G.S.M. Walker, *The Churchmanship of St. Cyprian* (Richmond: John Knox Press, Richmond, Virginia 1968), 19-61, and see also Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 135.

[84] Cyprian, *Epistle* 51, 55.

marize in the following way: Cyprian was a North African rigorist, even though he supported the rather laxist Cornelius for the sake of the unity of the church in opposition to Novatian who fought for the purity of the church. Cyprian's goals went in two directions: one was to preserve the holiness of the church in Carthage, but his second goal was just as important as the first, namely, to maintain the unity of the church. Finally, we only highlight some elements of the Novatian movement, which will later reappear in the Donatist movement:

1) Novatianism arose after the persecutions.
2) It appeared as conservative protests on behalf of traditional church discipline and was against the prevalent liberalism of the Church. It should be noted, however, that the aim of Montanism was not dissent from Catholic unity. The Novatians were those who first introduced an attempt for schism by their treatment of the lapsed, which was later followed by the Donatists.
3) The presence of the Spirit in the church, by which the church can be inviolate and uncorrupted, was an essential teaching of Novatian.
4) It had a rigorist view on the *ecclesia sancta*. In relation to their understanding of the essence of the church, they claimed to live a strict and ascetic ('apostolic') life.
5) This schismatic movement separated itself from the church on the ground of perfection.
6) The understanding of episcopacy was less collegial, in opposition to the Catholic[85] viewpoint. This was a result of their eschatology.
7) The notion of *Ecclesia Martyrum* had a special significance in the Novatian theology.
8) Their success was very limited with regard to territory. They concentrated on certain parts of the Empire and the development of the movement was also connected to sociological and economical deficiencies.
9) The Novatians' hostile attitude towards the Roman Empire made the reformation of the church's unity and holiness imperative, and they therefore rejected the authority of the Catholic Church – which was a state sponsored religious body.
10) The antithesis of the relationship of the church and the world was imported into the church as the antithesis of the elect and reprobate.

2.3.4 Highlights on Cyprian's Ecclesiology

Cyprian's ecclesiology became a primary reference for both sides in the Donatist-Catholic controversy. Some elements of Cyprian's teachings on the church were already touched upon in the section concerning *The Cathari* in this study. Now we shall add more conclusive remarks.

Cyprian developed, with fearless consistency, a doctrine of the complete absence of grace in every sect that had separated itself from the true church. His

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[85] For example, the Cyprianic view of the collegial episcopate accommodated the absence of perfection in the body of the faithful and became the sustainer of the holiness and unity of the church.

warning about the enemies of the church characterises the basic foundation of his ecclesiology.

> And what can be more crafty, or what more subtle, than for this enemy, detected and cast down by the advent of Christ, after light has come to the nations, and saving rays have shone for the preservation of men, that the deaf might receive the hearing of spiritual grace, the blind might open their eyes to God, the weak might grow strong again with eternal health, the lame might run to the church, the dumb might pray with clear voices and prayers - seeing his idols forsaken, and his lanes and his temples deserted by the numerous concourse of believers - to devise a new fraud, and under the very title of the Christian name to deceive the incautious? [86]

To Cyprian every schism was a departure from the church, from the sanctified and holy land, which is the only place for salvation through baptism. Schism in Cyprian's thinking was equal with heresy, which meant the denial of the title of Christian to schismatics. The essence of Cyprian's reasoning lay in the conviction that the sacraments are established by the church; therefore the sacraments can be effective only in the church, in communion and unity, consequently every attempt against the communion and unity of the church leads immediately to excommunication. Cyprian was strict in his position with regard to the church's rejection of the validity of the heretical sacrament:

> For it is no small and insignificant matter which is conceded to heretics, when their baptism is recognized by us; since thence springs the whole origin of faith and the saving access to the hope of life eternal, and the divine condescension for purifying and quickening the servants of God. For if any one could be baptized among heretics, certainly he could also obtain remission of sins. If he attained remission of sins, he was also sanctified.[87]

Several times Cyprian calls the church *domus Dei* or *domus fidei*, *matrix, radix, origo*, *caput* or the *sponsa Christi.* For scriptural proof he often refers to the necessity of being in Noah's ark, and he also quotes: "He who is not with me is against me, and who does not gather with me scatters."[88] In the *Unity of the Church,* he argued that the church is not the community of those who are already saved. Instead, it is an ark of salvation for all people, a school for sinners.

For him the church is often revealed in the metaphor of mother, rather than in the notion of holy. Many of his letters[89] give an idea of the 'mother' concept for the church, in such a way that the believer first must have the church as mother, and then he can have God as his father. One of the clearest examples for this is expressed in the treatise on the unity of the church:

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[86] Cyprian, *Epistle to Jubianus,* see James Donaldson (edt.) *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5, 422.

[87] See Cyprian, "Epistle to Jubianus," Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (edts.), *The Ante–Nicene Fathers* vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 382.

[88] Matt. 12: 30.

[89] Cyprian, *Epistle* 10, 15, 73, 74, see in Walker, *The Churchmanship of Saint Cyprian*, chapter VI.

> The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.[90]

The concept of mother for the church is also often associated with the episcopal office whereby the bishop in his ministry of baptism gives a spiritual rebirth to the church's children. For Cyprian the practice of baptism also played a social role, which went beyond the boundaries of the local church. The leaders of the local churches recognized and entered into communion with one another, with the result that the local churches together could reach the whole Empire and create joint churches in the world. Therefore, the Christians who have been baptized also participated through the Eucharist in the whole church.[91]

This close connection of the local churches' bishops in a collegial structure was one of the prior elements to maintain the unity of the church, as we have already pointed out. The local and universal church in this way was uniquely combined in Cyprian's teachings. In the *Unity of the Church,* he first announces the theme that the episcopacy is one and undivided and each bishop has his own authority. Then he turns to explain this unity in multiplicity, which should be the normal reality of the church. It is worth quoting the entire passage of the *Unity of the Church* on this issue:

> And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us that are bishops who preside in the Church, that we may also prove the episcopate itself to be one and undivided. Let no one deceive the brotherhood by a falsehood: let no one corrupt the truth of the faith by perfidious prevarication. The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole. The Church also is one, which is spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness. As there are many rays of the sun, but one light; and many branches of a tree, but one strength based in its tenacious root; and since from one spring flow many streams, although the multiplicity seems diffused in the liberality of an overflowing abundance, yet the unity is still preserved in the source. Separate a ray of the sun from its body of light, its unity does not allow a division of light; break a branch from a tree, - when broken, it will not be able to bud; cut off the stream from its fountain, and that which is cut off dries up. Thus also the Church, shone over with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body separated. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches

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[90] *The treatises of Cyprian, On the Unity of the Church* in James Donaldson (edt.) *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, 423.

[91] J. Patout Burns, "Baptism as the Crossing of Social Boundary" (Washington University in St. Louis, unpublished paper).

over the whole world. She broadly expands her rivers, liberally flowing,
yet her head is one, her source one; and she is one mother, plentiful in
the results of fruitfulness: from her womb we are born, by her milk we
are nourished, by her spirit we are animated.[92]

It must be emphasized that when Cyprian was speaking about the primacy
or the chair of Peter, it was only a temporal priority and the bishops were called
to express "the totality of the consciousness of the church."[93] The believers had
the duty to separate themselves from their bishops if they fall out from the
grace of God. This was a direct personal responsibility in which laymen and
bishops were both addressed.[94]

In Cyprian's view the church was - without doubt - a divine institution in the
fullest sense and through its bishops in communion with her presbyters what-
ever was bound or loosened on earth was also done in Heaven. The church is
the Bride of Christ, his house and his temple. Belonging to her, and being in
peace with her, are essential to salvation. These principles led Cyprian to be
more lenient with the lapsed in regard to their return to the church, as we have
seen in the case of the Novatians. Peace with the church meant peace with God.

To conclude the ecclesiology of Cyprian we can make the following remarks:

1) The North African ecclesiology is based upon the foundation of the Church
   on the Apostle Peter. He is the rock of Matthew 16:18 and it is on Peter that
   Christ builds the Church, and to him he gives the command to feed the
   sheep (John 21:17). However, according to Cyprian, these passages speak
   not merely to the prestige of the Roman See, but to the honour of all bish-
   ops.

2) The form of this authority is the power to bind and loosen, especially the
   remittance and retention of sins, as well as the administration of the sac-
   ramental life of the Church.

3) While the other apostles were of equal power and authority with Peter, by
   means of Christ's commission and the Holy Spirit (John 20, 21-23), yet so
   as to maintain order, this authority finds its source in Peter.

4) The Throne of Peter is the uniting power of the episcopate (established by
   and on Christ) and is shared by all the bishops. While the source of this
   power finds its locus in the bishop of Rome, as the See of Peter par excel-
   lence, yet all bishops are equal in all aspects of honour and authority to the
   bishop of Rome.

5) For even as the Holy Spirit and the Son find their source in the monarchy of
   the Father, and yet are one with the Father and are equal in power and
   honour, so are the bishops. For, while they are many, yet they are one, for
   all bishops sit upon the throne of Peter, and the throne of Peter is one.

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[92] See James Donaldson (edt.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, 423.

[93] This expression is borrowed from Hans Küng, *Structures of the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 31.

[94] Walker, *The Churchmanship of Saint Cyprian*, ch. IV.

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6) From this source proceeds all of the episcopate, in a partnership of honour and power, and by it the episcopate is one and undivided. Within this one episcopate we can see the development of two aspects of the shared office of Peter in which the bishops partake. These two aspects are the episcopal privilege and episcopal duty. In matters that do not touch upon bonds of concord and the sacramental unity of the Church, the bishops should have freedom to exercise their pastoral office over the people of God assigned to them.

7) Episcopal duty means the preservation of the bonds of communion and sacramental unity of the Church, and thus episcopal privilege ends where it infringes upon episcopal duty.

8) This duty is extended not only to the communion between bishops, but also on a local level between a bishop and his presbyters and deacons, and indeed between all of God's people, particularly those having pastoral responsibilities.

9) From the principle of a single episcopate proceeds also the principle of the Church being one, even as the Father is the source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, yet the divine essence is one. The Church is founded upon the bishops and is controlled by the same.

10) They form the churches that are united to their priest, the flock who adhere to their pastor. Thus, the bishop is in the church and the church in the bishop and whoever is not with the bishop is not in the church. The church is catholic and one. It is not divided nor can it be dissected, but is connected and bound together by the coherence of its bishops with one another.

11) However, in this locus of unity among the episcopate, the bishop of Rome must not operate with insolence nor arrogantly assume authority for himself over his fellow bishops.

12) Whoever operates in resistance to this partnership of bishops separates him from the unity of love and estranges himself from his brethren, making himself a rebel against the sacrament and the faith of the Church.

13) Instead, the bishop of Rome must operate in conjunction with the college of bishops and not in resistance to the councillor authority of the episcopate. Safety is found in the consent of the universal Church, whose voice starts in regional councils and is established in plenary councils by the Catholic Church, under the direction of the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

14) In the face of unrepentant Papal abuse, either in practice or doctrine, and where this has been brought to the church's attention by responsible members of the hierarchy, a regional council would call upon the episcopate, requesting a general council in order to hear its petition and for redress of grievances. Such a council would then weigh the petition and render verdict. In the case where judgment is passed against a Pope, it would be declared that the Roman See was vacant and a new bishop would be selected.

Without doubt Cyprian tried to solve one of the acute problems always reappearing in church history. In his teachings on the unity of the church he emphasised the coherence of the church. Cyprian tried to do so by holding the different aspects, ministries and sacraments together.

Cyprian and the whole ecclesiology of North African Christianity before the Donatists form a plethora of ecclesiological inquiries. How did later theologians approach this plurality of doctrines? Their later view certainly depended on their presuppositions about ecclesiological perspectives. This has to be considered when we examine the Donatists' and Catholic's claims in relation to these earlier ecclesiologies.

2.4 The Donatist Movement

Donatism is the name of a schismatic movement in the North African church which started a dispute with the Catholic Church after the Diocletian persecution between 308 and 311. The movement was named after Donatus[95], who was the successor of Majorinus (died in 313). Even though Caecilianus was elected as bishop of Carthage by the Catholic Church, a dissenting group (later called the Donatists) elected Majorinus as a counter bishop of Carthage. Donatus provided the charismatic leadership that transformed the group of bishops who were against the election of Caecilianus, into an organized institution of the *Donatist Church*. He was the leader of the Donatist Church for over thirty years and he was able to persuade the imperial authorities to recognize him as the sole primate of Carthage in 347. Donatus, the eponym of the movement, died in exile (in 355) and was succeeded by Parmenian.

In reference to the context of the geographical and sociological conditions we shall give a short overview of the history of the Donatist movement in order to locate the basic elements of the Donatist identity and its consequences for ecclesiology.

2.4.1 Geographical Settings of the Donatists[96]

The geographical distribution of Donatism is important for various reasons. First of all, we get a clear picture for the sociological basis. Secondly, there are many answers related to different theological and historical questions, which by their nature are connected to the geographical, climatic, cultural, sociological, political and religious background of the people in North Africa. In the early ages of the Roman Empire the country of the Berber people, who were the ruling people of North Africa, was one province. In the time of the Donatists the

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[95] Due to a plausible scribal error through the transmission of records of the council of Rome from 313 to the conference of Chartage in 411, the name of Donatus was connected to Carthage and Casae Nigrae, providing a possible conclusion that there were two persons named Donatus. The question whether Donatus of Carthage could be distinguished from Donatus of Casea Nigrae is now generally agreed to be settled. The two may be regarded as one. Barnes, "The beginnings of Donatism," *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1975) 13-22, 16-17, and J.S. Alexander, "The Motive for a Distinction between Donatus of Carthage and Donatus of Casae Nigrae," *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1980), 540-547.

[96] This paragraph mainly follows Frend, *The Donatist Church*, ch. 2, 3 and 4.

'Diocese Africa' was subdivided into five provinces. In the centre, there was Africa proconsularis, Numidia and Mauritania in the west, and Byzacene and Tripolitane in the east. The most distinguished provinces were Chartage (Africa procomsularis), Numidia and Mauritania. The geographical settings clearly show that from the border line of Egypt on the East to the Atlantic ocean on the West, which is about 1500 kilometres, and from the Mediterranean sea on the North to the Sandy Dessert on the South, there is a narrow strip of land whose average width is not more than 450 kilometres.

We are faced with two entirely different types of countryside in North Africa. On one side, there are the Atlas mountains running almost parallel with the Mediterranean coast creating a more pleasant climatic environment with its peaks and delightful cool spots, including the area of Carthage, the coast and river valleys. The territory called Tell, about 140 kilometres from the Tunisian and Algerian coast, was also a fertile place. On the other side, there are the Northwest and the South territories (High Plains) including Numidia, Mauritania and part of Byzancenia where the country changes its character completely. The climate of that area is rather heavy due to the oppressive heat in the summer months. The above mentioned factor results in most of the major cities being found along the coast and the fertile valleys. Even before the Roman occupation cities like Ruspe, Gigthis and Leptis Magna were prosperous towns, while the Lybian and southern area were societies that remained tribal communities. During the Roman occupation of North Africa Rome „discovered a second Sicily"[97] in the prosperous land, and outside of the Carthagian towns great Roman villas appeared, which played an important role in shaping the social character of North Africa. The inland cities were primarily agricultural centres, which were surrounded by rural areas. The cities and villas were perfect representations of the Roman civilization, which were able to mirror the style of the Italian model. They were the centres of the Roman civilization in North Africa. The other part of the country could never support the urban communities because of the weak natural conditions. This area almost remained untouched by the Roman civilization. As Frend describes: "The Berber peasant used the same plough, dressed in the same type of hooded burnous, carried the same type of heavy club, and spoke the same Libyan language as he does today."[98]

From the geographical distribution it is significant to point to the fact that the Donatists were dominant mainly in the areas where the Roman civilization had very little or no effect at all. The two parties geographically also had a shared ground that was the land of Tripolitana and Mauretania Caesariensis where they had about equal strength.[99]

We can conclude that the geographical differences also appeared in the social matters, which could also be an element of the source of religious disagreement among the Catholics and Donatists. We can assume that the native

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[97] Frend uses the expression in *The Donatist Church*, 33.

[98] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 31.

[99] For the (archeological) evidences which support the locations of the Donatist and Catholics. Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 49-55.

inhabitants of the land formed a solid unity against the settlers of the Roman Empire. This distinction was even highlighted when the peasants of the nomad land were left untouched by the civilization which was introduced in the towns. When they had no interest in being part of the new culture their opposition became stronger and stronger, which was manifested in many conservative ways in customs, thinking and other cultural factors. All in all, North Africa was a hostile country towards the Roman Empire.

2.4.2 The Sociological and Cultural Background of North Africa in the Time of the Donatist Movement[100]

In relation to the religious matters we shall discuss, the geographical description of North Africa has already given an indication of the sociological problems, which shaped the society of North Africa. Frend gives us a well supported analysis on the situation in North Africa.[101] However, the sociological issues cannot be seen as disconnected from other elements, like politics and the economics of the Roman Empire in general.

The surprising but necessary step of Constantine towards Christianity made Christianity a new force for society, however, it is questionable how fully Constantine understood his own decision. From a political strategy it would not seem convincing to favour Christianity, since little more than ten per cent of the population was Christian.[102] Without giving too much credit to the legend of Constantine's vision, we are right to suppose that he believed in Christ, as he also testified to by an experience of conversion. In the case of Constantine's so called *conversion* it is more reasonable to rely on Lactantius' narrative than on Eusebius'. According to Lactantius'[103] description, Constantine only had a dream and it had no immediate result in reality.[104] The well-thought-out ecclesiastical hierarchy gave a new position and opportunity to the people, which made them special. The sociological matters were seemingly diminished, and a Christian person could overcome these the easiest. The slogan, "neither slave nor free," illustrates this well.

In the Constantinian period the reforms of Diocletian were completed in a different way: namely, not by returning to the Roman gods, but rather by favouring Christianity. Constantine's religious politics seemed an important necessity, which also endowed formality to Christianity. Christianity became very ambiguous in nature.

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[100] This section mainly follows Frend, *The Donatist Church*, ch. 5-8 and Peter Brown, *The world of Late Antiquity A. D. 150 – 750* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich INC., 1971), 11-126.

[101] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, ch 5.

[102] Roland H. Bainton, *The Penguin History of Christianity* vol. 1 (Penguin Books, 1964), 116.

[103] Lactantius was born in Africa before the Decian persecution. He was a highly respected teacher of Latin Literature and Rhetoric in Nicomedia at Diocletian's residence, and during this time he become a follower of the Christian faith. When the persecution by Diocletian broke out, Lactantius lost his job in 303 and disappeared from public life. Constantine ordered him to Trevers, where he become a tutor of Constantine's son. Since 315, he wrote the history of the Roman emperors' attitude towards Christianity, and it is in this work where we first read what happened with Constantine at the 'Milvian Bridge.'

[104] Roldanus, *The Church in the Age of Constantine*, 36-37.

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On the one hand, we have the emperor as *Sol invictus*, who became the *Episcopus in externis* at the same time as he was retaining the title of *pontifex maximus* as well. That allowed him to be the judge not only in political affairs but also in religious ones. We also have to note that the identification with the deity by an emperor was related to a changed idea about the relationship to God. The Emperor now called himself 'God's man', as the instrument of divine purpose, also in relation to church affairs. He could take almost full control of Christianity and of Roman society, supported by the upper class. In the mean time he never completely broke with the pagan cult.[105] Constantine recognized a provisional religious pluralism as well. This double feature in the politics of religion maintained the power of the emperor. The church reconciled mankind with its Creator while the empire achieved political unity. "Now Christians could confess one God, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one empire and one emperor."[106] Constantine wanted to obtain the favour of the Christians and also of the other religions and movements, which resulted in contradictory religious views.[107] The characteristics of this odd Christianity were also present in the every day life of society.

The dangers of the emperor's religious politics must be examined not only from Constantine's point of view, but also from the side of the Christian community. The secularism of the Christian community, without doubt, encouraged this 'development'. The possibility of the Church's success in the world was often given more priority than the work of Christ. There was a tendency towards the idea that the Christian church is the possessor of the divine power or even the earthly establishment of salvation. The borderline between true Christianity and christianized Roman culture became fuzzy. Christocracy became narrowed down to ecclesiocracy.

On the other hand, an important feature of the conversion of Constantine was that by the authority he held he could ensure the unity of the Christian Church in the Christian empire. The *religio licita* of the Edict of Milan (313) guaranteed freedom in the practice of Christianity. It restored the status of those who were expelled from imperial services. It also restituted the properties of the Christians, which were taken away during the time of persecutions. The intention was to create a world for the Christians to live in and to make that world safe for them.[108]

Many new opportunities opened for both sides: for Christianity and for secular society. The fourth century's culture was successful. The elite were great patrons of the arts, literature and especially the luxurious goods of exquisite craftsmanship. Education was open to the lower classes. For example, it was

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[105] One can mention as the support of the pagan cult the statue of the *sol invictus*, which follows the features of

Constantine's face, or the pagan temple that was built in honour of the Emperor.

[106] Bainton, *The Penguin History of Christianity,* 119.

[107] In 320 he was against the Arians, but in the 330, Constantine became one of the followers of the movement.

[108] See Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classic Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957) part 2, ch. 5.

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possible for Augustine from a poor family to become a professor of rhetoric in Milan. Open education also resulted in eagerness towards a career. Christian and secular education developed hand in hand. During this progress up to 350 A. D. there was a very interesting combination of classical elements mixed with the new Religion.[109] In the time of 350 A. D. the Roman Empire reached the *Renovation of Times* (*Reparatio Saeculi*).

It is important to note that the fourth century's cultural revival deepened the blatant gap between the poor and rich. Taxation was the key issue, resulting in the prosperity of the upper class. The pressure on society led to a stronger connection to its roots and tradition. A growing individualism was also present in the life of the higher class whose members often created isolated "islands" in their country-villas. Participation in the Roman Empire's society (which was considered to be a new *romani*) was an outstanding feature of the average people of the middle class. This connection could be developed into extremes in two ways. On the one side, there was a fanatical service of the empire; and on the other side, there was resistance to the empirical power by the lower class.

The North African situation is pictured in the decay of the Roman cities in the fourth century, which resulted in the eclipse of the middle class. The heavy burden of taxation started a continuous desolation.[110] In the first place the focus of taxation was on the cities, but as these towns depended on the rural areas, this unwanted obligation also made an impact on the peasants in the countryside. The situation was complicated. It was almost impossible to find the right balance. The cities could not fully impose the Roman taxation on the lower class, since their own 'welfare' depended on them. It turned out that it was in everyone's own interest to protest against the unrealistic requirements. The resistance was successful for a short period of time in the countryside,[111] which entailed problems at the same time, namely often a good harvest was just as feared as a low one: a good harvest gave reasons to increase the tax. In contrast to the rural areas, the decline of the cities was an irreversible process, and showed no comforting signs at all. Small Romanized groups arose with considerable native elements. Those groups later turn out to be the 'fertile ground' for Donatism while the urban middle and upper class favoured the Catholics. The increasing difficulties of taxation threw many obstacles in the way of development and the seemingly stable economy, and created heavy conditions for the farmers as well, who often needed to loan from their richer neighbours. The

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[109] In Lactancius' *Institutes,* for example, we find many evidences for this fact. The belief in divine providence is introduced in a way that its sources are in reason and authority. Reason refers to Cicero and the Stoic tradition, whereas authority was combined with pagan seers, philosophy and passages of the Hebrew Scripture. See Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classic Culture,* 191-192. See also Roldanus, *The Church in the Age of Constantine,* 37-44.

[110] See Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 36.

[111] Frend supports this conclusion with archaeological and literary (see Symachus *Epistle* 9. 58) evidences, which give a clear implication of the flourishing market in olive oil, which was one of the most valuable commodities for Italy. Many olive presses were built at that time. There are also evidences of a developing native art supported by the Donatists. Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 66-67.

economic ups-and-downs finally created a situation of massive revolt, which determined the life of North African society for almost a century and a half. [112]

The religious factor also played an important role in the life of the society of North Africa in the third and fourth century. The ruin of the towns resulted in the collapse of the official pagan centres. The early times of Christianity were characterized by a great number of martyrdoms, which became the major mark of the "New Religion."

When Christianity began to expand in North Africa, around 180 A. D., it also found competitors in the old African religion and its cult of Saturn and Caelestis. There is a tendency to believe that the monotheistic character of the Saturn cult, which was different in the African context than on the other side of the sea, was a door opener for the "new religion," and later on for Islam. Saturn had a greater comprehensive view in Africa than in his Italian version where he was only seen as the god of crops. He was identified as *Deus Aeternus, Dominus, Sanctus, Invictus* and *Numen sanctum,* and these attributes, among many others, guaranteed a universal religious view in North African society. Saturn also had his roots in the older Carthagian times when he was worshipped as Baal-Hammon or in his female counter part *Tanit Pene Baal,* whose Romanized version was Caelestis. Worship towards the Saturn-Caelestis deity couple never completely disappeared even after the rise of Christianity.[113] Probably the Saturn-Caelestis couple remained in the background because of the traditional fear towards them. They were seen as "jealous, implacable and terrible beings."[114] Frend also connects the most vivid worship of the Saturn-Caelestis cult to the lower classes, especially to the peasants of the countryside, which seemed to be the most open to support the Donatists later in the fourth century.[115] The religious situation of North Africa before the appearance of Christianity, shows the general character of the religious contours of the Roman Empire.

We also have to note that due to the monotheistic similarity, the native character of the Saturn cult could have resulted in completely different outcomes in a new order of society, whose 'heart' became Christian. We also have to give a place to the suggestion that the "New Religion" perhaps won not in competition with its predecessor, but with the help of it, when the traditional native element became stronger as a distinctive character of the new cult in support of the social revolt. Christianity by its nature could complete what had been started earlier but did not become as pure as assumed.[116]

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[112] Several examples could be mentioned: Firmus' description of the situation in *Historia Nova,* or the behaviour of the Proconsul, Rusticus Julianus who was described as 'greedy for human blood as a wild beast' or the
burning down of Caesare, a roman city by the rebels. Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 72-73.

[113] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* chapter VI. Frend also notes that a certain fatalism can be detected in the given names of everyday life in society. Names like Donatus, Adeodatus, which means given by Baal; Honoratus (honoured by Baal); Fortunatus (favoured by Baal), 79.

[114] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 80.

[115] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 80.

[116] S. Gsell, *Historie ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord,* and E.F. Gautier, "Le judaism berbere dans l'Afrique anciene," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* XXVI. (1946).

It is difficult to find out what happened with the old religion in North Africa at the cradle of Christianity. According to Brown's suggestion we get a wider picture of the social background of the third and fourth century A. D. of North Africa if we consider the sociological differences not only in location but also in the language issue. We have to enlarge the subject of the question, which does not merely point to the distinctive or similar element of an old and new religion in North Africa, but also takes part in a wider context of the whole classic civilization of the west and Christianity.[117] This question can well be connected to the languages of the land of North Africa. Brown comes to the conclusion that the "language of the culture" was Latin in the fourth century A. D. in Roman Africa. Catholics and Donatists were both oriented towards Latin or lower Latin dialect, therefore the resurgence of Numidia's Christianization did not really mean the rise of the regional culture.[118] Brown calls attention to the fact that one of the major distinctions between Christianity and classic civilization was that the New Religion was the religion of the Book. The most accessible Latin texts were the texts of the Scriptures, which were considered to be 'good' Latin. The fact that the New Religion was the Religion of the book was especially true in the African context where the circle could narrow around the *Lex.* The Law was equal to the *codex* of the Holy Scriptures. The authority of the clergy depended on the preservation of the Law. Giving up (*traditio*) the source of that authority during the persecution in 304 A. D. was an unforgivable act, which was a major claim in the Donatist dissent. "It was as a Religion of the Book that the Christians of Africa thought they had been persecuted; it was as a Religion of the book that the Donatists thought they had been betrayed; and it was as a Religion of the Book that Christianity spread into the countryside of Africa."[119]

There are at least three elements which shaped the society of North Africa in the fourth century A. D. and which can also illustrate the sociological conflicts in the whole Roman Empire. 1) The conflict of Christianity and paganism and within that circle 2) the conflict of two different cultures.

According to Brown's conclusion, the culture of the Late Roman African Christianity was winning in opposition to the native traditions, and its language was Latin whether we talk about the Catholics or the Donatists. The role of the native cultural elements in society and especially in the rural areas probably was overemphasized as one seemingly important source of the rise of Donatism, and this also gave rise to the misunderstanding of the town's role in Late Roman Empire.[120]

3) The struggle between the different layers of society was the result of the unstable economy of the Roman Empire. It is also important to take Brown's suggestion into account, that the differences were sharp not merely between town and countryside but also among the town dwellers. These can be divided

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[117] Peter Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture", 279-300.

[118] Brown gives a number of evidences from the time of Augustine to show the tendency toward Latin through the *lingua Punica*. See Peter Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture," 286.

[119] "Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture," 288, quotation from 289.

[120] "Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture," 294.

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into two main aristocratic groups, namely the 'local' ones who became the supporters of Donatism, and the 'new' aristocracies who were the supporters of the Imperial Power and therefore of Catholicism.[121]

Coming to a conclusion about the different scholarly treatments of the sociological background of the religious conflict in North Africa in the fourth century A. D., we can say that the economic instability had a back and forth effect in the dissent. Not only the social matters had a contribution to the religious problems, but the New Religion with its inner struggle to reach the wider population of North Africa (like Donatism and its predecessors Montanism and Novitianism), can be seen as a vehicle which highlighted the basis of the social grievances. From a cultural point of view the Donatist Church's primary intention was not drifting out from the Roman world but rather to be the true church in society.[122]

2.4.3 A Brief Historical overview of the Donatist movement and their dissent

2.4.3.1 The Cause of the Schism

In order to find the origin of the schism we have to go back to the time of Diocletian, who attempted to exterminate Christianity. His persecution effort was fully in line with his subordinates, Galerius and Maximian and his predecessor, Decian. The restoration of the glory of Rome was attempted by favouring the gods under whom the Empire attained greatness. The persecution began in 303 in a well organized way. The first edict (24 February, 303) given by the emperor, commanded the destruction of all church buildings and all copies of the Scriptures. Its outcome was that Christians were under a subsequent impossibility on two frontiers: their civil status and legal rights.[123] Several edicts

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[121] Brown's evidences are convincing in support of his idea as he refers to the Basilicas, dedicated to the bishops of the 'great Donatist Church'. Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture," 294-295.

[122] Even Tyconius, a Donatist theologian, echoes this in his writings when he says that 'what has been done in Africa must appear in the whole world' [T. Hahn *Tyconius-Studien* 1900, 85.], in other words what was good for Numida was good for the Roman Empire. Brown, "Christianity and Local Culture," 295.

[123] There was a complex division in political power behind the scenes. The aim was the decentralization of the government. The Empire was divided into two districts: East and West. Both districts were led by officials called 'Augustus' as a subordinated office of 'Caesar'. The offices corresponded to two main headquarters - *Trier* in the West and *Nicomedia* in the East, to which two sub-headquarters, Milan in the West and Sirmium in the East, belonged. The Empire was divided into ninety-six provinces all together; therefore none of the commanders had enough military strength to control the whole Empire. Diocletian in the East and Maximiam in the West were the *Augusti*, and they were succeeded by their *Caesar*s Galerius in the East and Constantinus Chlorus in the West (the father of Constantine), and their followers were in the chairs of *Caesari* Severus in the West and Maximinus Daza in the East. In the time of Diocletian the *Augusti* did not have equal power. Diocletian practiced full control over the Empire. It was likewise in the case of Maximian as well. When Constantine became the commander of the troops of Britain and Gaul the seemingly balanced power became unbalanced. The situation became more difficult when Maxentius the son of Maximian killed Severus, and claimed the title of *Augustus*. Galerius, who was followed by Licinus, was refused. The Diocletian effort was not successful. An intermittent civil war took place in the next decades. Baiton, *The Penguin History of the Church,* ch. 4.

followed the first. The next edict attacked the officials of the church. The third one was an invitation for repentance, the fourth one, however, threatened all Christians with death who did not worship the Roman idols. The new and very effective element of this time of persecution was the seizure of the sacred writings. Those who handed these writings over were called *traditores*.[124] Some of the so called *traditores* were in an in-between situation. On the one hand, they tried to obey the imperial order, while also trying to save their conscience. Mensurius, the Bishop of Carthage, explained in a letter to Secundus, the Bishop of Tigisi, that he - Mensurius - took the Sacred Books of the church to his house, and he substituted a number of heretical writings, which pleased the prosecutors. Such an act did not acquit him of the charge of being a *traditor* in the eyes of the rigorist party, and this became a primary cause for the schism. In 305, twelve Numidian bishops gathered together in Cirta to elect a new bishop, who was hoped to become a successor of Paulus, who was a *traditor*. At this meeting under the presidency of Secundus, several other people were charged as *traditores*.

Finally, they elected Siluanus as new bishop, who had been involved in an act of *traditio* as well. The effect of Cirta as one of the major causes of the schism, seems to be artificial according to the historical evidences. Morally, we have to evaluate it as a very cynical confession, which reveals another face of Donatism.[125] The historical fact that one of the first Donatist bishops could be charged with the "sin" of *traditio* thus arose. This was highlighted by a contemporary critic, named Nundinarius. He was a deacon of the church of Cirta after the 'Great Persecution', and quarrelled with Siluanus, the newly appointed bishop. His intention was to prove the rigorist party's unjustness in their attack against the Catholics on the basis of *traditio*.[126]

2.4.3.2 Caecillian and Majorinus

In 311 A. D.[127] the formal break away between the Donatists and Catholics took place in North Africa. It arose with Caecilian's election as a Bishop of Car-

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[124] The word *traditor* became a technical term referring to those who had given up the Sacred Books and vessels.

[125] We have to note as was mentioned earlier that the only information preserved about the history of Donatism was written by Optatus (his work against the Donatists can be found in the *Gesta apud Zenophilium* and the *Acta purgationis Felicis*), and that which was written by Augustine. Their statements contain arguments of the Catholics and Donatists at the conference of Carthage 411 A.D., therefore their validity could be questioned as is done by some scholars, for instance by A.H.M. Jones. A.H.M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949).

[126] T.D. Barnes, "The Beginnings of Donatism," 15. See also on Donatiam: Allan D. Fitzgerald (general editor), *Augustine through the Ages*, *An Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

[127] Barnes questions the date of 311 A.D, which possibly was a changed fictional date at that time for the election of Caecilianus to be a Bishop of Carthage. According to the references by Optatus, his different conclusions are the following: in 304 A.D. Felix is accused of insulting Maximianus, in 305 A.D. Mensurius dies, in November 306 A.D. Africa recognizes Maxentius, and he restores freedom to the Christians of Africa, early in 307 A.D. Caecilianus is the bishop of Carthage and the Donatists installs Majorinus in his seat. Barnes, "The Beginnings of Donatism," 19-20.

thage. He was ordained by the former bishop, Felix of Aptunga. At that time Maxentius was the political leader of the territory of North Africa. He not only had eased the persecution of the Christians but even gave liberty to them, so that it then was possible to hold such an election in Carthage. It was a general custom that the new bishop was consecrated by the neighbouring bishop with the assistance of a number of others from the area. It should not be forgotten that a great number of Numidian bishops were not invited to the election, in opposition to the common practice, which without doubt deepened the 'wound' of the conflict. The opposite party, mainly the Numidian bishops, charged the consecrator, Felix of Aptunga, with the act of *traditio*,[128] therefore his consecration of Caecilianus was invalid. Finally, the 'Donatists'[129] elected Majorinus, as the "true" bishop of Carthage.[130]

2.4.3.3 The Condemnation of the Donatists by Pope Melchiades

Maxentius was defeated by Constantine who became the master of Rome. From the beginning he favoured the Christians, therefore he ordered Anulinus, the proconsul of North Africa, to restore the Catholic Churches. The year of 312 was a great turning point for the life of the North African Christians. The publication of the Edict of Toleration completely put an end to Diocletian's persecution. Eusebius' *Copies of the Imperial Decrees* reveals that Constantine wrote to Caecilian to offer him his full support, and he sent about 3000 *folles*[131] to be distributed to Africa, Numidia and Mauretania.[132] He also assured Caecilian that in the case of whoever sought to corrupt the church, Constantine's proconsul Anulinus would be given the authority to deal with those affairs. The opposing party had no time left. They had to defend themselves. They appealed to the Emperor for recognition in 313.[133]

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[128] In Augustine's letter, *Epistole* 129, it is shown that the charge against Felix of Aptungi was false. Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy,* 6.

[129] The name of the party 'Donatists', only appears after Majorinus, who was succeeded by Donatus of Casae Nigrae, from which the name came.

[130] The events of the official break away of the Donatists from the Catholics were preserved by Optatus and also by Augustine. Scholarly treatment may assume those secondary sources legitimate, though uncertainty will always appear in relation to their validity. Friar Baldwin, a Catholic writer, comments on some of the positions of Optatus and calls attention to the historical errors. He doubted whether Optatus, secluded in the corner of Numidia, ought to have said anything on the early affairs of the Donatists, on which he had no records by his own account. David Benedict, *The History of the Donatists* (Lafayette: Church History Research and Archives, 1985), ch. 1.

[131] *Folles* is a currency made out of gold and silver.

[132] See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Christian Frederic Cruse, book V, ch. 10.

[133] "We ask you, Constantine the best of emperors – because you are of a just race, who did not enforce persecution with the other emperors, and Gaul is immune from this crime, for in Africa there are disputes between us and the other bishops – we beg that your piety may order arbitrators to be given us from Gaul." Submitted by Lucianus Dignus, Nasutius, Capito, Fidentius' and the other bishops of the party of Donatus The document of *Libellus ecclesiae catholicae criminum Caeciliani, traditus a patre Maiorino,* did not survive. We only have references from *Libellus ecclesiae catholicae*. G.G. Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy,* 6. See also Barnes, "The Beginnings of Donatism." In relation to the question of the translation problems of the appeal, also see Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 147.

Willis emphasizes that this ecclesiastical appeal to the civil jurisdiction evaded the right order, which would have further implications in the history of African Christianity.[134] The Emperor's answer could not have been different than a punishment of those who refused the decision of Arles in relation to the above mentioned events.

Constantine appointed the Gallic bishops to be the judges of the affair under the presidency of the Bishop of Rome. They were Maternus of Cologne, Reticius of Autun and Marinus of Arles. At the same time the Emperor expressed his disapproval to Pope Milthiades concerning such an appeal by the church. The investigation acquitted Caecilianus from the sin of *traditio,* and he was recognized as the Bishop of Carthage. Dontatus of Casae Nigrae, the successor of Majorinus, was accused of committing a schism by rebaptizing Christians. A hundred years later the Donatists declared Milthiades to be a *traditor.*

2.4.3.4 The Council of Arles

As the case continued, a council was held in 314 A.D. at Arles. Milthiades was dead and his successor, Silvester, thought it might be wise to repeat the decisions which were given by his predecessor. The council condemned the Donatists again and set up a number of canons which declared that rebaptism was forbidden. It was also stated that those who falsely accuse their brothers or sisters shall have communion only at the hour of their death. The canons also dealt with the *traditores.* If one was proved to be a *traditor* by public officials, such a charge meant that one had to be dismissed from their church position.

Felix of Aptunga was found innocent of *traditio.* The charge against him was based on false evidence. A Roman official wanting to save his own life declared that Felix had been cooperating with the persecutor.[135]

The churches of the Donatists were confiscated but in the fourth century they remained strong enough to stay alive and even kindle the hatred against the Roman dominion. After Constantinian order was established they successfully gained advantages by proving that the persecution of their church continued. The following question should be articulated in relation to Constantine's support which favoured the Catholics and showed prejudice against the Donatists: What was the (political) motivation for the oppression of the Donatists? One possible cause was the maintenance of the peace in the empire by suppressing any sector which might plot revolt. [136] Other matters, which also kindled the Donatists' hatred against the Catholics, were the financial privileges the Emperor gave to the Caecilian's clergy. [137]

The earlier mentioned unpleasant reaction to the "pure" church broke out between Nundinarius, a deacon of Cirta and Siluanus in 320 A. D. It also came to light that Siluanus, who declared first that the *traditores* had to be outside of the church, was himself guilty of *traditio*; he robbed the treasury of the church,

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[134] Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 8.
[135] Augustine "Epistole 138, 88," Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy.*
[136] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 145-146.
[137] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 146.

obtained money under false pretences, and was made a bishop by violent means.

The Donatists owed their success to their leader, Donatus, the successor of Majorinus. Donatus's eloquent and powerful character gave him the title of "the Great." Without doubt his influence on his followers was extraordinary. After his death he was considered a martyr, and miracles were ascribed to him. In spite of all this, Augustine often calls him arrogant and impious in his writings.

In 321 A. D., trying to control the religious conflict by favoring one side, Constantine had to face the fact that the peace he desired was not successful. The result was the opposite. The forces by which he intended to destroy the Donatists gave them a new impulse and awakened enthusiasm which made them more fanatic and furious. The Emperor changed his politics and tried to convince the Catholics to suffer the Donatists with patience. His new attitude and the Roman administration's weakness in Africa can be illustrated with reference to the events of 321 A. D. in Cirta, where the Emperor built a new basilica for the Catholics in order to strengthen their position in one of the places where the Donatists were the most influential. When the building was finished the Donatists conquered it. After a few unsuccessful attempts to strengthen the rights of the Catholics, Constantine built another Basilica for the Catholics which replaced the one which had been stolen.

The Donatist party became convinced that the world around them within the Catholic Church had perished due to the contact with the Caecilan party, and that the Donatist movement alone was the true and pure church. Whenever the Catholics went into the Donatist Churches, they asked them to leave and washed the pavements touched by them with salt. Anyone from the "Pure Church" who had a connection with the Catholics had to be rebaptised. Those who refused the necessary order of rebaptism were excommunicated from the "One" true Church.

Outside of Africa the Donatists only had small groups: there was a little congregation in Spain and in Rome.[138]

2.4.3.5 After the Death of Constantine ("Persecution by Macarius")

The death of Constantine "the Great" (337 A. D.) brought rapid changes; the empire was divided up among his three sons. Constantine II received the provinces of the West. Constans (337-350) became the ruler of the middle part of the empire. He inherited the territories over Africa, Italy and Greece. Constantinus ruled the East.

Constans tried to restore the unity of the church in North Africa in several ways. According to the Donatist's claim the persecution of the dissenting party was probably part of his plan.[139] In 346 A. D. Donatus approached the Emperor for recognition. The Emperor did not reject Donatus's attempt straight away. In

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[138] In Rome they had the name 'Montenses.'

[139] Optatus states that one of the Donatist leaders was executed with ten bishops (Opt. II, 6). Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy,* 14.

347 A. D. in order to maintain peace, the Emperor Constans sent two commissioners, Paulus and Macarius, with a considerable amount of money to make an equal distribution among the Donatist and Catholic churches for the poor. In the eyes of Donatus this act was already a successful step toward recognition, and therefore he rejected the insolent bribery and forbade his followers to receive it. He quoted Tertullian's famous words: "What has the emperor to do with the church?" Paulus' and Macarius' journey became truly problematic; all the way in Numidia they were given a hostile reception, thus they were even forced to ask military support. On the other hand, as a Donatist reaction Donatus enlisted the dangerous *circumcelliones*[140] in support of the affair. The conflict ended in a battle. The soldiers of the empire rushed into a Donatist basilica and massacred its defenders. Donatus was among those who were killed, and according to the Donatists he was thrown into a well. After the unsuccessful attempt to pay a considerable amount of money to the Donatists for maintaining peace with the Catholics and after the fighting, Constans practiced force and oppression against the Donatists through his commissar Macarius. The Donatists held a meeting in 347 A. D. under the leadership of Marculus, in protest against Macarius. Marculus was arrested and later executed. He became one of the great heroes of the dissenting party.

The successor of Caecilianus was Gratus of Carthage, which is where the union was completed by Imperial decree under the office of Gratus. Continuous protests were made against the order. The Donatists began to rumor that the images of the emperor were placed on the altar and were worshipped in these united churches. In 348 or 349 A.D. Gratus summoned a council in Carthage, which issued canons against rebaptism and canons saying that any kind of ven-

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[140] The name *circumcelliones* became the synonym of terror and violence, which characterized the extreme wings of Donatism. Scholarly treatments suggest that the appearance of the rustic enthusiastic troops was a counter-result of the Imperial arrangements, which resulted in financial advantages to the Catholic clergy. Among others, the assumption is made by F. Martroye, "Une tentative de révolution sociale en Afrique: Donatistes et Circumcellions," *Revue des questions historiques* (Paris, 1904-05). Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy,* 12. The exact date of appearance of the *circumcelliones* is unknown. It is right to suggest that their raids began as a reaction to Constantine's order when he was still alive. Even though Monceaux dated their appearance around 316-17 A. D., he thought that the uprising against Ursatius had been conducted by 'barbarians' from the Aures mountains. Frend only dates them in the years of 340 A.D. See Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 171.

They were all over North Africa without any centres. They simply called themselves the 'Soldiers of Christ' but in fact they were brigands. They often robbed and beat people to death on the roads. They were generally feared by the whole population of North Africa and were regarded as religious fanatics.

Believing suicide to be martyrdom, *circumcelliones* frequently sought death. They followed Tertullian's teaching about martyrdom in extreme ways. Sometimes they found death by paying someone to kill them or they threatened others by violence to end their life in a most morbid way. Becoming a "martyr" in such a way had some very practical reasons in the circle of the *circumcelliones*. They wanted to get supplies from the inhabitants in order not to die from starvation, if the robbery trips turned out to be unsuccessful. Tyconius described them as the group who visited the tombs of the saints, and that they believed in the safety of the souls of the saints. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire* iv, 179, and Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 171.

eration of the Donatist martyrs was strictly prohibited.[141] The efforts of Gratus resulted in Africa's nominal return to the unity of the Catholic Church. During that time there were no philosophical and theological disputes between the two opposing parties.[142] The seemingly successful process of the restoration of peace in the midst of African religious conflict by Gratus and the Empire's strong support was possible because there was a shift of generations on both sides. All in all, the *tempora Macariana* left a deep mark on the Donatists similar to the time of the Great Persecution.

2.4.3.6 The Restoration of the Donatists by Julian

After the death of Donatus 'the Great' his leadership was passed on to two men: one of them was Bishop Pontius, and the other was Macrobius. Frend, on the basis of Augustine's description (*Ad Catholicos Epistola)*, makes a distinction between the characters of the two leaders. Pontius was a seer, a miracle worker and a prophet. Macrobius was formerly a presbyter of the Catholic Church, which determined his attitude to the conflict. In his argumentation he tried to follow the orders of church discipline, which were already established in the earlier Christian traditions of North Africa. He was later elected a bishop of a small roman Donatist community, called *Montenses* (Mountaineers). The next Catholic bishop was Restitutus.

After a long period of persecution, after 361, the situation changed. This was connected to Constantius' death,[143] which ended the civil war with his nephew Julian. Julian wanted to show tolerance to the different religious movements in his empire, but his intention was the acceleration of Christianity's self-destruction by placing the different inner movements and dissenting parties of Christianity in equal positions. In order to fulfil his will among many different[144] leaders, he also recalled the Donatists who had been banished by Constantius.

The return of state support for the Donatist leaders was a victory for them. They took revenge on the Catholics and most of the time they had Julian's support as well. The effect of the Donatist restoration increased the religious and social tension between the parties. After the Macarian's persecution the Catholics were ridiculed with the nickname *Macariani*. There was not even a sign of any possible dialogues between the two conflicting parties.

2.4.3.7. The Age of Parmenian

Parmenian, who became the new Donatist bishop in 361 A.D., as the successor of Donatus the Great had to face many difficulties in Carthage. This was especially true after Julian's death (363 A.D.). In the age of Julian, Donatism became a recognized religion in North Africa and this created a fertile ground for the movement to grow indeed. After Julian the imperial support stopped. Par-

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[141] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 182.
[142] The only theological debates were concerning the Arian controversy.
[143] He became the sole emperor in 351 A.D.
[144] Such as Athanasius, Aetius, and Lucifer. Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 185.

menian was an able theologian and leader, whose capabilities were not only recognized by his followers but the other party as well. He showed that he could handle the new situation. Along with Tyconius, Parmenian developed the Donatist theology, which improved the Donatist movement qualitatively. Parmenian tried to prove his church's beliefs that they were the true representatives of Christianity. Parmenian entitled his work *Adversus Ecclesiam Traditorum.*[145] He found the right time for his theological argument for he voiced his views when the restoration of the Donatists by Julian was causing a shock for his Catholic colleague, Restitutus.[146] The treaties of the Donatists' position in relation to the conflict with the Catholics proposed a challenge for the Catholics, which resulted in an answer by Optatus of Milevis. The Donatists then replied and the debate kept on going.

At this point, we can recognize an ambiguity in the Donatist's theology, especially in the Donatist Tyconius' theology which was a new note that could have been used to resolve the conflict between the Donatists and Catholics. According to Augustine's description, "…he was intelligent enough to know the weak points in Donatism and honest enough to admit them."[147] Tyconius' voice was suppressed by his fellow Donatists. Moreover, around 385 A. D. he was even excommunicated because of his teachings by the Council led by Parmenian. This also shows the changes in Parmenian's attitude. At the beginning of Parmenian's episcopacy his theological argumentation had often found support by Tyconius.

2.4.3.8 Optatus of Milevis

What we know about Optatus's life is not more than a short note in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* (II, xi, 61*)* where Augustine talks about him as a pagan man in his youth who had excellent education especially in rhetoric and philosophy.[148]
The *De schismate Donatistarum* was the answer by Optatus, the bishop of Milevis in Numidia to Parmenian's work. Optatus wrote it after the death of Julian, about sixty years after the 'Great Persecution'. His answer contained the following elements in opposition to Parmenian's work. First, he detailed the origin and the growth of the schism. Secondly, he described the true marks of the Christian church. Thirdly, he tried to stop the Catholics from being persecutors, referring to the time of Macarius. Fourthly, he was arguing against Parmenian's interpretation of the Scriptures in order to prove that the value of a sacrifice by a sinner is not ruined. Fifthly, he tried to show that baptism could

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[145] We do not know exactly if this was originally the title of the work. Parmenian's work contained five books. The five books were the following: 1) About baptism. 2) On the unity of the church, the conclusion being that the Donatist church was the only true one. 3) Attack on the *traditores*. 4) Critique of the Catholics, in order to appeal for imperial support. 5) Scriptural analysis in relation to these subjects. Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy,* 18.; and Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 194.

[146] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 194.

[147] Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy,* 19.

[148] Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controvers*, 23.

be valid even if a sinner conferred it, because we are only the instruments of God and the true confirmation is given by Christ (*opus operatum* of Christ). Sixthly, he described the violence of the Donatists. And finally, Optatus maintained the unity and reunion of the Church. The tone of his writing was rather mild and not harsh. He did not regard Parmenian as a heretic. After this life on earth and after purification, all schismatics can join the kingdom of God – that was Optatus' opinion in harmony with the early Church Fathers. Optatus' work is only known to us from the conference of 411 A. D.

2.4.3.9 The Maximianists

Shortly after the time of Tyconius the Donatists began to manifest their internal fissures. This happened in 391, or 392, after the death of Parmenian whose successor was the peaceful Primian.[149] Several tendencies can be found in the Donatist movement, which broke the unity of the group and made some steps towards the reunion with the Catholics. There were the Claudianists in Proconsul Africa and the Urbanists in Numidia who were reconciled to the main body by Primianus of Carthage. There were also the Rogatists, a Mauretarian movement in Donatism. They were not persecuted by their fellow Donatists like Optatus of Milevis. But the most famous inner dissenting group was the Maximianists'. Their separation from the Donatist movement is important showing how the Donatists could become so inconsistent with their own principles, which was certainly also an effective weapon in Augustine's hands, against the Donatists.

The name of the inner sect comes from its leader Maximianus, who was excommunicated by Primianus the Donatist bishop of Carthage. The following events were ironically very similar to that of the excommunication of Majorinus by the Catholics. A counter council was held where forty-three bishops were present and ordered Primianus to appear before them, who refused to do so. In 393 A. D. another council with about hundred bishops deposed Primianus and elected Maximianus the new bishop of Carthage. Primianus' partisans were rebaptized after practicing penance. Primianus did not agree with the decision of that council, therefore he rejected this and demanded to be judged by the Numidian Council. The council got together with around three hundred bishops in Bagai in 394 A. D. and condemned the Maximianists. They were continuously under Donatists' persecution until this counter movement was razed to the ground. The Donatists even acted like the Catholics, saying they could use the existing laws by the Emperor (which were made against themselves) - to oppress the Maximianists! The Donatists also broke their own rules in other ways. They claimed that whoever became schismatic must be rebaptized. There are examples proving that those dissenting Maximianist bishops who wished to return to the Donatists could do so without rebaptism.[150] It was the Donatist Optatus, the Bishop of Thamugadi (also called Gildonius, from his friendship with Gildo), who conducted the persecution of the Maximianists. He used troops not

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[149] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 213.
[150] In the case of Praetextatus of Assur and Felixianus of Musti.

only against the inner dissenting group of the Donatists but also against the Catholics.[151]

Optatus, the bishop of Thamugadi, was able to create a new social order with the aid of the *circumcelliones*. Augustine tells how he redistributed lands, settled the marriage disputes, evicted unpopular heirs, and punished oppressive landowners.[152] During the ten-year rule of Gildo and the Donatist Optatus, the Donatists achieved complete mastery in North Africa.[153]

2.4.3.10 Augustine and the Donatists

Augustine's North African background played a role in his theological thinking about the Donatist movement.[154] His biographical events support this fact. He was born in the land of North Africa, at Thagaste, and he grew up in the Berber culture, which he seems to follow with different intensity through his life. Monica, his mother, as a faithful Christian made a strong emphases on him as well. According to Frend his Roman and African patriotism came from his father.[155] His adventuresome life across the sea in almost all areas of the Roman culture became without doubt a part of his personality as well.

In the early periods of his life Augustine had no direct experiences with the Donatists. At Thagaste he was in a Catholic surrounding, afterwards he became a Manichean, and later he converted to Christianity and his Christianity was shaped by the Catholic Church in Italy. Brown highlights that the Catholic Church later in the fourth century, in the time of Augustine, was almost outside of the African tradition. Augustine himself entered the Donatist problem from the outside. When he returned to Africa he was more a foreigner in spirit from across the sea. His concept of the church rather developed from a polemic with the Manichees, and the pagan neo-Platonists, more than from the teachings of Cyprian.[156]

His picture and experience of the Catholic Church was beyond what he faced in the land of Africa. In the beginning when Augustine got involved with the Donatists his opposition to the Donatists was reduced in his eyes to a minor level.

When Augustine entered the problem the Donatist schism was already eighty years old. Through the decades the Donatist Church became strong with a well established episcopate. Augustine therefore faced a number of chal-

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[151] The history of the Maximianist is preserved by Augustine in *Sermo 2 Ps.* 20, 36*; in Epistole* 43. 9. 26; 93. 8. 24*;* in Contra Cresconium, iv. 6. 7., iv 58. 69*; and* in De Gestis cum emerito, 10, 11. Frend, *The Donatist Church,* ch. XIV.

[152] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 210.

[153] Gildo's rule came to the end in 397 A.D. when the Senate declared him a public enemy for holding back the corn-fleet, which caused a threat of famine in Italy. Gildo made several attempts to get back into his ruling position. Finally, he suffered a total defeat and on July 31, 398 A.D., he committed suicide near the Tunisian coast. This also meant the end of power for Optatus of Thamugadi. Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 225-226.

[154] W.H.C. Frend, "A Note on the Berber Background in the Life of Augustine," *Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries* (London: Variorum, 1976), ch. 14.

[155] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (London: Longman and Todd, 1984), 659-668.

[156] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, ch. 3 and 19.

lenges. One of them was that Augustine had to draw a clear line between the Donatist and the Catholic position, while such open opposition had a risk because of the imperial government's interest in achieving peace among the divergent movements within Christianity. Augustine also had to be careful not to identify the Catholic communion as the established church of the empire, especially in the land of North Africa. By the end of the fourth century, Roman polytheism was more a nuisance than an opponent worthy of the Christian church's dedicated attention. Augustine's attempt was to maintain Christian identity in a way that the characteristic elements were rather positive than negative, inclusive rather oppositional.

Augustine became an ordained priest of Hippo in 391, in a period when the ecclesiastical issues became more dramatic. We saw that the inner unity of the Donatist movement was very fragile. Until the years of 391-92 the Donatists were quite successful in North Africa. They easily convinced the major part of the population that Donatism was the true follower of the old North African Christian tradition. In 391 or 392 A. D. the death of Parmenian and his Catholic opponent, Genthilius, opened a completely new situation. The Catholics elected a new bishop named Aurelius who was most famous for his organizational abilities. He had a very close friendship with Augustine who supported him in every possible way.[157]

The political situation of the Empire became insecure between 399-411 A. D., and the consequences in religious matters led to strictness against the Donatists. The invasion of the Western provinces of the Empire and the wars with Alaric made the Empire very dependent on Africa's supplies; therefore the dominance of Catholicism was also a political necessity. The tolerance towards Donatism came to an end. The desired support from the Catholics for political stability also resulted in a progressive secularization of the church, which became a theme in Augustine's writings.

Augustine established a seminary in Hippo. His purpose was to maintain a continuous preparation for the priests so they could fulfill their duties in difficult situations. Augustine's seminary also could provide the next generation of priests for some parts of Numida's territory. The Donatist movement slowly started to collapse. Their demolition was even slower than Augustine thought. We have to be aware of the fact that Donatism could keep their position strong in North Africa for generations, and if we remember the social borderlines among the different segments of society, then we know that the Donatist leaders held and were gaining respect in the eyes of the lower class.[158]

Augustine's strategy was well thought out. He wanted to make the debates and anti-propaganda against the Donatists as public as possible. For that purpose he composed his *Psalmus contra Partem Donati,* which was an easily memorizable poem against the Donatist party, and was based on some of the arguments of Optatus of Milevis. The attacks against the Donatists on different

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[157] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 225.

[158] The final decision was articulated in relation to the case on September 13, 401 A.D. Frend, *The Donatist Church,* ch. xvi.

fronts - political, religious, and public - together resulted in ending their success. After 399, when a series of lawsuits were held and won by the Catholics, most of the Donatist possessions were lost. They were even declared and treated as heretics in many cases. The Catholic view on Donatism as heretical also meant that all the juridical consequences were applied to them except the death penalty. The edict of 405, put a formal framework to all the cases which were against the dissenting party. The desire for unity was also mentioned in the declaration. The aim of the edict was without doubt the suppression of the Donatists. In some parts of Africa, like Bulla Regia and Gratianopolis, the Donatist congregations disappeared, while in other places in the south-western parts of Numida the Donatists were still successful.[159]

Frend highlights that the Catholics also had to face a serious problem since the reorientation of the Donatist's clergy into the Catholic Church began to take place after 393. It was a problem because the rebaptism practiced by the Donatists was a hindrance for reunification. According to the final decision, whoever was not rebaptised could enter the Catholic offices again. Another requirement that had priority to the above mentioned was the following: a converted priest had to convince his whole congregation about his wish for becoming Catholic again. We can note that 401, was also a beginning of the Catholic mission in Donatist territories. In the summer of 403, a Catholic Council was held in order to convert the Donatist party. The final outcome of the council made an agreement that the Donatists should defend their position in public before a municipal court. [160]

Frend shows well the contradictory elements of Augustine's theology in relation to the Donatists when he suggested that Augustine could not entirely solve the problem of the dissenting group, since after the seemingly successful events of 411 A. D., which were rather personal victories, Donatism still existed for one and a half centuries.[161]

Yet, being aware of the ambiguity of Augustine's attitude towards the Donatist movement, we can distinguish certain levels. Augustine not only saw the deep division Donatism caused in the North African Church, but by accepting the Donatist challenge, he also found it necessary to develop his own unique doctrines of the Church, the Sacraments, and Grace to a degree that influenced subsequent Western theology. Hence, Augustine was compelled to devote a great period of his episcopacy in Hippo to the refutation of the Donatist perspective. He identified the Church, *'the realm of Christ'*, *'his mystical body'* and *'bride',* with the Universal Catholic Church, which had its centre in Rome.

For Augustine the Catholic Church was a *corpus permixtum*, comprising of good and corrupt people. Its ultimate moral and spiritual perfection belongs to God's final consummation. This mixed community, nonetheless, is characterized by unity, which is dependent upon the union of love among Christians. The antithesis, whose divisive and hateful spirit results in schism, is not Christian.

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[159] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 261-274.
[160] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 252-274.
[161] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 228-29.

Having abandoned themselves from the principle of Christian love, the Donatists separated themselves from the true Church of Jesus Christ.

As an empirical and historical institution, the Church must just as well include sinners as those who reflect sainthood. Augustine saw that the mistaken belief of Donatism was an attempt to establish some kind of institutional barrier between these two groups. He argued that the precedent of the history of Israel proves that God wanted the two kinds of human beings, good and bad to exist side by side in the Church.

Augustine argued that the church was one where its members expressed love for one another, and it was Holy, not because its members were holy, but rather because God gave the church its Holy character.

Augustine's work against Donatism can be divided into three categories[162]:

➢ Pastoral work designed for the laity[163]
➢ Polemical work in which he answers the question of unity with the Donatists[164]
➢ The purely theological work where particular doctrines are worked out[165]

Augustine considered *pax* (peace, which is the fruit of love) a central theological issue in his treaties on the Donatist controversy. The controversy affected three great doctrines: namely, those concerning the church, the state, and the sacraments.[166]

2.4.3.11 The Conference of Carthage in 411

Most commentators interpret the *conference* from the Augustinian point of view.[167] According to these interpretations, Augustine thought that the Donatists could have been convinced by reason alone to overcome their errors in ecclesiastical matters but the violence of the *Circumcelliones* became fierce around 410. The above mentioned circumstances, such as the cruelty of Optatus of Thaugadi and the recent attacks on the Catholic bishops, made Augustine convinced that the help of the Empire's 'secular arm' was needed to overcome the conflict. The emperor ordered the Catholics to have a conference between

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[162] Most scholars use these three categories, which can be subdivided into more categories. Willis, *St. Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 169-187.

[163] The works are: Augustine, *Psalmus contra partem Donati, Contra partem Donati* (This work is lost. It was probably a pastoral letter but Augustine tells us in the *Retractationes* that it was written about the same time as the *Psalmus* [Aug. *Retract.* I, 21].) *Contra Litteras Petilian, De unitate ecclesiae (*The original title was, *Ad Catholicos epistula contra Donatistas, Breuiculus Collations, Ad Donatistas post collationem).*

[164] The works are: Augustine, *Contra epistulam Donati, Contra epistulam Parmeniani, Contra quodattulit Centurius a Donatistis, Contra Litteras Petiliani (ii-iii), Contra Cresconium, Probationum et testimoniorum contra Donatistas liber, Admonitio Donatistarum de Maximianistis, De unico baptismo, De Maximiaistis contra Donatistas, Ad Emeritum episcopum Donatistarum post collationem, Sermo ad Caesariensis ecclesiae plebem, Gesta cum Emerito,* and *Contra Gaudentium.*

[165] Augustine, *De baptismo contra Donatistas.*

[166] Willis, *St. Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 169-187.

[167] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 279, or Brown, *Augustine of Hippo,* 334.

the two parties in Carthage in 411. However, Marcellinus, the president of the conference, was devoted to Augustine's theology, therefore the judge could not be objective at all and the future of the Donatists was already sealed ahead of time, and it was not even a question whether the Catholics would win.

Marcellinus decided that only thirty-six bishops could be present at the debate from both parties. Those bishops had to choose seven disputants from each side, who alone could speak and elect seven advisers and four secretaries, again from each side, to keep the records. The Donatists had objections against these rules and the form of the conference, which was like a form of a legal lawsuit rather than a model of a full council. They wished to give opportunity to all their bishops to tell their opinion individually. Probably they had the Council of Cyprian (256AD), in mind.

We also have to call attention to Tilley's observation that Marcellinus' instruction was new according what the Donatists would have expected from previous church councils, and it was issued by the time the Donatists were on their way to Carthage. The Donatists found out only after of their arrival at the meeting in Carthage, that they were involved in an administrative process as a *cognition extraordinaria* and not in an ecclesiastical meeting, which put the Donatists in a difficult position in the meeting. The Donatist had to face the following judicial difficulties: 1) The manner of carrying out this process as a *cognition extraordinaria*, was much different than the centuries-old formulary process. 2) One of the main differences was that the judge was not intermediary between the plaintiff and the defendant; he was rather an imperial administrative officer who could rule on procedural matters. 3) According to the process of *cognition extraordinaria*, if a person who initiated the complaint did not appeared on time the case could be decided in favour of the other party. 4) The position of the accuser and the accused could be changed according to the proceeding of the trial, where the judge was free to decide in regard to this issue.[168] It is difficult to imagine what would have been the outcome of the meeting if the Catholics had fulfilled the Donatists' desire for a different forum for discussion. It is certain that the Donatists' claim could have been more impressive if all their bishops had had the right to talk. The Catholics were afraid this meeting of the Donatists could easily end in a violent reaction.

The chief Catholic speakers were Augustine, Aurelius, Alypius, and Possodius. The Donatist party represented Emeritus of Caesarea from Mauretania and Petilianus of Cirta among the eighteen participants who were present. The Catholics were called upon to speak first and all of them rejected the legacy of their counter Donatist bishops in a well-disciplined and calm way. The Donatists defended themselves saying that their opponents were persecutors. The

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[168] See Maureen A Tilley, "Dilatory Donatists or Procrastinating Catholics: The Trial at the Conference of Carthage" in *Church History* vol. 60, No. 1 (Mar., 1991), 7-19. See also Erika Hermanowicz, "Catholic Bishops and Appeals to the Imperial Court: A Legal Study of the Calama Riots in 408," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12:4, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 481–521, and "Stretching the Law: Imperial Legislation and the Catholic Pursuit of the Donatists, 392-404", paper delivered at the North American Patristic Society Meeting (Chicago, 2005).

Donatists behaved arrogantly, and they often marked the Catholic bishops with *traditio*. The first half of the conference revealed the Donatists' unwillingness for real dialogue. It is important to see what the Catholics' and the Donatists' perspective on such a dialogue was. The historical introduction of the Donatist-Catholic conflict gave plenty of evidence showing that both parties were beyond solving the problem by dialogue. The Catholics were ready to use the support of politics while the Donatists did not see any possibilities for shared ground where they could come together on an equal moral level with their opponents. It is important to note that in the North African context the Catholics were not a majority at all. It is crucial to raise the question: who was the dissenting party *de facto* and *de jure* (which means in this case the theological basis as well).[169] The Catholics also had to find a defence as an accused party, themselves. The Donatists opened a front against the Catholics bishops on the ground of personal worthiness. They claimed that at least two members from the Catholic party, Augustine and Fortunatus of Cirta, were former Manichees. One of the major elements of the Donatists' arguments was that the validity of the true church depends on who is the most capable of keeping the sacraments pure.

The Catholics, however, were not in danger since the proclamation of Constantine said that the Donatists were responsible for the church schism. The Donatists did not have strong evidence to prove their side of the argument.

The final judgement by Marcellinus was general, which was also against the will of the Donatists, who asked to have distinct verdicts applied to the different questions handled in the meeting. On the basis of the Catholics' theological arguments, Marcellinus' reasons behind his decision were strengthened theologically as well. He was ready to accept the view that the church was spreading in the world and the parable of the Wheat and the Tares was identified with the church and not only with the world. Therefore the church on earth was a *corpus permixtum*.

Eno and Tilley have shown that on the basis of the *Gesta*[170] that the Donatist claims were not as monolithic as church history has usually viewed them. Firstly, the Donatists did not argue that there were no orthodox churches outside of North Africa. They merely stated that the members of the Catholic Church in Africa had communion with a wrong group, the *traditores*. In regard to this issue the Conference of Carthage was held to settle the problem. Secondly, the presence of the sinners in the church was the other major topic. The idea that the Donatists often represented their church as perfect and pure is an overstatement, considering the documents of the Conference of Carthage. The official Donatist statement read during the third session of the Conference of Carthage indicates that they admitted the presence of secret sinners of the

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[169] The written description of the events of the conference is preserved in *Gesta Collationis Carthagiensis*: ed. Migne, PL. 11. 1223ff, which gives the testimony that after the first session of the meeting the Catholics wanted to show that they were in the majority. After the counting of the representatives it turned out that they were short by thirteen individuals to be in the majority. Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 284.

[170] *Gesta Conlationis Crthagiensis Anno 411*, PL 11. 1257- 1418, translated by Serge Lancel (transl.), *Actes de la Conference de Carthage en 411* vol. 3 (Paris, 1972- 95).

church.[171] Augustine often built his argument on Matt. 3.12: "He will clear the threshing floor and gather his grain into the barn," and Matt. 13, 47-50 (The Parable of the Net[172]) referring to the eschatological judgement. The Donatist answer given by Pettilian at the Conference of Carthage ("*De occultis reis dixit Evangelista, quod tu vis tecum permixtos*"; "The Evangelist labels hidden, those you called mixed"[173]) indicates that according to the Donatist opinion, it is crucial that the identity of the *fish* (sinner) become known. All this meant in the Donatist accusation, that the Catholics were unable to deal with evil after it was identified. On the basis of the Donatist line of thought in this interpretation of the Parable of the Net, we can see that the Donatists could make a reasonable argument about being a true church even if their communities had sinners as well, because they dealt with them as soon as they were identified.[174]

Finally, Marcellinus closed the conference and "[...] that same night, by the light of lamps and candles, without summoning another session, he had the delegates recalled and pronounced sentence in favour of the Catholics."[175] Marcellinus announced his decision: "The *ordines* of the cities, private proprietors, bailiffs and lessees of Imperial states, the headman of villages, all were enjoined to enforce the ban on Donatist assemblies and to confiscate Donatist property."[176] On the basis of Marcellinus' judgment, Honorius issued a final law against the Donatists on January 30, 412, which was the renewal of the older legislation with an addition of fines. The *illustres* had to pay fifty pounds of gold*,* the *spectabiles* forty, the *senators* and *sacerdotales* thirty, the *clarissimi* and *principals* twenty, the *decuriones, negotiators*, and *plebeii* five, and the *circumcelliones* had to pay ten silvers. The Donatist clergy was exiled and separated one from another, and they were not allowed to make any appeal to the Emperor. All their properties were given to the Catholics. From the previous edict only the death penalty was not applied to them. We can conclude that the

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[171] „Pisces etiam bonos est malos uno reticulo usque ad littus, i.e., iustos et iniustos usque in finem saeculi simul contineri et prothari confirmant, non intunentes hoc de reis latentibus dictum, quoniam reticulum in mari positum quid habeat a piscatoribus, i.e., a scerdotibus, ignoratur, donec extractum ad littus ad purgationem boni seu mali prodantur. Ita et latentes et in Ecclesia constituti, et sacredotibus ignorati, in divino judicio proditi, tamquam pisces mali, a santorum consortio separantur..." (Coll. Carth. iii, 258; PL 11, 1410) „They (the Catholics) say that both good and evil are caught in the one net and are brought to shore, i.e., the just and the unjust are together until the end of time, not perceiving that this was said of the wicked who are not known by the fisherman, i.e., the priests, until brought to shore for the selection process and the good and bad are brought forth." (Translation by Eno, "Some nuances in the Ecclesiology of the Donatists," in *studia Patristica*14, (1976), 417-421.)

[172] "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

[173] Coll. Carth. iii. 263 PL 11, 1414. Eno, "Some nuances," 417-421.

[174].Eno, "Some Nuances," 417-421, and Maureen A Tilley, "Dilatory Donatists or Procrastinating Catholics: The Trial at the Conference of Carthage," *Church History* vol. 60, No. 1 (March, 1991), 7-19.

[175] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 288.

[176] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 288.

victory of the Catholics was straightforward. Only one question remained: 'How effective would the laws be against the Donatists?'

2.4.3.12 The Donatists after the Conference of Carthage

The Catholics were eager to ensure that the laws against the Donatists would be forceful in practice. Despite the carefulness of the Catholics, the Donatists and especially the *Circumcelliones* caused some trouble. The Donatists' fanaticism was very vivid right after the conference. Marcellinus became one of the victims of the Donatists' violence; he was put to death in 413 A. D. From 417, it is known that the Donatists made the first step towards the political separation from the Roman Empire, although according to written sources the arrival of the Vandals was not truly welcomed by the Donatists. Augustine often gave an impression that the Donatist reintegration into the Catholic church was 'finished and done'.[177] Yet it must have been a very difficult process if we think of the fact that the Roman Empire was living in its last days at that time, and as we mentioned earlier, the population of the Catholics centered in the cities where they were based on the Roman *civitas*, which was coming to the end. Finally, the possibilities of the Donatists were decreasing and resulted in the slow disappearance of the movement. They could only survive for some years in the villages of North Africa. Slowly disappearing, the Donatists became more and more fanatic, often causing unpredicted trouble. But interestingly several attempts for union with the Catholics were also successful. Although the Catholics were not secure in their position, it would not be wise to underestimate the Donatists' position in the countryside. The Donatist leadership still did not have too much influence on the masses yet their complete disappearance, according to the archeological evidences provided by Frend, did not happen until the seventh century. It is unknown what happened with the Donatists during the Vandal and early Byzantine period. Frend indicates that the Byzantine Donatists and the Catholics were both victims of the Arian persecution and they shared in the suffering, therefore their conflict was reduced to a minimum. During the Vandal period the Catholics had to face a rapid decline of their Church, which could have given a great opportunity to the Donatists, which they however were seemingly unable to take.[178] In 535, the privileges of the Catholics were restored by an Imperial edict.[179] Gregory then reintroduced the laws against the Donatists, which went back to the time of Constantine. Later a series of councils assembled in order to make an end to the Donatist movement, but without real success. The complete disappearance of Donatism took place at the same time

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[177] *Contra Gaudentium, i 23. 26,* see Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 297.

[178] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, ch. Xix.

[179] The pressure from Byzantine emperor Zenon and his consort Placidia Huneric allowed the restoration of the Catholics to a certain limit, resulting in the election of Eugenius, as new bishop of Carthage. The Arians were more keen on the mission for the non-Romanized countryside of North Africa, therefore they stopped the attack against the Catholics. See Maureen A. Tilley, "The Structure of the Episcopate and the Eclipse of Christianity in North Africa," a lecture, which was given at the conference 22. Nov. 1999, by the American Academy of Religion at the University of Dayton; the title of the conference was *Practice of Christianity in Roman Africa.*

when North African Christianity was lost for the world, approximately during the 7th and 8th centuries. It is certain that the Donatists were unable to establish a permanent national church like the Coptics in Egypt.

2.5 Analysis and Evaluation of the Ecclesiology of the Donatist Dissent

The analysis and evaluation of the Donatist movement and dissent can only be selective and limited to the purpose of this chapter, which is to draw attention to those elements in the Donatist movement which opened a new approach in the evaluation of the movement and which has a message for ecclesiology. Our attempt is to represent some of the characteristic features of Christian martyrdom which also played a role in the debate between the Catholics and the Donatists. The theology of penance, including the administration of sacraments, has to be understood in the context of the Donatist movement and the earlier Christian tradition in North Africa. Also, the Donatist ecclesiology within the context of its development and in relation to Augustine's ecclesiology has to be mentioned. The themes of holiness, perfection and separation, being schismatic or/and heretic, the issues of eschatology and Christology, and the different ways of interpretation of the Scripture, are all at stake. Just as well as the Donatist's Christian self-identity. Finally, it is important to make some elaboration on the characteristic features of the church's relationship with the world (state and society), the Constantinian problem, the coercion used by the Catholics with the help of the state to try to end the Donatist movement, and Augustine's position regarding to these matters.

2.5.1 Role of Persecution and Martyrdom in Donatism

On the previous pages we have seen many evidences that one of the most contradictory facts in the history of Christianity was its ambivalent (direct and indirect) relationship with the Roman Empire. On the one hand, the Empire was a very important vehicle of the Christian faith considering the *Imperium Romanum*'s golden age, when one of the great beneficiaries of the *Pax Romana* was Christianity. On the other hand, it was also the *Imperium Romanum* which shook Christianity to its very foundation through the persecutions, but at the same time this resulted in Christian martyrdom in the Empire, which was one way of expressing a true commitment to the Christian faith. The Greek word *martures* means witnesses,[180] therefore a martyr bears witness to his or her principles by choosing to suffer or die rather than renounce them.

One element of the Christian account of martyrdom was always against religious indifference. Ever since Jesus died on the cross, martyrdom has belonged to the very nature of the church. From the very beginning of the existence of the church Christians were expected to confess the Name, and if it was necessary even to suffer for the Lord.[181]

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[180]Certainly the word *martures* in the New Testament has a much richer meaning. It can point in the following directions: 1) positive witness of life; 2) witness by suffering, even to death.

[181] Matt. 10: 32-33.

Martyrdom also has a strong connection to Eschatology. Whoever preserved the faith would be rewarded at the Day of Judgement. Early Christianity had a distinctive confidence in this concept. We also have to remember that favouring martyrdom in order to gain advantage in relation to God's judgement was not accepted by all theologians in North African Christian theology.[182]

For the Donatist movement martyrdom has several aspects according to the events of their history. During the early times of Christianity the great number of martyrs became a major mark of the "New Religion." The brave Christians, who were ready to die for their belief, contributed to the expansion of Christianity in the African context as well.[183] When the persecution was over the glorious heritage of the martyrs remained. This was especially true at the time when severe persecutions occurred from the side of the Christianized state. The Donatists kept emphasising these martyr stories when the Catholics used imperial powers to persecute them.[184] These stories became models for the Donatist theology to be able to overcome the stress of the hostile surroundings.[185]

The Catholics however could not make good use of the martyrs in the same way as the Donatists did since the persecution was over. The Catholics placed emphasis on the memory of the martyrs in order to strengthen their own ecclesiology which valued the unity of the church as the Body of Christ. Augustine also tried to internalize[186] the remembrance of the martyrs in order to weaken the Donatists' argument, which claimed a direct line from the martyr predecessors to the Donatist Church.[187]

During the first five decades of the Donatist movement the Donatists also had to realize that the martyr stories of their glorious past could not be the only model for their church. This resulted in changes in their view of martyrdom in relation to the pre-Constantine period. The emphasis on the confession of faith before the Roman officials became less important since the rulers of the empire were - at least nominally - Christian. The Donatists had to learn and deal with a different and longer persecution coming from the Christian state and the Catholics. Love and the unity of their church were at stake in order to preserve their differences in relation to the truth and holiness of the Donatist church.

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[182] Tertullian's favour of martyrdom basically comes from two main sources: 1) the deep conviction of the teaching of martyrdom in the Scriptures; 2) Tertullian's attitude toward the Roman state.

[183] Tertullian and Cyprian gave many examples of the distinguished importance of martyrdom in the North African context. For example, the *Passio Perpetua et Felicitas* or the *Vita Cyprian*; and the *Acta Proconsularia* give evidences as well.

[184] This was during the times between 317-21 and from 346-48.

[185] Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress. 1997).

[186] Augustine refers to a whole range of martyrs, even beyond those who had distinctive connection to the land of Africa. They were, for example, Maccabeus, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul or Lawrence and Agnes of Roma, Vincent, Fructuosus of Spain, etc., see F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: Religion and Society at the Dawn of the Middle Ages* (New York and Evanston, Harper and Row, 1961, repr. 1983), 646, cited by Maureen A Tilley, "Harnessing the Martyrs: Social Control of Hagiography in Roman North Africa," paper presented at the conference of the North American Patristic Society (Chicago, 30 May 1998).

[187] Maureen A. Tilley, "Harnessing the Martyrs: Social Control of Hagiography in Roman North Africa," paper presented at the conference of the North American Patristic Society (Chicago, 30 May 1998).

Separation was the main focus for the Donatists and this required an exact definition of the church and also models which could be applied in practice. Their understanding of the church could no longer be only the vision of the persecuted suffering individuals. That understanding of the changes provided a new way for them to strengthen the Donatist Christian self-identity, which was not defined by reaction to apostasy anymore but rather by assimilation with the surroundings. However, we also have to mention that the stories of their martyrs always remained alive with changing intensity according to the political and religious situation of the changing context. Tilley has shown that these changes in their views allowed the Donatist movement to work out their own utilization of the Scriptures along with the stories of the brave martyrs of North African Christians.[188] Therefore Donatist battles with the Catholics never lacked the role of martyrdom. It soon turned out that all the attempts from of the Catholics to stop the Donatist movement, even by fierce violence of persecution, turned out to be counterproductive.

The Donatists' ecclesiological strategy concerning martyrdom was also well supported by their construction of 'time', on which their worldview placed an emphasis. According to Augustine's description, the Donatists divided history into the present time, when the saints and Christ have died, and the future time, when the holy people of God will rise from death. Basically this structure maintained, in other words, the time of suffering and the time of glory. This view was not so distinctive compared to the views of Augustine. Augustine also divided history into two parts in the same way as the Donatists. Differences occurred in personal matters, on the level of false and true priests or bishops and their followers, and in the fact that the Catholic Church was a friend of the state and Augustine considered the emperors of his day to be good Christians.[189]

We also have to take note of the appearance of the *circumceliones* who were the extreme wing of the Donatist. We cannot leave out the facts which resulted in the extreme forms of Donatism and why their hatred was kindled against the Catholics' loyalty to the Roman Dominion. We have to question, in opposition to Willis and others, whether the Latin language was truly so foreign that it

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[188] According to Tilley, the martyrs' stories played a variety of roles, according to the changes in the political and religious situation, and can be distinguished in the following periods: from the late half of the 3rd century, *The Donatist Passion of Cyprian*, early 1st century, *The life and Passion of Cyprian*, in 303, *The Acts of Saint Felix*, in 317-320, *Sermon on the Passion of Saint Donatus And Advocatus*, in 327-321, *Passio Ss. Dativi, Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs, Passio Ss. Maximae, Donattillae et Secundae and the Sermo de Passione*; in 346-348, *Sermo de passione Maximiani et Isaac, Passio Bendeict Martyris Marcu, The Martyrom of Marculus*. See Maureen A. Tilley (trans.), *Donatists Martyr Stories, The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa* (Liverpool: University Press, 1996). We also have to note that the origin and the writing of these martyr stories are also questioned, in opposition to Tilley's views, especially in the case of the *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs*. According to Dearn places the origines of these martyr stories after the *Conference of Carthage* (411); therefore he questions in opposition to Tilley whether these martyr stories could have played a role at the outbreak of the Donatist schism. Alan Dearn, "The Abitinian Martyrs and the Outbreak of the Donaist Schism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55, No. 1 (January 2004), 1-18.

[189] Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, ch. 5 and 6 with references to primary sources on Augustines and the Donatists.

gave the *circumcelliones* an excuse for violence among the native working class people. It is true that most of the participants of the "martyrs" knew no Latin at all. They were Berbers. If we think of the three social strata's: 1) the top was composed of the Latin aristocrats who supported Rome as much as possible; 2) below them were the Punics; 3) the lowest group was the Berber population. When Carthage was destroyed it was the Punics who were called to serve the Empire. They made up the major masses of the population in Numidia with their churches and their own bishops. It can be assumed that supporters of the Donatist movement were to be found in two groups: the middle and the lower classes. Therefore the language issue cannot be one of the major elements of the conflict.[190]

Augustine refused to recognize the Donatists as martyrs[191] who had rather chosen death than to submit to the Catholic Church. He simply saw them as traitors, like Judas. After the several attempts to "convert" the Donatists back to the Catholic Church, Augustine became more harsh and he even linked the Donatist with criminals who broke the law. Therefore Catholic opposition should not be seen as persecution but prosecution against criminals – according to Augustine.[192]

If we leave out the extreme side of the Donatists' martyrdom and take into account Tilley's research which elaborates the shift in the Donatist theology concerning martyrdom, then we can conclude that their practise of martyrdom - when the context required it - was not so unusual, considering the earlier tradition of martyrdom. Not even when we think of suicide as a form of martyrdom, which was known from antiquity. The Donatists simply sustained a tradition and the importance of voluntary martyrdom until the fourth and fifth centuries. In support of their views and actions in relation to martyrdom they had a strong conviction about their religion as a Law of God, and also the assurance of being an elect of God.[193]

2.5.2 The Ecclesiology of the Donatist Movement

2.5.2.1 Donatist's Self-identity as Shaped by the Image of Israel

What does mean to be a Christian? This question was very relevant for the fourth century. The ecclesiology and theology of the North African church was

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[190] See the part on the geographical and sociological background of the Donatist.

[191] Augustine opposed the Donatist claim for martyrdom in every possible way. One of the most noticeable writings is the book entitled *Contra Gaudentius*. The occasion for writing that book is Gaudentius' case, who was a Donatist bishop (a successor of Optatus) and barricaded himself in the basilica of Timgad while he was persecuted by the official Dulcitius. Gaudentius threatened to burn the church down with himself and with his congregation in it. He also wrote letters to Dulcitius to explain his refusal of official policies. These letters were handed over to Augustine, who replied to them in the two books entitled: *Contra Gaudentius*. This treatise against the Donatist bishop Timgad "was the most heartless of Augustine's writing in defence of the suppression of the Donatist" – as Brown comments. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 335.

[192] Augustine, *After the Meeting against the Donatist* 17. 22.

[193] See also Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death, Suicide and Martyrdom Among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1992), ch. 7.

shaped by the Donatist party. One of the major principles of such a movement as the Donatists was their group- and self-identity.

For the early church's theology holiness was not exclusively in the realm of a distant and remote, unseen world. It was much more present in the people's everyday lives.

Holiness was available for everyone and everywhere, which highlighted events that centred on the church, worship, administration of the sacraments and in the sense of being together as a community.[194] Their identity was also strongly characterised by their community being a particular group in society. The prototype of a saint was pictured in the figure of the martyr in the pre-Constantine era during the persecutions of the church. This Christian consciousness was carried on after the changes of religious-state affairs in 313. This was especially the case with the Donatists. The 'psychology' behind it was that they probably needed to make certain of being the real heirs of the persecuted churches of the martyrs.[195] I fully agree with Markus when he says:

> For the Roman Empire Constantine may have brought the reformation, but to the Christians it was a revolution. [...] To take a change in a cataclysmic change which the 'Constantine reformation' meant for the Christian Church, it perhaps necessary to have experienced something of the guilt and the shame for the Christian Church's willingness to accept, to enjoy and to exploit it and to carry the burden of its 'establishment' throughout so much for the history of Europe.[196]

This also means that a group like that of the Donatists' also acted as a living conscience of the church in absolutely new circumstances offered by the Empire. If we consider their behaviour as an often reappearing phenomenon, later in church history we will always have to think of the context which often provides new possibilities for the church.

Being deeply rooted in the North African Christianity, Donatism was often characterised as a self-conscious movement, as a church of martyrs.[197] This is especially true for their attitude towards the lapsed during the persecution. A single point of church discipline about how to treat those who had been *traditores*, was enough for a *casus belli*, for a schism to form their own rank, and the rigorist party only vanished with the disappearance of Christianity in that part

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[194] See R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), I, 2 and P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (Chicago and London, 1981), where Brown makes a point that the Christian cults of the saints were very much connected to their tomb and relics. This observation makes it clear that the Christian saints and the church have a close link to their historical context.

[195] See also W.H.C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*, (New York: New York University, 1967).

[196] Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 25.

[197] On that matter it is right to place the Donatists in line with the teachings of Cyprian because at least by intention they tried to operate according to the heritage of the mid-third century's persecuted churches. We can even say that they tried to complete the rigorist idea of the movements, which started with Montanism.

of the world. The Donatists considered themselves to be the true church, justified by their own acts while separating themselves from the unity of the Catholic Church in North Africa, because they were the only pure ones. The Catholic Church evidently connected itself with the wrong party - the *traditores* - therefore it was not true and pure in the eyes of the Donatists. By their separation and their claim to be in line with the apostolicity of the church, we are facing the ambivalent nature of such a movement. The mark of holiness, which almost every separatist party could claim, was the pin-point of their morals. We fall into a trap if we focus on the Donatists' identity on behalf of the true bishops and *traditores,* since both sides included bishops who handed over the sacred writings to the roman officials.[198]

The Donatists' positive conceptions of themselves also lay in their understanding of their community as the "holy assembly of Israel in the midst of her unclean enemies."[199] Tilley argues rightly that the model of the martyr-church alone would not have been enough to give cohesion and survival to the Donatist church. Tilley makes an important point in her research, namely that the motif of the assembly of Israel, the *collecta*, gives a positive image to the Donatists' self-identity, and Israel is also seen in a positive way as a sanctified, ritually pure community, who were called to encourage good behaviour and the solidarity of the church while the Catholic view was negative on Israel, as the sin of Israel in typology represented the sin of the Christian people.[200]

The parallelism with the people of Israel in such a positive way was a unique phenomenon in the Donatist church, which had no prehistory in the earlier ecclesiological tradition.[201] The *collecta* image used by the Donatists simply meant that they preserved the sacred scriptures from harm during the persecution, and therefore their assembly was holy even at the time of difficulties in the life of Christianity. Later, the quarrel centred on the validity of liturgy, such as Baptism or ordination, and the Donatist argument was that they were faithful to the Law no matter under what circumstances. In that line of thought the image of cultic identity with the people of Israel became an important issue, which also maintained the Donatists' positive self-image. A good example from the history of the Donatists supports the claim for ritual purity well: for example, the consecration

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[198] The written evidences based on primary sources show plenty of evidences of that. Augustine often calls attention to the fact that while the Donatists claim to be the *Ecclesia Sancta* there are numerous examples of sinners in their church's leadership. Augustine for instance mentions Optatus.

[199] Maureen A. Tilley, "Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of Martyrs to the Collecta of the Desert," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5.1 (1997 and 2007), 23.

[200] Tilley has studied two sets of writings of the Donatists: 1) the *Passio sancti Saturnini presbyteri* and 2) the *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs.* The English translations of the Donatist writings can be found in Maureen A.Tilley, *Donatists' Martyr Stories* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1996)
The Latin Bible uses two words for the people of Israel: *collecta* and *coetus.* See Maureen A. Tilley, "Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of Martyrs to the Collecta of the Desert," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* vol.15, no.1(1997 and 2007), 1-21.

[201] They always referred to the image of Israel literally and historically as a cultic community. We can find many examples for that in the *Didascalia* and in the *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum.*

of the Catholic Ceacilian was declared invalid according to the Donatists because one of his consecrators had been a *traditor.*

Almost every Donatist leader refers to this connection to Israel through the keeping of the Law, which was for them the entire Bible.[202] As the Donatist self-identity was firmly established as the *collecta,* they found numerous texts in the Bible against the Catholics and as the proof for their separation. In Tilley's conclusion one of the major points is that this positive self-image associated with Israel was able to keep the Donatist movement alive until the seventh century.

2.5.2.2 Donatists' View on Perfection

Perfection was another important element in the Donatist ecclesiology. The Donatists' view of perfection is simply stated in the idea that the church must be holy. The holiness of the church has special marks that have to be recognized by everyone. The church can be true and holy if there is a communion of the saints, who are genuine and perfect. This was the first principle in the Donatists' theology and the unity and catholicity of the church were contingent upon this prior issue. The Donatists' view of the holiness of the church was combined to a certain extent with Tertullian's and Cyprian's teachings about the ideal spiritual church, which depended also on the fellowship of the saints, which the sinful world could not recognize. The Donatists based their ecclesiology mainly on the quotations from Scripture whereby Cyprian and Tertullian kept the Christians together in the time of persecution, by focusing on the one hand on their refutation of the world, and on the other hand on martyrdom as a permit to heaven. For Tertullian the church was a *hortus conclusus, fons signatus*: an exclusive place because the fountain of grace springs only there. Cyprian formulates less poetically: *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.* The Donatist bishops see in this line the authority of their conviction that they were the inheritors of the Maccabees who were tortured due to their faithfulness to the holy books.

As the previous theologians of the early centuries, Donatism also laid chief emphasis on the subjective holiness or personal worthiness of the members of the church and made the efficacy of the sacraments dependent upon that. Therefore those members of the clergy and those bishops, who left their faith during the persecution of the church, could not be part of the pure and holy church, but if they were, their church was not a 'real' one. The Donatists developed their idea on sanctity as follows: the perfectness of the celebrant is decisive for the working

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[202] Like Tyconius, the Donatist exegete who wrote: "I consider it necessary to write a book of rules and so the fashion keys and lamps, as it were to the secrets of the law. For there are certain mystic rules which obtain in the inner recesses of the entire law and keep the rich treasures of the truth hidden from some people" [see Tyconius, *The Book of Rules*, translated by William S. Babcock, *Text and Translations* 31(Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989). See also Tibor Fabinyi (ed.) and István Czachesz (trans.) Tyconius: Szabályok könyve (translation), (Budapest: Hermeneutikai Kutatóközpont, 1997).] Or Petilian the Donatist Bishop of Cirta: "If anyone loves the law, as the Maccabee youths did, they would die for the laws of God [...] (God) will raise us who have died for the holy laws to preserve us for eternal life." [*Epistula ad presbyteros et diaconos* 6, reconstructed in Paul Monceaux, *Histoire litteraire de l'Afrique chretienne depuis les origines*], references taken from Tilley, "Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity," 28-29.

of the sacraments. Thus the spiritual act of Christ cannot be distinguished from the concrete act of the celebrant of the sacraments (the priest). If the priest was sinful then the power of the sacrament was taken away and in this way he shaped an anti-church. The core is that the purity of the priest did not have a moral but an ecclesiastical impact. Grace was operating if he did not hand over the holy books as the Catholics had done.

Donatists also claimed continuity with Cyprian when they valued the purity engendered by baptism within their own community, and not the invalid baptism offered by the Catholic *traditor* communities.[203] The Donatists felt obliged to separate themselves from those who called themselves Catholic Christians, because they violated the holiness of the church. Augustine's argumentation against such ideas was worked out well; he claimed that the separation of holy from unholy was impossible in both the empirical Catholic Church and on the other side among Donatists.[204]

In many ways we are right to think that in the fourth and fifth century Donatism was much closer to the ecclesiological tradition of North Africa than was the Catholic Church. For centuries the views of the African Christians were dominated by the idea that they had to be able to separate themselves from the unclean and hostile 'world'. Cyprian could easily require from his believers that they be among the saints, by their way of life. The 'mother' concept of the church was also very common in the land of Africa, and it maintained the idea of how this church was called to preserve the safety and cleanness apart from the world, where the demonic powers were present.[205] One of the inconsistencies in their claim lay in the fact that as a separatist movement, whose primary aim was to preserve the holiness of the church and become the *ecclesia sancta,* they were exclusively restricted to the land of North Africa. They were much more able to represent the mainstream African Christianity, although there are contradictory elements in their teaching on the holiness of the church derived from Cyprian's theology; and they also made a violation against the unity of the church (thereby not listening to Cyprian), along with the error of often false accusations of *traditio* against others, while they also handed over sacred writings during the time of persecution.

It has to be noted that on the other side that the Catholic Church's unity should not exclude the responsibility of working towards perfection and holiness. The difference between the two concepts, Catholic and Donatist, was in the different understanding of holiness. That resulted in the question of how to understand the *ecclesia sine macula et ruga*. Is that clarification in the realm of eschatology which is yet to come, or is it to be applied to the present time of the

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[203] Augustine however respected Donatist veneration of the power of the sacrament. As Peter Iver Kaufman says: "As Augustine pointed out, Cyprian's stipulation [on the necessity of rebaptism of heretics] was probably a reaction to the apparent failure of heretical baptism to inspire charitable dispositions, compromises, conformity and reunion. Heretics baptized to perpetuate their heresies, so there must have been something wrong with their baptisms." Peter Iver Kaufman, "Augustine, Evil and Donatism: Sin and Sanctity before the Pelagian Controversy," 115-126.

[204] Augustine, "On Baptism against the Donatists," *Nicene and Post –Nicene Fathers* vol. 4, 503.

[205] Brown*, Augustine of Hippo*, part III, 19.

church? We can see that the patristic solution of the question went in the direction of solving the problem by saying that the one reality of the church has two aspects: the visible and the invisible. It should also be noted that the term 'holiness', which was always used to differentiate Christians and non-Christians, by the times of the Donatist was used to make a distinction among the Christians.

The view on the work of grace also resulted in a different understanding in the dissent. In the Augustinian or Catholic view the holiness and perfection was guaranteed by the grace of God in the historical existence of the church. Therefore the holiness and perfection of the church was not connected to the clergy or the bishops but to the sacraments of the church, as it was already stated in the writings of Optatus of Milevis in the *De schismate Donatistarum*, where he described the true marks of the church.[206] Later Augustine is fully in line with Optatus on the holiness of the church, since he talks about the holiness of the church in an objective sense as a divine gift given in the sacraments "[...] when we are considering the question of the genuineness and holiness of the sacrament, '(does not depend) what the recipient of the sacrament believes, and with what faith he is imbued'."[207] This simply means in objection to the Donatists' view that perfection as a moral condition cannot be the constitution of the church because that would easily lead to the over rule of God's Grace, which is always the foundation and guarantee of the church.

Altogether one can distinguish three ideas developed by the Donatists. Firstly, they began to consider themselves as the source and mediators of the purity of faith and life of the believers. Secondly, they developed the idea that the purity of faith was a characteristic that belonged to the church as such. As in the classic Roman pagan religion, the relation of the community and the gods was based on the right performance of rituals, so the purity of the community was only given by the performance of a number of precisely described rituals. These were based on the laws of purity in the Old Testament. Breaking the order of these rites implied alienation from God. Thirdly, the Donatist bishops intensified for their believers the fear of losing their purity by contact with the impure ones.

The Donatists laid a chief emphasis on a sanctity which was coming from the performance of rituals. Thus for them sanctity was a position based on rituals, while for Augustine it implied a process wherein the personal efforts of the believers signified that they not only belonged to the *communio sacramentorum* but also to the communio sanctorum, and so the believer was also cooperating with grace in this way.

2.5.2.3 The Doctrine of the Administration of the Sacraments

According to Cyprian the Donatists declared that only the Catholic Church could administrate the sacraments by the authority of Christ committed solely to the Church. Only churchmen of spotless life could validly administrate the

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[206] See the section of this thesis '*Optatus of Milevis*'
[207] Augustine, *De baptismo* 3. 14-19, *Nicene and Post –Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, 441.

sacraments. They insisted so much on one aspect of holiness that they lost the whole balance of Christian morality and faith.[208]

The Donatists' relationship to the earlier ecclesiological tradition significantly changed concerning the role of baptism in the fourth century. In that context the Donatist dissent had a unique position in the understanding of the role of baptism. It was derived from the Christian community's failure during the Diocletian persecution. The Donatists intended to keep the Cyprianic tradition when they declared that their understanding of the baptismal ritual was a bulwark against the pollution of idolatry. Therefore in the Donatist rejection of the baptism performed by the Catholic bishops there was also a rejection of the overseas churches who were maintaining communion with Caecilian and his adherents. Moreover, the Donatists judged these churches equally guilty just as they did the North African Catholic Church.

The 'only valid' practice of baptism administered by the Donatist bishops, as a way of defending the true church, was a necessary element in their *theological* understanding; it did not originate in the realm of the social boundaries and issues of the time, but rather its basis was in the realm of their view concerning the cosmic boundary separating the Kingdom of God from the Satan.[209] This basically meant that those Christians who had not been baptised by the Donatist bishops did not share the communion with the Donatists, which remained according to their understanding the only true church, and therefore they committed the sin of idolatry and they were bound for hell.

The sacraments and especially baptism was a crucial point in the North African ecclesiology. Augustine was critical to a certain extent regarding Cyprian's theological understanding of baptism. Cyprian held that baptism must be ecclesiastical or it is invalid. In opposition to that Augustine allowed that schismatic baptism might be valid, even though his opinion was for the rest harmonious with Cyprian on baptism. However, Augustine makes an important point: if a so called sect practices baptism, their view of the sacrament itself has to be theologically clarified. Cyprian's mistake according to Augustine was that he did not distinguish the sacrament of baptism itself, from its effect or use. Walker makes a very interesting suggestion by saying that, "the Augustinian approach might suggest that there is no absolute distinction between church and sect, but that all possess the church's attributes and graces to a greater or a less degree."[210] Walker's idea has to be considered when we examine Augustine and the Donatists controversy closely.

The Catholics faced two challenges in relation to the religious practice of baptism performed by the Donatists: 1) They had to defend themselves against the accusation of idolatry. 2) They somehow had to justify the recognition of

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[208] In that sense it is not right to describe the classic Donatist doctrine of the late fourth and early fifth century as Cyprianic, for it shifted its emphasis from the divine commission of the Church to the personal holiness of the ministers.

[209] See J. Patout Burns, "Baptism as the Crossing of Social Boundary," (Academic paper, Washington University in St. Louis).

[210] Walker, *The Churchmanship of Saint Cyprian*, 60.

Donatist baptism. The first problem's solution was an easy one because according to Cyprian's teaching the sin of schism was greater than idolatry, and so the Catholics easily argued that the Donatists and their adherents were cut off from the kingdom of heaven.

Before discussing the second solution it is crucial to make a reference to the fact that after the Constantinian shift the imperial support of the Christian Church brought a change also in the operational definition of the church's boundary. Christians entered more actively into the military, political and commercial life of the Empire; however, new problems became more vivid as the tension arose between traditional Christian moral standards and the requirements of more secular responsibility of the church. In many Christian families there resulted a delay of baptism and the enforcement of the life-long catechumen.[211]

The solution of the second problem was not that clear, and it is worth giving a short overview on Augustine's way of dealing with the issue.

Firstly, Augustine argued against their claim and indicated the absurdity of pretending that the true church was now restricted to Africa. He also pointed out the absurd thought that the church over the sea (the Catholics) who had never heard the name of Caecilianus could now be excluded, according to the Donatist teaching, from truly administering the sacraments any longer. Secondly, he turned the focus away from the human minister towards the divine giver of all grace. He made a distinction between the sacraments and the *use* of the sacraments, by saying that the former is invariably confirmed whether within or without the Church, so long as the sacrament is administrated according to Christ's ordinance and with the intention of doing what Christ does in the sacrament.[212] The holiness of the Church is objective and the holy grace is beyond the one who administrates the sacrament. The Augustinian view characterized Western Christianity for more than a millennium. Therefore if perfection - according to Augustinian understanding - was attainable for everyone in this life, then grace, which was mediated by the church and the administration of the sacraments, well defended the holiness and the unity of the church. That also meant that in the Augustinian understanding baptism was assured by *ex opere operato* rather than the *ex opere operantis.*

The Catholic Church's position mainly relied on this doctrine of grace in opposition to the Donatists' teaching, and all perfection as a moral condition of unity and holiness was a long process of growth, which gave a dialectical view on the church. Later the Catholics developed the doctrine of the church on that basis. Augustine's task was to find out the answer to the Donatists' claim that they were the inheritors of the classical African ecclesiology established by Cyprian. The polemic was on the issue that Cyprian's doctrines were not Catholic at all. The difficulty, Cyprian believed, was that the grace might flow outside of the

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[211] J. Patout Burns, "Baptism as the Crossing of Social a Boundary," (Academic paper, Washington University in St. Louis).

[212] Augustine, *De baptismo* 7, 53," *Nicene and Post –Nicene Fathers* vol. 4, 512-13.

Visible Church. According to our understanding, making a distinction between the Visible and Invisible Church can solve the problem.

Augustine's Platonism is a great help here, which means that the Visible Church is the phenomenal Church and it is only a pattern of a real Invisible Church in the Heavens; therefore the fullness of the Church as Christ's Body embracing all the truly faithful, is not of this world but of the world beyond this one. The most glorious City of God has its stability in the eternal kingdom and not in this mutable world.

2.5.2.4 Theologies of Penance

Before the time of the Donatists North African Christianity shows a whole variety of practice to reintegrate the sinful and the schismatic. Earlier in the thesis we saw the example of the Novitian movement which allowed re-entry into the church for the laity after repentance and rebaptism. More problems occurred with the re-entry of the sinful clergy. The main theological concern came when they discussed the re-entry of bishops, who were supposed to be the minister of reconciliation. How could such a bishop be restored to his office and Episcopal duties? Various examples show that the methods of the readmission of the clergy were not systematized.[213] The practice of penitence often was due to the changing situation. So this was also true for the practice of the Donatists, even if we assume that in the beginning of the schism they tried to be faithful to the North African Christian heritage. They tried to be consistent even as they were developing their practice. The Council of Cirta (305) already overruled the Cyprianic doctrine that serious sinners might not celebrate the sacraments, by the election of the *traditor* Siluanus, who was ordained to be a Donatist bishop. Tilley's perspective on the happenings at Cirta is also possible: namely, that it was the Donatists who invented the practice of readmitting sinners to Episcopal duties – and not Augustine, who is usually credited with this.[214] However, one question still remains: Did the Donatists considered Siluanus to be a *traditor*? Any answer can be only hypothetical since the only source we have in relation to that question comes from Optatus, the Catholic bishop.

Later – shown by Tilley on primary references – we are right to believe that the Donatist practice was eased and the so called *lapsi* were taken back into their church without penance nor any imposition of hands.[215]

The Catholics freely readmitted their laity and clergy without requiring rebaptism or re-ordination. In the case of clergy, they were lowered to the lay state, and the only persons who had to do penance were the bishops who practiced rebaptism. That was the case especially between the times of 370-390.

Evans rightly points out that Augustine's major work, the seven books of *de Baptismo,* which were written in opposition to the Donatist's practice, is often out of context and sounds as if his discussion on baptism was not addressed to

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[213] Maureen A. Tilley, "Theologies of Penance during the Donatist Controversy," *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001), 330-37.

[214] Maureen A. Tilley, "Theologies of Penance during the Donatist Controversy," 330-37.

[215] Tilley, "Theologies of Penance during the Donatist Controversy," 330-37.

the Donatist problem. Certainly Augustine's *de Baptismo* was also for the Catholic public, since he clarifies his position on rebaptism exhaustively. Augustine also made a key issue in *de Baptismo* about how the Cyprianic tradition was broken by the practice of the Donatists and their separation from the Catholics. Augustine gives a picture of the Donatist bishops who were in contradiction with Cyprian's teaching because they had disagreements on separation and rebaptism.[216] But as we have seen earlier, there were many examples of how the Donatists were able to tolerate among themselves those who held a different opinion. The Cyprianic ground for the Donatists lay in the separation from the Catholic bishops who were *traditors.* Cyprian never taught that one should remain in communion with lapsed bishops. Augustine's argument in *de Baptismo* overlooked that fact.[217]

Concluding about the practise of penance in the Donatist movement, we can sum up that it was closer to the earlier African Christian tradition's heritage, such as represented by Cyprian. It is also clear that they were sensitive enough to their surroundings to make changes and be sometimes less, and sometimes more tolerant concerning the readmission of the lay people or clergy. However, most of the time they were also consequential to the other areas of their ecclesiological teaching, such as holiness.

2.5.2.5 Changing Perspectives in the Donatist Ecclesiology

In order to be faithful to the historical facts it is essential to call attention to the significance of how the Donatists changed their view on the holiness and perfection of the church. From the historical introduction we learned that in 361, when the forty years of difficulties for the Donatists, including the persecution of Macarius, ended, the whole politics of the Empire concerning the Donatist Church changed radically. This was during the time of Julian's reign, who began to support the Donatists. The Donatist movement went through a tremendous growth in various ways, and also increased in numbers.[218] Parmenian and Tyconius realized that their movement was not the church of the poor anymore; all sorts of people belonged to the Donatist Church: good and bad, rich and poor, pious and impious. The Donatists' ecclesiology was challenged and needed radical change on certain points. That resulted later in the conflict between the two Donatist leaders, Parmenian and Tyconius. Being aware of the fact that the new circumstances required adjustments in several teachings of the Donatists' theology, Parmenian developed an ecclesiology which continued to claim the holiness of the Donatist Church. Parmenian's ecclesiology centred on the different gifts of God, which are only given to the one and true church. These gifts were the following: 1) the *cathedra,* the authority of the church, 2) the *angelus,* a rightly consecrated bishop, 3) the *Spirit*, 4) the *fountain,* baptism, 5) the *seal* of the *fountain*, 6) the *umbilicus,* the properly consecrated al-

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[216] Augustine, *De Baptismo*, 2. 7.
[217] Evans, *One and Holy,* ch. 3.
[218] Frend, *The Donatist Church,* 199-201.

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tar.[219] The ecclesiological changes were not about the individuals in the church, but about God's gifts to the church; therefore if somebody was proved to be sinful, it did not have such strict consequences as among the earlier Donatists. Tilley makes an important remark saying that from the time of Parmenian the Donatist Church was recognized as an institution and not merely a group of individuals.[220] The institutionalization of the Donatist church had its positive and negative side as well. Having similar ecclesiological structure to the Catholics, the Donatist church could have been seen as a complete church institution and organization, whereas until the time of Parmenian it was not. Parmenian's ecclesiology contained the positive element of minimalising the evil within the church, which opened a possibility for a more effective defence in opposition to the Catholic accusation against the deeds of the individual priests and bishops. Parmenian's theology answered the need for some of the theological treaties of the Donatists to be adjusted on certain points, as we could see in the previous paragraphs.

Tyconius was on the other side in the Donatist movement. He took the consequences of the growing popularity of the Donatist's movement seriously, he believed that the increase in number also resulted in the existence of evil within the church, therefore the Donatist church could not claim absolute purity. So far his diagnosis matched with Parmenian's. The difference appeared in Tyconius' solution. According to Tyconius' view, the Donatist church in its historical existence could not avoid the fact that evil is present in it. The distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous was not predestined. It could be expected that both the righteous and the unrighteous would be found in the *Civitas Dei* as well as in the *Civitas Diaboli,* which made Tyconius sharply focus on penitence in his teaching.[221] He offered an ecclesiology which was able to cope with schism and evil inside the church of the pure. It is also the question: if Tyconius and Augustine admitted that there were sinners in the church, then what was the difference among them on that point of ecclesiology?

Tyconius was somewhere in between the Donatist and Catholic view on the church. Tilley rightly formulates in consideration of Tyconius' ecclesiology, saying that: "Tyconius' beliefs on evil in the church would have been too Catholic for the Donatists and the urgency with which he advocated repentance would have been too Donatist for the Catholics."[222] The mystical rules of the *Liber Regularum* and his way of interpreting the Bible, which created a unity of the Scripture and the world, clearly give evidence to that. It could happen that Augustine missed some of the main points of Tyconius's ecclesiology.[223]

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[219] Maureen A. Tilley, "The Ecclesiology of Parmenian and Tyconius," *Studia Patristica* 27, (1993).

[220] Tilley, "The Ecclesiology of Parmenian and Tyconius," 263.

[221] Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 204. and Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1998).

[222] Tilley, *The Bible in the Christian North Africa,* 114.

[223] Maureen A. Tilley, "Understanding Augustine Misunderstanding Tyconius," *Studia et Patristica* 27 (1993), 405-408.

To sum up it can be stated that Tyconius introduced the Church as the Body of Christ and as *collecta* which also possesses evil in mysterious ways.[224] The church in Tyconius' view was a migrant church. That insight was a key element in the history of the movement for the Donatists' survival. Tyconius also made sure that he had the right methods regarding the survival. Therefore he introduced rules for interpreting the Bible. In his rules Tyconius left enough room for both the Holy Spirit and human reasoning, which was the way for the Donatist to be flexible enough and not be bound to the martyrdom more than was necessary. He was also the first to introduce the church as the mixed body (*corpus permixtum)* of Christ. With these concepts he brought the reality of the church closer, which was revolutionary, considering the earlier attempts which could only talk about the church as Christ's pure bride.[225] Tyconius made a significant contribution to the development of the Donatists' ecclesiology that was able to answer the challenges of the surrounding situation. Unfortunately, the disagreements on the ecclesiological differences among the Donatists (Parmenian and Tyconius) did not have a positive end. As a matter a fact, the excommunication of Tyconius by the Donatists was rather a tactical decision, based on disciplinary matters. Perhaps, all the various schisms in the late 4th century were just too many challenges for the Donatists to come up with a coherent ecclesiology. Consequently the schism in the Donatist movement, which started with Tyconius and later culminated with Maximianus, broke the unity of the Donatist movement. Those events also call attention to one characteristic danger of the Donatist factor which one has to take into consideration, namely that every break-up of unity of the church leads to more frequent possibilities of further schisms.

2.5.2.6 Augustine and the Donatists

In the previous pages we show what was Augustine's response and thoughts in common with and in contrast to the Donatist movement. This section is an addition to the former information, now in an evaluative way revealing some more characteristic elements related to the purpose of this chapter.

When Augustine got acquainted with the Donatist dissent he did not see more in the problem of the dissenting party than a rebellious ethnic conflict, which also explains his propaganda against them. When he got acquainted with the issues of the Donatist party's ecclesiological problems, he had assurance about the Cyprianic tradition being on his side in ecclesiological matters.[226] Although, as we saw earlier, Augustine's true understanding of the Donatist claim on the Cyprian's teaching, can be questioned. Augustine found strong support by Optatus to strengthen his ideas against the Donatists. Augustine changed his

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[224] Tyconius, *Liber Regularum Tyconi*, W.S Babcock. (transl.) *Tyconius: The Book of Rules,* (Atlanta, Georgia, Scholars Press, 1989), 14.

[225] P. Bright, "'The Preponderating Influence of Augustine: A study of the Epitomes of the Book of Rules of the Donatist Tyconius," P. Bright (ed.), *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), and Tilley, *The Bible in the Christian North Africa,* 128-129.

[226] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, ch. 19.

ecclesiological views about the following issues ever since Tyconius gave voice to his opinion about the Donatists' ecclesiology: 1) the prevailing millennium of their present age in relation to Christ and the church, 2) how the Bible is fulfilled in the Church, but not yet ended, 3) the view which is able to realize the tension between the "now" and the eschatological reality. On the basis of Tyconius Augustine could make room for the existence of the church in the present. Also the source of Augustine's concept of the two cites (*Civitas Dei* and *Civitas diaboli*) is rooted in Tyconius' idea, just as the thought of the *corpus permixtum,* until the Last Day of separation.[227] Augustine built these new elements into his criticism on the Donatists, relying on Tyconius' theories about the sociological inseparability of the two opposed societies (the mixture remains in the church).

Augustine's dispute with the Donatists culminated after the church council in 411, when Augustine's opposition to the Donatists turned into coercion even with the help of the state, almost giving up his earlier efforts to convert the Donatist to the Catholic faith again. However we also have to mention that to a certain degree he was consequential with his earlier thinking about the way of treating the pagans, the Manicheans and the sinners of the church. Augustine's conviction about the truth, which he saw as represented by the Catholic Church on earth, was one of the major causes of the correction as an imperative charity.[228]

In theological thinking the older Augustine at the time of writing *De Civitate Dei* turns toward the direction of finding more common aspects with the Donatists. One of the significant renouncement is in relation to the view on the Roman Empire, which he considered earlier as a political model. In *De Civitate Dei*, he describes it according to the previous African Christian apologists, as when he comments that the increase of the Roman's growth was due to injustice, unjust wars, aggression and robberies.[229] Many parts of *De Civitate Dei* drew upon ideas of the moderate criticism of the African Church's dualism by Tyconius.[230] His view on martyrdom also began to agree with the view of traditional African Christianity.[231]

The changes in Augustine's views provide a complex theory on the political theology interwoven with the idea of the "two cities." According to Augustine's train of thoughts we can come to the following conclusions: 1) The Roman empire is identical with the diabolic powers of the world, and as a historical form the Empire carries a heritage whose priorities are determined by the ethics of

[227] P. Fredriksen "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse," R. Emerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Age* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 29-35.

[228] Emilien Lamirande, "Church, State and Toleration," Russel P. Robert (edt.), *Saint Augustine and The Augustinian Tradition*, The Augustine Lecture Series, Augustiniai Institute, (Villanova, PA: Villanova University, 1974).

[229] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, book 4. 3.

[230] See W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Curch: a Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 315-25. and R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 1970), 114-126.

[231] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, book 22. 8, 9.

self-sufficient pride. 2) The church is the reign of God in a formal and not in an actual sense. Israel and the church carry the culture that teaches the way of love as is seen in *agape* and obedience. 3) With each difference we face divergent elements: 3a) In the institutional church there are members who belong to the city of pride. 3b) There are people who belong to the *City of God* but they are outside of the formal church boundaries 4) The separation of the city of pride and the city of God by means of the institutional boundaries between church and the pagan empire, is only formal. The final separation will take place eschatologically, and not in history. 5) On basis of the previous points, the institutional church in history is not only the church of the City of God, therefore the Empire cannot be rejected as a mere instrument of Satan's reign. 6) The Empire with its political function and economic well-being is able to pursue ends which can be legitimate and in harmony with God's purposes. But the Empire's temporal realm has no destiny beyond the material ends. 7) Christian citizens are also called to serve the empire as long as it functions in a legitimate way, providing the essentials, such as law and order, food, shelter and so on, for material existence.[232]

Augustine never accepted the dualistic conflict as was argued in the Donatist point of view. He was one of the first who maintained a kind of principle of secularity in such a way that it recognized the political order as fully legitimate - even though it is also clear that for Augustine mankind's final and true home is not within history but in eternity.

The well developed Augustinian view also still lacks some considerable elements which are important in regard to the Donatist Church. Firstly, as we have seen in many examples throughout the later history of the church, the church itself might be sinful, not only in the sense that in its boundaries there are individuals who are sinful, but also as an historical entity the church can be sinful. That point is just as crucial for the understanding of the church during communism, when we try to show the Donatist factor's significance for similar ecclesiological situations. Secondly, the moral significance and responsibility of the state is also missing from the Augustinian view. Thirdly, the messianic hope from the historical point of view, and the created world, are not in focus in his views ("do God's will on earth as it is in Heaven"). We can conclude that a tension for Christians is always there when themes of judgement and hope, righteousness and sinfulness, holiness and demonic powers, church and state will be put on the table, which actually has led to all sorts of political theologies. [233]

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[232] Ernest L. Fortin, "Political Idealism and Christianity in the Thought of St. Augustine," P. Robert Russel (ed.), *Saint Augustine and The Augustinian Tradition*, The Augustine Lecture Series, Augustiniai Institute (Villanova: Villanova University, 1972).

[233] References from the history of the church in the 20th century can show plenty of examples for the options of all kinds of political theology.

2.6 Church Unity & Division - Conclusion in Light of the New Approach to Define the Donatist Factor and its Elements

The distinguished place of the Christian church in Roman Africa can be pictured well according to the records and documents of the time from the end of the second through the fifth century. The development and the often rapid changes with the interplaying of socio-economic and political forces and religious ideals, led to a unified although diverse community of the Christian Church. When we look at the peculiar establishment of Christianity in Roman Africa, a clear line of formation is detectable, the contours of which came from the theological lines of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Donatus (Donatism), while Augustine shaped the hallmarks of universal Christianity. The African Church initially defined itself internally, and found coherence by its opposition to the religion and culture of Roman society, as well as to extreme forms of Christianity.

Burns' points will excellently support the basis of our conclusion which tries to comprehend Donatism by placing it into the ecclesiological situation of second through the fifth centuries. The basic issue is the unity of the church which circled around the following themes: i) opposition to external enemies; ii) the local churches' internal diversity; and iii) an attempt to build a universal communion of the local churches.[234] The early third century's egalitarian ideal in the Christian church of Roman Africa with minimal internal differences, had changed in a few decades to an organised internal diversity. The struggle for common standards and for a structure of regional cooperation also remained a source of conflict in the fifth century. The tension increased between sameness and otherness, holiness and worldliness, a rigorist position and laxity, local identity and universal aspiration. Unity was not based on uniformity at all but on an organised diversity. Our special focus is on the Donatist dissent, whose uniqueness contributed to African Christianity, which was one of the most flourishing communities in the early church. With the prehistory and the consequences of the dissent, which were in line in many points with the Christian tradition in Roman Africa, we try to draw a clear picture (on the basis of Burns' points) of the complex ecclesiological situation and locate the basic motifs, whose reappearances in church history require us to open a way for further discussion in theology.[235]

2.6.1 The Opposition to External Enemies

An oppositional position by the church is evident in the second century's Christian community. Christians found unity and cohesion in an exclusive worship of Christ whereby one of the basic forces came from the rejection of Roman religious and cultural practices. The differentiation from the surrounding cul-

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[234] Patout Burns, "Establishing Unity in Diversity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 32 (winter 2005), 381.
[235] Burns, "Establishing Unity in Diversity," 381-399.

ture, by defining the boundary which identifies an opposing community, created unity among the members on the basis of what they wished to reject.

2.6.1.1 Tertullian

Tertullian's writings and the vivid history of martyrdom describe well the opposition to external enemies in the second and early third century. More precisely, we can see a community which was occupied with the attempt to concentrate all its energy on the separation from Roman religious culture. The opposition was against idolatrous and demonic practises. The *Ad martyras* and the *De pudicitia* of Tertullian, for example, highly indicate the role of martyrs and confessors who resisted the demands by the imperial officials, even at the cost of their property and life. The standard of confession by these witnesses to Christ was on the highest level, so that the martyrs were credited with extraordinary powers of intercession before God for their followers. The intention to fulfil the requirement of the ideal practice of Christian life according to the specification of the apostolic church was at the centre in the life of the Christian community in the time of Tertullian.

Tertullian also carefully distinguished his community from other alternative forms of Christianity. That is well pictured in his rejection of Marcionism and the different forms of Gnosticism (Valentius, Hermogenes). The differentiation increased between the *ecclesia numerus episcoporum*, that is, the Catholic Church which was ready to compromise with the evil world in order to make progress, and on the other hand, the *ecclesia spiritu* which represented those who were intolerant towards the secular world. The different debates and approaches which separated the community from the surrounding culture also strengthened its identity. The unity of the Christian community in Carthage concentrated on its boundaries and on preserving its internal purity from the pollution of worldly life, but this led to difficulties in managing internal diversity or dissent. The influence of the New Prophecy provided a gradual shift in Tertullian's ecclesiology. The works of *De preascriptone hereticorum, Adversus praexan or the De pudicitia* were written under the influence of the New Prophecy. The tendency of the growing rigorism may not have characterised the whole church, but its popularity developed in the Roman African territories and often played a determinative role for the internal diversities, which were not more than an *ecclesia in ecclesiola*.

2.6.1.2 Cyprian

By the time of Cyprian the unity of the communities was based not only on the issue of the separating members, who rejected others as non-members. The internal differentiations of roles and classes of membership, which were structured by the communities themselves, reached a higher degree of influence. The strong boundaries provided different ways for the realization of various values and behaviours, while unity and the congregations' identity were strengthened. By the time of the mid-third century the opposition to the Roman culture and the well-designed multiply roles of members of the community in Carthage is

detectable in Cyprian's writings. The practices focused on the rejection of idolatry and the strong emphasis on the purity and the holiness of the community. God's power in the life of the community was at the centre of practice, especially in the rituals of baptism and the eucharist. All this also meant that the same fragile unity of the church and the internal conflicts within the community remained the same since the time of Tertullian.

2.6.1.3 Donatism

By the time of the Donatist dissent most of the motives for diversity were enlarged according to the socio-cultural aspects. On the one hand, North Africa's Christianity faced a conflict of Christianity with paganism: there was a cultural pluralism in which the native traditions and the culture of the Roman Empire were in conflict in many cases, and there was a struggle by the different layers of societies with an unstable economy of the Empire. On the other hand, one can picture the fulfilment of a process where the church tried to find its historical legitimacy. The monarchy of God appeared first in the church then expanded in relation to worldly power in the fourth century. The theological (ecclesiological) shift resulted in an understanding of the church-model where the cosmic *exusia* of Christ had to be maintained by the close relationship of the church and the world. The so called Constantinian shift was clear evidence of that process, which culminated under Theodosius I in 380 when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. The idea was that the 'leaven' of the Gospel merges into the world and dissolves in it while the political aims of the Empire (*Pax Romana)* was also maintained. In the meanwhile the very identity of the church was endangered because of the mutual influences. The ambivalent nature of the Empire's and the Christian Church's relationship was seen on many levels. The Donatists consequently relied on the North African Christian tradition of maintaining the status of opposition with the surrounding Roman culture. Their group- and self identity were shaped by the Image of Israel, and were strongly characterised by their community being a particular group in society. For many years the Christian ideal as the prototype of the saints was pictured in the figure of martyrs which was consciously carried on by the Donatists after the changes of the religious state of affairs in 313. The essence of the Donatists' claim was that they were the true heirs of the persecuted churches of the martyrs, which was in opposition to the evil and idolatry of the Empire.

2.6.1.4 Augustine

Augustine continued to affirm Christian opposition to idolatry but his focus was more on the private forms of cult like astrology or superstition. While in the second, third and fourth century the definition of the unity of the church was based on the opposition of demonic practises of idolatry, in the fifth century Augustine took a different approach, for which the major elements circled around the definition of mutual love, forgiveness and services through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as it could be shared in the body of Christ. The Au-

gustinian consideration of the Roman Empire had a complex and ambivalent nature, especially in his work, *De Civitate Dei,* in comparison to his anti-Donatist writings. First, it has to be noted that the *civitas* (*terrena*) was not fully equal with the state; rather it meant society (the city) which has an indirect relationship to the *res publica,* since the commonwealth derived from the city-state in the ancient conception. His political theology is strongly related to his ecclesiology as *Civitas Dei.* In one way, Augustine simply makes use of the state without unreserved trust in it since he admitted the change which had come over the Empire since Constantine. In another way, concerning Augustine's thoughts in relation to external enemies, we can come to an overall conclusion, that besides his *positive* approach to the state he also had an *oppositional* understanding similar to earlier African Christian apologists. The *civitas terrena* is the society of the reprobate, in other words, the society which was represented by the state and is condemned.

2.6.2 The local Churches' Internal Differentiations

2.6.2.1 Tertullian

The number of internal differentiations of roles and the structure of governance contributed to the fragility in the unity of the church. Most bishops claimed their authority in disciplinary decisions on the privilege granted to Peter by Christ in Matthew 16: 19. Tertullian rejected such a view that the authority of the office of bishop was passed from generation to generation with the same discretion since Peter.[236] The sacralization of the clergy's offices and leadership could be claimed only on the basis of the communities need for order – according to Tertullian. The authority to teach or judge was conferred exclusively on the basis of spiritual gifts such as those which could be pictured by the New Prophets (Montanism) and the *regula fidei*. Tertullian's view on ecclesiology and authority in the church might have represented a minority opinion in Carthage in the early third century, it was a clear indication however that the role of bishops and their authority was challenged and debated. Tertullian based unity on the consensus among the local churches on belief and practice, while also allowing the churches founded by the apostles to introduce stricter standards of belief and practice by the prophets.

2.6.2.2 Cyprian

By the time of Cyprian the internal conflicts about the standards for membership and the roles in the community were the sources of debates. The internal conflicts were intensified between episcopal and prophetic leadership in the local churches. In the time of Tertullian the result was evident. Tertullian's view on the problem left its mark which often characterised common understanding, which is shown for example in the debate about Cyprian's election to bishop in

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[236] Tertullian , *De pudicta* 21, *De praescriptone haereticorum* 32, 1.

Carthage. Later, at such a crisis point in the time of Cyprian, the office of the bishops held greater favour.

The development of internal structures of class and authority and the characteristic formation of Christian identity was hindered by the difficulty of Emperor Decius' persecution. The many failures in maintaining a confession of Christ strongly challenged the very identity of Christianity. The violation of the rule of idolatry did not allow the same continuity in the church, as if nothing had happened. There were various practices of re-entry to the church according to the different level of standards. Often theological claims were not determinative. The majority of bishops were uncertain of their role in forgiving the sin of apostasy, which Christ reserved to himself in Matthew 10: 33. The lapsed and their often opulent supporters advanced the claim that intercessory power, which traditionally had been assigned to the martyrs and confessors, could be extended to the forgiveness of grave sins. Cyprian and his fellow bishops rejected these appeals, although they saw a possibility of readmission to the churches on the basis of limited membership within the community. With the acceptance of penitence a limited power to sanctify was given to the bishops.

2.6.2.3 Donatism

First, the Donatist church seemed to be firm considering the question of holiness and all the related themes which appeared in the practice of church life. According to the earlier Donatist teaching, holiness is the special mark of the church which has to be recognised by everyone. The church only can be true if it has communion with the saints who were genuine and perfect. The unity of the church therefore is contingent upon this prior issue. Later with the institutionalization of the Donatist church the emphasis of Cyprian's teaching on episcopal authority and power became important, also in relation to the allowance of tolerating deviation from the established standards of norms among the laity. Parmenian's and Tyconius' perspectives enriched and developed the Donatist theology, with the result that there was a quantitative and qualitative increase of the Donatist church, although the clear line of differentiation came to a front in the Donatist church, with the consequence of an inner dissent (the Maximianist separation in 392-393). As the document of the Conference of Carthage in 411 says, one can also be persuaded of the fact that the Catholics' and the Donatist's ecclesiological view is not as far apart, as was often thought as we have pointed out earlier in relation to the *Conference of Carthage 411*.

2.6.2.4 Augustine

Augustine was ready to accept the differentiation of roles within the church but he emphasized that the virtues and gift were shared by all faithful. In the early fifth century, the boundaries of the Christian church were less defined compared to the time of Cyprian; therefore this weakened the communities' identity and made it difficult to identify the North African Christian heritage and tradition. For example, the rituals of baptism or the participation in the Lord's Supper did not serve as church member identification. Many church

members, for example, were baptised during the Donatist schism and were later admitted to the Catholic communion. Others were suspended from the eucharist communion because of grave sins, and remained in that state until their death. They could identify themselves as Catholic. Augustine preached to all of them.

We should not neglect the fact, even if we do not question Augustine's best intention to solve the problems of the church that the insecure political situation of the Empire between 399 and 411 depended very much on Africa's supplies. Therefore the dominance of Catholicism was also a political necessity which required a stronger opposition regarding the Donatist church.

Augustine argued in opposition to Cyprian's understanding concerning the role and power of the bishops that the sanctifying power belongs to Christ alone and the bishops only play a role as agents. Therefore it can be effective even in the practice of schismatic and unworthy bishops. Augustine divested the bishops' exclusive power. That concept resulted in the rejection of the Donatist concept based on Cyprian's teaching, namely that the bishops serve as mediators between God and his church, and their role and responsibility were restricted to governance. Augustine's understanding of the office of bishop was closer to that of Tertullian than Cyprian. He had the same view on the bishops' role in forgiveness. In the Augustinian consideration of the local churches, the common vocation and shared life of Christians within the unity of the congregation were stressed. With the differentiations of the roles of both imperial and ecclesial cultures, he refused to relate these distinctions to any religious value. They were temporary, used by God to bring the elect together in the *Civitas Dei*. The *Civitas Dei* in Augustine's understanding was closer to the concept of the *communion sanctorum*, the elect who are the true recipient of the promises of David and the gifts of eternal peace and beatitude as he set forth in Book XX in the *De civitate Dei*. The Visible Militant Church is never more than part of the wider church. Its peace and beatitude are in hope. It is always *in via* as a symbol and representative of the *Civitas Dei* which uses the peace provided by the earthly state.

In the Augustinian view, the Catholic Church was a *corpus permixtum*, comprising of good and corrupt people. The church's ultimate moral and spiritual perfection exclusively belong to God.

2.6.3 Attempts for Universal Communion of the Local Churches

2.6.3.1 Tertullian

The unity of the universal church was determined by the belief and practice of the consensus of the local churches - as Tertullian believed. He gave priority to those churches which were founded by the apostles according to the agreement of the *regula fidei*. Considering the question of practice he asserted the work of the Holy Spirit in the form of the New Prophecy which could initiate higher standards of purity as well.[237]

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[237] Tertullian, *De praescriptone hareticorum* 19-21, *De monogamia* 2-3.

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2.6.3.2 Cyprian

By the time of Cyprian a radical shift - compared to the situation of a half-century earlier - provided the development of regional cooperation among the churches. A whole network of churches evolved on the consensus of belief and practice. Cyprian associated the collegiate of bishops with the results and evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit, common in Christian communities throughout the world. The communities' local cohesion and a new sense of universal identity and broader unity were under formation.

One of the questionable points of Cyprian's idea on the system of collegial bishopric as a maintainer of unity and holiness was that the burden of holiness was placed on the individual bishops. Therefore if a bishop failed to maintain his purity and moral holiness he would lose the gift of the Holy Spirit. This way he would deprive his local church's power to forgive and sanctify. According to Cyprian's teaching such a bishop had to be removed in order to protect the holiness of the entire College of Bishops and the unity of the (universal) church also. The removal of unworthy bishops was a great challenge but its necessity was unavoidable. Cyprian differentiated the penitential and clerical roles which could have supported a fuller unity of the church both on the local and universal level. The equality of the bishops also contributed to the justification of the regional differences. A permission of greater diversity characterised the churches in the time of Cyprian. Disagreement on fundamental issues did not necessarily break the unity of the church.

By the time of Cyprian, the Novitian separation in line with the New Prophecy's earlier attempts in the Catholic Church, is clear evidence of the emerging difficulties on the matters of *sancta ecclesia*, *ecclesia martyrum*, eschatological perfection, penitence and the power of the church.

2.6.3.3 Donatism

After the death of Constantius, under the rule of his nephew Julian, the restoration of the Donatist movement happened and was followed by a rapid growth of the Donatist Church. By the time of 361-391, the Donatist church established its unity in opposition to idolatry and the Roman Government, as well as in opposition to the Catholic communion which supported the Roman policies. The enforcement of this boundary, even with violent and terrorist methods (*Circumcelliones*), established the unity of the local and regional church. The broader unity of the universal church seemed to be abandoned by the Donatists.

2.6.3.4 Augustine

One of Augustine's major aims was to develop a sense of membership in a worldwide communion within the local churches. In the beginning, when getting acquainted with the Donatist church, it was vital for him to bring the Donatists into the catholic communion. It was not possible on the basis of any consensus of the churches or the sharing of the gift of the Holy Spirit in the collegiality of bishops, but on the basis of the birth, death and resurrection of

Christ and his sending of the Holy Spirit to the church. Augustine's interest in the universality of the church was also evident in his understanding of the sacrament as the ecclesial body of Christ's connection to his resurrected flesh. After the Conference of Carthage (411) Augustine treated the Donatists as pagans or heretics. In his complex understanding on the church with the "state" relationship combined with concept of the *two cities*, he saw the possibility of coercion with the help of the 'secular arm', which was recognized in this case as fully legitimate.

2.6.4 Concluding Remarks

Our introduction to the history and the evaluation of the Donatist movement and its antecedents, supports the tendency of the new scholarly treatment, which says that the traditional portrait of the Donatist movement as a martyr-maniac, millennialist, sectarian and heretical group, can no longer be consequently maintained. The new ways which were opened in the middle and later part of the 20th century's historical and theological research concerning the time of the Donatist movement; have overruled the old picture about the Donatists. After the scholarly reconsideration[238] of the Donatist movement, one can have a wider picture of the movement where a clear line of development is detectable in the responses by the Donatists to the changes in their circumstances: in accordance to their understanding of the situation they constructed and reconstructed the world of their own experience. In this way Donatism was able to survive the transition from its minority persecuted state to the institutionalized church of the majority in the Roman North Africa.

According to the Donatist dissent's theological problems, which circle around the right balance of disciplining church members, whereby holiness and the unity of the church is at stake, we learned that the details and circumstances of the problem deepened the ecclesiological difficulties of the Donatist-Catholic debate. We could clearly see that both sides approached the ecclesiological problems in a different way. That is certain if we bear their very different positions in mind, although the land of Africa and the Christian tradition would have allowed more common ground for a better solution. The evaluation of the Donatist movement has shown that we are at the border or intersection of two worlds, that of the 'catholic' and the 'dissenting' tradition.

Donatism was capable to work out its own ecclesiological character in line with the previous tradition of Christianity in North Africa. They inherited the literal interpretation of the Bible from Tertullian and Cyprian. The Donatists also placed an emphasis on the unity of the Bible in their interpretation of the Scripture. That can well be pictured in their strong self-image that matched with the picture of Israel in the Old Testament and their separation which derived mainly from an appeal to the New Testament. The reliance on Scripture as Law was a strong attitude of Donatism, which also well cohered with the Donatist perception on them as a similar community to Israel, who originally re-

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[238] Maureen A Tilley, *The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

ceived and cherished the Law. They followed Cyprian's views on the unity of the Bible which was rather ecclesiologically based. The ecclesiology of the pure church also goes back to Cyprian just as well as the question of the validity of the sacraments performed by those who were outside of their church. The emphasis on living witness and the abiding presence of the Spirit connects their teaching to Tertullian and the church of the third century, especially considering the martyrs of that time. The martyr stories allowed building a world where heroes and villains are clearly distinguished. This way the followers of the Donatist movement had a clear literary vision which commanded their community life. These basic tendencies were combined in the Donatist ecclesiology and applied in certain changes of their history. The Donatist community presented an understanding of their Christianity in such a way that they could survive for centuries apart from other Christians. In the area where many other Christians accepted the political and moral status quo, Donatism found new ways to resist assimilation to the larger worldly society.

When persecution was over and more peaceful times followed, the Donatist church did not die out. Their positive conception of themselves resulted in strong community awareness as the *collecta* who held the Law of the Lord. That self–awareness was due to their building and maintenance of their own world, in which their interpretation of Scripture as the *Law* commanded what one ought to do, rather than what one should believe. This resulted in a pragmatic understanding of the biblical passages instead of a doctrinal one. The Donatists' focus was more on what the Bible commands one to do rather than on what one ought to believe. According to this view the Donatists developed a *logic* of separation. The causes of the schism between the Donatists and the Catholics also have to be evaluated on disciplinary rather than on doctrinal levels; therefore the charges against them for being a heretical sect seem to be out of context. Firstly, one would have needed to define the criteria for being an *ecclesia* or *sect* in the 4th and 5th century's ecclesiology. One also has to realize that the Donatists held religious dominance and control of the society in North Africa. Protest and criticism are not enough for giving the label 'sectarian' to others. Their heretical status is to be questioned as well. On the basis of the Donatists' teachings, we can acknowledge that there were no heresies in doctrinal matters in relation to the heritage of the North African Christianity. Their interpretation of the message differed from the official interpretation of the Roman Church. The historical facts also show that the Donatist Church's heretical state was falsely invented a century after their appearance (405). In that decision church politics played a role more than doctrinal considerations, since that was the only way to bring them within the scope of the general anti-heretical legislation in the Roman Empire.

Several scholars have called attention to Donatism's relative success as due to their combination of contradictory concepts. On the one hand, the institutionalism of their church could become a power structure ruled by a hierarchy. On the other hand, they were able to maintain a non-hierarchical community of love concerned with spiritual values. The Donatist church was ready to cope

with the realities of their context. Parmenian's works are clear evidence of this, when Parmenian distinguished between personal and ecclesiastical purity. Therefore the Donatist church went through a radical transition in its ecclesiological concerns, whereby the holiness of the church depended on God's necessary gifts and it was not based on the individual members' moral status. Tyconius even went further than bishop Parmenian: he envisioned the church as the mysterious but also 'mixed' Body of Christ, since there is the presence of evil in the *collecta*. His understanding of the church in this way strengthened the pilgrim image of the church in this world.

The Donatist separation also had a very vivid application to all the socio-political aspects of the indigenous people in the land of North Africa. This became more evident when the Roman Church and its hierarchy accepted a union with the Roman Empire. Why the church accepted the union will remain one of the most difficult questions to answer, particularly the relevant questions are: Did everyone accept the hierarchy's decision? What happened to the Christian value-system? Was the resistance of the radical changes effective enough? We find answers for all these questions in the Donatist movement's basic attributes: it was a religious movement performing a revolutionary function. The Donatist dissent is an example that shows that there are no pure theological demands which are not shaped at the same time by the socio-cultural, historical and national circumstances. These concepts have been formulated by sociologist of religions as the notion of world-construction and world-maintenance. A scholar like Tilley could make a radical shift in her research of the Donatist movement, by taking this important element into account as a methodological consideration.[239] We can see the same mechanism in the case of the Donatist movement, especially in their interpretation of the Bible and theology as a source for their ecclesiological concerns, all of which was coloured by their own world-construction and maintenance.

The Donatist attempt toward the formation of church-unity, along with their reaction to major ecclesiological and socio-political challenges, is worth evaluating. The attitude of the imperial authority toward the bishops and the church changed from persecution to respectful recognition in the fourth century, although the empire's whole value system remained the same. To many Christians this new situation was not a religious victory over an evil empire, but a replacement of the Roman religion by the new. The danger of losing the original Christian message might have been a reality for many Christians. The changes in the Roman Empire's politics toward Christianity opened a number of dangers for the church, and these dangers multiplied in various ways on both sides of the dissent, as we have seen. On the one hand, one of the most charac-

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[239] Tilley refers to those sociologies of religion which explored ways whereby people make sense of their surroundings and tell their stories according to their view of the world, which is based on their social, cultural and political experiences. "The less firm the plausibility structure becomes, the more acute will be the need for world maintenance." Cf. Tilley, *The Bible in the Christian North Africa,* 6. Tilley refers to the thoughts of Peter Berger in this matter: cf. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1967, reprint: Anchor, 1969).

teristic weaknesses was that the Christian answer to the questions of the world ignored the fact that there were great changes in the historical development of that time. On the other hand, while Christianity became a historically recognised institution (church), it also had to preserve the essence of its teaching - the *kerygma* - as the central meaning of the Gospel. So the challenge of applying the Gospel as a true and valid answer for the *contemporary* world's realities and questions was not adequately met, and these problems were misunderstood or left untouched. The result was – as is more often the case - a theology weak or even unfaithful in its content and response to the age in which it belongs. Both sides of the opposing party had to take these risks into account. In the North African environment the theology of the Donatist movement was able to adapt and reduce the risks more than the Catholic Church, although they could not avoid schism.

The relationship between the Christian Church and the Roman Empire became the central issue of separation for the churches, since the Donatist movement held the opposite position of the Roman Church, which officially allied with the empire. The contradictory position of the Donatists and the Roman Church toward the *traditores* and *lapsi* weakened their loyalty to the Christian message, whereby basically more disciplinary matters than theological or doctrinal concerns played a role. It is logical that the Roman Church and its hierarchy after accepting union with the Roman Empire would be more readily inclined to forgive and forget personal past failures than the Donatists were. In most cases the Donatists were more 'puritan' on this issue, insisting that only the confessors who suffered persecution should decide whether or not a *lapsus* or *traditor* is accepted back into the church. This position was supported by their own increasing martyrdom, which naturally led to the follow-up position that the validity of sacraments administrated by the bishops and priests who were lacking basic Christian virtues, had to be questioned. The contradictory politico-ecclesiastic positions of the Donatist movement and Roman Church remained significant throughout the conflict. The Donatist movement seems to be more traditional concerning its liturgical practice, liturgy at the tombs of martyrs, eucharist love feast (*agape*) and their discipline of penitence.

We can conclude that the Donatist movement was a formation according to circumstances after the Great Persecutions, whose primary aim was to call attention to the Christian values in the practise of the church with special references to martyrdom. It is possible to assume that Donatism was a necessary and important religious formation in the life of North African Christianity after the difficult situation of persecution. It was necessary because reinforcement, renewal and reformation are only possible if the church is firmly resolved to face the challenges and mistakes of the past in light of the true identity of Christianity. No one can deny that the solution offered by the Donatists was not without mistakes. We have already seen the numerous problems which hindered the endeavour by the Donatists. Apart from their inconsequence, it is right to suggest that they were closer to the former North African Christian tradition than their opponents. The long history of the movement shows clearly

that they were able to reconsider their ecclesiological views, which resulted in improvement in the movement's theological thinking and even made a notable impact on the formation of the Catholic Churches' ecclesiology - as we could trace in Augustine's teachings as well.

Apart from the actual on-going theological changes in the Donatist movement, the constellation of the difficulties after the fifth century meant that their ecclesiology was not coherent enough and therefore the Donatist movement was unable to form a permanent national church.

2.7 The Different Elements in the Donatist Factor

Our study of the Donatist dissent and its theological, historical and sociological context leads to the conclusion at this point that it is possible to say that the Roman Catholic Church's struggle with the Donatist Church provided a theological legitimacy for speaking about a 'Donatist Factor' in the history of the church. The notion of the Donatist Factor leads us to the heart of ecclesiology. Basic theological demands are at stake, which reveal the nature and perspectives of the church itself, also in the world when a hostile environment and even persecution are present. Pure ecclesiological themes are present which try to define the essence of the Christian Church according to the holiness and catholicity of the church, since the Church is the body of Christ on a universal and local level.

North African ecclesiology from Tertullian through Cyprian and the Donatists, had an important voice which challenged and finally positively influenced the western (Augustinian) ecclesiological tradition. The Donatist dissent calls attention (in line with the North African ecclesiological tradition) to the principle of *ecclesia semper reformanda,* in a radical way in late antiquity's context.

So let us clarify how we are using the following terms. The 'Donatist Factor' can be defined as a multi-layered notion, a composition of different elements which played a role in the history of the Donatist movement, and we shall refer to this later as a paradigm for the analysis of the earlier and present historical contexts and actions of the Reformed Church of Hungary. When we speak of the 'Donatist Factor' we thus mean the perspective and thoughts which make up the identity of the Donatist movement. When we distinguish several Donatist factors, in the plural, we will be clarifying the different elements in the above mentioned multi-layered Donatist identity.

We shall now introduce the Donatist Factor's elements according to the 'new approach' of recent analysis.

2.7.1 The Role of the Image of Israel as Collecta[240] in the Donatist Factor

The image of *collecta* as the holy assembly of Israel is a positive conception which helps maintain and strengthen a community's identity in the midst of unclean enemies. This comparison can be a major cause for distinction and also separation. Patristic and later church history have a number of examples for the usage of the motif of Israel in both a positive and negative manner as well. In a negative way, the sin of Israel in typology became the sins of Christian people. In a positive approach, Israel was sanctified as ritually pure in order to encourage good morals and enhance the community solidarity. The outstanding positive image of Israel sharpens the boundaries of the opposing party as an enemy, therefore separation is most desired in order to avoid assimilation. The image of the *collecta* as basically inseparable from the Law of God, has the consequence that the community which most relies on this image, often precisely does not do the will of God nor does it keep the word of the Lord, but it does keep the Law in a legalistic way.

The image of *collecta* matches and holds together the other concomitant elements of the Donatist Factor as well. According to the history of the Donatist movement the self-awareness as *collecta* seems to be their most tested feature, which they could often apply to any given circumstances.

2.7.2 The Role of the Construction of Time in the Donatist Factor

The role of time is crucial in order to comprehend the world around us. In Donatism we met a twofold construction of time: the time of suffering and the time of glory. This view of time has a chief emphasis in the Donatist Factor, since all the other characteristic elements are organized according to this apportionment of time, especially martyrdom. This view of time greatly helps to strengthen the image of *collecta* built on the analogy of Israel. The understanding of time in the Donatist factor sees the course of events as a simple repetition of the events predicted in the Bible. This results in a perspective in which the apocalyptic end of time has smaller emphasis. Instead of looking forward to martyrdom or a glorious future time, looking back is more significant. Such a construction of time allows a participation in the same block of history with the martyrs of the past or even with Jesus.

2.7.3 The Role of Separation in the Donatist Factor

One of the major causes in the Donatist Factor leading to separation was their opposition to the indiscriminate mixing of the church with the sinful world. The time of division of good and evil is not only the Final Judgement, but the immediate separation can take place when the identity of pure and impure is known. Separation implies a sense of place, which could reflect a pro-

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[240] The *collecta* is a technical term for the ritually pure assembly of Israel at prayer. Maureen A. Tilley, "Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity. From the Church of the Martyrs to the *Collecta* of the Desert," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5.1 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 21-35.

vincial attitude of the Donatist Factor. Separation is also strongly connected to the exclusive assurance of salvation of a group of individuals. The stress on development and eventual perfection and the holiness of the Church as the body of the Lord become crucial. In the Donatist Factor the boundaries of separation were often restricted to the actual narrower context whereby all the events are measured and evaluated in that narrow circle in the light of Scripture. In such a view the construction of the world can be very limited and isolated.

2.7.4 The Role of the Office of Bishop in the Donatist Factor

As the leaders of the community, the bishops play an important role in the Donatist Factor. Their personal charisma and virtuosi were often a source of justification for their calling and their criticism, which made religious movements more durable with the coexistence under extraordinary conditions, for example martyrdom. Certainly not all religious virtuosi have charismatic gifts. The leaders of a particular religious formation are often seen as the ministers of the *eternal king* and are distinguished as faithful disciples who are especially responsible for separating good and evil. This gave rise to high expectations of outstanding spiritual abilities towards the episcopal officeholders in the institutionalized church.

The transition of the spiritually elite status of the bishops as *pneumatophoroi* (bearers of the spirit) or *gnostikoi* (having divine insight) went in the direction of being more involved in public life after the time of Constantine. When the Christians increased in the Roman Empire so did the extent of the bishop's authority which led to more participation in civic matters. The position of the bishop after the time of Constantine thus involved public as well as spiritual leadership and thus became a combination of administrative skills with religious abilities. The compatibility of these two aspects of the episcopal office resulted in the threat that the spiritual excellence of the bishops would be overshadowed by their administrative duties. After the Constantinian changes, the following factors played a determinative role in the requirements to hold a bishop's office: social elite status, education, wealth and access to the emperor. The 'aristocratization' of the Christian ideal of the bishop was a real threat to the church and its independence from worldly-political intricacies.

The negative tendencies around the office of the bishops in a state-church setting also became a subject of debate in the Donatist Factor, under the theme of church leadership as highly responsible for the church to be holy and clean.

2.7.5 The Role of the Necessity of Suffering in the Donatist Factor

Suffering through martyrdom was one of the basic particular characteristics of the Donatist movement, which played an important role in the context of true believers, concerning who can be recognised because they are persecuted and because they are holy and faithful to the Law of God. On the basis of many examples of the Scriptures, suffering and martyrdom through persecution by evil forces, is a hallmark in the Donatist Factor and also Christian self-identity. This characteristic element had a strong connection to their eschatological understanding in the beginning, as we have seen in the Donatist movement history.

However, after persecution ended and when there was relatively permanent peace, persecution and martyrdom received more emphasis in regard to the past, in order to maintain a long-term tradition.

2.7.6 Revitalization of the Christian Message

In the Donatist Factor the different angles of the possible solution point to the themes of holiness and separation in the church. Considering the holiness and unity of the church locally and as a denomination, Christological and eschatological concerns are the core of the revitalized Christian message. The *unity* of the church is contrasted with two concepts that stand on either side of it: uniformity and union. 'Uniformity' is to deny individuality and the uniqueness of personality. 'Union' is a limited degree of unity. However, the unity of the church in diversity allows for the recognition of different approaches to the concept of the church, while the stress on the Donatist Factor can result in separation or dissent as well. In such an extreme situation when dissent is unavoidable one of the most problematic issues is how a church can remain part of the one body of Christ, and also be the spiritual home for a certain formation of Christian community in the given context. The question of church-discipline, church-membership, the role that the laity plays in relation to clergy or vice-versa, and church leadership are crucial in these matters. The revitalization of the Christian message in light of the above mentioned themes is a determinative element in the Donatist Factor, whereby a re-interpretation of the original doctrine about the Christian message becomes necessary. This has consequences for the practice, polices, and deviations by the church's hierarchy. These conflict generating issues at first do not go beyond the practical level. Only when the church's hierarchy stubbornly persists in supporting injustice for a long period of time will doctrinal consideration also take place.

2.7.7 The Understanding of the Church, State and Society as a Structural Part of the Donatist Factor

The Donatist Factor focuses on the following questions and solutions under the theme expressed in the above title. How does the church as the body of Christ relate to society? How does ministry deal with the collective evil present in the world? Since the fourth century the church has been showing a whole range of possibilities of state-church arrangements. What is the task of the Christians? In the Donatist understanding, the church is often described according to the basic standards set up in relation to (church) disciplines with regard to the purity, which saves the members of the church from the outside impure 'enemy', or separates the pure church members from those who have become influenced by such an 'enemy'. In the meantime the central Christian values such, as love and peace, are overlooked or not balanced well with the concept of the 'true church'. The rule of conduct, in the first place, is not among the classic 'guards' of the church – the canon, creeds and offices are usually mentioned in this matter. But Christian life for the Donatist Factor tends to take the place of creeds and being a confessor or martyr replaces the offices in

the church. The church is then more dependent on the Christian attitude than on the formal structural elements. From the different angles of the possible answers this element of the Donatist Factor tends to look for a solution whereby an alternative society is offered through the community of the church, and this includes thoughts about the right to resist and revolt. The Donatist Factor shows a high sensitivity for clear distinction and even separation between the state and the church, although the social and national feelings are in the focus of church activity.

2.7.8 The Donatist Factor is Reform Orientated

Altogether, considering the different elements of the Donatist movement generally speaking, it can be established that the Donatist movement was reform orientated; therefore this feature also bears importance in the Donatist Factor.

The theological roots of the reformation of the church are vividly present in the Scriptures. Reformation of the Christian life and the church was the focus of the Donatist movement's aim, which included some unique aspects. Analogies for the attempt for reformation can be found in the Old Testament in the context of the people of God. (For example the history of Elijah, Jonah or the times of captivity, and so forth). In the New Testament in the context of the Christian church the heart of reformation is expressed in the word *anakainosis*[241] (*renovatio*). Both the active verbal form (Hebrews 6,6), and the passive form of *anakanoó* (.....) are found. In the active form the subject is the people of God; in the passive form, the subject is God (*divinum passivum*) - but the context makes clear that the people or the church cannot renovate themselves. *Renovatio* of the church is only possible for God. Paul expresses in his Letter to the Romans 12: 2, that the renovation of the church is in contrast to *aggioramento,* which is an alignment with the schemas of this *aion*

The ecclesiology of the Christian church faced the following crucial dilemma after the persecution of Christianity, in light of the Donatist Factor. The expression of faith basically could go in two directions: confrontation or compromise with hostile secular powers. The paths of valour and martyrdom, or the paths of accommodation and discretion, are the most common ways to deal with the dilemma. One also has to take into consideration a theology of penance and the possible ways for development after persecution. In the description of the Donatist Factor as reform orientated, one can understand a readiness for radical changes in disciplinary or even doctrinal matters, which can consist of the maintenance of earlier traditions which kindle a hostile attitude toward this world. This motif of the Donatist Factor often coexisted, and still does today, with the need for radical social change to help the oppressed, the exploited, and the victims of imperial structures. We often see that the need for preservation is not only restricted to religious heritage but some native or national qualities and cultural traditional elements are combined and directed against colonial

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[241] Heb. 6: 6; Rom. 12: 2; 2 Cor. 4: 16; Col. 3: 10; and Tit. 3: 5.

foreign oppression. The tendencies of Donatist-style Christian reformation attempts are that they maintain a radical opposition to the politicisation of the original religious doctrine, ethics, or religious message in general. Consequently opposition to the unity, identity or even to temporary alliance with political structures, is one of the major features. The nature of these tendencies in the Christian church, on the one hand, finds its roots in Christianity's revolutionary aspect in the commitment to its cause. On the other hand, a minority religious status has obviously often occurred in certain contexts, while the aspiration for universality is also one of the basic purposes. These ambivalent tendencies characteristically appear in a front on both sides, when the Christian identity, renewal, or the unity of the church is challenged and when diversity appears in these issues.

Having studied the Donatist history and having explained various elements of the Donatist Factor, we shall now turn to the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary. Only after explaining and evaluating this history in chapter three and four, shall we then later in chapter five and six be able to draw the two topics together by relating the Hungarian Church's situation to the Donatist Factor.

HISTORICAL LINES OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF HUNGARY FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

3.1 Introduction

In order to be able to analyse the Donatist Factor's relevance in the present ecclesiology of the Reformed Church of Hungary it is important to review the historical line from the sixteenth and twentieth century in the Reformed Church of Hungary. In this way we will be able to give a solid ground for further theological elaborations in relation to the years of communism and the changes after 1989.

Since the beginning of the perceptions of the ideas of Reformation in the sixteenth century the following five major periods can be distinguished: 1) The spread of reformation in the sixteenth century; 2) the counter-reformation of the seventheenth century; 3) the struggle of he eighteenth century and the Edict of Tolerance; 4) the emergence of the national church in the ninetheenth century; the Reformed Church of Hungary during the changes of the first period of the twentieth century.

3.2 The Spread of Reformation in the Sixteenth Century

It is well known that the program of Reformation in the church started earlier than on October 31, 1517. The reformation of the church was the result of a continuous process. When the church became a political, intellectual and economic power, which gave motivating causes for renewal, secularization was also unavoidable. The prehistory of the Reformation had many positive elements in the 'heretical' and in the monastic movements which pointed to the need for reformation in the church, culminating in the most famous date of the Reformation. This was also the case in the life of Hungary. The progressive outcome of the Reformation in Hungary was due to its forerunners in church history. From the first period of the fifteen century, the Movement of the Hussites made a deep impact on Hungary by their teachings. The focuses of their teaching were in ecclesiastic matters, namely the independence of the secular power from the papacy. They said that the papacy should return to apostolic poverty and asceticism. The nature, unity and the authority of the church, the discrimination between 'a physical understanding of the church' and an understanding of 'the holy church as the bride of Christ, the congregation as the elect of God', were at stake. The Hussites as a predominantly religious movement were also propelled by social issues and were strengthened by the Czech national self-awareness, which besides their theological teachings, also influenced the Hun-

garians.[242] The Hussites were mostly dominant among the mendicant orders, especially the Franciscans. Their criticism of church hierarchy and their autonomous theological thinking lead to a revolt of the Franciscan order in 1512-13, which succeeded in the first generation of the reformers after 1526.[243]

After the Turkish occupation of Hungary (usually connected to the lost battle with the Turks at Mohács[244] in 1526), the country was divided in three parts after the fall of Buda in 1541. The remnant of the Hungarian Kingdom which was not occupied by the Ottomans, was divided between the Habsburg Royals and the Transylvanian principalities. After the shock of Mohács, the Hungarian people were depressed and the Reformational movement just gave the right comfort and new ways for the future. The tragedy of Mohács created a situation in Hungary which greatly differed from the circumstances in Germany (Wittenberg) and Switzerland. Luther, in the peace of his monastery cells was searching for a merciful God, while Central Europe's great kingdom of Hungary fell in ruins as the result of the fight with the pagan Turks. Hungary was left alone by Christian Europe and the Pope also disappointed the country at this time. The aftermath was a catastrophe. The public feelings were in an upheaval. The historical situation of Mohács pushed Hungary toward theological renewal.[245] One of the major questions to answer, was: What were the causes of the Hungarian catastrophe? What can be the new ways which lead out of this disaster? Most of the Hungarian people believed that the Turkish occupation was God's punishment on them for the medieval church's corruption. The Hungarians, in that historical context, were not merely interested in salvation on an individual level, but for them reformation was a matter of life and death concerning na-

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[242] Hungarian historiography gives evidence that the Hussites were a great supporter of the revolution in the rural areas, under the leadership of Antal Budai-Nagy in 1437/38. Although the revolution was defeated the Hussites had a notable influence and power after the revolt. For example, the town of Sárospatak was under their control between 1440-58. See János Barcza: "A Reformáció kibontakozása és progresszív hatása nemzetünk életében," *Theológiai Szemle*, no. 3 (1989), 154-157, and Katalin Péter, *A reformáció: kényszer vagy választás?* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2004), 45-59. Another notable evidence of the influence of Hussites in Hungary is that the Hussite's Bible partly or completely was translated into Hungarian by the followers of Hussitism in the southern part of Hungary. (Codex of Apor, Codex of Viena and the Codex of Munchen, see János Bottyán, *A Magyar biblia évszázadai* (Budapest: Református Zsinati Iroda, 1982), 14-18. See also Dénes Dienes, *A keresztyénség Magyarországon 1526 előtt* (Sárospatak: SRTA, 2006), 111-115.

[243] Having realized the social responsibility of the church the Franciscans supported the György Dózsa's agrarian riot in 1514.

[244] Mohács is a town in the Southern Trans-Danubia region of Hungary. In 1526 it became the scene of the lost battle fought against the Turks, which resulted in the collapse of the medieval Hungarian State.

[245] We also have to note that the Reformation as a spiritual-intellectual movement in Hungary was not a quick transformation but a process in the Hungarian society. This was due to the fact that the thought of the Reformation did not arrive in an empty irreligious context. Tt the time of the reception of the thought of the German Reformation there was also present a notable resistance towards the German influence, because of the general anti-German feelings. This resulted in the Hungarian's welcome of Luther's teaching with some prejudice, and the Lutheran Reformation was more succesful among the German inhabitants in Hungary. Dénes Dienes, "Reformation in Hungary before Mohács," Keneth Mathews (edt.), *Not omitting the Weightier Matters, Thinking about ministry in the twenty-first century, Essays in Honour of Robert E. L. Rogers* (Belfast: Ambasador, 2002), 174-192.

tionhood as well. The disadvantageous circumstances of the foreign and national affairs were seen as God's punishment. Therefore, searching for a merciful God gained importance in relation to the Hungarian nation. The Hungarian history was often viewed in parallel to Jewish history.[246] This historical-theological view gained importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and since then it is always a reappearing phenomenon in Hungarian literature and theology up to the twentieth century.[247] The progressive outcome of the Reformational movement in Hungary was due to its effects on the life of the nation. It was a positive process which did not allow the collapse of the Hungarian nation when its existence was challenged. A nation simply disintegrates if pessimism and demoralization are the leading powers for its future. The great Hungarian Reformers, preachers and highly trained theologians (such as: Mátyás Dévai Bíró, István Szegedi Kis, Mihály Sztárai, Péter Méliusz Juhász, Imre Ozorai etc.) were able to give comfort to the people by preaching the Gospel of hope. They were greatly enhanced by the patronage of magistrates ready to serve the Reformation movement in Hungary. The Helvetian trend of the Reformation spread rapidly, especially in Debrecen and its surroundings. The following causes had a significant importance: 1) The development of the printing press. For example, Gál Huszár the Reformer of the Hungarian Highlands brought his printing press to Debrecen in 1561, where many confessions, church regulations and the works of Bishop Méliusz Juhász were printed. 2) Lay people were also entrusted with reading and explaining the Bible. 3) Church life, especially in Debrecen, followed the model set at Zurich. The most

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[246] The analogy between Hungarian and the Jewish history most frequently appeared in the literature and theological argumentations in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Colourful notions and metaphors exemplify that: *flagellum Dei, Hungarian (Magyari) Juda, ruina Hugariae/Transylvaniae* etc. See István Bitskey: A nemzetsors topaszai a 17.századi Magyar irodalomban, lecture, 2004, October. For a theological example, the most well known author is András Farkas. His work was entitled: "On the Jewish and Hungarian Nation" (A Zsidó és magyar nemzetről), 1538. András Farkas was educated in Wittenberg. According to his theological views the Hungarian nation is considered the elect of God. It is God who made the Magyars a great nation, but from time to time, just as the Jewish people, they forget God's mercy, consequently God's punishment is unavoidable. Finally, consolation in the loving God gives a promise for the future. Farkas' theological view is projected onto the entire history of the Magyar's. See Dénes Dienes, "Farkas András: „A zsidó és magyar nemzetről" című művének teológiája és kortársi párhuzamai," Virág Jenő (edt.): *LIMES – Tudományos Szemle* (Tatabánya, 2001), 73-81. Beyond András Farkas a great number of authors can be listed who underline the same hermeneutic with the historical parallel between the Hungarian and Jewish nation. These are: Benedek Komjáti: "Az zenth Paal leveley Magyar nyelven (Letters of Saint Paul in Hungarian); András Horváth Szkhárosi: Az Istennek irgalmasságáról (On the Mercy of God); András Batizi: Paraphrases of Psalm 44; Mihály Siklódi: Paraphrases of Psalm 54; Sebestyén Tinódi, Gáspár Károlyi: Két könyv (Two Books) etc. See besides the above mentioned literature: Győri L. János, "Izrael és a Magyar nép történetének párhuzama a XVI-XVII századi prédikátori irodalomban," G. Botond G. Szabó (edt.), *Egyház és művelődés. Fejezetek a reformátusság és a művelődés XVI-XVII századi történetéből* (Debrecen: Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerületi és Kollégiumi Nagykönyvtár, 2000), 29-52.

[247] For example we find the same Hungarian- Jewish historical parallelism in the Hungarian anthem written by Ferenc Kölcsey (1790-1838), (The text of the Hungarian national anthem was written in 1823. It is one of the great poems of the age of reform. It was first published in 1828 under the title Hymn.). We see the same theme in the poems of one of the greatest Hungarian poets, Endre Ady (1877-1919): 'Nekünk Mohács kell' ('We need Mohács') etc..

important feature of the worship service was the preaching of God's word in the language of the people. Bishop Méliusz Juhász also imitated the lively interest of the Helvetian Reformation in public order, social life, education, law and order, and even in the physical and as well as the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants. 4) The Debrecen Synod of 1567, by its adoption of the Helvetian Confession, ensured a uniform church order, and this became an important milestone in the congregations of the eastern part of the country. 5) The Reformed Church of Hungary was greatly strengthened by one of the most important spiritual achievements of that period, namely the translation of the complete Bible into Hungarian by a Reformed minister called Gáspár Károli, published in 1590. Eighty percent of the Hungarian population became followers of Protestantism (50% Reformed, 25% Lutheran and 5% Unitarian) by the end of 1600. Murdock rightly points out that Hungary's reception of the Reformation was due to the fact that when a dramatic time had arrived in the 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church failed to be the nation's spiritual leader in the eyes of the Hungarian nobles. [248]

It can be concluded that the Reformation's welcome in Hungary enriched not only the life of the church but it made a great impression on the cultural history of our country as well. This was apparent in the fast developing printing press, in the foundation of the great Hungarian Colleges, in the responsibility of governing power, and in the development of society based on the individual and collective purity of morals and tolerance.

3.3 The Counter-Reformation of the Seventeenth Century

The Counter-Reformation brought a time of severe trials and persecution into the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary. King Rudolph's absolutism[249] (1608) supported the Counter- Reformation greatly. He illegally added an appendix (xxii. act of law) to the Acts of Laws of 1604, without the approval of the parliament, which gave full support to the Roman Catholic Church in its contention against the Protestant heresy.[250] He also prohibited the discussion of religious matters in the parliament. The revolt of Prince István Bocskai[251] in fa-

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[248] Grame Murdock, "Calvinist Catechizing and Hungarian Reformed Identity," Maria Cracuin, Oviddiu Ghitta and Grame Murdock (ed.), *Confessional Identity in East-Central Europe* (London: Ashgate, 2002). See also József Pungur, "Protestantism in Hungary, The communist Era," Sabrina Petra Ramet (ed.), *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia, The Communist and Postcommunist Eras* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992).

[249] Rudolf II was born July 18, 1552, in Vienna, Habsburg domain [now in Austria]
he died in Jan. 20, 1612, in Prague, Bohemia [now in Czech Republic]. He was a King of Hungary (as Rudlof, 1572-1608), a King of Bohemia (as Rudlof II., 1575-1608/1611), an Archduke of Austria (as Rudolf V., 1576-1608) and a Holy Roman Emperor (as Rudolf II., 1576-1612). 'Absolutism' was a concept to express the total power of the ruler. The Habsburgs tried to introduce it everywhere where they ruled. Absolutist centralism became all powerful after 1680, when the Habsburg monarchy became a 'Great Power'.

[250] Andor Csizmandia, "A feudális állam 1526-tól 1848-ig," Andor Csizmadia, Kálmán Kovács és László Asztalos, *Magyar állam és jogtörténet* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1998), 174-175.

[251] István Bocskai or Stephen Bocskai (1557 - 1606) was a Hungarian noble from Transylvania, between 1604-1606 the leader of an anti-Habsburg uprising in Royal Hungary (more exactly in today's Slovakia) – partly also in Moravia and Austria –, and from 1605-06 the prince of Transylvania.

vour of religious freedom was against King Rudolph's church politics. The effect of Bocskai's influence resulted in the peace document of Vienna in 1606, which erased the problematic xxii Act of Law. Later King Ferdinand II of the Royal House of the Habsburgs was the key leader of the Counter-Reformation from a political side. The Jesuit archbishop, Péter Pázmány, affirmed that the disaster of the Turkish catastrophe was due to the fact that our nation had turned away from the Virgin Mary, the "Patroness of Hungary." The strategy of the Counter-Reformation in Hungary was to wage a war against "Protestant heresy" on political and literary levels simultaneously. The aim was to convert the entire Protestant population of the country to the Roman Catholic faith. The Counter-Reformation developed according to the following strategy: 1) Re-catholicization of protestant noble families: therefore the principle of the *cuius regio, eius religio* (so far unknown in Hungarian public law) was practised against the Protestants, who were thereby left without patrons. Prince Gábor Bethlen's[252] politics supported the Protestant interest and this was successful to a limited degree.[253]

After the death of György Rákóczi I[254], a fierce attack was started by the Roman Catholics against the Protestants. Those Protestant pastors who resisted were summoned before the extraordinary court at Pozsony in 1673. A royal pardon was offered, one Protestant pastor was converted and the others resigned the ministry. Encouraged by this result, Protestant pastors and schoolmasters were summoned from the entire territory of the kingdom. Those, who despite grave threats were not willing to be converted, were imprisoned, and driven on foot from Pozsony to Triest where they were sold as galley-slaves. This period was what is called the 'Decade of Mourning' (1671-1681). It was an indication of the forceful policy of the Habsburgs' re-catholicization and it was a lasting testimony to the confessing courage and solidarity of the Reformed believers in Europe. The state, which was re-catholicising by means of military force, had to pay a great price because people were becoming upset, yet the continuous violent acts and persecution against the Protestants did not stop. An important occasion was the organization of the first presbytery[255] (local church council) at Pápa in 1617. Since the exponents of the Counter-Reformation thought mainly in terms of the clergy, the opinion was held that if the church ministers were eliminated from the life of the church, the congregations could be turned by peremptory orders in whatever direction they pleased. But the elected presbyters formed a "second front" to defend the life of the congregation. They were

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[252] Gábor (Iktári) Bethlen was born in 1580 and died in 1629, Gyulafehérvár, Transylvania [now Alba Iulia, Rom.] He was a Calvinist prince of Transylvania and briefly titular king of Hungary (August 1620 to December 1621), in opposition to the Catholic emperor Ferdinand II.

[253] The peace documents of Nikolsburg (1621), Vienna (the second, 1624), Pozsony 1626 give evidences to that. József Barcza, *Bethlen Gábor, a református fejedelem* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985), 105-123.

[254] György Rákóczi I (1591 – 1648) was elected prince of Transylvania in 1630.

[255] We have to note that the organization of the first presbyteries was not widely accepted and practiced in the entire country. The eastern part of Hungary was against the so far unknown practice of the presbytery in the church. The opposition to the presbytery system grew out from the feudal structure of the society.

able to practice their devotions without ministers, and could resist the intense attacks of the Roman Catholics, as for example during the years of the 'Decade of Mourning'. This process also resulted in the fact that only lay people were in a position to lead the life of the Reformed Churches. 3) After the expulsion of the Turks from Hungary, a more moderate wave of re-catholicisation followed, which lasted for another century. The laws enacted by the Catholics caused a great number of difficulties to the Reformed congregations.[256]

In the seventeenth century, the view that Calvinism was the "Hungarian Religion," became more widely spread. The Reformation settled into the Hungarian Protestant theological thinking of that age, which resulted in a dogmatism that did not continue to search for the truth but merely maintained what had already been achieved. The inner demand for renewal remained in the background. The consequence was a religious weakening which lead to the emergence of sectarianism as well. On the one hand, we find many examples of faithfulness in martyrdom, regardless of the consequences. On the other hand, as a resistance to the Counter-Reformation, the negative forms of enthusiasm also become stronger. The most radical group was in Transylvania. It was an extreme wing of the Unitarian Movement[257], the so called *Saturday Sect* (Szombatista). The *Szombatista* movement reverted to orthodox Judaic law and custom, while remaining nominally Unitarian: for example, they preached sermons in their native language, but prayed and worshipped in Hebrew. They were called the *Saturday Sect* because they held the Sabbath on Saturday, in compliance with Old Testament laws. They were, however, ethnically Székely. Their radicalism did not find a positive echo in the life of Transylvanian society, which led to their disappearance. [258]

An important attempt to handle the situation of the Counter-Reformation and its negative effect on Protestantism was made by the Hungarian followers of the Movement of Puritanism, which had a notable impact on the theological life of the Reformed Church of Hungary. Puritanism, as a dynamic form of Protestantism, arrived in Hungary by the mediation of Hungarian theological students who studied abroad.[259] Wider acceptance of Puritan thought followed in the seventeenth century, when a group of students returned in 1638. They

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[256] Mihály Bucsay, *A protestantizmus története Magyaroroszágon* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985), 110-118.

[257] Transylvania in the 16th century was one of two centres - the other was Poland - of the newly emerging Unitarian understanding of Christianity founded during the reign of Sigismund II (1548-72). Remarkable and important events happened in both places, but the Polish experience was brief, ending in the middle of the 17th century. Many of the Unitarians (Socinians) driven from Poland fled to Transylvania, where Unitarianism proved to be more lasting.

[258] Prince György Rákóczi I, eliminated the "Saturday Sect" with strong politics and with the support of the people in Transylvania. Only a small group of followers remained in the eastern part of Transylvania among the *Székelys* (a Hungarian-speaking ethnic group). See Imre Révész, *Egyháztörténelem* (Reprint of Imre Révész, *Egyháztörténelem I-II* (Debrecen: sine pub., 1936, reprint: Budapest: Zsinati Sajtó Iroda, 1992), ch. 5, book II.

[259] The Hungarian research of church-history gives evidences that the spirituality of the Puritan movement was present before its concrete acceptance in Hungary. The work of Albert Szenczi Molnár's work and his contemporaries support that fact. See István Ágoston: *A magyarországi puritanizmus gyökerei* (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1997), 41-66.

were members of the London League, and their leader János Tolnai Dali started a reform in Upper Hungary and in Transylvania.[260] Puritanism provided the first notable 'revival movement' in the Reformed Church of Hungary. Representatives of Hungarian Puritanism had the intention of democratizing Church organisation and making religious life more intimate. Their strict ideas were also reflected in their outward appearance (very simplistic, unadorned clothing, short haircuts). Their aspirations were far from those of the English Independents; however, they did enthusiastically translate popular works written by English puritan authors (such as William Perkins, Lewis Bayly and William Ames), and many of them had a good knowledge of English. The effort of Puritanism received a slow acceptance in most parts of Hungary.[261]

The continuous theological debate of Puritanism and Reformed Orthodoxy characterised the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, which resulted in a synthetic outcome. The two opposing sides made some kind of peace with each other. Puritanism was determined to hold back the attacks that aimed to change the structure, yet it provided a way for deepening the 'content', namely the ministry and personal piety. The theological formation of that time is pictured by the merging of various influences, which were: Orthodoxy, an emphasis on Reformed heritage, Puritan characteristics, and the fruits of Pietism. This multifaceted Reformed Orthodoxy was not averse to the expression of emotional identification. The strength of the collation of the different characteristics in the theological life of Protestantism in Hungary bore its positive effects when rationalism started to spread in Hungary.[262]

3.4 The Struggle of the Eighteenth Century and the Edict of Tolerance

The status of Hungarian Protestantism after the War of Independence by Ferenc Rakóczi II, was determined according to the politics of Charles III, (1711? – 1740)[263] and Theresa Maria[264]. Charles III regulated religious life by his

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[260] The most important representatives were János Dali Tolnai (1606-1660) Pál Medgyessy (1605-?) and János Csere Apáczai (1625-1659) who tried to encourage the internal revival of their Church by introducing school reforms and by the issuing of spiritual literature.

[261] The synod of Szatmárnémety (10, June 1646) under the leading of bishop István Katona Gelejei in the presence of prince György Rákóczi I, had condemned the Puritan attempts in thirty articles and Gelejei worked out the *Canones Ecclesiastici*. We also have to note that the synod did not refute the foundation of presbyteries, at least theoretically, when the right time created the necessary circumstances. See Imre Révész, "Szatmárnémeti zsinat végzései," *Sárospataki füzetek* (1865), 678-680.

[262] Dénes Dienes, *A református kegyesség jellemző vonásai a 18. században Magyarországon* (Sárospatak, 2002), 10-93.

[263] Charles III, also known as Charles VI (October 1, - 1685 October 20, 1740), was Holy Roman Emperor, King of Bohemia (as Karel II.) and Hungary (as Károly III.) from 1711 to 1740. From 1703 to 1711 he was an active claimant to the throne of Spain as Charles III.

[264] Maria Theresa (May 13, 1717 - November 29, 1780), was a reigning Archduchess of Austria, a Queen of Hungary 1740-1780), Croatia and Bohemia, and a Holy Roman Empress.

Carolina Resolutio[265] (1731) which was in favour of the Roman Catholics. While the age of Leopold I[266] was characterized with a bloody Counter-Reformation, the decades after the Peace of Szatmár (30 of April, 1711) were less radical in their opposition to Protestantism. The defeated freedom struggle created a new political situation. The liberation from the Turkish occupation was followed by the incorporation of Hungary into the Habsburg Kingdom. We also have to note that after the expulsion of the Turks the population of Hungary radically decreased in the area of the Great Plain and South Hungary. The loss was about half a million people, which led to an ethnic problem later in Hungary.[267] Under the rule of Charles III, Theresa Maria and Joseph II,[268] resettlement started from the neighbouring nations. The religious freedom which was guaranteed by the Peace of Szatmár was very fragile and without much assurance. In order to complete their major political aim the Habsburgs made an agreement with the Roman Catholic clergy, therefore the religious matters were viewed as *motus rebellionis*, and the aim was to re-establish the religious order as it has been before the War of Independence.[269]

The Age of Enlightenment and tolerance then commenced in Europe, especially in the Protestant countries. Joseph II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and King of Hungary issued an Edict of Tolerance (*Edictum Tolerantiae*) in 1781, in which they regulated the public religious practise of the non-catholic believers, thereby putting an end to a hundred years of oppression. However, Joseph II's church politics did not ensure total freedom of religion. Major changes were followed by the meeting of the Parliament in 1790-91 whereby the Protestants' juridical rights were restored. Although the attempt at re-catholisation was stopped, the Roman Catholic status of *religio predominans* was affirmed. The favourable condition of the Protestants came to an end when Francis I entered the throne in 1792 and renewed the Counter-Reformation.[270]

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[265] By the *Carolina Resolutio* the former freedom of the Protestants was abolished. No Protestant worship services could be held; a Catholic oath was demanded for being appointed to civil service; mixed marriages were permitted only when the non-Roman Catholic Party gave a 'letter of mutual concession', the so called *Reverzális*, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church whereby the children issuing from the marriage would be brought up in the faith of the partner; the *Carolina Resolutio* forced the churches to elect superintendents (bishops) so that the Protestant Church would have someone to officially 'address' the king.

[266] Leopold I, (June 9, 1640 – May 5, 1705), Holy Roman emperor, was the second son of the emperor Ferdinand III and his first wife Maria Anna of Spain. His maternal grandparents were Philip III of Spain and Margarita of Austria. In 1655 he was chosen king of Hungary and in 1659 king of Bohemia, while Leopold gained the crown of Croatia in 1657.

[267] By the time of 1844 more than half of the Hungarian population was Hungarian born. The division of the minorities was as follows: 18% were Romanian, 14% Slovakian, 10% German 5% Serbian, 4% Carpath-Ukrainian and 1% were comprised of others. Antal Balla, *A Magyar nép története* (Budapest: Magyar Téka), 79.

[268] Joseph II (March 13, 1741 – February 20, 1790) was Holy Roman Emperor from 1765 to 1790 and ruler of the Habsburg lands (including Hungary) from 1780 to 1790. He was the eldest son of Empress Maria Theresa and her husband, Francis I.

[269] Bucsay, *A protestantizmus története*, 143-147.

[270] Bucsay, *A protestantizmus története*, 147-149.

After the seventeenth century's strong statements about leadership in the Reformed congregations, the principle of parity was accepted (starting at the Synod of Buda in 1791), when ministers and laymen were represented in equal numbers in the governing of the church. The territorial division of the Church Districts - from the eighteenth century onwards - followed the military system which relied upon catchment areas.[271]

Church politics was very dependent on the secular politics. The Roman Catholic viewpoint clearly declared that the relation of the different churches (denominations) had to follow the hierarchical (feudal) structure of society. Therefore the only approved ruling religion could be the Roman Catholic Church, due to its traditional dominance. After the collapse of Napoleon's power the strength of feudalism began dominating again all over Europe, which rekindled the Counter-Reformation's attempts. The Protestant Reformation was often identified as a cradle of revolution which endangered the juridical order. The other line of argument against the Protestants used the popular thesis of Romanticism: the organic state-theory. Therefore national identity could only be maintained by national *constitution* - and as a dominant part of such *constitutio* the Roman Catholic Church had a foundational and fixed role in that process. Consequently, the national religion could only be the Roman Catholic Church, which was thought to help ensure the unity of the nation, along with the factors of one language and one constitution.[272]

Rationalism appeared in the theological thinking in the middle of the eighteenth century in the Reformed Church of Hungary.[273] However, it was not as sharp and intolerant as it was in some other countries, but rather tended to harmonise 'common reasoning with faith and Christian scholarship'. It started to spread in a wider circle only at the end of the eighteenth century when volumes of sermons were published, whose authors were the first to adopt Bible-criticism. Hungarian Reformed piety during the eighteenth century was typified by a Christ-mysticism and deep affection for Jesus. This passionate love for Jesus was connected to a self-torturing penitence. There was also the teaching of predestination and the consciousness of being elected by God, which were still part of the heritage of orthodoxy in religious thinking. The strength of Reformed doctrine, redemption by grace and faith alone, seemed for many devout people to be expressed most clearly in this. So the pious individual of the eighteenth century looked up with courage and comfort from the depths of his or her

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[271] Today, the Reformed Church in Hungary has four districts: the Danubian, the Transdanubian, the Cistibiscan, and the Transtibiscan; the foundations for this took place after the *Carolina Resolutio II*, (20 October, 1734) between 1734-1736.

[272] Izidor Guzmics (1786-1839) a monk of the Benedictines who became the abbot general of Panonhalma, uses the argument in his work titled: 'Letters about the Union of the Christian Religion' (Levelek a keresztyén vallás egyesüléséről). See Sándor Bíró, Mihály Bucsai, Enre Tóth, Zoltán Varga, *A Magyar Református Egyház történe* (unchanged reprint in Sárospatak: sine publ. 1995), 263-327. See also Sándor Ladányi, Kornél Papp, László Tőkéczki (edt.), *Egyháztörténet 2, 1711-től napjainking* (Budapest: MRE Pedagógiai Intézete, 1998), 75-81. Révész *Egyháztörténelem*, 38-55. and János Csohány: *Magyar protestáns egyháztörténet, 1711-1849.* (Debrecen: sine publ., 1994).

[273] In Transylvania already from the 1730's several college professors thought in the spirit of the German views promoted by Christian Wolf.

personal fate to the fulfilment of life's salvation, which does not depend on one's own possibilities. Earthly life was full of failures and was sinking into death, but could be raised into the infinity of eternity. However, instead of the mystical experience of conversion (as in the pietism of Halle and Herrnhut) the practical reality of being converted while remaining in society, was important. The Reformed pious Hungarian individual of the eighteenth century had an assurance through God's elective work in Jesus Christ and not through his own *praxis pietatis*. Due to the political situation, the public practice of piety became difficult in places and indeed impossible for several communities living within traditional frameworks.[274]

3.5 The Emergence of the National Church in the Nineteenth Century

From the very beginning, the Reformed believers had the desire to live as a unified national church in Hungary but this could not be properly realised until the nineteenth century. The Debrecen Synod of 31 October, 1881 was able to lay the foundation for the constitution of a national church, which was further developed by subsequent national synods. These foundations were: 1) majority system; 2) corporate government; 3) the principle of parity; 4) the Synod became the central organ assembling every tenth year; 5) the foundation of the General Covenant, which represented the national church between the sessions of the synod; and 6) one of the most important achievements of the Debrecen Synod was the organisation of a unified Reformed Church of Hungary, consisting of several autonomous Church Districts.[275]

The accomplishment of an equality of religions required a long and strenuous process. During the War of Independence in 1848-49, the Act XX of 1848 finally declared that there was equality and mutuality (reciprocity) amongst the established (Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran and Unitarian) denominations, whose administrative and educational expenditures were subsidised by the state. This Act could have ended the role of the Roman Catholics as "*religio praedominans*." However, the Act could not be enforced because the War of Independence was defeated and the Austrian authorities cancelled the autonomy of the church in Letters Patent.[276] During the War of Independence, the Protestant Churches unequivocally supported the revolution, therefore in the years of retribution for the War of Independence, the Protestant Churches did not suffer, because the state regarded them as one of the props of the rebellion.

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[274] We also have to note that besides the Hungarian authors, German Pietists (J. Gerhardt, J. Ardnt), English Puritans (L. Bayly) were widely read just as well the Swiss Pictet, The French Pierre Du Moulin and Jean Frédéric Osterwals, the English Philip Doddridge and John Bunyan. Hungarian Reformed believers read the same prayers and tracts as the Swiss free citizens, the persecuted French Hugenots, The Dutch Reformed believers, the English non-conformists, and the Danish or German Lutherans.

[275] The Evangelical Lutheran Church held a general synod in 1891 and accepted a constitution similar to the Reformed Church's and the Unitarian Church also followed the example of the Protestant churches.

[276] *Patent* is a 'public command' by the ruler to carry out orders (in this case religious), which limited the rights of the Protestant church, and in this way the church was placed under direct state control.

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The interest of the Habsburg Dynasty and Rome's attempt to centralize religion met together against the Protestants, whose struggle for independence was not only religious but national as well.[277]

The constitutional liberty of Hungary was restored by the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867, and the Reformed Church gradually regained its internal freedom. The religo-political basis for the 'age of dualism' (double monarchy) was ACT LIII of 1868, which regulated the reciprocity of the established churches, and decreed that anybody who had completed his or her eighteenth year was free to move from one denomination to another.[278]

After 1848-49, the power of Protestantism became politically dominant. Therefore most actions of the Habsburgs, in cooperation with the Roman Catholics, were explainable according to their interest, since they saw the possibility of revolution in the Protestant denominations. According to the statistics of 1858, more than 1,3 million Reformed people lived in Hungary out of the 14, 3 million population of Hungary. There were close to 2000 parishes which employed 1989 pastors, 300 assistant pastors and 2617 schoolmasters.[279] In reality the power of the Reformed Church of Hungary was only superficial. After the Independent War of 1848-49, the inner life of the Reformed Church led to decay. The following reasons have been mentioned as the causes of the inner crisis of the Hungarian Protestantism: 1) The institutional order was not satisfactory. 2) The financial poverty of the church and the low payment of the pastors. 3) The theological thinking lost the spirituality of the Reformation, as a negative consequence of rationalism and liberalism, resulting in the irreligiousness of the Reformed believers.

Bourgeois development was accompanied by religious life becoming formalised. The social re-arrangement attending industrialization resulted in people losing contact with peasant communities and migrating from villages to towns. The situation of the church, as one of the consequences of secularization, shows the marks of disappointment, unconcern and indifference, which paralyzed all good intended efforts in the church. It was not only true for the believers but also for the pastors of the church. The last two centuries of the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary was also marked by the negative attitude of the pastors which often saw their elders, educators and believers as rivals.[280]

On the one hand, disappointed masses of people turned to growing separatist church movements. These were, for example, the Baptist Church, whose beginning started in Hungary around the mid nineteenth century; the Christ-Believer Nazarene Congregation (the first congregation of the Nazarenes was established at Pácsér in 1848 by Lajos Hencsei); the Seventh-Day Adventist Mission, which began in 1895; Methodism, whose first congregation was organized in Hungary in 1900. On the other hand, Protestant church life received a

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[277] Bucsai, *A Magyar Református Egyház történe*, 280-281.

[278] Bucsai, *A Magyar Református Egyház történe*, 346.

[279] Bucsai, *A Magyar Református Egyház történe*, 352.

[280] An excellent summary on the theme is found in István Gazda and Barna Horváth, *Borsod – Gömöri "Református Papok" történelemkönyve* (Miskolc-Mezőcsát: sine publ., 2006), 14-88.

new stimulus through its home missions, which followed English and German models.[281] The supporting factors for this new style of church work were Bible classes, pastoral care of individuals, and institutional aid given to those often rejected by society. Towards the end of the nineteenth century several revivalist movements spread among the Protestant Churches. These were the Scottish Mission, the German-speaking Reformed Congregation, the Christian Student Federation, Home Mission Evangelization, Sunday schools, Bible study groups, and the Bethania Fellowship. Institutional charities also multiplied: homes for handicapped children, orphanages, the Philadelphia Diaconess Training Institution, and the Zsuzsanna Lórántfi Association, among others. These movements had good results, but several problems had to be faced as well. The nature of these movements required radical change (*metanoia*) in the believer's life which were only present in a limited way among the population of the Reformed believers; therefore the wider renewal did not happened. Another problem was that the outstanding leaders of these initiatives did not take care of the reinforcements in leadership, and since the content of their program was exported from abroad, it could not be rooted in the Hungarian context, therefore their attempt never went beyond small associations. As a good result of the revival movements, often the presbyters' responsibility gained importance and this enriched the religious life of the congregations. After three decades the results became evident, thus changing the church leadership's view towards these movements, and this provided good relationships internationally.[282]

3.6 The Reformed Church of Hungary During the Changes of the First Period of the Twentieth Century

According to the statistical data of 1910 the members of the Reformed Hungarian Church were 2,621,329 which shows an increase of more than half a million since 1870.[283] The Reformed Hungarians' increase in number had several

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[281] Outstanding leaders of the home mission were: Lajos Filó, Imre Révész, Aladár Szabó, Tivadar Bibeauer (Sunday School Movement), Aladár Szilassy (Christian Student Federation) and his wife (Zsuzsanna Lorántfi Association)

[282] Bucsay, *A protestantizmus története*, 222-224. See also János Bolyki and Sándor Ladányi, "A Református Egyház 1918-1948 között," József Barcza, Dénes Dienes (edt.), *A Magyarországi Református Egyház története 1918-1990* (Sárospatak: sine publ., 1999).

[283] The statistics of 1910 were based on the census which resulted in one of the most comprehensive and exact data of the Hungarian population in relation to ethnic and religious perspectives which measured Hungary in its historical continuity.

CHART 1.				
	Hungary		Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia	
Religion	capitation	%	capitation	%
Roman Catholics	9,010,305	49,3	10,88,138	52,1
Greek Catholics	2,007,916	11,0	2,025,508	9,7
Reformed	2,603,381	14,3	2,621,329	12,6
Lutheran	1,306,384	7,1	1,340,143	6,4
Greek Orthodox	2,333,979	12,8	2,987,163	14,3
Unitarian	74,275	0,4	74,296	0,3
Jewish	911,227	5,0	932,458	4,5
Other	17,066	0,1	17,452	0,1
Sum	18,264,533	100,0	20,886,487	100,0

The first chart shows clearly that in the territory of Croatia and Slovenia more than two thirds of the population was Roman Catholics in contrast to the Protestant and Jews population, whose proportion was just a few thousand. This fact was due to the politics of the Counter Reformation which forbade the settlements of the Protestants in that area. If we consider the religious map of Hungary we can conclude that none of the denominations had absolute majority - even the Roman Catholics were under 50%. The Protestant religious followers became the second biggest religion. The category of *others,* on the one hand, mainly includes the Baptist and the non-denominational believers, and on the other hand the atheists. Their low number shows that the majority of the inhabitants of Hungary adhered to their traditional religion. We can also see from the data that the eastern part of Hungary's population (being farther from Vienna) was more Protestant than Roman Catholic.

CHART II.									
	Religion								
nationality	R. Catholic	G. Catholic	Reformed	Lutheran	Greek Orthodox	Unitarian	Baptist	Jewish	others
Hungarians	58,7	3,1	25,8	4,2	0,4	0,7	0,1	7,0	0,0
Germans	66,6	0,1	1,2	21,6	0,1	0,0	0,0	10,4	0,1
Slovakians	71,8	4,1	0,5	23,2	0,0	0,0	0,1	0,3	0,0
Romanians	0,3	38,5	0,0	0,1	61,0	0,0	0,1	0,0	0,0
Ruthenian	1,0	98,2	0,0	0,0	0,2	0,0	0,0	0,6	0,0
Croatians	98,9	0,2	0,0	0,1	0,5	0,0	0,0	0,3	0,0
Serbians	0,9	0,4	0,0	0,0	98,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,2
Sum	74,3	7,7	1,7	6,3	8,9	0,0	0,0	0,8	0,3

The second chart shows the different nationalities' religious proportions in Hungary, without the territory of Croatia and Slovenia. The division is most varied among the Hungarians. The dominant population was in the Roman Catholic denomination, and the Reformed Church was second in terms of population. The Roman Catholic dominance among the Croatians, the Greek Catholic dominance among the Ruthenians, and the Greek Orthodox dominance among Serbians, is striking. The previous data supports the fact that the Reformation was not successful in the eastern part of Christianity.

causes: 1) the pressure of counter- reformation was eased, and the political atmosphere gave more freedom to the Protestant churches; 2) the structure of the traditional "folk-church" became stronger and stronger as a consequence of the home missions and the revival movements; 3) there was a national revival whose sources were driven by the renewed formation of the Hungarian nation and society, whereby the middle class nobility and the noble intelligentsia – who were mainly Protestant - took an important part in the leadership of the nation.

The influence of the Reformed believers on Hungarian culture and science was also significant. One of the most characteristic features of theological life was the idea of Christianity without dogmas, which weakened the church tradition and confessional Christianity.

At the outbreak of World War I, the historical Protestant churches supported the war policy, but gradually turned toward opposition. Out of the chaos of the war's end, a communist regime emerged in Hungary. At the time of the revolution of 1918-19 the programme of the leading party, the so-called "Revolution of Michaelmas Daisies," in October, 1918, there were many anti-clerical phrases, which labelled the churches as relics of feudalism. Under the sway of the Soviet Republic (the Republic of Councils), ecclesiastical schools and lands were nationalised, religious instruction was prohibited in schools, and there were many churchmen amongst the victims of the Red Terror. However, the Commune lasted for only 133 Days. Then the Red Terror was followed by a White Terror. The politics of the government which came to power in this country after World War I, was guided by the principle of "Christian Nationalism." This policy considered political unity to be its first and most important ally, as it inspired, revived, and represented the heroic virtues of a nation. Although the

CHART III.							
Religion	**native language**						
	Hungarian	**German**	**Slovak**	**Romanian**	**Croatian**	**Serbian**	**Ruthenian**	**others**
Roman Catholics	64,8	14,1	15,5	0,1	2,1	0,0	0,1	3,3
Greek Catholics	15,2	0,1	3,9	56,4	0,0	0,1	22,7	1,6
Reformed	98,4	0,9	0,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,3
Lutheran	31,9	31,5	34,6	0,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,3
Greek Orthodox	1,8	0,1	0,0	77,1	0,0	19,5	0,0	1,5
Unitarian	98,6	0,2	0,1	0,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,3
Jewish	60,8	5,9	5,8	26,4	0,0	0,1	0,0	1,0
Other	76,9	21,6	0,6	0,1	0,1	0,0	0,3	0,4
Sum	52,5	5,5	8,9	9,9	0,1	10,8	0,2	12,6

The last chart interestingly shows the religious division of the population in light of the spoken native language.

It is outstanding that among the Reformed Church the spoken native language is Hungarian. It is obvious therefore that since the seventeenth century the so-called Hungarian Religion was comprised of the followers of the Reformed faith. We must also realize that Unitarian Church was also dominantly comprised of Hungarians. The Lutheran Church almost equally shares among its members the Hungarians, Germans and Slovakians. For the source of the data see: Ladányi, *Egyháztörténet 2,* 82-84.

Reformed Church also enjoyed the support of the state, it could exert much less influence on the political direction of society than it would have been entitled to in terms of numerical proportion. Of course, it was also exposed to the temptation of nationalism.

3.7 Trianon – 'vae victis' (Excursus)

On June 4, 1920 Hungary had to sign a harsh peace treaty. The Treaty of Trianon was a peace treaty between the Allied and Associated Powers, at the Grand Trianon Palace at Versailles, France. The Treaty regulated the situation of the states that replaced the former Kingdom of Hungary, as part of pre-war Austria-Hungary, after World War I. The winning parties of the Treaty included the "Allied Powers" (United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan) and the smaller "Associated Powers" (such as the main beneficiaries of the post-war territorial changes: Romania, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and Czechoslovakia). The losing party was Hungary alone, since Austria-Hungary had by this time disintegrated. Although the actual day of signing the Trianon Peace Treaty was June 4, 1920, the new state boundaries were decided in their final form more than one year previous, on 8th May 1919. [284]

The Peace Treaty of Trianon was a fateful turn for Hungary - a second Mohács[285]. Hungary was compelled to sign it at one of the low points of its history. As a consequence of the Peace Treaty of Trianon, Hungary was deprived of her historical boundaries and about 71.5% of its territory and population, including 3,400,000 Hungarians living in the neighbouring states. [286] At the same time Germany lost 13.5 percent of its former lands to its victorious neighbours and Bulgaria a mere 8 percent. We also have to consider that Hungary had been a multiethnic state in contrast to Germany or Bulgaria, and therefore the com-

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[284] It is a historical fact that the borders of Trianon had been determined on May 8, 1919, one year before the signing of the peace treaty. They were determined one-sidedly, without consideration of Hungarian interests. Later, Hungarian public opinion was unable to alter the decision. By that time the victors had abandoned Wilson's principle of self-determination - the goal of the peace - as the organizing principle. See Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1999), 139-147.

[285] The great Hungarian poet Gyula Illyés (1902-1983) was the first to use the expression 'second Mohács', for the description of the effect of the Peace Treaty of Trianon.

[286] As a result of the Peace Treaty, Hungary lost 71.5% of its land. Transylvania and part of Bánát went to Romania (31.4%); part of Southern Hungary (Bácska, also called Vojvodina) and the rest of Bánát went to Yugoslavia (19.5%); the Northern Highlands (Slovakia) and Carpathian Ruthenia went to Czechoslovakia (19.2%); the Burgenland region went to Austria – and other small territories to Italy and Poland. Also: 63% of the nation's total population (3.5 million), and half of the Hungarian-speaking population (1.5 million) were living outside the new borders in towns and cities of almost pure Hungarian population. Hungary lost irreplaceable historical monuments, cultural artifacts, churches and educational and cultural institutions. Lost:- 90% of her natural resources, including - 88% of timber - 63% of arable land - 65% of navigable water - 95% of water power - Fiume, a port city which was Hungary's only outlet to sea - 56% of industrial plants - 85% of iron - all gold and silver mines - all salt deposits. Hungary's army was limited to 35,000 volunteers. The navy and air force were disbanded. - Reparations had to be paid: one part by May, 1921, the rest in 66 semi-annual instalments. - Hungary's livestock and coal was given away to her successor states. See Iván Bertényi and Gábor Gyapay, *Magyarország rövid története* (Budapest: Mecénás Kadó, 1992), 522-523.

parison is not valid to some extent. Without doubt the drastic decision of the peace treaty was unprecedented in the history of Europe. One of the bases of the treaty lies in the modern idea of the right of peoples to self-determination, which ensures every ethnic group the right to become a political entity and form a state. The on-going negative effect of this imposed application by Trianon concerning the idea of the right of peoples to self-determination is proven in the last few decades of the second half of the twentieth century.

History also shows the pain and despair suffered by people after changes of historical circumstances (lost wars, annexation of territories), when they are forced out of their native home, or exposed to harassment. Fundamental human rights, individual and collective rights, were violated. The psychological impact of the continuous grievances led to a national psychosis directed against not only the Treaty of Trianon, but also its creators and preservers. The minority fate of the annexed Hungarians became increasingly unbearable because it was indefensible: international rights and guarantees remained ignored, and the promised legal means proved to be inapplicable.

During the period of Communism, the Hungarian ethnic groups suffered under double oppression: while everyone suffered under the communist dictatorship, anti-minority policies and practices added to the plight of the annexed Hungarians, who could not even protest since all political expressions were stifled. Improvements were painfully slow even after the fall of the Communist regimes. For example, only a fraction of the Hungarian communal or private assets were restored to the previous owners since 1989. Even today the Hungarians in the neighbouring countries around Hungary feel that their very existence is in jeopardy.[287] The policy of uprooting, expelling, discriminating, and occasionally outright killing, combined with "socialist industrialisation" and deliberate colonisation (transferring a large number of non-Hungarians to territories traditionally inhabited mainly by Hungarians and thus changing the ethnic composition of the area), considerably reduced the number and, to a larger extent, the proportion of the Hungarian minorities in all the states neighbouring Hungary.

Since 1910, the number of ethnic Hungarians in these areas detached from Hungary declined from 3.3 million to 2.6 million. Their proportion drastically fell from 30 to 11 percent of the population in Slovakia; from 32 to 20 percent in Romanian Transylvania; from 28 to 16 percent in Vojvodina (Serbia); and from 31 to 12 percent in Subcarpathia (Ukraine). The ethnic composition of the cities changed even more dramatically, as graphically demonstrated by the case of the capital of Transylvania, Kolozsvár. In 1910, 82 percent of the city's population was Hungarian and 14 per cent Romanian. Today it is called Cluj-Napoca, where - due to the relocations and other methods of the deposed dictator Ceausescu and the notorious present-day mayor Funar - Hungarians com-

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[287] I refer here to those negative events which characterize the present (2006) life of the Hungarian ethnic groups in Slovakia (note has to be made that even the illusion of the European Union did not solve the ethnic problems in Croatia and Romania).

prise only 18 (instead of 82) percent of the population. These figures reveal a sophisticated form of ethnic cleansing.[288]

The antecedents of Trianon are still, from many points of view, matters of arguments. Most historians agree that one of the major causes is hidden in the federation of the Austrian – Hungarian Monarchy, which started with the Compromise (*Ausgleich*) of 1867, which most scholars consider to eventually become an "earlier cause" of Trianon. It is beyond any doubt that the monarchy federation placed Hungary in a position of unimagined power. [289]

Hungary's position inside the monarchy and its constitutional relations with Austria can be characterized properly with some interesting snapshots. With the Compromise of 1867, Hungary gained limited statehood. At the same time Austria also voluntarily limited its own sovereignty. The "common affairs" included the following: the monarch, military affairs, foreign affairs and finances (the co-administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina was included in the latter category). Practically speaking, Austrian preponderance was maintained in the sphere of common affairs, for instance in the usage of the Austrian emblem (the double-eagle) and gold-black flag in the army and embassies. However, national defence was not only represented by the "schwarz-gelb," since the Royal Hungarian Army (Magyar Királyi Honvédség) also existed, using Hungarian as the commanding-language. Hungarian parity was even more evident in the financial realm. There were separate Hungarian coins and paper-money, and on larger bills the print was in German on one side and Hungarian on the other. Inside the Monarchy everyone had the right to free movement and settlement. As a result, there was a high rate of emigration and immigration. (Most European countries did not require a passport.) Regarding economy, the Monarchy's vast territory (677,000 km²) had a positive influence on Hungary; there were more advantages than disadvantages to the unified customs territory. Hungary had an independent judiciary, an independent police force, etc. Common affairs were united and managed by so-called delegations, elected by the two parliaments. Hungary provided (according to the last figure) 36.4% of the common

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[288] Géza Jeszenszky, "The Genesis of a Lasting Quarrel in Central Europe," book review of Ignác Romsics: *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary: the Peace Treaty of Trianon,* 1920 (Translated by Mario D. Fenyo, [New York, Columbia University Press, 2002], 201), *The Hungarian Quaterly*, ol. XLIV, no. 172 (winter 2003).

[289] The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy can be properly characterized by three maps:

1) A physical map depicting the mountainous regions and waterways. The Empire encompassed an enormous territory along the Danube. The Carpathian range, the mountain chain surrounding Bohemia, and the Alps made this vast state - stretching from the Polish fields down to the Adriatic - recognizable from a great distance.

2) A political map. On this map it is obvious Austria would not have existed as a major power without Hungary, which, according to Bismarck, was the territorial and geo-political center of the Monarchy.

3) An ethnographic map. This was equally diverse both in Austria and Hungary. While in Austria a proportion of scarcely more than 1/3 of the population was native German - that is, a member of the "state-forming" nation - the situation was somewhat more fortunate in Hungary, where in 1910 approximately one half of the population considered themselves Magyars. (Exactly 52, 6% considered themselves Hungarian. See "Chart III" in footnote 287.)

expenses. This was the so called "quota" which also characterized Hungary's economic potential within the Monarchy.[290]

We can end the discussion of the antecedents and causes which lead to the Peace Treaty of Trianon, with the following main points:

1) Hungary (re)gained its historical territory and state supremacy in the compromise of 1867. The country's survival depended on its shared status with Austria, the common major power position, and a common army. Hence, the only guarantee for the supremacy of Hungary and the Hungarians was the Monarchy. And while the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy continued to exist in its 1867 structure - until October 16, 1918 - Hungary could maintain its position both in peace and war.

2) Hungary completely underestimated the danger of the ethnic issue and its ability to act. It also completely excluded the possibility that it would be overcome by the ethnic groups and their nations militarily and that the remnants of the defeated Romanian and Serbian armies or the Czech legions could invade Hungary. The second unexpected extreme was the sudden and inglorious collapse - the military, political and social dismemberment - of the former Great Power, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Inside the Monarchy, the collapse was the most complete within Hungary, for neither in Austria nor in (outside the Monarchy) Germany was the state and ruling power weakened to the extent that it was in Hungary. Hungary became so unable to show resistance that at one point it even failed to maintain public order and security in certain locations, let alone confront the invaders. [291]

3) The idea of the recognized right for self-determination and autonomous statehood of the nationalities was not applied to Hungary while all the other nations could benefit from it in regard to their secret agreement with the winning great powers. The stabilization of the post war situation was one of the most important aims of these political steps, but the rather rapid decision with wrong territorial division, and new border lines without taking the rights of all nations under considerations in these circumstances, lead to the Trianon 'trauma' for the Hungarians – as is pointed out in István Bibó's essay.[292]

The Peace Treaty of Trianon altered the situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary greatly. Large numbers of Hungarian Reformed people found themselves living in the so called Succession States (Romania, Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia) after the territorial division of historical Hungary, by which Hungary lost two-third of its land. According to the census of 1910 there were 2,621,329[293] Reformed people in 2,073 churches in five Church Districts. After the application of the Treaty of Trianon the number of Reformed people

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[290]György Csepeli, "Nemzet által homályosan – Részlet" (1992) and Zsuzsa L. Nagy, "Trianon a magyar társadalom tudatában" (1987), Miklós Zeider (edt.), *Trianon* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003),860-865, 828-846.

[291] Ignác Romsics, "Nemzeti taumánk: Trianon" (1995), *Trianon*, (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003), 866-873.

[292] István Bibó, 'A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága' *Bibó: Összegyűjtött munkái*, I, kötet, (Bern: Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1981-1984), 240.

[293] See above footnote 283, chart I.

dropped by 916,906, and the loss of churches was 1,012. It is note worthy that the whole of the Transylvanian Church District was incorporated in the Romanian state with the loss of 600 parishes, and approximately 1000 small church groups without a resident pastor.[294] After the tragedy of Trianon the major aim was stability and finding new ways for the Reformed Church's service in society. These attempts found their roots in the already existing associations, and home mission movements, which could reach all levels of society. The renewal of the church was at stake, which actually had a significant calling in regard to the people of the rural parts of Hungary, namely, persecuted people who were mainly Jews and the Hungarians abroad as a minority.[295]

 Yet, the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary between the two World Wars cannot be identified with the chauvinistic trend insisting upon the cultural superiority of our nation or race. The internal life of the Church moved forward significantly. In 1931, a unified Reformed liturgy (Agenda) was completed. In 1934, the new Statute Book of the Church came into force. Neither the national associations of ministers and presbyters, nor the youth organisations were indifferent to the great social problems. After World War I, new trends replaced liberal theology. Basically, three theological trends dominated the Reformed Church. First, the so called General Christians, with János Victor as a leader. This trend emphasised the importance of evangelization and spiritual awakening. Mostly the Anglo-Saxon influence was reflected in this movement. Under the influence of the Dutch Reformed theologians (such as Abraham Kuyper), Historical Calvinism was the second major trend, whose leader was Jenő Sebestyén. Historical Calvinism was the first to develop educational activities by producing a strong Reformed self-confidence and a sense of duty. The third trend was under the influence of the German neo-Reformation Theology, Barthianism. Dialectical theology, which effected a decisive change in European theology, was not unknown in the Reformed Church of Hungary in the inter-war period. It had especially enthusiastic adherents amongst professors of theology and scholarship holders who studied abroad, but their influence could only be felt in the life of the church a generation after World War II. The main representatives of Barthianism were Sándor Tavaszy, Barna Nagy, István Török, Sándor Ceglédy etc.

   Taking into consideration the fact that the Governor of Hungary, Miklós Horty was a member of the Reformed Church, the Reformed Church tried to climb into the position of a "second state-church," in order to enjoy some compensation for the many grievances and losses that had afflicted it in past centuries. Even if the Reformed Church of Hungary had not served all the endeavours of Hungarian politics in the interwar period, the Reformed Church would

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[294] The Hungarian Lutheran Church lost 484 out of 770 churches and 485,219 of 1,340,143 members. The Unitarian Church lost 111 of 115 congregations. Bucsay, *A protestantizmus története,* 236.;
Imre Révész, *History of the Reformed Church of Hungary* (trans. Georg A. F. Knight, Washington D. C.: The Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, 1956), 151.

[295] János Bolyki and Sándor Ladányi, "A Református Egyház 1918-1948 között," *A Magyarországi Református Egyház története 1918-1990* (Sárospatak, 1999) and Ladányi, *Egyháztörténet 2,* 125-145.

not have been strong enough to avert the consequences of a revisionist policy, the enactment of anti-Semitism and the inhuman destruction which followed the German occupation of the country. Although unequivocally rejecting the Third Act against the Jews in 1941, the Church's representatives were unable to hinder its enactment. On the episcopal level, they tried to save what could be saved. In an agreement with the Church government, the "Good Shepherd" organisation was founded, which together with the Scottish Mission, performed effective rescue work amongst the persecuted. A good many people were saved by private and institutional actions.[296]

3.8 Conclusive Remarks on the Historical Lines of Force in the History of the Reformed Church of Hungary between the Sixteenth and Twentieth centuries

Our conclusion highlights the various historical lines from the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary between the sixteenth and twentieth century naming the most important processes which, on the basis of the Donatist Factors, characteristically had an important role and relevance in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

1) The reception of Protestant thought gave renewal to the Hungarian Church. According to the original meaning of the word "protestant," which comes from the German princes' support of Luther's thought at Speyer, 1529, we can consider "protestant" as a self-confident assurance, rather than a protest against the given order. In that meaning we can picture a (re)new(ed) state of relationship between God and humanity. According to the Reformers' thoughts the self-empting of the soul and the repentance of our sin open the way to receive God in Christ, while a new mutual love-relationship is formed between God and humanity. This relationship results in a firm basis of a personal experience of faith. God addresses us with his Word from day to day and as a consequence of this personal meeting with God as a spiritual experience, a special piety is created. Protestant piety activates all areas of the believer's life as a thank-offering in the praise to God.[297] The formation of the Protestant culture was a consequence of the above mentioned process, which formed Europe's culture, politics and economy, and therefore Hungary's as well. The introduction of the reception of the Reformation's thoughts in Hungary already gave evidence by the time of the sixteenth century to the following new elements in theology. These were: a) the influence of the movement of the Hussites concerning the independence of secular power from the papacy, and concerning the nature and authority of the church; b) the view of Hungarian history in parallel to Jewish history, where the self-awareness of being the elect of God played an impor-

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[296] See János Bolyki and Sándor Ladányi, „A Református Egyház 1918-1948 között", in József Barcza, Dénes Dienes (edt.), *A Magyarországi Református Egyház története 1918-1990* (Sárospatak: sine publ., 1999) and Ladányi, *Egyháztörténet 2,* 125-145.

[297] János L. Győri: "Milyen kihívást jelent ma számunkra a protestáns műveltség"? *Confessio* no. 30 (2006).

tant role; c) the challenges and perspectives confronting the Hungarian nation were now seen in the light of Protestant thought and piety.

2) The Counter–Reformation of the seventeenth century brought a time of persecution and continuous religious struggles into the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary. One peculiarity of that century in relation to the Reformed Church of Hungary was the view that the Calvinist trend as the "Hungarian Religion" became stronger and widely spread.

One of the major characteristic aspects of Calvinism was that it could assure the confirmation of the individual attributes of a nation, while also continuing to relate to the wider Protestant family of faith. Therefore the Hungarian soul - through Calvinism - could become a part of the whole Protestant worldview which was held together by God's Kingdom, without loosing the characters of its nationality. Having a minority status as a persecuted denomination strengthened the faith of the believers. Martyrdom gained significance in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary of that time (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries).

3) The spirit of Puritanism made a notable impact on the theological and everyday life of the Reformed Church of Hungary as the first important revival movement. God's supreme authority over human affairs, particularly in the church, and especially as expressed in the Bible, led the Puritans to seek both individual and corporate conformance to the teaching of the Bible, and it led them to pursue both moral purity, down to the smallest detail, as well as ecclesiastical purity to the highest level. Hungarian Puritanism and Reformed Orthodoxy had a synthetic character which brought these two opposing parties together. That was due to the fact that the history of Hungarian Protestantism was under the 'pressure' of continuously confessing its beliefs in the times of the Counter-Reformation and in the political climate of hostile surroundings (by the Habsburgs). Confessing meant confession of sin and the confession of the faith (doctrinally and practically) at the same time. This characteristic of the Hungarian church and faith led believers not merely to concentrate on their own piety, but to focus beyond that in God, and God's will as the *telos*. Christian life and Protestant thinking in the Hungarian context did not have the extreme forms of pietism, as happened in Western Europe.

4) The effect of Romanticism, Rationalism, Enlightenment was a growing secularism. However, this arrived with delay in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century life of the Reformed Church of Hungary. Religious life became formalized and Hungarian culture, with its double paradigm of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, was becoming unified around the theme of national identity. The confessional identities were disappearing, which led to a distortion of the Scripturally based sacred elements in the Christian life. As a result of Romanticism, salvation was reduced to happiness and joy. The freedom of the soul in Christ was changed to the freedom of the individual and of a nation, according to juridical terms. The social sensitivity according to the thought of equality *coram Deo* turned dominantly into social care. Various elements of the view of history based on the Scriptures (rooted in the Old Tes-

tament) were secularized as well. The ideal picture of the prophet was changed to the heroic revolutionary's picture. The rationalised and liberalised theological thinking resulted in a Cultural Protestantism, and the major task of the church became the social and cultural duties. The continuous and rapid loss of the identity of the Reformed Church of Hungary created a crisis. Disappointed masses of followers of the Reformed faith turned to the separatist churches and sectarian movements. The formation of various church and Christian associations was also an attempt to break through the religious depression. Their strengths and weaknesses were at the same time their association structures and their often very strict lifestyle as revivalist movements, which often resulted in exclusiveness. The Reformed Hungarian's numerical increase – according to statistics of 1910 - had several causes, but the identity crisis of the Reformed Church of Hungary was not solved, since it was due to the effect of Cultural Protestantism.

5) As for the ethnic problems of many nationalities, these started already after the time of the expulsion of the Turks and continued with the resettlement politics of Charles III, Maria Theresa and Joseph II, so that new challenges were facing the Hungarian nation and the Reformed Church of Hungary. The challenges arrived at their high peek and resulted in great negative effects on the Reformed Church of Hungary after World War I, when the harsh Peace Treaty of Trianon was signed at Versailles in 1920. The loss of the Reformed Church of Hungary was greater yet because many congregations were abroad. Finding new ways of service for the church was unavoidable. All parts of the Reformed Church abroad were in a minority status facing a hostile surrounding and living through numerous challenges. The Hungary Reformed Church was able to handle the situation and could even make progress through its home mission associations. The chauvinistic trend insisting upon the cultural superiority of our nation or race was far from the purposes of the Reformed Church of Hungary. However, the life of the church was renewed and all sorts of activities were organized which served those aims. This progress changed after World War II, which we will now introduce in the following chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY AND THE 'OFFICIAL' THEOLOGY OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF HUNGARY BETWEEN 1945 - 1990[298]

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a comprehensive overview of the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary during Communism in Hungary. Coming closer to the present time, the recent past (1945-1990) gains significance in helping us understand the present ecclesiological problems. Considering the challenges of the Reformed Church of Hungary after Communism, we have to give 1) a general overview on the ideological, historical and political background of the period of 1945-90, also revealing the most important elements of the socio-political and cultural aspects; and 2) a description of the formation of the theology of the Reformed Church of Hungary is important for an evaluation in relation to the Donatist Factor.

It is obvious that a detailed historical description and a detailed analysis of the time from 1945-1990 cannot be the task of a general introduction, for such would go beyond the boundaries of this study. Our aim is rather to point out the tendencies of that period, and this will lead to further theological elaborations. In this way, an interpretive perspective will be opened whereby we show the ecclesiological situation of the present and the role and responsibility of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

The Protestant Churches in Hungary experienced one of their most difficult times in the twentieth century after World War II. The Hungarian Protestants represent one of the largest numbers (2.5 million) of church members in the Central European region. The Reformation movement had a great emphasis on all areas of life in the Hungarian Nation since the 16th and 17th century, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Giving spiritual leadership in difficult historical times, the Protestant congregations became a nation-wide church in

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[298] Several recent monographies are dealing with the same subject which will create a basis for this chapter. These are: Jos Colijn, *Wer mag wider uns sein? Bruchstellen in der Kirchen – und Theologiegesichte der reformierten Kirche Ungarns nach dem II. Weltkrieg* (Kampen: sine publ., 1992). Translated into Hungarian by János L. Győri; *"Kicsoda ellenünk? Törésvonalak a második világháború utáni magyar református egyház- és teológiatörténetben,"* (Kiskunfélegyháza: KEPE, 1992). István Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia a magyarországi református egyházban 1948-1989 között* (Debrecen, 1995). József Barcza and Dénes Dienes (editors) *'A Magyarországi Református egyház története 1918-1990'* (Sárospatak: sine publ., 1999). Sándor Fazakas,*"Új egyház felé,"* *A második világháború utáni református egyházi megújulás teológiai konzekvenciái* (Debrecen: Dissertationes Theologicae 4, 2000). Fodorné Nagy Sarolta, *Történelmi Lecke* (Budapest-Nagykőrös: sien publ., 2006). Sándor Ladányi, Dániel Keresztes and Ede Hamarkay (eds.), *(sic!) – válogatott kövek a református egyház és az állam kapcsolatának medréből* (Exodus, 2006); Sándor Ladányi, *Adalékok a Magyarországi Református Egyházban az 1956 – 1957-es esztendőben töténtekhez. Dokumentumok a Református Megújulási Mozgalom és az Országos Intézőbizottság, Valamin a megtorlások történetéből* (Budapest: Kálvin János Kiadó, 2006).

Hungary. This prominent characteristic of the Reformed Church of Hungary lost its powerful influence to a certain extent between 1949-1990.

4.2 Marxism–Leninism: a System against the Eternal One, which Thought Itself Everlasting

It is important to reveal shortly the main ideological characteristics of Marxism – Leninism in relation to religion to be able to get a hint of the philosophical (ideological) background, as the source of the Communist System in Hungary. The subtitle's ambivalent, even paradoxical statement, 'A *system against the Eternal One, which thought itself everlasting',* sums up an important understanding of Marxism – Leninism, also in relation to religion and the church.

Marxism-Leninism was a utopian model of a revolutionary community, as a typical political religion of an intelligentsia longing for an inner-worldly salvation. In reaction to the Hegelian philosophy of *Geist*, Marx put "Hegel's dialectic back on its feet"[299], and stated that the "history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."[300] Marxist interpretation of reality views matter (especially in an economic sense), as the sole subject of change and all change as the product of a constant conflict between opposites arising from the internal contradictions inherent in all events, ideas, and movements. Because everything contains different elements that are in opposition, "self-movement" automatically occurs; the conflict of opposing forces leads to growth, change, and development, according to definite laws. Communist scientists were expected to fit their investigations into this pattern, and official approval of scientific theories in the USSR was determined to a large extent by their conformity to 'dialectical materialism'. The use of these principles in history and sociology is sometimes called historical materialism. Under these doctrines the social, political, and intellectual life of society reflect only the economic structure, since human beings create the forms of social life solely in response to economic needs. People are divided into classes by their relationship to the means of production—land, labour and capital. The class that controls the means of production inevitably exploits the other classes in society; it is this class struggle that produces the dynamic of history, and the source of progress toward a final uniformity. Historical materialism is deterministic. It prescribes that history inevitably follows certain laws and that individuals have little or no influence on its development. Central to historical materialism is the belief that change takes place through the meeting of two opposing forces (thesis and antithesis); their opposition is resolved by a combination produced by a higher force (synthesis). The materialism of Marxism on most points is an enemy of religion. One of the basic tenets of the Marxist doctrine is that religion is humanity's lack of freedom. Religion is a symptom rather than cause, of a

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[299] Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848. www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/61
[300] Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848.

deep disorder in society.[301] Therefore Marx concludes the following on the basis of Feuerbach's ideas of 'projection' and alienation:

> Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world…It is the opium of the people…The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness…Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth… the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.[302]

Religion is a drug (opium) invented by people to dull their pain and misery, and is misused by their capitalist rulers to keep the people subjected to the *status quo*. Marx well reflects the spirit of the early nineteenth century German philosophical tradition when he states that the analysis of history is uncompromisingly atheistic, therefore the belief in the supernatural was untenable for reasonable people.

One can say that Marx's thought is similar to Christian belief in some senses. Marx's explanations of alienation and emancipation have a quite similar structure to the Christian ideas of sin and redemption. The hopeful future-oriented quality of this thought sounds similar to the hope of the gospel. Yet despite these formal similarities the materialist orientation of Marx's thinking based on atheism is a particular obstacle to Christian interpretation.

Marx's social theory challenged Christian belief and made a deep impact on the church about social responsibility, which had often been put aside, and this had indeed resulted in alienation (*Entfremdung*). From the Marxist social-theory point of view, the role played by atheism in Marxism sometimes became less important. This is the starting point where Christians and Marxists (or Christian-Marxists) seek the same goal, which is the liberation from any type of human bondage. In this understanding, we can find various connections between Christianity and Marxism in liberation theology. Marx's social view also calls attention to the gap between the church and the lowest level of society. Marx's critique of religion teaches that the social order is not a God-given condition, but it is created by people. However, one may ask if it is not important to make a distinction between the norm of God and the human application of these norms in the different historical contexts?[303]

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[301] "Man makes religion; religion does not make man. In other words, religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, the state, and society. This state, this society, produces religion, a reversed world-consciousness because they are a reversed world. Religion is the fantastic realization of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality." See Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, the essay was originally published in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (1844), in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 41-42.

[302] *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on Religion*, 42.

[303] Frank Sawyer, *Philosophical Perspectives IV, In Dialogue with Theology from Kant's Idealism to Nietzsche's Nihilism,* only the Hungarian translation is published. Gabriella Rácsok, János Hunyadi and Szilveszter Füsti-Molnár (trans.), *Filozófiai Pperspektívák IV, A teológiával párbeszédben Kant idealizmusától Nietzsche nihilizmusáig* (Sárospatak: SRTA 2000), 134-141.

With the institutionalization of Marxism–Leninism in Russia and in the Eastern block a notable dissimilarity is detectable compared to the Western European countries where such institutionalization never happened in the name of Marxism-Leninism, because they remained democratic. With the institution-alisation a modification of the Marxist theory proceeded in the mist of the revolutionary context (after 1917) of Russia. The Russian socialists fought against the Tsarist hierarchical domination which was a composition of the autocratic monarchy and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. It is an irony that while the revolutionary movement was against the reactionary force of feudal absolutism, hierarchic autocracy under Stalin shared theoretically the ideological basis of Leninist Bolshevism, while displaying the signs of typical Tsarist power as a useful means to legitimise themselves. Stalin transformed the Leninist community into a bureaucratised and hierarchically organised institution of totalitarianism, whereby the deification of Stalin and his followers left its mark on every action of the system, also in relation to the church.

Lenin appeared to share the view of Marx on religion: "Religion is an opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man."[304] The churches "are taught by religion to practice charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their whole existence as exploiters and selling them moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven."[305] In accordance with Benson's analysis, attention should be called to the fact that Lenin's opposition to religion was slightly different than Marx's view: in Marx's description, the church was only a symptom, while Lenin believed that religion is a symptom and *cause* of the disorder in society.[306] Lenin believed that religion was a historical phenomenon, tied to the oppressive structures of human history such as feudalism and capitalism. Lenin favoured the idea (on the basis of Marx and Engels) of the complete separation of church and state, and he thought that the state should never make laws about religious belief and should not support one religion or an another. All three opposed the argument that religion should be banned under socialism. The fight against religion, and more precisely against the church in Hungary, was not always apparent at the beginning of the Marxist influence, but this was done purposely in order to make a step forward to gain more power. We are faced here with a rather crafty dialectic, since the long term motivation was to maintain the Communist political system's interest with aggressive means. Communism in this way created an absolute and totalitarian (eternal) state ideal while the system itself proclaimed that changes are due to the historical dialectic in order to increase development.

Riegel described the general political characteristics of Fascism, National Socialism and Marxism-Leninism in six steps which well illustrate the mechanism

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[304] V.I. Lenin, *Socialism and Religion*, [first published in *Novaya Zhizn,* No. 28, (December 3. 1905)], (V.I. Lenin *, Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973, vol. 10), 83-87.

[305] Lenin, *Socialism and Religion*, 83-87.

[306] Trevor Benson , *Discretion and Valour, Religious Condition in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Philadelphia: Fortess Press, first published in 1974, revised edition in 1982), 19.

of these "political religions." These are the following doctrines: (1) *an inner worldly salvation* whereby the leaders and ideologists invent an independent tradition of sacralisation for their utopian vision; (2) *a total reconstruction of society and culture;* (3) *the primacy of politics* became a central fact of the revolutionary reconstruction of society; (4) the leaders in these new political surroundings became self-elected saints of the community as the *moral elite* who had the right to command and lead the lives of the people in the name of socialist salvation; (5) the demand of *exclusive commitment* results in dictating which alternatives are to be seen as heretical, and who the enemies are. The terror of persecution became the most effective way to fight against them. (6) the claim of an exclusive mandate of salvation and of historical truth widened the circle of expansion into a *world mission.* In this way the Salvationist regimes of modern political religions used both politics and religion, by mobilising the civil duties as well as the religious consciences of their citizens for their own cause.[307]

The Hungarian Communist Party, which was a firmly resolved enemy of the church, found its ideological sources in Marxism-Leninism, with all the major characteristics that have been introduced above. Stalinism was a model of Mátyás Rákosi's cult of personality, and János Kádár's time was a golden age of the Hungarian Communist Party. After World War II, the Reformed Church of Hungary found itself caught in the press of Western ideas and under the Soviet Union's yoke.

4.3 Historical and Political Background[308]

After World War II, the particular political-military status of the compromises of the winning political powers resulted in Hungary (as a defeated country of World War II) and its neighbourhood countries on the north, east and south becoming a part of the sphere of interest of the Soviet Union between 1944 and 1945.[309]

The recent historical approach to the history of that time basically distinguishes four different periods (1944-1949, 1949-1956, 1956, 1956-1988).[310] The periodisation of the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary between October 7, 1948 and March 19, 1990 is less necessary since we have theological thinking in our focus. During that period the relationship of the church and state was controlled by a legal agreement. Therefore such a distinction between the different periods of that time is only relevant if we are observing

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[307] Klaus-Georg Riegel, "Marxism-Leninism as a Political Religion," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions,* vol. 6, No. 1 (June 2005), 97-126.

[308] The general description of the historical and political background mainly follows Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. Században* (Budapest: Osisris Kiadó, 1999), 269-581.

[309] The winning countries (England, France, Soviet Union and the USA) of World War II met in Yalta (1944) and in Potsdam (1945) where they decided that Hungary will belong to the Eastern block (in a political sense) of Europe namely to the Soviet Union's sphere of interest.

[310] Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. Században,* 271.

the church and state relationship on a practical level. Bölcskei[311] and Tomka[312] observe four categories in that partnership: confrontation, ghettoisation, dialogue and instrumentalisation.[313] Our goal is to illustrate the political, cultural, and church-state relationship in parallel, in order to give a comprehensive overview of the ecclesiology of the Reformed Church of Hungary during Communism, while we also glance into the demonic plans and action of Communism in Hungary.

4.4 Between 1944-1949

4.4.1 The Loss

The loss for the population of Hungary in World War I was 530 thousand people out of the 21 million total population. After World War II, the loss of people was 900 thousand out of the 14, 5 million population.[314]

600 thousand people went into Russian captivity. Out of these 600 thousand people, 100-120 thousand people were civilians. 300 thousand soldiers surrendered to Anglo-Saxon troops.[315]

While the Communist propaganda proclaimed the friendship and peace of all nations, a mass of Hungarian people escaped from the neighbouring countries to Hungary because of the violent politics against minorities. The entire population of some villages inhabited by Hungarians were killed in Romania. The Hungarian press and use of the Hungarian language was forbidden in Czechoslovakia. In the Southern Lands (Vojvodina, Jugoslavia and other regions) 400 thousand Hungarian people were massacred, among them was János Gachal the Reformed bishop of Torontalvásárhely (Debeljača). Relocation of the Hungarians happened as follows: from Romania (134 thousand people), Yugoslavia (66 thousand people) and from Czechoslovakia (119 thousand people). They started their life from zero in Hungary. Exchange of the inhabitants happened in 1946 when 68 thousand Hungarian people arrived to our country from the Highlands (Czechoslovakia).[316]

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[311] Gusztáv Bölcskei, "A legújabb kori egyháztörténetünk áttekintése 1948-1990," *A Magyarországi Református egyház története 1918-1990* (Sárospatak: sine publ., 1999), 155-158.

[312] Miklós Tomka, "A katolikus egyház a kommunizmusban. Szociológiai vázlat," *Katolikus Szemle*, (Róma 1990), XX.

[313] Colijn: *Wer mag wider uns sein*, 51.

[314] Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. Században*, 268.

[315] Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. Században*, 268.

[316] Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. Században*, 304.

4.4.2 Politics and Economics

In the first period (between 1944-49) we can observe the transformation of the political and economical situation after the war.[317] Right after the war the economy was based on the existing patterns of ownership and the free market. The western European democratic nations were the model to be followed for the Hungarian society rather than the nationalistic autocratic attempts. At the beginning, for the sake of appearance - according to the points of the Atlantic Charta and the Conference of Crimea, which theoretically guaranteed freedom and democracy for the countries of the Eastern block - the Soviet leadership communicated that the primary aim was to create a multi-party system based on parliamentary democracy and the coalition administration with the Communists in Hungary. [318] The Provisional National Assembly[319] and Government was established in 1944. The foundation of the new government took place in the historic Reformed College of Debrecen, where Lajos Kossuth announced the Declaration of Independence in opposition to the Habsburg dynasty in 1849. The host of the program was Bishop Imre Révész, who welcomed the event and gave his help for the work of the assembly. Behind the scenes the major aim was the takeover of power by the Communist Regime. It is less known that the program of the Provisional National Assembly and Government was planned and directed from Moscow under Stalin's control.[320] Slowly the Communist effort became predominant, with the purpose of the liquidation of the multi-party

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[317] Romsics calls attention to a problem that the period between 1944 and 1949 was often falsely described as a "coalition period" which suggests an unrealistic euphemism, therefore the direction and essence of the alteration is not clear. However, the Soviet Union and the Hungarian Communists' aim was to confirm the interest of the Soviet Union in Hungary from the beginning. Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. Században*, 271.

[318] The following political parties were present after the war, which represented the different classes of the society. The Smallhorders Party with approximately 900 thousands representatives. They won support from the landowners' class of the peasants and middle-class Christians. The Civil Democratic Party representatives were about 50 thousands members. They were supported by the urban working-class and provincial intellectuals. The Social Democratic Party had more than 350 representatives and they were supported by the urban working class and the intellectuals. The National Peasants Party counted about 200 thousands members and they won support from the poor peasants of Trans-Tibiscan and provincial intellectuals. The Hungarian Communist Party was the fastest growing political formation. They counted about 4-5 hundred members in 1942, 3 thousand members in the end of 1944, 30 thousand people in February in the year of 1945, 150 thousand in May and 500 thousand members in October. Their supporters represented most classes of the Hungarian society. These five parties founded the Hungarian National Independent Party (Front) in 1944.

[319] The predecessor of the Provisional National Assembly was the Hungarian National Independent Front which was organized by Ernő Gerő, Imre Nagy, József Révai and Mihály Farkas. The composition of the Provisional National Assembly was: 39, 13% were from the Hungarian Communist Party; 24, 35% were from the Smallhorders' Party; 6, 96% were from National Peasant Party; 5, 65% from the Civil Democratic Party and 5, 22% representatives were independent. It was clear that in the assembly's composition the majority of the representatives were from the Hungarian Comminist Party. Sándor Balogh, *A magyar népi demokrácia történet , 1944-1962* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1978), 22.

[320] Mária Palasik, *A jogállam megteremtésének kísérlete és kudarca Magyarországon 1944-1949* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2000), 22.

system in politics in order to build a one party system to stabilise autocrat attempts. One of the first steps of this program was the *Land Reform* in March, 1945. Since the feudal ownership survived in Hungary after World War I, the political parties came to a consensus on the reform before the end of World War II. The *Land Reform* was country wide and affected 35% of the area of the country.[321] One of the biggest losers of the *Land Reform* was the Reformed Church of Hungary. On the one hand, about 80% of the Reformed Church's members, as potential supporters of the church, lived in the rural areas and thus become landless. On the other hand, the Reformed Church of Hungary lost its lands and properties, of about 608,028 acres, whose yearly income was worth 2,014,054,- Forint (HUF).[322] The churches did not get back their lands, not even until today.

The second step was the economic agreement between Hungary and Moscow. The pact consisted in a trade-barter of about 30 million USD and a five year agreement which allowed for the Soviet economics to share the profit of Hungarian economics (fifty-fifty percent). This was followed by a second period of the nationalization of banks, insurance companies, heavy industrials, coalmines, the companies of transportation, printing presses etc. The consequence of the influence of Soviet economics in Hungary was an enormous depreciation in 1946. The inflation of the Hungarian currency was the biggest in the history of the world: one Forint /HUF/ became equal to 50 billion Pengő, which was the Hungarian currency before 1946.[323]

Another aim, besides the cleaning up of private ownership, was to be able to introduce a planned economy. The first three year economic plan started in 1947. The official prognosis was that the living standard would develop 80% by 1949 and would reach the same level as it was before the war. In reality the salaries in 1949 were only half of the payments of 1938. Politics followed the idea of making the salaries equal, therefore it happened that the high salaries were lowered by 60-70 %, the physical workers' salaries by 30-40%, and the teachers' by 80%. The living standard of a teacher, for example, was 27-30% of the living standard as it had been in 1938.[324] The hidden purpose of politics was the weakening of the force of production for ideological purposes. Therefore

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[321]Every private estate of more than 1000 holds (1 hold is about 11,5 acres) including the Church and bank lands also had to be redistributed. Peasants and small-landowners had to redeem their land beyond the allowed 200 and 100 holds. The reform put an end to the inequality of land distribution. Therefore on the one hand, the small-peasants who formed the basis of the Reformed Church become stronger. On the other hand, the *Land Reform*'s primary aim was social and political rather than an economic one. The main purpose was to annihilate the big land-owner aristocracy who had played a determinative political and economic role. The Reformed Church regarded the *Land Reform* as an inescapable political reform. Ferenc Glatz, "Az újabb kori Magyar nemzeti kultúra és a református egyház," *Confessio* no 1 (1988,) 34 and Gyula Gombos, *The Lean Years – A Study of Hungarian Calvinism in Crisis* (New York: The Kossuth Foundation, Inc., 1960), 19.

[322] The loss for the Hungarian Catholic Church was 8,040,742.5 acres, the income of which was 22,498,930,- Florin (HUF). See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-A-21-e-1-32-1948. in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke*, 57.

[323] Romsics, *Magyarország története*, 311.

[324] Politikatörténeti Intézet Levéltára, 274.f.24/11.ő.e. in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke,* 60.

one of the major aims in society was the total change of the elite and the introduction of the Communist ideology in every possible way to maintain egalitarianism and subjection. The schedule of the adaptation was directed from Moscow and not from Budapest. The characteristic of the transformation was gradual in the beginning and more radical later. The changes reached a high peek in 1947-48 and ended with the acceptance of the new constitution in 1949.

The dramatic document of József Cardinal Mindszenty's[325] letter to Helm A. K., representative of the British Parliament, well illustrates the political situation of Hungary in 1945-46. The letter - written in S.O.S. style - clearly describes the anti-democratic changes of Hungary and all the fraud which happened on all possible levels: in politics, economics and in law and which was directed and controlled from Moscow.[326]

4.5 The Actual Context around the Formation of the "Theology of the Servant Church"

The above mentioned political and economical circumstances created unstable, ambivalent conditions for the churches in Hungary. The future was vague and the tendencies were misleading. The churches could continue their task almost without any harm. Instead of resistance, helpfulness and generosity was experienced by the invading Red Army. In contrast to that, the information

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[325] Cardinal József Mindszenty (March 29, 1892 – May 6, 1975) was a 20th century Hungarian Cardinal and steadfast clerical opponent of Communism in general, and of the regime in Hungary in particular. Mindszenty was born József Pehm on March 29, 1892, in Csehimindszent, Austria-Hungary. He became a priest on June 12, 1915. He was arrested under the socialist Mihály Károlyi government on February 9, 1919, until the end of the Bolshevik Béla Kun government on July 31. He adopted his new name – part of his home village's name – in 1941. He also joined the Independent Smallholders' Party in this period, in opposition to the Fascist Arrow Cross Party. On March 25, 1944, he was consecrated bishop of Veszprém, which is a distinguished post because the town traditionally belonged to the kings and queens of Hungary. He was arrested again on November 26, 1944, for his opposition to the Arrow Cross government, and charged with treason. In April, 1945, he was released from prison. On September 15 he was appointed Primate of Hungary and Archbishop of Esztergom (the seat of the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary). On February 18, 1946 he was elevated to the position of Cardinal by Pope Pius XII. Stephen K. Swift, *The Cardinal's Story: The Life and Work of Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty* (1950).

[326] Cardinal József Mindszenty's letter: "Your Excellency, /... At present the situation is that the minority at the elections have become the majority in power, as if the Communist Party had got 57% of the mandates instead of 17% and not the Smallholders' Party..../ In Hungary there is no democracy, but there are Marxist police, Marxist press, prisons, concentration camps. Soviet citizens (Rákosi, Minister of State; Rajk, Minister of Home Affairs; Gerő, Minister of Traffic; Revai, ideologist of the Communists) rule by means of party courts of justice over the Hungarian People which has nothing in common with this Government. The consequences of this situation are: 1) Compliance with all the desire of Moscow (in consequence of the Hungarian-Russian contract the whole economic life of Hungary is in Moscow's power). The clever and sly politicians are Moscow's men, either they don't see or they are corrupt and so ready to comply with all wishes coming from the East. 2) Systematic destroying of the country (pitiless reduction of civil servants; keeping of England and the USA at a long distance; hatred of capital so that our economic life is already being paralysed; misery which is leading to starvation; preparing of the ground for the Kolhos-system by destroying agriculture.) The only secret of the stability of the Forint is the extreme want of money...3) Nepotism and corruption surpassing all measures ever seen..." in Politikatörténeti Intézet Levétára, 508.f.1/91.ő.e. published in Fodorné, *Történelmi Leck,* 61.

about the Soviet politics against the churches was not comforting at all. One of the major questions was what kind of role would be given to the church by the state in the new situation. One thing was clear: any renewal in the church would depend on the future political steps. Dependence on the newly formed political power seemed to be unavoidable. The church had to define its status in relation to the state. The Reformed Church of Hungary and the other churches focused on the stabilization of the church, confession of sins and revival. The Synod Council of the Reformed Church of Hungary made a confession of sins publicly (9, May, 1946). In regard to that an important note is made by Bölcskei when he calls attention to the ecclesiological tendencies which were already present at that time. On the one hand, the tone of a legitimate theological restart after the destruction of the war could only be repentance on the basis of the Bible, which then opened the way for renewal. On the other hand, the very same Synod Council also formulated a declaration (written by Andor Enyedi[327]), which at the same time called for acquiescence in the present situation. In this way an ambivalent approach was created which wanted to confirm the principle of the critical distance and the principle of relative acceptance.[328]

The political changes with their unseen misleading tendencies made clear for the responsible church leaders that the unpredictable future for the church would be completely new and permanent. Imre Révész's and László Ravasz's statements are evidences showing that they were not under any illusion at all, but clear about the situation in which the possibilities of the church would be cut back as much as it is possible. [329]

We also have to acknowledge that the above mentioned prediction of the Reformed Church's possibilities concerning its future in the newly forming political climate of the post war situation was not so evident for the rest of the church. Without doubt a naive "political messianism" ruled many people's thinking in the church. Most of the people evaluated the new socio-political formation as a temporary condition. They put too much unrealistic hope in the help of the Western countries which would liberate Hungary. From the other side, the atheistic and anticlerical political formation also thought that the state relationship with the church was temporary since their aim was to liquidate church life completely. Therefore both sides, from different motivations, were thinking about the new situation as a 'necessary evil'.[330]

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[327] Andor Enyedi was the bishop of the Transtibician Church District of the Reformed Church of Hungary between 1942-1952.

[328] See Gusztáv Bölcskei, "A magyarországi református teológiai munka fél évszázada szociáletikai megközelítésből," *A Magyarországi Református egyház története 1918-1990* (Sárospatak, 1999), 195.

[329] Imre Révész (bishop of the Transtibician Church District) in 1, December in 1944 called attention in his *"Confidential Instruction"* that the situation is not a short episode nor merely temporary. Similar to that László Ravasz (bishop of the Danubian Church District) at the Assembly of that district on 21 November, 1945, analyses the circumstances as very unstable. Bishop Ravasz foreshadows the coming future quite realistically. He predicted that since Hungary was defeated in World War II, the right wing fascism would be followed by left wing fascism. See László Ravasz, 'XXIII. És XXIV. Püspöki jelentés. Budapest 1945. November 21' in Gyula Bárczay (edt.), *Válogatott írások, 1945-1968.* (Bern: EPMSZ 1988).

[330] Bölcskei, "A magyrországi református teológiai munka," 191-200.

In the background the process of theological uniformity is detectable. The role of the church in the new settings was mostly focussed on the debate between the official church leadership and the different pietistic movements. Without doubt, the revision of the church relationship with the state needed readjustment. The opposing questions were about the 'method'. Major theological questions were on the table, such as the confession of sins, the prophetic status of the church, the synod-elders' principality, the separation of the state and church, the church membership, and the mission of the church. The democratic settlement of Hungary was under a transformation toward dictatorship. During the two or three years of changes the church had time to prepare itself for the future. Basically, the divergent ecclesiological questions represent the three different groups in the Reformed church: 1) The *conservative* group, whose leaders were not interested in any reformation of the church. Their aim was to maintain the folk-church setting of the Reformed Church of Hungary. 2) The *revivalist* group, which accelerated the inner revival of the church. The focus of their interest was the position of the church in the new social order. This second group had a strong connection to the different pietistic movements before World War II. 3) The third formation was the so called "*opposition party*" in the church. On the one hand, they supported the new 'political' role of the church in order to build the new socialist society. On the other hand, most representatives of the third group basically thought that there were no other options for the church to be able to rescue its organizations. We are fully in harmony with Colijn's remark that a clear distinction cannot be made between the three tendencies since none of them was uniform and consciously organized.[331]

The focal point of the debate circled around the renewal of the church. Should there be a whole reformation or only some reforms in the church? Even the danger of schism was present from the side of the opponents who were enthusiastic about the reformational attempts[332] in the church. The other side set a veto on the enthusiastic, revolutionary and reformational attempts. László Ravasz, Imre Révész, Sándor Makkai, Jenő Sebestyén and János Victor were arguing that the church does not need reformation in an ecclesiological sense, but only in an historical sense. The principal of *ecclesia semper reformanda* does not mean that every generation of the church has to do reformation as it happened in the sixteen century. *Renovatio vitae* is a priority – argued János Victor[333].

Jenő Sebestyén (often called the Hungarian Kuyper)[334] differentiated between the concepts: 'formation', 'deformation' and 'reformation'. Deformation

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[331] Colijn: *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 14-15.

[332] See MRÉ 1945. december 1. és 1946. február 23. – ORSZT 5-6. in László Ravasz, *Emlékezéseim* (Budapest, 1992), 320-322.

[333] János Victor's lecture was in 30, November 1946, Sárospatak. The conference theme was: The Renewal of the Church. See in Sándor Fazakas, *"Új egyház felé,"* A *második világháború utáni református egyházi megújulás teológiai konzekvenciái*(Dissertationes Theologicae 4., Debrecen, 2000), 21.

[334] In his theological writings on doctrine and ethics he often refers to Kuyper, and he also was strong on the importance of Christian organisations.

can appear in the teaching and in the life of the church, and sometimes purification will be sufficient, but at other times a greater reformation is needed. Sebestyén was convinced that the Reformed Church of Hungary held the true signs of the *notae ecclesiae,* therefore only *purification* was needed.335

László Ravasz related the situation of the church to a revolution, which is not exactly the same as reformation. Revolution brings new ideas, instead of the old wrong ones, but the new ideas might also be wrong. Reformation, for Ravasz, is a reestablishment of good ideas. The major aim for the church is the restoration of what is true and pure, through confession of sins, self-discipline and sacrifice.336

The forum of the revivalist group seemed to be the National Reformed Free Council (*Országos Református Szabad Tanács)* which assembled first in Nyíregyháza, August 14-17, 1946. The leaders of the new formation were Albert Bereczky and Benő Békefi. As we have noted earlier, the formation of the different groups in the church is not easy to separate. This is very true for the so called "opposition party" and the "revivalist" groups. The National Free Council gave evidence to that. The National Reformed Free Council's voices sharpened and confronted the actual church with important issues about reconciliation and judgement in the new political climate, and the question of church membership and responsible status of the elders. Only later did it become evident that the different motivations of the leaders (in the National Free Council) resulted in the end in a critical tone about the church and lead to the uncritical adoption of the new social order. That process also crystallized the differences in the theological questions between the representatives of the revivalists (like János Victor) and of the opposition party (like Albert Bereczky and Benő Békefi).

A summary of the theological themes of that time will point to the relevance of the Donatist Factor in a special way in the transformation of the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary, which we will analyse later at the end of this chapter when we make an evaluation.

This summary mainly follows Bereczky's argumentation, although we also have to take into consideration the different negative evaluations of Bereczky's theological work.337 In these approaches we can see the origin of the so called *theology of the servant church*, which we shall explain as a separate topic later.

a) Repentance

According to Bereczky, the sin of the church was that it did not stand against the sin of society, such as the exploitation of the poor, fascism and the persecution of the Jews. The church cannot preach the Good News, God's special grace,

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335 Jenő Sebestyén's lecture was held in Budapest (1946), entitled: *Református egyház.* Fazakas,*"Új egyház felé,"* 21.

336 László Ravasz, "Forradalom és reformáció," *Élet és Jövő,* 26, (October, 1946). See in Fazakas, *"Új egyház felé,"* 21.

337Scholars like Márton László Pakozdy, János Erdei, Ferenc Lendvay, Gyula Gombos, and Istvan Szabó Bogárdi agree that Bereczky in most theological questions was uncertain. Therefore a group of theologians around him worked out the new theological argumentation which was exactly fitted to his (church) political ambition.

while the power of general grace is left to Satan. Bereczky was criticizing the official church leadership, which did not take seriously the confession of sin. The new circumstances after the war were seen by him as clear evidences of God's grace, where more and better possibilities were offered to the church. Therefore the acceptance and support of the new situation was equal to the acceptance and support of God's will.[338]

b)   The responsibility of the church for the Hungarian nation.

Bereczky emphasized the differentiation between the church and the world, and pointed to the social responsibility of Christians. He found the behaviour of most Christians to be artificial, because they promote the separation of the church from the world outwardly, and inwardly they show the same symptoms as the world, namely hatred of the brethren and selfishness. The "world" becomes the means of God, according to Bereczky's argumentation. God has plans with the whole Hungarian nation which cannot be restricted to the church. Therefore the church's call has to go beyond the sphere of special grace because the world is part of God's general grace.[339]

c)   The prophetic task of the church

The National Free Council declared that the prophetic task of the church had to be confirmed in the church through "charismatic preaching." Bereczky broadened the prophetic task of the church with reference to the Old Testament prophets. Church renewal is bound to the renewal of the whole nation. In his line of thought the preaching of Christ cannot result in the listeners' opposition to the world. Only spiritual renewal can provide social justice. The only way - according to Breczky – to fulfil the prophetic task of the church, is to preach the gospel and to reveal God's will and justice through His law. In this way the church and the whole nation become one, when repentance and inner renewal take place, so that the church fulfils its mediatory task as happened in the time of Moses, Jeremiah or Jesus Christ.[340]

Bereczky's influence ensured that the "reformation" emphasized in the church at that time, was the only possible way. He was convinced - not taking too much care of all the above seen contradictory statements - that God was on their side and that the Holy Spirit was working only in their own *opposition party*. Whoever was against the program of this opposition party was an enemy of the church. The attacks by the opposition party against the official church leadership meant that these official church leaders had lost the right of a prophetic task – according to Bereczky's views.

Today it is clear that the new organization of the Reformed Church, the National Reformed Free Council, became the executive power in the church whose only aim was the persuasion of the new political order's correctness. The close relationship to the revivalist movement in the beginning was misleading for

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[338]Albert Bereczky, "Isteni gondolatok a magyar békéről," *Magyar Református Ébredés* (1946), 3. See also Colijn: *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 26-27.

[339]Albert Bereczky, "Az egyház felelőssége a világért," *Magyar Református Ébredés* (1945), 29, December. See in Colin, *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 28-29.

[340] Colijn: *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 30-32.

many people. Békefi and Bereczky, the founders of the National Reformed Free Council, misused the benefit of that relationship in a difficult historical situation. It must be remembered that the borders established by Trianon had placed most of the important sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' historical centres of Hungarian Protestantism abroad. Therefore the spiritual unity of the Hungarian Reformed believers had already been severely interrupted. In that new weakened situation after World War II, the National Reformed Free Council could easily fulfil its political task with sonorous words and seemingly church related themes.

The National Reformed Free Council opposition was artificially created against bishop Ravasz and the official church leadership, while Ravasz's clear attempts were also for the renewal of the church within the realm of its own task and boundaries. Ravasz was aware that since the changes of the borders after the Trianon Peace Treaty, one quarter of the inhabitants of Hungary was not Roman Catholic. In that minority the biggest denomination was the Reformed Church of Hungary. Therefore a good relationship with the smaller denominations was a basic interest for the Reformed denomination, just as well as the concentration of forces with the Roman Catholic Church. By the time of 1946 the wish for common action by the different denominations could happen and it circled around the following themes: 1) the most important aim of the church lay in the prophetic task of the church, namely in the preaching of the Word of God; 2) the guarantee of the freedom of the church and the free practice of worship for every individual; 3) the acknowledgement and guarantee of freedom for the social work of the church (diaconal and education); 4) struggle for the above mentioned points, if the invading power would endanger the life of the church.[341] Bereczky and the opposition partly radically refused the attempt for common action among the Christian denominations in Hungary.[342] The attempt for wider common action among the churches could not succeed. When ecumenicity was carried out it was then controlled by the Communist regime and mainly supported for political aims. Ravasz had no other way than to refuse the work of the National Reformed Free Council because those tasks belonged to the Hungarian Reformed Synod. Today we know exactly that the formation and program of the National Reformed Free Council was directed and controlled by the Ministry of the Interior, and so it was a direct action of the Communist Party.[343] In this way the program of renewal and reformation of the church was only an appearance, and the real aim was division in the church in order to prepare the Communist Party's delegates for the taking over of power and leadership in the church.

By the time of 1948 the position of the church in the relationship to the state had changed. On July 12, 1948 the Hungarian Workers' Party was estab-

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[341] László Ravasz, *Emlékezéseim*, 327-328.

[342] Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára O-9047. 1946. márc. 13. The statement is in Mátyás Rákosi's memoirs. Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke*, 92.

[343] Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára 13586/2. in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke*, 111.

lished from the coalition of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, which was a step further toward the building of the one-party system, while the communications misleadingly emphasized socialist pluralism. There were no doubts that the question about the state-church relationship needed to be settled. Several attempts for a solution were made, as we have mentioned earlier, mainly by Ravasz and Révész. The changes of 1948/49 are shown by the controlling of political power by the Communist regime, and in the fact that the church was terrified, therefore any partnership between church and state was not between equal partners. The first target by this new political power's policies against the Christian denominations, was the Reformed Church. The Catholics had a defence against direct political attacks to a certain extent because of the Vatican. Therefore the Hungarian Communist Party's interest was to find a partnership for its purposes in the second biggest denomination (Reformed Church of Hungary), which was more defenceless. The Reformed Church of Hungary became an instrument in the hands of the political question of how to settle accounts with religion, and every action between the state and the Reformed Church provided a good test case for action against other denominations. In these circumstances the state took the initiative for negotiation with the church. One part of the Reformed Church of Hungary was ready to make a compromise on all possible levels with the state, as we have seen in Bereczky's attempts. We also have to note that the old church leadership became more and more isolated while a new group of church leadership was forming from the so called opposition party, who were ready to work together with the state.[344] Ravasz clearly saw that Communism was aware of the fact that the direct persecution of the church leads to the strengthening of the church, as a counter effect of the persecution. Therefore the political approach was that the church had to be weakened according to the tactic of *Divide et impera!*" - or, as it also became known, the method of "salami politics"[345]. The Communist's church-politics strategy was that the followers of Christ had to be placed in opposition to the leaders of the church, who were becoming partners of this kind of destructive church-politics. According to Ravasz, that happened the most successfully in the case of the Reformed Church of Hungary.[346] The execution of the above mentioned strategy was straight forward: the individuals in key positions who were *personae non gratae* in the eyes of the communist leadership had to be changed

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[344] We have to call to attention that the changes in the church leadership was controlled by the Communist Regime and it is arguable that by the time of 1948 they had enough power and influence on the entire Reformed Church to have it make a compromise with the newly formed "People's Democracy." For example, in the first round of the Communist policies, most elders of the congregation were against the nationalization of the church schools. Colijn, *Wer mag winder uns sein?*, 34.

[345]'Salami politics' was used to describe the method that isolated political opponents from one another in order to render them harmless.

[346] Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, Budapest, O-13586/1. p. 156. see in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke,* 94.

by the *personae gratae*.[347] In the long run the complete change of church leadership made great influences and changes in the Synod as well; the results will be discussed later.

There were two more major points which needed to be settled: 1) the nationalisation of the church schools; and 2) the complete separation of the church and state, which mainly meant financial independence from the state.[348] The drawing away of the church from the state could only be accomplished gradually, according to Ravasz. On the one hand, since the church lost its lands and as a consequence of the 'land reform' the financial situation of the church became miserable, therefore the church could not maintain its life by itself. On the other hand, the church had to avoid the total financial dependence on the state to be able to rescue its independence. Ravasz's view was commonly shared in the Synod Council.[349] In the years of 1945-46 the church was convinced that the future of the Hungarian culture was impossible without the church

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[347] The creating of an ostracism among the leaders of the different Hungarian church districts was the first step by the Communists. Andor Lázár the chief-curator of the Danubian Church District resigned his title in May 11, in 1948. Before his resignation he was arrested because during his office as head of the Ministry of Justice (1932-1938) he took part in Mátyás Rákosi's arrest. At the same time László Ravasz, the Bishop of the Danubian Church District, also resigned because of the unbearable political pressure which made his work impossible. Roland Kiss followed Andor Lázár in the office of chief-curator and Albert Bereczky followed Bishop László Ravasz. They were the men of the Communist Party, although Kiss's election required hard work because of the resistance of the public opinion of the church. The desired changes by the Communist leadership in the Danubian Church District opened the way for direct action in the other districts and in the whole Reformed Church of Hungary. In the Transtibician Church District, the office of Bishop Imre Révész went to János Péter. János Péter was known as the first man of the Bolshevik church leaders and one of the most aggressive supporters of the Communist ideology. János Péter was followed by Tibor Bartha (between 1958-86) in the office of bishop for the Transtibician Church District. Szentpéteri Béla Kun, the famous church jurist, the chief-curator of the Transtibician Church District, was followed by Ferenc Erdei in 1952, who was a devoted adherent of the Marxist ideology. The Cistibician Church District was abolished in 29, October, 1952. Therefore the office of Bishop Andor Enyedy and Chief-curator Elémér Horváth simply stopped. The existence of the Cistibician Church District was restored on 1, January, 1957. Only Bishop Elemér Győry held his office without changes between 1943-1961 in the Transdanubian Church District. He was followed by Benő Békefi. The importance of the changes for the Communist Regime can be illustrated clearly by the following chart which lists the quantity of loyal church leaders:

Denominations	"key positions"	" Loyal church leaders before the counter revolution (of 1956)"	"The loss of loyal church leaders after the counter revolution (of 1956)"	" Loyal church leaders in the present (11, Sept.1958)"
Roman Catholic	606	257	57	282
Reformed	150	110	31	117
Lutheran	30	24	13	25

See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-A-21-a-H-31-4/1958 in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke,* 94-106.

[348] The historical churches of Hungary by the time of 1948 were juridically equal and the social work such as the maintenance of their schools was financially supported by the state.

[349] László Ravasz, "Az egyház és a választások," *Élet és jövő* no.12 (1945), 1 and "Új egyház felé," *Élet és jövő* no. 10 (1945), 1.

schools.[350] Not only the church leadership but also the opposition party agreed on the importance of the church schools and Christian education. The radical shift towards socialism in the political life of Hungary made clear that the state kept the right to organize education, whereby the role of the church became less. Although religious education had become one of the most important tasks of the church, after 1948 the government severely limited it.

The next step was the preparation and the execution of the agreement between the state and church. On April 30, 1948, the Synod Council of the Reformed Church of Hungary formulated a declaration whereby the Synod laid down the theological basis and commitments of the agreement. It is possible that the declaration of the Synod was born under political pressure.[351] The theological basis of the declaration brought nothing new to the earlier statements by groups of church leaders, who were ready to make a compromise with the Communist Regime. The Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary declared openness toward the agreement with the state according to the following theological considerations:

1) That the slogan of the "new world, new tasks and new man" had not changed. The "new" situation - according to the theological statement of the synod - was given from God and had a purpose. Therefore, God ensures a better and nicer future for the Hungarian nation in the new political (Communist) settings.

2) That the democracy which was being propagated by the political order would not be different than that which the Reformed Church of Hungary was aiming to follow, according to its God-given calling.

3) The Reformed Church of Hungary as a free church in a free state would only be obeying its Lord, Jesus Christ. Therefore the moral independence of the church was beyond any question.

4) When people are not ready to follow the program of Jesus Christ the results are social revolutions and class-struggles. The biggest responsibility in such struggles is for the church to give a comprehensive social program. The Reformed Church of Hungary did not have such a program. Therefore it was a God's judgement that the new politico-social program was done without the church and even in opposition to the church by those who were convinced that the church was in opposition to Socialism.

5) The church had to take into consideration the social teachings of Jesus and their consequences and should announce its social and economic program. The biggest sin of the church was in the past, when it called 'Christian' what was not according to Christ. It would be a self-abnegation of the Reformed Church to use Christ's followers for political aims. The clear task of the church is to pro-

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[350] In those years the churches had 4,500 schools and out of that number the Reformed Church had 1117 schools.

[351] The documents of the Hungarian Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár) give evidence that the declaration was posted on the same day to the department of Education when the Synod Council finished its meeting with the note made by Bishop Imre Révész, wherein he says: for the fulfilment of the request of the State. See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-I-1-v-19.t-sz.n.- 1948, 40, in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke,* 206.

claim God's Law for the benefit of the individual, the community, the whole of humanity and the Hungarian Nation. Therefore the synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary declared the following (only the most important points are mentioned):

a) Its full ability for service in the name of Jesus Christ in the new Hungarian social settings.

b) The church welcomes all the actions of the government, because they do not differ from the Christian aims of the church, based on the freedom of the Gospel and the principles of love and justice.

c) The church acknowledged the Hungarian Republic and its constitution and found it suitable for developing a free society for free people.

d) The church found the liquidation of the system of *latifundium* (large private land ownership) to correspond to the teaching of the Bible.

e) The Synod was ready to revise the relationship with the state according to the constitution and laws.

f) It is clear that the church had to make a sacrifice in the changing new world, although the church hoped that its main tasks of preaching the Gospel, teaching and evangelization, would be allowed.

g) All believers in Christ are called to renew the society of Hungary.[352]

On October 7, 1948, an Agreement was signed between the state's representative, Gyula Ortutay the minister of Education, and Bishop Imre Révész from the Reformed Church of Hungary. This was signed in light of the recognition of the principle of 'a free church in a free state'. As a part of the Agreement, the Republic in accordance with legal principles, ensured the church the following free exercises in its life: holding divine services in churches, or other suitable public buildings, private homes and out of doors. The church was allowed to hold Bible classes in churches, schools, private homes, community houses. The mission work of church papers and an independent press would be allowed as well as the distribution of Bibles and periodicals. Holding community and church conferences and retreats, as well as obligatory religious instruction at school, and also the exercise of welfare work, would all continue.[353]

The Republic allowed six Reformed schools to remain as church institutions. The Republic recognized and assured the right of the Reformed Church to hold obligatory religious education in the state schools, although this was changed to a facultative choice by the Order of the Council of Ministers in September 5, of 1949. The state also assured its contribution to the church, which would decrease by 25% every five years and cease on December 31, 1968.

On the other hand, the Reformed Church of Hungary affirmed that the church would pray for the Hungarian Republic, the state head, the government, and the prosperity and peace of the Hungarian people. Furthermore, the church declared to be cognizant concerning the decision of the government of the Hungarian Re-

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[352] Outline of the Declaration of the Synod Council, 30, April, 1948, in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke*, 312-314.

[353] See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-A-21-e-II.-1948-1971, 16, published in *Magyar Közlöny*, no. 227 (October 9, 1948).

public to nationalize non-state schools and annex dormitories; and also to place all teachers and other personnel of the school in state service.[354]

It is obvious to assume that the faithfulness to the Agreement would become apparent in time. Indeed, the history of this church-state relationship illustrates that the 'Agreement' was never more than a "one-sided ground of reference that could often be spoken about but not kept, since the state was not willing and the church was not able to do so."[355]

On August 18, 1949 Vice-premier Rákosi presented the new constitution, which was established following the Soviet pattern. Hungary became "a state of workers and peasants" where all power was given to the working people. Hungary became a "People's Republic." The new constitution assured: 1) freedom of conscience for the citizens and the right to freely exercise religion; 2) separation of the Church and State in the interest of the assurance of freedom of conscience.[356] The Reformed Church of Hungary replied in the following way: "We accept our new situation as the sign of God's mercy on us, and we seek for guidance in His Word what is to be done by us."[357] An oath of loyalty to the "People's Republic" had to be signed by all employees of the church in December, 1949.[358] The Reformed Church officially stated that from the viewpoint of a Christian conscience, the content of the oath was unobjectionable; therefore a faithful servant of Jesus Christ could accept it with a free and good conscience.[359]

The earlier experiences of the Reformed Church of Hungary could teach that the well sounding formulation of the constitution in relation to the church would be abused. The welcoming of the new constitution by the Reformed Church of Hungary was, on the one hand, the result of the actual church leadership's direct allegiance to the communist regime; and on the other hand, it was a sign of compromising fear[360].

The Vatican forbade Roman Catholic bishops to negotiate with the state, which resulted in a tension between the church and the state. To ease the fierce tension the Council of Bishops proposed the following solution: the lower clergy

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[354] See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-A-21-e-II.-1948-1971, p.16, published in *Magyar Közlöny*, no. 227 (October 9, 1948).

[355] Sándor Tenke, "A Magyarországi Református Egyház elmúlt 40 évben," *Confessio* no.3 (1989), 84-91.

[356] Paragraph 54 of the Hungarian Constitution (August 18, 1949) See in *Új harangszó* (August 21, 1949).

[357] Albert Bereczky, *Five Years of Hungarian Protestantism 1945-1950* (Budapest, 1950), 26.

[358] The oath of allegiance of the clergy was required by Order No. 4288 of the Council of Ministers issued on 22, October, 1949.

[359] In accordance with the ruling of the ministerial council 4288/49 of October 14, 1949 the text of the oath was as follows: "I … swear that I will be true to the Hungarian People's Republic, its people and constitution, will keep to the rulings, will maintain State official secrets, serve the interest of the people within the scope of my office, and in all things look to develop the Hungarian People's Republic to strengthen and expand it." See in *Új Harangszó*, 18, December, (1949).

[360] The fear was most relevant since Rakosi's rule. For example, in the election of May 19, 1949 the Vice-premier stated that all who did not vote for the Front "would be his own enemy, the enemy of his family and of his fatherland." See a documentation by J. B. Barron, H. M. Waddams, "Communism and the Churches" Review author[s]: Margaret Dewar in *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Jan., 1951), 61.

were allowed to take the required oath under the condition of the "*salvus legibus Dei et Ecclesia*" without offending divine and ecclesiastical law. The regime organised a "Priestly Peace Movement" in the summer of 1950 to divide Catholic clergy, which suggested that the peace movement was to be used for confrontation between the lower and upper clergy. The Council of Bishops tried to neutralize the deliberate division, with the following declaration:

> "Excommunication will fall upon those who : 1) act against the lawful authority of the Church or who want to upset its authority, 2) who are willing to participate in movements or actions organized by the Communist Party, or make supportive statements to the same, 3) who accept ecclesiastical position or title without canonical procedure and installation." [361]

An immediate reaction by the state was that in June 1950, 2000 monks and nuns were arrested and deported. As a consequence of the open persecution of the church, on August 30, 1950, after eight meetings the Archbishop József Grósz and the Minister of State, József Darvas, signed the Agreement.[362]

An attempt to deify history opened this new scene and its tragedy played for decades.

4.6 The "Theology of the Servant Church"

All that we have just seen on the previous pages turns out to be the elements which formed the "theology of the servant church." We entered this history and context in more detail in order to illustrate the major correspondence between the context and the theological reactions. Now a further explanation of the new theological trend will give a clearer picture about the so-called official theology of the Reformed Church of Hungary of that time. Almost every scholarly treatment which has made an attempt to introduce this time of deep problems in church history emphasizes that most documents are not available for research; therefore a comprehensive picture cannot be drawn.[363] It is also important to highlight the fact that a realistic description of this theological trend requires that the reader be aware that the surface hides an entirely different reality. When the deeper reality is exposed – and it is often negative – this is not a mere subjective attitude, but is strongly based on the clear evidences of history, both then and now.

As we have seen, a systematic centralization took place in the political life of Hungary after World War II, which ended in a total dictatorship. Therefore when we talk about the so-called official theology of the Reformed Church we have to notice that the theological work was not realistic, nor autonomous. This kind of

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[361] Jenő Gergely, *A Katolikus Egyház Magyarországon, 1944-1971* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1985), 92.

[362] Jenő Gergely, *A Katolikus Egyház Magyarországon, 1944-1971*, 92. See also in Joseph Pungur, "Church –State Policy in Communist Hungary," *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, (Calgary: Angelus Publisher, 1992), 88-89.

[363] We also have to note that since many of the confidential documents became available in the recent past we face other difficulties, namely that most incriminating documents were destroyed after the year of change, 1989/90.

'theology' belonged solely to the church leadership and their ruling theologians, with the primary aim to maintain the ambiguous church-state relationship in favour of the Communist Regime[364] - however, with the hope that the Church might preserve its existence. To avoid misunderstanding about the use of the word of 'theology', we often label it the *official theology,* whereby we have to make the following comments: 1) After the Agreement of 1948, the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary took over the 'responsibility' of spiritual leadership and 'productive' theological work, which however never reflected the Hungarian Calvinist theological thinking. 2) As we have mentioned earlier, this kind of official theology grew out of political ambition, and therefore it was not primarily based on Christian doctrine, nor entirely motivated by Christian social-ethical principles, but this 'servant theology' was composed under the pressure of political circumstances. 3) The context of the church became the text, and even a pretext (false excuse) for theological thinking.

We have to make a short reference to some phenomena which will allow a clearer picture of the sources of the theology of the 'servant church', especially for an understanding of how and who this theology really served. One phenomenon was the collectivization which began in 1949. Collectivization was a continuation of the 1945 land reform, and this was plainly a part of the class struggle against the well-to-do landowners and farmers. Impossible compulsory quotas were imposed on those who were not willing to surrender their estates. The Protestant churches willingly took their share in centrally written sermons to support the actions of the Party. Meanwhile, by the liquidation of the small and middle landowners and their properties, the strongest basis of the Reformed Church fell apart.[365] That fact certainly resulted in the beginning of the decline of the Reformed Church at that time.

In parallel to the official theology of the Reformed Church, the continuance of different theological trends which began before World War I did not come to an end, although they were put mainly to one side, and their possibilities were restricted. Their significance was in their effect on the theological thinking among those who were not satisfied with the official theology of that time, although the theology of the servant church willingly used - in some cases – the older theological language as well. Those who could not identify with the ruling theological trend had no publicity at all and if they tried to raise a critical voice they were labelled as 'political reactionaries'. Therefore, there was another phenomenon: the series of show trials of the early fifties which gave an assurance that the Party had

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[364] The unconditional serving of the Communist Regime's goals is illustrated by the praise of Mátyás Rákosi, who was the party head ("the best disciple of Stalin"), on his sixtieth birthday: "Since the liberation we have learnt and are continuously learning new lessons taught to us primarily by his life, teaching and example. (...) We are increasingly aware of the great gift which was and is given to us by his wisdom, humanness and knowledge. He is the great statesman whose wise and strong hand leads the life of the country." Albert Bereczky, "Rákosi Mátyás születésnapjára," *Magyar Nemzet* (March 8,1952), 1, also see A. Bereczky, *A keskeny út* (Budapest: Református Egytemes Konvent Sajtóosztája, 1953), 297.

[365] Ferenc Glatz, "Az újabbkori Magyar kultúra és a református egyház," *Confessio* no 1: 34 (1988), 31-42.

gained enough power to settle accounts with those who opposed them, namely the "class-aliens" of the new Communist order. Even after the acceptance of the new constitution by the Hungarian Parliament in 1949, which declared the basic civil rights and duties in light of the freedom of conscience (including the freedom to exercise religion with the separation of state and church), a State Office for Church Affairs (Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal) was yet established in 1951[366].

It later became evident that the AEH planned and executed the Communist Party's attacks against the church, whereby the final aim was not less than to liquidate the church. This was done on three levels. The first level was the *psychological,* since the head of the ÁEH was above the bishop and in practice that meant that he was the head of the church. Without him no effective action could be taken in the church. This was known by the pastor of the smallest village, to the bishops of the General Convent. The second area was the *economic*. The ÁEH apportioned and passed all annual budgets of the church. The ÁEH paid the full salary of the high church leaders with all their expenses, the seminary professors and the full budget of any publications. A total financial dependence was worked out which resulted in almost full control of church activities. The third area was the *political*. Every church law had to be approved by the government. The ÁEH had an absolute veto in the General Synod. The ÁEH office was under the State Security Department (Államvédelmi Osztály, ÁVO), which later was renamed as the State Security Office (Államvédelmi Hivatal, ÁVH[367]). This AVH functioned as a political

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[366] Act 1 of 1951; by the government decree in 1957 (No. 1045) it became a department of the Ministry of Education. The explanation of the establishment of the State Office for Church Affairs was that the new office assured the collaboration of the state and the different denominations according to the paragraph (54§.) of the new constitution. The State Office for Church Affairs (ÁEH) was for a short period ceased during the revolution of 1956. It was reestablished in 1959. The final closure of the AEH only happened in 1989. See Edit Köpeczi Bócz, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 2004), 14-20.

[367] Kiszely's book on the history of the ÁVH starts his introduction with the following significant motto from Joel 1, 2-3: "Hear this, you elders; / listen, all who live in the land. / Has anything like this ever happened in your days / or in the days of your forefathers? Tell it to your children, / and let your children tell it to their children, / and their children to the next generation." The ÁVH (previously the ÁVO), The State Security Office (ÁVH) was set up in September 1948, under the control of the Interior Ministry. Its legal predecessors were the Political Security Department (PRO, 1945) and the State Security Department of the Interior Ministry's State Police (ÁVO, 1946), which had been headed by communist officials even in the assumed coalition period. The PRO's main task had been to purge Hungary of the remnants of Nazism. Its brief was extended after the November 1945 general elections to waging a struggle against 'reactionary elements'. Its headquarters were at Andrássy (later Sztálin) street 60 (6th District), which had earlier been the 'House of Fidelity' where Ferenc Szálasi's fascist Arrow-Cross Party had been based. Later it moved to the tower block in Jászai Mari square (5th District), popularly known as the 'White House'. The ÁVO and later the ÁVH played a decisive part in preparing and conducting show trials during the struggles accompanying the communist take-over. Their activity was supervised and controlled by members of the Soviet state security service, the NKVD (later the KGB), acting as advisers to their leaders. After the communists took power in 1948, the ÁVH was treated as the army or 'fist' of the ruling Hungarian Workers Party, HWP. The ÁVH, at the peak of its power (1949-53), functioned as a separate authority formally responsible to the Council of Ministers (government). However, its sole chief in reality was the party general secretary, Mátyás Rákosi. Apart from the security police, the ÁVH included an 18,000-strong Army Border Guard (the 'Green ÁVO') and the military intelligence. It also contained an Internal Force, a corps for keeping order within the service, es-

gendarmerie and executed the tasks of the ÁEH with selective cruelty in all possible ways.[368] One of the first tasks was to work out the directives of church politics according to the above mentioned system. The spread of the atheistic worldview and the transformation of the Christian society were a priority. According to the view of the ÁEH the existence of the church depended on following the guidance of the Communist Party, whose basic principle was the fight against a religious worldview. The system was worked out to the smallest details. Church politics was planned nationwide and internationally. The system found troops of collaborators in the church who became espionage agents. On the organisational level the ÁEH had a "Protestant department" and "Catholic department," whose major task was to put forward the actual church politics as was determined by the Party.

For the so called West, the goal of communication by the Party was to always state in the headlines that the Church was free in Hungary, and the Party made sure that only a carefully selected group of church leaders could go abroad to represent and give that appearance. The committee of the elders was changed to include those lower class people who represented the proletariat in the church, even with no church background, and they could become the ringleaders of the Communist propaganda. The same happened in the case of the higher levels of church leadership. As we have seen earlier, the new bishops and head curators were selected according to the same principle, namely, those who were willing to become subservient supporters of the Communist ideology in the church.

We also have to mention the highly developed and very wide connections[369] of the ÁEH whereby it could control almost all areas of life. The effectiveness of the ÁEH was due to the countrywide and international net of spies who had to give information regularly about people under observation. A wide scale of functions can be distinguished among this secret work. There were silent observers, who were giving in-

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tablished after the Soviet pattern. The ÁVH assumed the task of guarding important party and state buildings and several forced-labour and internment camps, including Recsk and Kistarcsa. Between 1950 and 1953, the ÁVH took proceedings against about 650,000 people. The dreaded Gábor Péter, who headed the organization from 1945 until his arrest in January 1953, carried out faithfully every order from Rákosi. In 1953, Imre Nagy's first government attempted to place the ÁVH under Interior Ministry control again. During the 1956 revolution, the deep antipathy for the Stalinist system felt by Hungarian society manifested itself most of all in the hatred of the ÁVH and the lynching of some 'ÁVO' men. Some ÁVH units and officers fought against the rebels alongside the Soviet troops. The Nagy government fulfilled one of the main demands of the revolution on October 28, 1956 by disbanding the ÁVH. This was confirmed on 7 November by the Kádár government in an Interior Ministry order, although most of its members continued to work for the state-security (later the political investigation) department of the police until 1961. Gábor Kiszely, *ÁVH - egy terrorszervezet története* (Budapest: Korona, 2000), 44-77.

[368] Köpeczi Bócz, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége*, 26-108.

[369] The ÁEH functioned country-wide under the direction of ÁVH, which was in Budapest. They were responsible for the theoretical working out of the different actions of ÁVH, just as well as for the solving of problems and the analysis of the different written reports, which were the result of the observations by the secret agents. Besides the Budapest centre of ÁVH, it had representatives in every County Council. According to Edit Köpeczi Bót, the hand-written notes would be worth studying as a separate phenomenon. One can often find the following commands as the solution to a problem: "call that innocent pigeon for a questioning"; "if his/her personality becomes burdensome, we must liquidate him/her"; or, "detect his/her connection." Köpeczi Bócz, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége*, 56-57.

formation only in a written form. If the secret observations were not successful, and if they did not know enough about a person's thoughts, then the task was to make friendships and the spies would worm themselves into the observed person's confidence. In most cases the only successful method was the provocation with lies and intrigues, and in that way the selected people could lose their closer or wider social esteem. One of the major rules was that the officially formulated accusation never could be a concern against the person's political or religious views.

   The above mentioned tactics were well supported by the Party policies by 1957. They found that the useful method against the church was not the direct opposition and persecution, but rather it was more effective if the Party controlled the aims of the church and church politics. In this way the Party was always one step ahead of the church and the church followed the Party and not vice-versa. [370] The first area for enforcement of the tactics of the Communist Party was the (re)education of the youth. All steps of re-education had to circle around the aim of the liquidation of religious convictions, which was the spawning place of reactionaries – according to the Communist Party's thinking.[371] A comprehensive psychological terror characterized the educational work from the elementary schools to university level. The good quality of teaching and academic freedom disappeared from the schools, and this was succeeded by the communist ideology. Loyalty to the Communist Party and ideology was the measurement of getting into the levels of education and receiving diplomas. The propaganda practices did not leave untouched even the very few schools, colleges and academies of the church which could stay under church control.[372] The Party concentrated its espionage agent work with great circumspection in the church schools. Since the education under church control did not fit into the plan of the Communist Regime, the Party wanted to have assurance that the re-education in these schools would bear fruit and would result in a contribution to strengthen the Party and its interests.

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[370] The cited principle of the communist party is from the analysis of the local work group of Somogy. See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-A-21-d 001841 / 1957 (2.d.) in Köpeczi Bócz, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége*, 31-34.

[371] See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-A-21-e (3.d.) Köpeczi Bócz, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége*, 38.

[372] As we have mentioned earlier, one of the many social changes in Hungary was in the educational system. Most schools in the country were church related. After the "Agreement" (1948) the Reformed Church lost over thirteen hundred elementary schools, over twenty high schools, and several other collages of higher education. Only four high schools were left, three teachers' colleges and four theological seminaries. By the time of 1952, the Reformed Church lost its teachers' colleges, three of its high schools, and two of it theological seminaries. These facts clearly show the violation of the "Agreement" (1948) by the state with the help of the church leadership. The Synod session of the Reformed Church of Hungary on October, 24, 1951 with little disagreement agreed to the violation of the "Agreement." The church schools, colleges and seminaries which were the bulwark of Hungarian Calvinism for centuries, were swept away. The Sárospatak Reformed College was affected in a long-term way by the closing of its theological seminary in 1951 and continued with the drastic transformation of the Sárospatak Reformed High School into the Rákóczi (state) High School. The newly reorganized Rakoczi High School was run according to the atheistic Marxist-Communist ideological pattern, and was thus very far from what would have been desired by the family of princes it was named after.

The Party found a way to systematize and hold together the troops of collaborators in the so called "Peace Movement of Priests and Pastors" (Papi Békemozgalom). This movement was formed officially by those clergymen who did not agree that the church should be in opposition to the (church) politics of the Party. The most important aim of the Peace Movement of the Priests and Pastors was to extend the influence and leadership of the Party, to create and strengthen the basis for working class power in the church by the leaders of the church. In this way the movement became one of the means of the state to transform the life of the church toward its own political purposes. The pastors and priests were under a continuous re-education, therefore they could become propagators of the Communist-Marxist ideology in the congregations. The Peace Movement of the Priests and Pastors, and also the Peace Assemblies, were the frame and forum for the acceptance of the Marxist ideology and activities. The Peace Assemblies were planned to the smallest details by the ÁEH representatives of each county. The main theme of the lectures, the lecturers, the commentators and the content of the comments, were all planned and designed beforehand. The designers of the "Peace Movement of the Priests and Pastors" were sensitive enough to delegate their representatives to go abroad, thus spreading their propaganda of Hungarian Socialism at international conferences, whereby this peace movement gained international recognition[373] as well.[374]

The beneficiaries of the functions of the ÁEH were the faithful servants of the ideology of the Communist Party and its purposes. One of the most significant groups was comprised of the leaders of the Hungarian church, who were happy to receive high awards from the "Hungarian Workers Party" for their direct or indirect role in the activities of the ÁEH.[375] We can also take into account - to a certain extent - as beneficiaries, those pastors and priests who were supportive and loyal enough to the Party's ideology. However there was a characteristic distinction among them: 1) we can find pastors who were supportive to a "necessary minimum"; and 2) we can find

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[373] According to the different documents of the Ministry of the Interior there was a purposeful building of the international net of spies through the code-named agents. The area of their work was not only the Socialist countries but also the imperialistic countries of the West. After the revolution of 1956 the international connections grew in significance, since the Reformed Church of Hungary (the new leadership) first represented itself at the WCC conference. The leader of the delegation was Tibor Bartha, and they were aware that at the plenary section the WCC wanted to deal with the case of the Hungarian Protestant leaders who were alienated from the church because of their roles in the "counter revolution." The delegation made clear for Visser't Hooft that the Hungarian delegation would counter-attack and even leave the conference if the case was to be discussed publicly at the conference – so the theme was dropped from the plenary agenda. In this way it happened that leaders like H. Berkhof offered the help of the WCC for the protestant churches of Hungary at this time of great pressure, not knowing that the Hungarian WCC delegation was not the right group to offer such help to. See Állambiztosángi Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára, O-13586/2. in Fodorné, *Történelmi Lecke,* 146-147, 79.

[374] Köpeczi Bócz, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége*, 58-100.

[375] Among the many we only name those who were mentioned earlier in the dissertation: Albert Bereczky, bishop of the Reformed Church of Hungary; Tibor Bartha, assistant professor of the Theological Faculty of Debrecen; László Márton Pákozdy, professor of the Theological Faculty of Debrecen; Lajos Vető, bishop of the Lutheran Church of Hungary, etc. See Magyar Országos Levéltár XIX-A-21-d 0057-1/1957 in Köpeczi Bócz, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége*, 115-116.

those pastors who were enthusiastic and zealous in their assistance, which was well demonstrated in the way they preached of the Gospel (in a socialist manner).

However, we can find a great number of pastors and church leaders who refused loyalty and service to the Party's ideology and they became victims. They were ready to undergo persecution, jail, and even death for their faith.[376] Their awards were: selected cruelty from the state, but appreciation and love from the congregations. Their story is far beyond the boundaries of this study. They were the ones of whom "the world was not worthy."[377] The victims' list is longer than those who lived in that time. The new generation who grew up in the poor nourishment of scientific socialism are victims as well, and their children, too, who form the majority of the present society with their injured souls.

The above given introduction to the purpose and function of the ÁEH clearly suggests that the official theological teaching could not avoid the transformation according to the atheistic and communist ideology. Since the physical destruction of the church buildings was impossible (because they wanted to maintain a façade), the annihilation of temple of the soul was the aim, and the rebuilding of the soul of a person is always a greater challenge. The official theology of the Reformed Church of Hungary at this time was introduced by the changing of the guard, in church leadership. We can sum up in two characteristic names the different "theological" elements, although both names cover the same content. The church leadership taught about the purpose and task of the church under the title of the *Theology of the Narrow Way* until 1956, and after 1958 the title was changed to the *Theology of the Servant Church.* Istvan Szabó's work puts the content of the 'Theology of the Servant Church' in the following framework: 1) The church and state interrelation was classified by subject matter; 2) The aspect of service (diaconal) was made universal and totalitarian; 3) The acknowledgement of the decisions of church politics in all recognized theological work (in other words, the application of this theology of the servant church).[378]

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[376] Among many others, prominent pastors such as Béla Pap and István Pogyor were murdered; Pap disappeared without trace and Pogyor died in custody under suspicious circumstances. Others were forced to resign or were removed from their parishes. Imre Szabó and Károly Dobos, ministers of prominent Budapest churches, were exiled to remote village parishes, their only "sin" that they had helped other people who had been forcefully deported from the capital city. During the Communist regime of forty-five years, 133 of the church's 1,200 ministers and countless laymen suffered deportation, prison, or removal from office. A number of publications give evidence to martyrdom among the Hungarian Protestants in the Carpathian Basin area, between 1949-1990. The following are the most well known and important: Pál Forgon, *Ott voltam, ahol a legszebb virágok nyílna* (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1992); Barna Horkay, *A Keleti Baráti Kör: Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésről* (Published by the author with the support of the Kom Over En Help, 1998); Zoltán Kovács, *Bilincsben is békességben Istennel: Szibériai rabságom története* (Budapest: Ref. Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya. 1990); Sándor Szilágyi, *Boldog rabságo,* (München: sine publ. 1986); András Visky (ed.), *Bilincseket és börtönt is* (Kolozsvár: Koinónia 1996); Gyula Bárczai, *Sorsok a református egyházban 1948-1988* (Bern: sine publ., 1989); Árpád Hargita, *Tűzoszlopoddal jéghegyek között: Zimányi József életútja* (Fundamenta Alapítvány 1995).

[377] Heb. 11: 38.

[378] Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia a magyarországi református egyházban 1948-1989 között,* 68.

4.6.1 The Theology of the Narrow Way

The vision of the *The Theology of the Narrow Way* as a point of departure of the new theology is associated with Albert Bereczky's name[379]. The main disposition of the new theology was God's self-revelation in history. The socialist historical and sociological reality was given by God after World War II. So Bereczky saw God's judgement in the catastrophes of the war (judgement on the old feudal system and Nazism), and he saw God's act of mercy in the liberation by socialism. Bereczky without doubt declared that according to the political reality the church was linked to the Eastern block by God's mercy. As we have shown earlier, the confession of sins and repentance was one of the first tasks of the church to be able to receive God's liberating mercy in socialism. The rhetoric of church politics by the use of the notion of the "narrow way" was very misleading. First of all, because it is rooted in Scripture (Mathew 7, 13-14), [380] where the understanding is to follow the narrow way of the decision of faith. Secondly, the use of the notion was abusive because it was already a phrase used by the pietistic movement of the revival groups, with a different understanding than Bereczky. In a different way, Bereczky's politics wanted to free the church from its sinful past (repentance) and fulfil the task of the church on the narrow way by means of its prophetic task in the new socialist order. We can see that the church leadership's attempt at first was to not become identical with the world.[381] That attempt became very ambivalent when the application of the narrow way's theology became the same path as the ideology of socialism. That process can be well detected in the different "teachings" of other church leaders, like János Péter and Tibor Bartha.[382] Bereczky himself was convinced by the time of 1950, that the major tasks of the church on the narrow way was confession and obedient service. Therefore, "the believer can demonstrate that he/she is a useful member of the socialist society." [383] That view was even strengthened later by Bereczky himself when he wrote about the narrow way as follows:

> The way of our people never leads us back to the past but always on-
> wards, towards the future. Our way is always, everywhere and in
> every respect, a narrow way. We therefore, continually face the ques-
> tion: how can we keep to this way faithfully and how can we walk in it
> obediently, both as regards the inner, specific mission of the Church

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[379] The expression *The Narrow Way* (A keskeny út) is Bereczky's, which was also a title of one of his volumes in 1953. It was a collection of sermons, lectures, articles etc., rather than a systematised theological exploration of the theme.

[380] "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

[381] Albert Bereczky, 'Eligazodásunk', *Az út* (28, November, 1948)

[382] Péter János, "A Magyar református egyház útja," and Elemér Kocsis, "Bartha Tibor püspök munkássága a Magyar református teológia szolgálatában", *Református Egyház* (June, 1982), 121. First use of the citation is in Colijn : *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 71.

[383] Albert Bereczky, *Keskeny út*, (Budapest: Református egyetemes Konvent Sajtóosztálya, 1953)

and as regards the service of the timely causes of man's earthly life, of
men and people, of the world which is the object of God's love?[384]

This theology of the narrow way was used to prepare the next step toward
the theology of the serving church. The specific mission of the church was to
fulfil the new "exodus," namely to lead the people of God to the Canaan of so-
cialism by using religious rhetoric.

4.6.2 The Elements of the "Theology of the Servant Church" in the Light of the Notion of Service

The word *service* seemed to be the watchword which became the "right"
formulation to explain and justify in theological terms the necessary transfor-
mation in the church, which however resulted in the alignment of the church to
the communist ideology. Under the slogan of *service,* a double guarantee[385]
could be confirmed: (i) The church (leadership) gave assurance of its commit-
ment that the socialist life style would be desired by and realized among the be-
lievers. That was called the *service of teaching*. (ii) The state, in turn, guaran-
teed that it would strengthen the position of the (new) leadership in the church.

This double guarantee helps explain the ambivalent nature of this theology.
For it was teaching the people to aquiese to atheist socialism, while meanwhile
using biblical phrases about service. We should not loose sight of the fact that
we are facing cooperation with an atheistic ideology, whose final purpose was
to liquidate Christian thought and life.

The following *services* were distinguished[386] in the church after the contract
with the socialist ideology in light of the "Agreement" of 1948: 1) *Sacerdotal
service* was the mediatory service of the church for the sinful people. 2) The
service of teaching created the arena and forum of orientation and support of
ministers in their ministry, concerning how to deal with issues of relevant pub-
lic services. 3) *Service of orientation* refers to the justification by God through
Jesus Christ and the justifying Word of God. Jesus Christ, who gave his life for
our justification and salvation, is present to lead us in the midst of everyday
life. If the church does not recognise this fact, Bereczky said, then it would be
facing two temptations: a) by not recognising the sins of the age the church
would preserve and defend what God has judged and condemned; b) the church
would accommodate to the changes of the *saeculum* in a such a way that the
sacrifices and the values given by God would be left unused. The frame of inter-
pretation for all of this was socialism, "where times required new people and

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[384] Hungarian Church Press, 1955, XII. 15. VII/22-24. 4 First use of the citation is in Colijn: *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 72.

[385] Bogardi Szabó, "A belső vérzés hosszú időszaka - A „szolgálat theológiája," mint a magyarországi Református Egyház nyomorúságának tükröződése," *Confessio* no.1 (1990), 111-119. See also Tibor Bartha and László Makkai (eds.), *Studia et acta ecclesiastica* vol. 5, *Tanulmányok a magyaror-szági Református Egyház Történelméből 1867-1978* (Budapest: A Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztály, 1983), 563-602.

[386] Jos Colijn lists the following services in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary according to the publications of that time. See Jos Colijn: *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 75-78.

new people needed new hearts"[387]. 4) *The prophetic service* should also be fulfilled according to Jeremiah 1,10: "today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." Péter's interpretation of Jeremiah meant that the Reformed Church of Hungary arrived at an historical turning point where the church had to give a hand (to the Communist Regime) to destroy and to build.[388] Colijn also calls attention to Bereczky's view on the church which doubtfully states that the church cannot fulfil it prophetic task, since the church is not really a church.[389] 5) The above mentioned lack of the prophetic service of the church suggested another theme to the new theologians: the *service of intercession or substitution*. Since after the "Agreement" (1948) a number of pastors did not agree with the truth of the new social order, it was said that this service was most needed on behalf of the church leaders. However, it is now clear that the substitutionary death of Christ was reduced to a political interpretation. 6) The next category was the *service of the whole nation*. Colijn simply cites Bereczky to describe what it meant: "For the Marxist we (the church) have to become Marxist!"[390] Bereczky earlier explained more gently the same thing: "We confess the faithfulness of our church to the wellbeing of our nation. The joy of our nation is our joy, all the burdens of our nation are our burdens. We are willing to offer any service and sacrifice for the nation's sake."[391] 7) Under the *service (diaconia) of society and politics* we find a hermeneutics which christologises the political position of the leadership of the church. The rich theological meaning of *diaconia* and all the related theological notions, such as: the diaconia of the Triune God, Jesus Christ's kingship, and also serving lordship, the saving work of the Shepherd, were all reduced according to the requirements of the socialist context. That resulted in a view where Christ as Kyrios in the original sense could not be pictured in absolute authority but Christ's obedience could be emphasized where the word 'Christ' could be changed for the word Church, whereby the purpose was obedient suffering. In this way the church gives testimony to God's cosmic love.[392] Practically, that meant that the church ultimately gave up its existence. In the words of Békefi, this was explained as follows:[393]

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[387] Albert Bereczky, "Eligazodásunk," *Keskeny út* (Budapest: Református egyetemes Konvent Sajtóosztálya, 1953), 414. See also in a similar tone; János Péter, *A magyar református egyház útja*, Második püspöki jelentés (Budapest, 1952).

[388] János Péter, *A magyar református egyház útja*, Második püspöki jelentés (Budapest, 1952), 9-11.

[389] Bereczky, *Die ungarische Christenheit im neuen ungarischen Staat* (Zürich, 1948).

[390] Bereczky, *Die ungarische Christenheit im neuen ungarischen Staat* (Zürich, 1948), 22.

[391] Albert Bereczky, "Nyilatkozat az egyházi alkalmazottak esküétételére," *Református Egyház* no. 21 (1949), 17.

[392] Benő Békefi, "Diakóniai feladatunk egyházunk új helyzetében," *Református Egyház* no. 16 (1951), 18-20. and Benő Békefi, "Diakóniánk, mint Jézus Krisztus diakóniájának része," *Református Egyház* no. 18 (1951), 4.

[393] For the first evaluative use of the Bekefi's citation, see Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia a magyarországi református egyházban 1948-1989 között,* 100.

> If the church understands that she is in the world to carry out Christ's diaconia, she will die of that, because she will not be needed anymore. For the church does not exist to assure her own existence to eternity but that by sacrificing herself, by sharing in Christ's suffering a new creation will come, in which there will be no temple, but where God dwells in the universality of the people: in the city without temple. (...) let us learn that such a world is made by his salvation where finally the Son himself will be submitted to the One who had cast all things under his feet and where God will be all in all.[394]

If we take into consideration the purpose of the Marxist-Leninist ideology with religion[395] we can fully agree with the analysis of Szabó, when he says that Bekefi's train of thought was in harmony with that purpose. Namely, that the church with its obedient suffering takes part in the liquidation of the church. Since the Kingdom of God is realized in the new socialist order, the church must die in its suffering (like Christ died) in order to reach the land of plenty, namely, socialism. The *ecclesia crucis* was left without the *ecclesia triumphans,* since Békefi did not find it important to point to the *resurrection* as the central meaning of the existence of the church, with Christ present through the Holy Spirit.[396]

4.6.3 *"Grace that Works within also from Outside"[397] – The Role of Common Grace[398]*

The subtitle itself refers to János Victor's articles from the time of the *theology of the servant church.* Victor's articles became an often used and abused reference for the proponents of the *theology of the servant church.* Our intention is to introduce the theological elements of Victor's view, rather than to

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[394] Benő Békefi, "Diakóniai feladatunk egyházunk új helyzetében," *Református Egyház* no. 16 (1951), 18-20.

[395] See above in the subtitle: Marxism – Leninism: A System against the Eternal One, which Thought Itself Everlasting.

[396] Bogardi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia ött,* 100-101.

[397] One of the most famous articles of János Victor, 'Grace that Works Within also from Outside', in *Református Egyház* no. 4 (1952),1-3. The article become an object of debate (after 1989) on the question how much it could serve the theoretical theological basis of the *Theology of the Servant Church.* Jos Colijn seems to suggest as one of the possible misunderstandings. (See in Jos Colijn, *Wer mag wider uns sein?,* 66. Leaving out the word *also* already changes the intention of the article, as in Tibor Bartha's article (*A Magyarországi Református Egyház Diakóniája*) The same mistake appears just as well in the English translation of Bartha's article by János Pásztor (see in 'The Theology of the Servant Church and the Theology of Diaconia in the Protestant Churches and Their Consequences in Hungary During the Time of Socialism', *Religion in Eastern Europe* (1995, no. 6: 26).

[398] Here we refer to another article by Victor: "Általános Kegyelem," *Református Egyház* (1954, no 12-14).

evaluate any position in the debate concerning Victor's direct or indirect role, as a founder of *theology of the servant church*.[399]

The background of the article was a conference in Prague, where Bereczky received an *honorary doctorate* from the faculty in 1952. The participants of that event from international and inter-church circles did not show a sign of the former tensions and conflicts that had occurred between the churches. (These tensions were obviously the consequences of the Trianon Peace Treaty and it's afterlife between the two World Wars and after World War II.) Victor came to the conclusion according to his experiences of the meeting that the reconciliation was imposed upon the Christian Churches becasue it was carried out by the secular, political and ideological factors as a mutual appeasement. The new order of socialism made that happen and the struggle for peace between the churches was successful. The theological realization following from that experience, was: 1) the church should not overestimate its ministry when it states that through its work the Word of God captures the human heart in such a way that all our outer attitudes necessarily turn in the right direction. Victor calls attention to the conviction that sanctification can arise only from rebirth, which is that half of the truth which can be misused in a way that "we overestimate the significance of our ministry in a sense that we forget about other means and methods of God which He can use to transform the attitudes of people towards one another, and towards the direction of His will."[400] This is the heart of the article, from a rhetorical point of view. Szabó points out that in the above mentioned statement by Victor, his main question is: while we emphasize the renewing and morality-forming significance of the Word, we cannot exclude influences coming from outside.[401] Victor answers the dilemma:

> The person who does not recognize, with grateful and humble heart, the fact that God works in the lives of humans outside His Word as well, and that numberless morally good acts can proceed from that, such a person has not understood the majestic testimony of the Word about God's 'universal grace'. Among the factors that God's 'universal grace' uses to transform the moral lives of men, we can find, in distinguished position, the political, legal social economic orders that humans live in. And this order does not only form one's outward deeds, but one's thinking, emotions and spirituality as well. Yes, there is something indeed that forms humans from outside.[402]

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[399] Szabó makes a comprehensive evaluation of Victor's views in light of the Victor's theological life-work – although Victor had not fully explained what he meant on this issue. Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia*, 70-85. We can agree with one of Szabó's conclusions that as Victor's article was often referred to as an approval of the theological basis for the *theology of the servant church*, and Victor never abandoned his theological view, which finally seemed to lead to the theology of the servant church. Indeed, he often used the propagandistic rhetoric of the collaborating church-leaders.

[400] János Victor, "Kívülről befelé is munkálkodó kegyelem," (Grace that Works Within also from Outside), *Református Egyház* no. 4 (1952), 1-3.

[401] Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia,*76.

[402] Victor, "Grace that Works Within also from Outside," 2.

In the following part of the article Victor contrasts capitalism with socialism in favour of socialism. Victor's intention was to clarify the relationship of the world and church. He found his clarification in the theme of *Grace that Works Within also from Outside*, and these effects have to be revealed in the church's public use of ministry. He recommends following the example set by the apostles:

> (the apostles) who did not consider what exclusive or not exclusive, what long lasting or limited significance their ministry would bear in the moral lives of their fellow men. (...) The basis of their ministry was not their rational consideration, but the decision of their faith. (...)This ministry that we are entrusted with, if we do not fall into the mistake of overestimating its significance, will be in harmony with the work of God which he does through other means of His in the lives of the people.[403]

Szabó calls attention to Victor's purpose in light of his earlier writings,[404] that the Christian church has to recognise in the midst of great historical changes that God's general grace in the world and outside the church is not only present, but social changes are to be seen as God's plan, thus justifying the new social order by this.[405]

Victor in the series of studies on common grace, himself gives warning of the danger of formally applying 'grace that works within also from outside' or 'common grace' to justify social changes. First he outlines the Calvinist *locus classicus*[406] that human nature is corrupt, but God's grace sets a limit to the power of sin. Then sin influences all life, but it does not destroy everything. Humanity cannot do anything good by itself, yet Reformed confessions[407]speak about the good deeds of humans, which are imperfect and burdened with sin. If some things in life are still more or less void of corruption it is due to God's grace. *Special grace* includes only the elect, whereas *common grace* includes all people. According to Szabó's evaluation, Victor acknowleged that the formal application of *common grace* or the theme of *Grace that Works Within also from Outside,* when used for the justification of social changes, could lead to the German Christians' position in the time of Hitler. Therefore Victor argues that both manifestations of grace are attached to Christ.[408] From his article it is obvious that *special grace* in the church and *common grace* outside the church

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[403] Victor, "Grace that Works Within also from Outside," 3.
[404] Victor, "Az örök Ige mai hirdetése," *Református Egyház* no. 3 (1952), 1-2.
[405] Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia,* 78.
[406] See John Calvin, *Institute* 2. 1. 2.
[407] Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 62.
[408] Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia*, 82.

need to be harmonized.[409] Victor's article can be questioned on many points, but it is also true that he was cautious and careful with the formulations of *common grace*. Victor stopped at a certain point, whereas other church leaders like Tibor Bartha[410] twisted and overdeveloped his thoughts into propaganda.

4.6.4 The 'Reformed Confessors' of 1956 – Attempts for renewal

The year of 1953 opened the way for changes in the Hungarian society and also in the church. The famous year of 1953 is connected to the death of Joseph Stalin. Things changed under the leadership of his successor, Khruschev. The denunciation and exposition of Stalin's dictatorship led to changes of internal and external affairs, and these effects were experienced in Hungary as well. Changes were taking place in the upper leadership of the Hungarian People's Republic. Imre Nagy[411] replaced Mátyás Rákosi as prime minister in the summer of 1953, although Rakosi remained General Secretary of the Party and was able to undermine most of Nagy's reforms. The changes were due to open the way for reforms in most communist countries as a consequence of a moderate liberalization. Nagy's purpose was to develop socialism according to his reforms in light of the existing laws. He dissolved the internment camps, re-examined the 'show trials', and put an end to the collectivization. Even with the welcoming of the reforms by the majority Nagy was not able to achieve essential changes for two reasons. First, the inner opposition of the Party and the circle of Rákosi could undermine Nagy's attempt with the help of the State Security Office (ÁVH). The international changes put Nagy seemingly in a position of right-wing opportunism, and he was deprived of all his offices in April 1955. The international changes were due to the fact that Austria became a demilitarized and neutral country, which had raised Nagy's hope to see the future of Hungary as the same. Austria's neutrality had changed the cold war military planning. Hungary's strategic importance increased, with the result that Hungary signed the Warsaw Pact on May 14, 1955 by means of the new prime minister, András Hegedűs. In the rapid changes of the situation Nagy managed to

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[409] Victor emphasised Kuyper's understanding of *common grace* where the work of grace is modelled by circles centered around Christ. The last circle is the *common grace* which contains the church as well. At this point, Victor turns Kuypers theory up-side down, saying that: "...common grace is the prerequisite of special grace... therefore special grace would not be understandable without common grace." (See J.Victor, "Az általános kegyelemről," *Református Egyház,*1954, no.12 and 13) However, Kuyper clearly distinguished *special grace, common grace* and *mutual grace*. And in his theory of the state, a *free church in a free* state is connected to the sovereignty of *mutual grace*. (A Kuyper, *A kálvinizmus lényge*, Budapest, 1922.) See Bogardi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia*, 80., espc. footnote 243.

[410] János Victor pointed out that the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ secures for humanity that all embracing grace of God which renders possible the conduct, development and ascent of human life. Thus serving general human life in love is just as much a service under the sovereingty of Jesus Christ as our ministration within the church." Hungarian Church Press, 1955. XII. 15. See in Colijn: *Wer mag wider uns sein?*, 80.

[411] Imre Nagy (June 7, 1896 – June 16, 1958) was a Hungarian politician, appointed Prime Minister of Hungary on two occasions. Nagy's second term ended when his non-Soviet-backed government was brought down by Soviet invasion in the failed Hungarian Uprising of 1956, resulting in Nagy's execution on charges of treason two years later.

hold together a circle of reform–communists, which was one source of the tension leading to the revolution of 1956. The increasing international tension, the uprising of Polish workers in Poznan (Poland), had caused Moscow to change its policy. Party chief Mátyás Rákosi was replaced by Ernő Gerő, and János Kádár received the second place in the Party. With the loss of the credibility of the former leadership, Imre Nagy again became a member of the party. These events inevitably lead to the 1956 uprising.[412]

At the time of the revolution of 1956, a silent and growing resistance in the church became most visible by the 'Reformed Confessors' in the form of a declaration against the policies of its leaders. The declaration was entitled: "A Statement of Faith, 1956."[413] It was written in similar intention and style as the Declaration of Barmen in 1934. Since the WCC's Executive Committee had a meeting in Galyatető (Hungary) in the summer of 1956, copies of the Hungarian declaration were handed over to the representatives of the meeting. The *Statement of Faith* denied the highly praised superiority of the Marxist–Communist ideology and denounced any theology which would support it. The declaration stated as follows:

> *'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever'(Heb. 13: 8)*
> *1. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath (John 3: 36)*
> (...) We reject as false teaching the tenets that Redemption works through profane history by introducing permanent developments in a positive direction. This type of soteriological sanctioning of Historical Materialism and its false optimism contradicts the Bible and denies the truth of the Gospel. The historical philosophy of Historical Materialism in this theological disguise is anti-biblical. Our official Church government affirmed this false Materialism in Christian doctrines (...) 3. (motto: Rom. 13: 1 and Acts. 5: 29) We believe that our present political authority is appointed by God and we have to be obedient towards it in due respect, and also remember it in our prayers, in all matters that do not contradict God's law.(...) We confess that our former social order has been condemned by God's righteous judgement. But we also confess, in the light of the Gospel, that the present State and social order bear the marks of sin as well. Just as any other State or social order, the order we live in has numerous features which can not be approved by the church.[414]

The above citied part of the declaration as a protest against the dictatorial behaviour of the clique of church leaders, had the effect of a bombshell. The attempt to return to the Reformed Presbyterian principles in church government

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[412] Romsics, *Magyarország történet*, chapter V. and VI.

[413] The full text of the declaration is available in English: Géza Németh, "Persecution, Resistance, Betrayal: the Liberation Theology in the Reformed Church," Joseph Pungur (edt.), *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, 111-114.

[414] Géza Németh, "Persecution, Resistance, Betrayal: the Liberation Theology in the Reformed Church," *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, 111-114.

affirmed the task of the church. The reception of the Hungarian *status confessiones* by the General Secretary of the WCC, Vissert't Hooft was not surprising, since they were informed about the events of the revolution of 1956. The Hungarian representative at the meeting, János Péter the leading bishop, simply saw the declaration as a sign of disobedience, the acceptance of which by the Reformed Church of Hungary was not possible for anyone. As a matter of fact the declaration was signed and in this way won support by 160 pastors as a voice of criticism. Now it is generally accepted that the declaration had a great part in preparing the Revolution, as it appears in Gombos' memorable words: " The tradition of Hungarian Calvinism was an organic element in the spirit of the Revolution, because one root of Hungary's ideals of liberty goes straight back to the political struggles of the seventeenth century..."[415]

In the crisis and Revolution of 1956, the Reformed Church of Hungary was left without any effective leadership, while bishop Bereczky the president of the General Synod, was incapacitated by an illness. The other two bishops were passive as well for different reasons. On the famous date of the Revolution, October 23, 1956, only one person, László Pap was acting in the name of the Reformed Church of Hungary; he was a professor and deputy bishop and was not one of the ruling clique. He was highly regarded by laity and ministers of the church.[416]

On the day of the Revolution the 'Reformed Confessors' in the Reformed Church of Hungary formed a "National Committee of the Reformed Church" as a support for the revolution. One of the aims of the committee was to provide sufficient leadership in a time when the official hierarchy had either resigned or been dismissed. They had to attempt also to prepare a general election in the church. The committee called back Bishop László Ravasz to active service, who became the leader of the church and the Renewal Movement along with Pap. In their broadcast on October 30, they asked people to show soberness, calmness and maturity. The Action Committee was working well after the second Soviet military intervention which began on November 4th, which suppressed the revolution and the fight for freedom. The committee sent a circular to the church sessions to find out if they would support the Renewal Movement. Two-thirds expressed unflinching support, while they assured that the sessions would respect the 1948 Agreement.[417]

After the reestablishment of the Communist dictatorship of János Kádár the new prime minister severely punished those who had taken part in the revolution. There was a fierce wave of assertions, imprisonment, torture and executions from which the church was not spared. Pastors and the laity of the Reformed Church were arrested as well, some were deported, some were hanged.

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[415] Gyula Gombos, *Szűk esztendők, A Magyar kálvinizmus válsága (1959), A történelem balján* (Budapest: Püski, 1992), see also the edition in English: Gyula Gombos, *The Lean Years, A study of Hungarian Calvinism in Crisis* (New York: The Kossuth Foundation, Inc., , 1960), 93.

[416] Ladányi, *Adalékok a magyarországi Református Egyházban az 1956 – 1957-es esztendőben töténtekhez,* 47-51.

[417] Ladányi, *Adalékok a magyarországi Református Egyházban az 1956 – 1957-es esztendőben töténtekhez,* 65-77.

After the initial revenge and terror, the Kádár regime consolidated its grip on the country and restarted by the old methods[418] the so called 'normalization' of state and church relationship. One of the most difficulties for the church was that the espionage agent system reached its 'golden age' after the Revolution of 1956. That was true not only in the secular circles but in the church as well, since the church was the most frequented area where the so called reactionaries (from the state's point of view) could become active. Many pastors were members of the spy net, willingly or unwillingly.[419]

The immediate changes after the Revolution for the Reformed Church meant the arrival of new leadership. Tibor Bartha became the president Bishop of the General Synod and the life of the Church bore the stamp of his leadership for a decade, from 1958 to 1968.

4.6.4 "A Peculiar Hungarian Theology"

The first ten years of the Bartha era was determinative for developing and applying the themes of *the Theology of the Servant Church,* which were often stretched into extremes. In this way a genuine "Hungarian Theology" – as Bartha called it - was forming in the furnace of the new theologians. This continuance of the *Theology of the Servant Church* always was in the status of development and ignored the *consensus ecclesiae* and *coniuratio testium.* Here we have to notice that the Renewal Movement of the Reformed Church of Hungary had managed to shake the progression of the *theology of the servant church* by their critiques and refusal to accept it. However, by their method of oppressions already mentioned, the old and new set of church leaders managed to silence the critical voices.[420]

A new theological theme was crystallizing, called *"Evangelical Calvinism,"* by the time of the early eighties. Under the new theme they argued that the previous thirty years of the Reformed Church of Hungary had not resulted in the decline of Reformed identity, but in the rise and consistent carrying out of the original Reformed intention.[421] The Calvinist heritage and pietism of the Reformed Church of Hungary was seen in Bartha's view as a social–ethical concept. One of the most important elements in that concept was the recognition of responsibility as humanity's active behaviour, for which the major source is rooted in our election by God. Therefore : " (...) the Gospel makes God's people stand on the side of social justice. Further more she [the church] was the first in her attempt to reflect on the facts of social progress from a theological point of

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[418]For example the Presidential Council ordered summary jurisdiction. Death penalty was given not only for murder, but also for possession of arms, robbery, looting, going on strike or even instigating strike and later for almost every kind of expression of criticism. A new organ, the Hungarian Revolutionary Defence Armed Force, was established mainly by former ÁVH officers and unemployed party functionaries who numbered about twelve thousand members.

[419] The recruit was to be an espionage agent, in basically the same way as we described early. Gábor Kiszely¸ *Állambiztonság 1956-1990* (Korona Kiadó, 2001), 97-141.

[420] Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia,* 108-109.

[421] Bartha, "Evangéliumi Kálvinizmus," *Református egyház* no. 5 (1982), 98.

view, and to build the relation of the church to a new social world system, that is socialism."[422] The new watch word was: "Go ahead like Calvin!"[423]

4.7 Remarks concerning the Religious and Theological Life of the Church at the Periphery During the Years of Communism[424]

4.7.1 General Remarks

We have already made a number of remarks in relation to this theme in the description of the Reformed Church of Hungary in this chapter. The church at the periphery was the church marginalised by the ideological-political system of that time. We do not aim to give a detailed historical-theological description of the subject. Our aim is rather to give a short comprehensive reference (since the subject would deserve a study of its own) about the *living* theological and religious life of the Reformed Church of Hungary in opposition to its *official* theological work. This latter was maintained by the mostly uncritical, ideological practice by the theology of the 'servant church' leadership and its circles during the time of Communism. The majority of the Reformed Church of Hungary was squeezed into a ghetto situation during this time. As we could see from the introduction to this chapter, the official theology was mostly the theology of the church leadership, and the effects had a very ambivalent nature. On the one hand, the meaning of theology went through a radical transformation whereby the major focus was directed by church political aims. On the other hand, it became obvious that such a quasi theology is not able to serve the God-given aims of the church. The theology of the servant church was a *display-window* theology and its effect was limited on the followers of Christ. Pásztor's remark needs to be taken seriously, when he draws attention to the fact that one cannot get a clear picture about the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary during the decades of Communism only from the officially published source of the church-leadership of that time. One also needs to study the everyday life of the church, mostly depending on the *oral history* from the witnesses of those times, the sermons, memoirs and letters. When one does not recognize the importance of these less official sources, other aspects of the self-recognition of the Reformed Church of Hungary will always be missed.[425]

4.7.2 Before 1975

A formal, official church decision was made by the declaration of the 'Fraternal Message' (Testvéri Izenet, 1950), that the life and influence of the church vol-

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[422] Bartha, "Evangéliumi Kálvinizmus," 98. We also have to mention that on the same track Bishop Elemér Kocsis was a maintainer of Bartha's thought. Kocsis developed the social–ethical perspectives of *the theology of the servant church* more universally.

[423] The formulation is originally from G.W. Locher. See in Colijn, "*Wer mag wider uns sein*"?, 92.

[424] The Hungarian theological work has not notably dealt with this question so far, therefore we face a lack of historical research. Also the shortage of the documents, which is obvious from the nature of their context, makes any research on the theme difficult. Hopefully the informal sources will also be more and more published.

[425] János Pásztor, *Misszió a XXI. században* (Velence: Somhegyi Kiadó, 2000), 19.

untary associations should be ended, and by means of the Missionary Regulation (Missziói Szabályrendelet, 1952) the leftover outreach (evangelistic and diaconal, etc.) activities of the church were also liquidated. Any church activities besides the regular worships services could only be practiced secretly in small circles. In other words, the church could not reach beyond its own walls, and even within the walls there were 'informers'. It was also clear that to rise on the ladder of success was only possible by means of increasing one's loyalty to the church-leadership at any time during Communism. The exposed and subordinate position of the Reformed Church of Hungary resulted in different levels in the church to be able to maintain its everyday life. Appeasing became a concomitant feature in a number of cases with various intensity, in order to "survive." The different levels were well distinguished: 1) there were small groups of pastors who held a critical position in opposition to the church leadership's view; 2) others did not make any public standpoint concerning the delicate questions; 3) part of the pastors held the same view as the church-leadership, namely that the Reformed Church of Hungary was obliged to maintain the well-being of socialist system in Hungary; therefore the service by the church to Communism and the justification and affirmation of its decisions and acts were necessary because the situation was at first seen as a *judgement* and later even more emphatically as *grace* given by God. In this short section we aim to give some remarks about the church life which was led by the attitude of the first two groups just mentioned (while the rest of the chapter is about the third group's servant church theology).

Basically in the smaller parishes the Reformed congregations had a relative autonomy (*ghettoised church*) to practice their religious belief in their local settings, if they did not show notable resistance to some basic rules which guaranteed that the desired image of loyalty to the Communist ideology was not harmed. Numerous directives were given by the church-leadership to the pastors, elders and the congregations about the actual political, social, economic and ideological questions and also the official standpoints of the church in these matters. The enforcements of these directives were necessary in the so called *representative sermons*, elders meetings and their minutes or conferences.[426] The refusal of the application of these guidelines led to legal proceedings by the higher church and state authorities. For example, it could easily happen in a number of cases that the representative sermons were written and handed in to the authorities, but were never preached from a pulpit. Or, for example, the records of the elders meetings only formally fulfilled the requirements and directives of the church-leadership, but in reality the situation was different. In a number of congregations this led to a double life, according to the restricted possibilities which could be somewhat different in the local contexts. A number of collections of ser-

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[426] Emília Szatmáry, in her Master's paper introduces the nature and results of these directives by the church leadership, as viewed through the papers, representative sermons, and elders meetings' minutes, as written by the pastors and other church members of the Reformed Church County of Borsod, from 1956 to 1970. Emilia Szatmáry, A Borsodi Református Egyházmegye gyülekezeteinek helyzete az igehírdetések és gyülekezettörténeti vázlatok tükrében a szocializmus első két évtizedében – avagy a túlélés technikája (Research Paper for the Master of Theology Degree, Sárospatak, 2005).

mons[427] give testimony to this situation during the times of Communism (obviously only published after 1989) which well demonstrates that the pastors did not entirely follow the church leadership's orders in the everyday church life, and they even made a notable effort to find answers for the challenges solely from the Scriptures. The oral tradition[428] also gives evidence that a number of small pastor-circles were formed (illegally) to reflect on the different areas of theology which could enrich the pastoral work in the congregation. The theological work in these groups greatly differed from the officially organised meetings and conferences, both in the themes and answers, and any publicity for these small study group meetings was impossible.

4.7.3 After 1975

After the Helsinki Accords[429] (1975) the situation of the countries of the Warsaw Pact (Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance) started to ease, which resulted in more activities in the inner life of the church. Basically we can differentiate two levels where notable changes were experienced: a sociological and a political. From an analysis of the different time periods of the Reformed Church of Hungary during Communism, the period 1968-1985 is called the time of *instrumentalisation* (when the state used the church) and the period of 1985-1989 is called the time of *disintegration* (when state control of the church was eased). One also has to face the fact that the forced collectivisation, as well as the process of urbanization and industrialisation, created a very critical situation in the Hungarian society whereby the problems of families breaking up, alcoholism, an increasing number of suicides, corruption of the work ethic, and an increase of crimes among the youth were all taking place. The context of the

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[427] László Ravasz, *Krisztussal a viharban* (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1997). Kálmán Cseri (ed.), *Adventől Adventig* (Budapest: Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztály, 1989). This collection of sermons consists of 73 sermons by 48 pastors from the decades of Communism. See also, Szabó Imre, *A bűnösök barátja* (Kiskunfélegyháza: Parakletos Könyvesház - Egyesült Protestáns Egyház, 1998). Cseri Kálmán, *Ábrahám öröksége* (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1993). Sándor Joó, *Jézus* Követésében (Budapest, 1996), Sándor Joó, *Megragadott a Krisztus* (Budapest, 1997). Sándor Joó, *Ne félj cask higyj* (Budapest, 1998). Gábor Zergi, *Az élők csomójába kötve* (Sárosptak, 1999). István Juhász, *Jézus Krisztus a gyülekezetben* (Baratos, 2002), János Victor, *Csendes percek I, II* (Kolozsvár: Koinónia Kiadó, 2007).

[428] Nemes Csaba – Tamási Judit (eds.), *Tűz-láng-pár, Németh Géza és Némethné Kríza Judit emlékezete* (Budapest: Dunamelléki Református Egyházkerület, 2008), 135-245. In this publication one can find a number of interviews about the church life during Communism. Also see Marianna Misák, *Egyházpolitika a Szocializmusban, amiről szólnak a könyvek és, amiről nem* (Master Degree Research Paper, Sárospatak, 2007), 31-91.

[429] Here we refer to the first revision (1975) of the original adoption of the Declaration of Helsinki (1964), especially to the final Act, the 'Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States', which enumerated the following 10 points: 1) Sovereign equality, 2) Refraining from the threat or use of force, 3) Inviolability of frontiers; 4) Territorial integrity of States; 5) Peaceful settlement of disputes; 6) Non-intervention in internal affairs ; 7) Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; 8) Equal rights and self-determination of people; 9) Co-operation among States; 10) Fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law. János Székely (chief ed.), "Helsinki Záróokmány," *Britannica Hungarica* (vol.8), (Budapest: Magyar Világ Kiadó, 1997, fiftheenth edition), 528.

church already showed the sign of serious problems in society. [430] The church recognised its duty which needed to be actualised in its social mission. The changes resulted in an increase in the local mission activities among the youth from the beginning of the nineteen-eighties, just as well as mission and diaconal outreach among the addicts, disabled people (blind, deaf and dumb), among the gypsies, among the physically handicapped, and the church also organised telephone counselling. The discrimination against the active church members was also lessened during these years.

In the times of *disintegration* (1985-1989) the centralized control started to loosen in the area of economics, as well as in the social and political spheres. Many signs of the desired democratic changes were taking place. From the beginning of the nineteen eighties onward, democratic opposition parties were formed. The strict church politics was eased according to the changed circumstances. For example, the ÁEH new well that in order to keep the loyalty of the church leaders they needed to be more tolerant. A further weakening of the position of the church was not necessary anymore in order to continue the existence of the ÁEH.

The loosened control of the state over the church was experienced in number of ways. For example, the official church journal (titled: *Református Egyház*) in its exegetical studies and sermon outlines no longer showed any (party) political tone in their application of the interpretation of the Scriptures. Other scholarly journals (*Confessio* and *Theológiai Szemle*) started to publish occasionally the papers of the ignored theologians,[431] who had supported a critical tone in opposition to the leaders of the church. Major theological themes, for example the ordination of women, could publicly and freely be discussed.[432] Some of the *pastor-circle*s could become more and more active and could raise their critical voice in a number of questions. The so called *Andor Enyedy Pastor Circle* (Enyedy Andor lelkész-kör)[433] from the second half of the nineteen eighties could make a number of appeals to the church-leadership in various aspects of church public life about

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[430] Sándor Ladányi, "Ravasz László," *Református Egyház* no. 5 (1990), 101-103.

[431] For example, Ervin Vályi Nagy, "Isten dicsősége és az egyház küldetése," *Theológiai Szemle* (1978/ 11-12) 335-339 or "Eligenedés és Közösség," *Theológiai Szemle,* (1980), 205-209. In 1984 an accurate book could even be published about the twentieth century Western theological movements. Ervin Vályi Nagy, *Nyugati teológiai irányzatok századunkban* (Budapest: Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztály, 1984).

[432] László Kürti, "A Biblia a nők lelkészi szolgálatáról," *Confessio* 4, (1980), 3-12.; Klára Lenkeyné Semse, "A nők ordinációja mellett," *Reformátusok Lapja* XXV (1981), Antal Mihály Nagy, "A nők társadalmi helyzete, általában és kiemelkedő szerepe az Ószövetségben," *Theológiai Szemle* (1982), 13-19.; Tivadar Rózsai "Felszenteljünk-e nőket?," *Reformátusok Lapja* XXV (1981), 5; Kálmán Tóth. "Nők a Teológiai Akadémián és a lelkészi szolgálatban," *Református Egyház* (1981), 188-189.

[433] The *Andor Enyedy Pastor Circle* originated in the Reformed Church district of South Borsod (Borsod is a county of North-East Hungary). By 1989 this circle had named itself after Bishop Andor Enyedy. After awhile part of that group desired to meet more regularly and then became known as the *Bábai Circle*. This circle got its name from one of the places in Borsod county called Hejőbába, where Rev. István Török (not to be confused with Professor István Török the dogmatitian) was the local pastor and became the organizer and maintainer of the meetings. Misák, *Egyházpolitika a Szocializmusban,* 91-108, 95.

the status of the pastors who studied theology part-time. The circle also raised criticism about the proposed law concerning abortion and about the laws concerning religion[434] (1989). They also had a sharp critique about the pressure of the state on the election of office bearers in the church (1988-89).[435]

With this introduction of the other side of the Reformed Church of Hungary during the time of Communism, a time when the leading characteristic of church life was its survival attitude, we aimed to demonstrate the living theological side of the Reformed Church of Hungary. It will be the task of the coming chapters to reveal how the number of initiatives from the church's marginalized status could become determinative and have a positive influence on the whole of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the changes of 1990.

4.8 Concluding Remarks: the Reformed Church of Hungary (1945-90) and the Donatist Factors

Our remarks at this point will help prepare an understanding of the Donatist Factors relevance to the present ecclesiological situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary. We shall touch on three major areas according to the focus of the Donatist Factors: 1) the identity crisis of the Reformed Church; 2) lost Christology for ecclesiology; 3) the sociological aspect in relation to the Reformed Church of Hungary.

1) The identity crisis of the Reformed Church of Hungary, besides all the positive signs between the two World Wars, did not come to an end. One set of causes we already discussed were the different theological trends, as they appeared in different movements and associations in the Reformed Church of Hungary. Most of them were contradictory by nature, although they all represented their program in order to solve the identity crisis. Some of them tried by evangelisation, others by awakening, and some called attention by means of direct political programs, while others by the propagation of evangelical Calvinism. On the one hand, the folk-church setting or Cultural Protestantism was far too big a challenge for them. On the other hand, the reality of the church, as a consequence of secularisation, showed the marks of disappointment, unconcern, and apathy, and all good intended efforts in the church were paralyzed. This was not only true for the common believers but also for the pastors of the church.

The existential need and the low values in the Reformed Church of Hungary provided a fertile ground for the Communist Regime's church politics in which the collaborators of the church were ready to maintain all the purposes of the Communist ideology almost without any critiques. The ambivalent nature of this kind of church politics was obvious. On the one hand, the aim was to liquidate religion and the church. On the other hand, the church became a means of the socialist propaganda, which was known by the creators of the "official the-

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[434] István Török's letter to the President of the Hungarian Parliament (March 7, 1989) was also published in the journal called: *Confessio* no.2 (1989), 123-124.
[435] Misák, *Egyházpolitika a Szocializmusban*, 91-108.

ology" of the Reformed Church of Hungary and its leaders. The question about the church leaders' choices cannot be seen as "discretion and valour"[436] – as Trevor Benson suggested, but rather "weakness and cowardice" - as Szabó has pointed out.[437] Cowardice was conjoined with lies and falsified theological work, which represented an identity crisis of the Reformed Church of Hungary on a wide scale. The church leaders' attitude was shaped by the atheism of the Communists. The responsible church leaders did not question the existence of God but they lived in the church and led the church according to aims of an atheistic ideology, where God was not seen as the Kyrios. We also have to remember that there was the other theological attitude of the 'Reformed Confessors', which was critical of the official theology of the time, although it could not have publicity because of the given circumstances but its exsistence is unquestionable after 1956. It will be an important task to show whether this movement will be able to play a determinative role after the changes of 1989.

2) The identity of the church has to be seen as transcendent, which is rooted in Christ *extra nos*. Any national-confessional identities such as Hungarian-Reformed, etc. would be lost without that basis. Jesus Christ's attributes, his being truly divine and truly human (*inconfuse* and *indivise* - Chalcedon, 451), clearly requires that. The essence of the Church can only be pictured in this 'duality'. Ecclesiology's interrelation to Christology is obvious by the notion of *sóma Christou*. Christ is the head of his church (the *soma)* –and the reality of this connection means that the body (church) cannot have another head, political or otherwise. The believers' identity with Christ will be pictured in their service of Christ. That obedience is primary in the following of Christ, which also determinates the believer's life in the world by the preaching of the Gospel with his/her whole life. That is the only service that the church can do for the world in opposition to the teaching of the 'theology of the servant church's' concept of service. Therefore the church has a pneumatical reality and an institutional reality. The church's essence is also realized as an eschatological 'event' and exsitential character in time and space. These attributes have to be seen together. False Christology provides false ecclesiology, as is detectable in the teachings of the 'theology of the servant church' in Békefi's interpretation.[438]

Christology was lost (in the full sense of theology /ecclesiology/) according to the 'official theology' of Reformed Church of Hungary. In this way an existential crisis of the Reformed Church was unavoidable, and the influence of this on the time after the collapse of Communism is significant. The ground for the relevance of the Donatist Factors was prepared by means of the negative course of events in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

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[436] Benson, *Discretion and Valour, Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe,* 256-288.

[437] Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és,* 30.; n65.

[438] Ervin Vályi Nagy, "Ekkléziológiai kérdések a mai teológiában," *Theológiai Szemle* no. 5-6 (1981), 142-148.

3) The secularization of church life and the sociological aspects were unique in the setting of socialism compared to western society. The Reformed Church of Hungary would not have been able to avoid facing secularisation if socialism had not happened in Hungary. The western European churches' experiences are clear evidence of that. Some of our ecclesiological difficulties are also based on the fact that the official theology of the last decades did not allow the facing of secularisation. On the one hand, facing secularization would have harmed the aims of church politics, and would have given an actual opportunity for the attempts by those who were a minority in their theological thinking. On the other hand, the whole program of the 'peculiar Hungarian theology' (worked out by Tibor Bartha and Elemér Kocsis) would have resulted in a different understanding (a socialist one) of the concept of mission as *missio Dei*.

We also have to highlight that the church in the Communist society was exposed to all the negative ethical tendencies whereby this society could be maintained and be under the control of its leader. For example, the mechanism of the net of spies, the carefully planned and worked out Communist propaganda on every level of society, also in relation to the church (ÁEH, ÁVH), was not with out consequences in the peoples' life, mentality and worldview. The taks in the next chapter (5) will be to analyse these consequences. For now we can clearly conclude that the church, which was very much marked by its leadersip, did not fulfil its God-given task in the difficult circumstances of Communism; rather on many occasions it became the collaborator with the Communist state on a practical level, just as well as on a theological level, creating a difficult situation. In the final chapter (6) we will show how Donatist Factors will help us better understand the situation in Hungary.

**OVERVIEW OF THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE
REFORMED CHURCH OF HUNGARY AFTER THE DOWNFALL OF
COMMUNISM**

5.1 Introduction

The introduction to the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary with special reference to the times of Communism was important for the following considerations: it gave a solid basis as a comparison point. The analyses of the present ecclesiological situation in light of the tendencies of the past will show the challenges the Reformed Church of Hungary faced in its recent and earlier history. With the introduction of the past one and a half decade (1989/90 – 2005), we will draw many lines back to the former official and nonofficial theological attempts which tried to define the identity of the Reformed Church of Hungary in relation to God and the world.

Some of the tendencies of the history of theology as preliminary concerns need to be introduced in a wider spectrum in order to find the connection points to the recent Hungarian theological, and ecclesiological situation. Even from a 'bird's eye view', the last few centuries' western theology "has turned from a theology of the Word to a theology of the world," as Kilian McDonnell wrote in the eighties.[439] That statement sums up not only a major part of the current situation in theology but the recent past as well. Certainly McDonnell's recognition does not stand alone in the theological thinking of the twentieth century or earlier.[440] Shortly listing and naming – on an introductory level - some major turns and sifts of paradigms in the theological thinking will allow a wider perspective on the background of the ecclesiological challenges for the Reformed Church of Hungary after the changes of 1989/90.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the church confidently looked forward to the "Christian century." The horror of World War I and all the following revolutions were a real shock for the western civil societies. They also realized the weak points of their communities which lead to the disintegration of their societies. Most of the mistakes of the church and its theology were exposed, which had maintained such societies as now collapsed. The concept of Christianity as a world view or ideology could no longer hold its earlier dominant position.[441]

Culture-Protestantism and liberal theological thinking, whose theology was not about the judging and merciful God but rather in favour of the current

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[439] Killian McDonnell, "The Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Theology Today* 39 (1982/1983), 142-161, 142.

[440] One can think of, beside others, Franz Overbeck, *Christentum und Kultur* (1967) or Dietrich Bonhoeffer's letters from prison in Hitler Germany.

[441] Ervin Valyi Nagy, *Nyugati teológiai irányzatok századunkban* (Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1984), 22.

status quo, were shaken to their foundation. In that theological atmosphere, where not the whole of theology but only its one kind of interpretation was badly bleeding, Barthian theology became a real "ringing a bell"[442] and shock with its emphasis on divine revelation from above and all the consequences this entailed. Dialectical theology's (counter)reaction to liberal theological thinking has made a permanent influence, for example in the role of the Gospel and Revelation and its connection to the world, or, for example, against the idea of the reduction of faith in Christ to an ideology.[443]

However, after World War II, the continent's theology and that of North America were characterised rather by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's liberal theological questions, than by the Barthian theology of the Word. That did not mean that Barth's theology had no effect. The dialectical theological approach reduced the questions of the Enlightenment (which were developed in liberal theological thinking), to silence instead of answering those inquiries. Therefore the questions of the Enlightenment and liberalism could come alive again because they were more realistic and made countless attempts for the religious understanding of reality.[444] However, the self-confident optimism of the Enlightenment was lost, disillusion set in and led to the demolition of traditions which had been the maintainer of core values for the western societies. In the second half of the twentieth century Marxism (Communism), positivism, and modern sociological-religious views (such as by Max Weber) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's writings, all predicted in a variety of ways that religion itself would disappear. Their prophecy never happened but our time broke up in the plurality of all sorts of religions. Among these circumstances which rapidly led to indifference, Nisbet could still detect the appearance of the renewed faith in the Judeo-Christian tradition two decades before the millennium.[445]

Hungary faces a different situation. Hungarian theology was strongly characterised by the Barthian theology and its Hungarian application by the followers of Barth, like István Török or Barna Nagy who were convinced that according to the best concepts of theology we cannot approach God from earth, just as that we can never reach Heaven from Earth. Theology cannot be more than a reflection of God's addresses in his Revelation, where God is always the Originator.

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[442] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes. Prolegomena zur Christlichten Dogmatic*, 1927, where Barth sees his mission and his role as the way up to the dark tower of the church, and on his way instead of the handrails he grips the rope of the bell. The reference to Barth's analogy is in Valyi Nagy, *Nyugati teológiai irányzatok századunkban*, 23 .

[443] Vályi Nagy, *Nyugati teológiai irányzatok századunkban*, 22-39.

[444] Vályi Nagy, *Nyugati teológiai irányzatok századunkban,* 11-29, 17. Along with Vályi Nagy, John Webster makes somewhat a similar conclusion, with reference to the very colourful understanding of Barth's theology and the connection to modernity and postmodernity. John Webster, "Barth, Modernity and Postmodernity", Geoff Thompson and Christian Mostert (eds.), *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, , 2000), 1-28.

[445] Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York, Basic Books, 1980), 317-351.

In the western societies the realization of the mistake of the church and theology happened after World War I, whereas in the wider circles of the Hungarian context it only happened after World War II, as we have seen in Imre Révész's and Albert Bereczky's theological thinking. The main cause of the delay was due to the strange mixture of feudalism and capitalism, which survived World War I, as was discussed earlier in this thesis.[446] Unfortunately, Hungarian (official) theology, over against the above mentioned theological realization of the problems, just acted in a contradictory way by serving the Communist ideology after World War II.

After the period of the first half of the twentieth century, in which theologians were engaged primarily in the questions of their discipline's identity and character, they have in recent years turned to address as a matter of first principle the physical, the social and the political issues in the world about them. Let us name only a few: ecological theology, black theology, political theology, liberation theology, feminist theology, and for example, the 'theology of the servant church' in Hungary. Each theological approach in its own way has been searching for a way to go beyond a 'theology of the Word' and develop a 'theology of the world'. In this situation one sometimes finds a theological deformation, which might become an ideology of group self-preservation. This can happen in the church, and indeed happened, for example, in Hungary during Communism.

One of hottest points arrived when the democratic changes started in 1989 in Hungary. The changes of the early nineties after international Communism had collapsed, also notably challenged Christians in the western societies in many ways.

The most relevant changes obviously happened in the Middle-Eastern European societies. Churches also experienced all sorts of new possibilities among the changes. When analysing the ecclesiological problems of the Reformed Church of Hungary, we cannot avoid the frame of postmodernism, secularism and globalisation, which are vividly present not only in the Hungarian context but in the Western societies as well. These movements take place with their often contradictory elements in society and culture, and in the life of the church.

The aim of summing up this chapter in light of the above mentioned preliminary concerns is, 1) to describe, on an introductory level, the facts of the historical changes of 1989/90 in parallel with the political and socio-cultural aspects of the Hungarian society placed in a wider international context of Western cultures and their societies' experiences, and, 2) to introduce the ecclesiological situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary in these circumstances.

5.2 The Changing of the Political System in 1989/90

Some clarifications about the nature of the changes are necessary in order to see the complexity of the major lines of the shift in 1989/90. The changes of the regime in the Hungarian context cannot be viewed only on the political level,

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[446] Vályi Nagy, *Nyugati teológiai irányzatok századunkban*, 22.

although the introduction of political pluralism (a multiparty system) and free elections were basic steps towards (real) parliamentary democracy. We have to note that the changes of the regime did not fully mean a complete change of the leadership, rather the transformation was in the structure of political authority.

The changes affected the social context of family settings, wider relations on the level of community life, and for example church communities. The time horizon of the changes cannot be limited to one or two years only. The beginning of the changes had happened in the declining Kádár's era. Some alterations were already present, while others began after 1989/90. The Hungarian changing of the system fitted into the shift of world politics as well.

The changes happened in three steps, according to Romsics's periodization in which he follows the major political and sociological changes. 1) The first period is from 1987 to 1988, when the struggle and challenges of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (MSZMP) took place. 2) The second period is from 1988 to 1989 the formation of the Opposition Parties' and National Roundtable. 3) The third period is from 1989 to 1990. This period was completed with the democratic election of the local authorities.[447] Since the study does not aim to go into the details of the different periods, we only highlight the major elements which are necessary for the understanding of the background of the context of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

5.2.1 The Causes of the Changes

Focusing more on the changes on the political level in Hungary, one major characteristic element has to be named, and this is that the changes were mainly determined in 1989 by external possibilities. This point is very important for the understanding of the nature of the changes. There was no revolutionary battle in Hungary in 1989-90. The political changes took place not because the so called ruling class lost its power, and also not because the majority nation did not want to live in the same way as it used to. The collapse of the old communist system could happen basically for two reasons. 1) The USA won the battle of armaments over the Soviet Union. 2) The communist party ran into economic debts which resulted in complete dependence, consequently they had no power anymore to maintain their total political dictatorship.[448]

Beside the economic debt, the Communists also ran into a moral crisis of their own ideology by the end of the 1980's. The seriousness of the communist ideology and practices were questioned even by those who were in power. The new strategy of the leaders of the Communist Party was to emphasize the reform-minded nature of the MSZMP.

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[447] Ignác Romsics and Imre Prohaszka, *Volt egyszer egy rendszerváltás*, (Budapest: Rubicon-Ház BT, 2003); see also Zoltán Ripp, *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon 1987-1990* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2006).

[448] László Tőkéczki, "Az elmúlt tíz év a politika mérlegén," *Théma, Theológiai Élet Ma – Protestáns Tanulmányi Kör* (2000/4).

A group of leading personalities[449] of the reform wing came into the foreground after the fall of Kádár in 1988. The attempts of the reform wings were supported by a new phenomenon: the so-called *reform circles* were founded within the local organizations of the MSZMP, indicating the emergence of a radical reform movement which gained more and more ground as one of the factors of the process leading towards democracy.[450] Among the groups of reformers, the most dominant, which was led by Imre Pozsgay, could also make contact with the emerging and strongest opposition organization, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF). One of the early major achievements of the MDF as a forming opposition party was the publication of the *Social Contract* in 1987. In the *contract* they rejected the communist system by calling the demands of the 1956 Revolution timely. They also pointed out that a new era had started with the dissolution of the "Kádárite consensus." However, the compromise proposal included in the program urged the establishment of a controlled one-party system on a legal basis. It saw this recommendation as the starting point for an evolutionary development towards pluralistic democracy.[451]

A loose democratic opposition organization called the Network of Free Initiatives was founded in early May, 1988. The Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) was founded as a liberal party as well in that same year. Most people of the Network predicted, before the MSZMP meeting in May, 1988 which led to the ousting of János Kádár, that the speedy deterioration of the economic and political situation was bringing possible catastrophies. They expected a *long transition* in accordance with the realities. Beside the MDF and SZDSZ, other opposition organizations also appeared on the stage of the Hungarian political life. One of them was the Young Democrats' Alliance (FIDESZ) which had been founded in March, 1988. They were most well-known because of their anti-government radicalism, while in the early periods of their history they shared some of the same political ideas with the Free Democrats on the liberal constitutional state and a liberal market economy. Their political behaviour was manifested in spectacular political actions, which severely provoked the leaders of the Communist Party.[452]

Furthermore, there were two really important historical parties, who gained significance in the political life as well. These were the *Independent Smallholders' Party* (FKGP) and the *Hungarian Social Democratic Party (SZDP)*. Both started their political life anew with a number of internal conflicts, which

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[449] Major personalities of the Reform Wing within the MSZMP were: the father of previous economic reforms, Rezső Nyers; Imre Pozsgay, who represented the idea of democratic political transformation and national independence; and Prime Minister Miklós Németh, who represented the new reform-minded generation.

[450] Zoltán Ripp: *The Roundtable Talks of 1989: The Genesis of Hungarian Democracy*. ed. András Bozóki (Budapest: CEU Press, 2002), 3–39.; 6. See also: Patrick O'Neil, *Revolution from Within: The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the Collapse of Communism* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1998).

[451] János Kis – Ferenc Kőszeg – Ottilia Solt, "Social Contract: The Conditions of Political Settlement," *Beszélő Összkiadás*, vol. 2 (Budapest: AB-Beszélő, 1992), 749–791.

[452] Ripp: *The Roundtable Talks*, 10-11.

circled around clear-cut ideas of the nature of the transition and the need for ne-gotiation with the MSZMP. Finally, among the internal conflicts a view which supported the proposals of the MSZMP, namely - that "all constructive social forces" should participate in future talks and, moreover, that the negotiations should be about the election system and about the principles of the constitution-making process, as well as about social and economic questions – determined their political decisions.[453]

5.2.1 Negotiated Revolution[454]

The changes of 1989/90 are often called a "Negotiated Revolution," which allowed a peaceful transition. Several analyses referred to the facts that the elite set up the rules of the changes (Roundtable Talks) and agreed on the future steps of political actions. The following groups were represented in the Round-table Talks: 1) The opposition parties, the representatives of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) and the representatives of the trade union from the old party-state. The 'Roundtable' prepared most of the steps of the changes in regard to the new constitutional order. The end of the discussion of the 'National Roundtable Talks' was on September 8, 1989. The agreement of the 'Roundtable Talks' was not signed by the SZDSZ and the FIDESZ. Several questions remain hidden within the office and function of the Roundtable Talks. First of all, their legitimacy: who gave them the right to set up the changes? According to what circumstances was it decided who can be a representative or member of the "office" of the Roundtable Talks. The readiness for compromise between the old and the newly forming political system had an important role, which also assumes that a great number of interests had to be pleased on both sides. The campaign of the coming free election had a determinative role in the process of the political decisions as well. All the participants, the old and the newly formed political parties, had a realistic possiblity to win the elections. Ripp clearly highlights that the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the successor of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party, was in real competition with the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) in the beginning of 1989.[455] The attitude of the Communists was due to their material and financial interest, just as well as to maintaining their power on all possible levels. None of them acted as being committed to the Communist ideology. The political climate of the years of the changes was truly a "process of bargaining," as R. L. Tőkés calls it. [456] The negotiations of 1989, whereby the members of the Hungarian political elite themselves could make decisions about the future of their country without having considered the interest of the external powers, was an outstanding moment

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[453] Ripp: *The Roundtable Talks*, 12-13.
[454] The expression was used by László Bruszt, who described the 1989 Roundtable Talks and the peaceful transition to democracy. Rudolf L. Tőkés would rather change the term to 'stipulated' (which belongs to the organic political culture in Hungary), rather than a negotiated revolution. András Bozóki book review of Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), *East European Constitutional Review* vol. 6, no. 2- 3 (1997).
[455] Ripp, *Rendszerváltás*, 478.
[456] Tőkes, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution,*37-82

of "grace"-according to R. L.Tőkés.[457] Tőkés' statement can be doubted if we consider the external causes – as above mentioned – behind the scenes.

 A growing number of people even deny that there have been real changes in the system, focusing only on the compromise attitude and the sociological aspects. These views narrow down the understanding of the concept of the changing of the system to the changing of the nomenclature of the elite in cultural and economic context. Their reasoning is based on the fact that 80% of the leaders of economics, politics, academic life, media or church life are the very same people who were determinative figures in their fields in the eighties or earlier.[458] No one was dismissed because of the role they played in the Kádár era or earlier. The observations of these groups are important with regard to the deeper understanding of our situation. The awareness that the changes of the elite and the changes of the system are not equal with each other, should be underlined according to some political scientific criteria.

In political terms no one can deny the changes, whose memorable day is on October 23, 1989, when the third Hungarian Republic was proclaimed by Mátyás Szűrös, the president of the parliament.

5.3 Observations on Hungarian Society from a Socio-Economic View

Being on the borderline of East and West, the twentieth century was a continuous shock for the Hungarian society: first, the great losses because of Trianon, then the end of World War II when Russia began to dominate Hungary, then the freedom struggle of 1956, and the decades of continuing Communism. What was common in the Hungarians' negative historical experiences is that they were always the means in the hand of the dominant powers. The above mentioned historical circumstances left their mark on the whole of the Hungarian society. One should also take into consideration that Communism itself was a result of earlier historical happenings.

In times of swift changes, Ralph Dahrendorf says – that "a political formation can be relieved in six months, an economic system can be transformed in six years and for the transition of a society sixty years is needed"[459] –as is also true for the Hungarian situation.

After the changes the most important shifts took place: the foundation of democratic institutions started, the electoral rules were devised, constitutions were rewritten, the separation of powers was put into law, and soon a multi-party system emerged. The censored press became more open and free. Many citizens' rights, such as the right to travel, to form associations and to practice one's religion freely, were all put into place.

The replacement of the old economic system was a bigger challenge. On November 21, 1989, Miklós Németh announced in the Hungarian Parliament that Hungary's National Debt would be twenty billion USA dollars by the end of

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[457] Tőkes, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution,*167-210.

[458] These facts are worked out by sociologists like György Lengyel, Erzsébet Szalai and Ferenc Gazsó and academically accepted.

[459] Reference to Ralph Dahrendorf in Péter József Martin, "Ördögi Körök," *Beszélő* no.9 (2006).

1989. Németh also confessed in the publicity of the Parliament that the Communist leadership in the eighties lied and provided false information about the country's financial parameters in order not to scare off foreign investments.[460] The optimistic predicaments foresaw that the transition from a command to a market economy would not take more than two or three years. A new banking system was introduced, with financial services from business loans to credit cards. A free market system had to be instituted, and a new tax system had to be developed. One of the most important changes happened with the emergence of the private sector, and also the state property's privatization started. The economy and politics were burdened with great contradictions between each other in many arrangements.[461] Political reforms were intended to serve the interest of all people or at least gave voice to them. Giving voice, they often ran into contradiction with their economic plans, which resulted in insecurity, unemployment and the poverty of the major segment of society. Social justice was a challenge in many ways for democracy which had difficulties in carrying out the economic changes. Bankrupt factories had to be closed down, which forced many workers into unemployment and insecurity.[462] As one set of the results of these ambivalent processes of politics and economics, the following difficulties accumulated and they have become permanent so far: the state has less ability to carry out its fundamental responsibility; economic decline made the population impatient toward democratic institutions; the state socialism's social structures[463] underwent a polarization whereby the middle sector of society started to disappear; and illegal transactions (black market) grew.[464]

Tökéczky's observations deepen the understanding of the transition, when he clams that on the different levels of society the control of information shows notable differences. In the new situation only a very limited number of people, the so called elite, can take advantage of the new possibilities in relation to pri-

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[460] The recent Hungarian political scandals of 2006/07 remind us of the old Communist method. Before the election of 2006, the MSZP falsified the data of economics, and lied to the people about the status of economics in order to win the election. After winning the election, Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány confessed the truth to his party (MSZP) saying that they "lied day and night" in order to win the election, hid all the economic problems and provided false information on economic data for the EU. The tape which recorded his words became public and resulted in a long-lasting demonstration against the Government of MSZP and SZDSZ.

[461] Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and Ellen Comisso, "Property Rights, Liberalism and the Transition from 'Actually Existing Socialism'," *East European Politics and Societies* 5 (1991), 162–88.

[462] Rudolf Andorka and Zsolt Spéder, "Szegénység a 90-es évek elején," *Társadalmi Riport 1994*, ed. Rudolf Andorka, Tamás Kolosi, and György Vukovich (Budapest: TARKI, 1994), 74–106.

[463] "State socialism was more than an economic and political system with institutions in need of repair. It was also a complex social system. Its central institution was universal state employment. In all socialist countries the overwhelming majority worked as employees of the state. Wages, benefits, and careers were designed centrally by state agencies. The state decided how many engineers, music teachers, lathe operators, and carpenters there should be and kept a watchful eye on how different occupational groups fared relative to one another." Ákos Róna-Tas, "Post-Communist Transition and the Absent Middle Class in East-Central Europe," *Entities in Transition: Eastern Europe and Russia After the Collapse of Communism* vol. 93 (University of California Press,), 29-44.; 31.

[464] Róna-Tas, "*Post–Communist Transition*," 29-31.

vate ownership and democratically structured society. The result of that fact is that the "gown" of civil society has to be created from above and has not "fitted" the whole society yet. The development of an elite group has as yet only reached a very small, approximately 5% of Hungarian society; so it is unavoidable to stop the individualistic aims in the development, which often do not serve the interest of the whole society. Among the many side-effects we have to name at least two, which can be described as selfishness and immorality since we deal with power oriented structure, and which creates other difficulties.[465]

The "newborn" democratic society quickly differentiated among the 'victims' and the 'winners' of the transition. Some of the victims are the older people, whose fixed pension has eroded by runaway inflation; unskilled workers, who were the first to loose their jobs; the large families (with three or more children) who are faced with the quickly increasing cost of raising children. We also have to mention, not exclusively but notably, the ethnic group of the gypsies who accumulate the above mentioned disadvantages. There is also a large segment of people in society who work in the non-profit sector and are experiencing a growing economic insecurity which is getting close to poverty.[466]

The number of winners of the transition is insignificant compared to the numbers of the victims. The big company owners are mostly middle-aged men who typically joined the Communist Party not for ideological purposes but for building their carrier, before 1989. They have been able to take advantage of privatization and have been in high demand among foreign firms. In starting their own companies, the political and economic network which they built under state Socialism provided unrivalled advantages. For example, today (2007) the Prime Minister and a number of the political leaders of the MSZP–SZDSZ governing coalition, are those billionaires who started their carriers before 1989. Many of the older generation of the Communist elite could also take advantages by means of their earlier power. The new economic elite is often intertwined with the criminal underworld as well.[467]

There is a widening gap between the quickly rising wealth of the upper class and the majority who experience no improvement in their living standard. When the political changes opened new possibilities these new situations became fertile grounds for inequality under the slogan of democracy and private ownership. We can see capitalism on one side and poverty and hopelessness on the other. Life has become more and more incompatible. That process is heading toward the danger of loosing the middle classes from the post-Communist societies, while Western societies demonstrate that a nation needs the stability of a strong middle class. Róna–Tas rightly points to the fact that in Hungary the middle-class has seldom been a sufficiently determinative part of society. The

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[465] Tökéczki, "Az elmúlt tíz év a politika mérlegén." See also Péter Róbert, "Egyenlőtlenségtudat," *Társadalmi Riport* (1994), 311–33.

[466] Róna-Tas, "Post–Communist Transition," 34-36.

[467] Róna-Tas, *"Post–Communist Transition,"* 36-38.; See also Ákos Róna-Tas, "The First Shall Be Last? Entrepreneurship and Communist Cadres in the Transition from Socialism," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 100.1 (July 1994) 40-69, and József Böröcz and Ákos Róna-Tas, "Small Leap Forward: Emergence of New Economic Elites," *Theory and Society* 24 (1995), 751–781.

middle-class was recruited from lesser nobility and the ethnic Germans and Jews who suffered enormously after World War II. When Communism broke out, the middle class was not a category to be accepted in the view of egalitarianism by the Communist Regime. According to the above mentioned political and economic facts, in the post-Communist countries the middle class identity only appears on the level of ethnicity (not economically), and only to a certain extent. Ethnic nationalism therefore provides a security of identity for some, because one belongs has this by birth and it cannot be lost; however, many dangers of ethnic nationalism are also obvious.[468]

At the same time, as the result of the above mentioned context, the life of the individual became more and more isolated losing the sense of community in the family and in society. The most painful realization of the process of loneliness can be seen in the rural areas which were the strongholds of the sense of community for many centuries. The huge cement blocks of the towns illustrate this process as well. There is no space in those buildings which would provide the basic requirement of being together. Tradition is lost without community life, and without tradition there are only anonymous masses or very fragmented groups left. The new Hungarian civil society is still in its infancy whereby subjective relativism is the only measurement of values on every level. The disordered Hungarian society tries to give an illusion of a mature society, where the misinterpreted role of the media and the image of superstars give a value system without real and functioning ethical norms. The first step would be to face our reality in which the informational level is very weak. The result of Communism is still present in politics, economics and in culture. One has to see clearly that in a fragmented society the effect of modern pluralism has its dangers and at the same time one is unprotected from the manipulation of politics and business.[469]

During the four decades of Communism a terrible process can also be detected in the society of the Hungarian population. While in the time of Communism the often articulated slogan was that we live in the time of 'cultural revolution,' reality just showed the opposite. The majority of the Hungarian population was left without convertible and competitive cultural knowledge which normally creates a solid basis for any further real and effective developments in any segments of society. Therefore the "brain washing" by communism was far more effective than anybody had thought.

5.4 The Sociological and Cultural Elements of the Postmodern Age and their Relevance in the Hungarian Context

The introduction of this theme will be brief and limited to the purpose of this study. The importance of these elements could be highlighted from many aspects, but the concentration will mainly be on the religious and church related themes, also in comparison to their determinative role in the non-communist countries. The appearance of these postmodern elements in the Hungarian context was unavoidable. The suddenness surprised the Hungarian society in many ways, which also created a great set of unpredictable challenges for the Church as well. Some of the characteristic elements of culture

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[468] Róna-Tas, "Post –Communist Transition," 42-43.
[469] Tökéczki, "Az elmúlt tíz év a politika mérlegén," 21.

and society which played and play a role since the changes of 1989/90 will deepen the understanding of the ecclesiological surroundings of the Reformed Church of Hungary, just as well as the recent lines of sociological, and 'generative anthropological' research which tries to comprehend the *motions* (transformations) of culture and society in their wider historical settings. The context of all the different elements can well be fitted to the frame of the Postmodern age.

5.4.1 Technological Revolution

The present situation is often characterized by the technological revolution. It is certain that any time we face the transition of technologies we cannot disconnect its effects from society and culture. When we attempt to discover the images of our era in the midst of many elements, which are mainly described by the concept of postmodernity, at the root of the different constellation of the causes one has to take into account, as a primary role, the influence of the technological revolution and its consequences. The last century's revolutionary technological atmosphere probably made the greatest impact on human history's culture and society ever.

The synthesis of the postmodern technology and the industrial society continuously forms a new civilization,[470] a "techno culture populated by technosapiens"[471], in order to utilize the possibilities of the currently rapidly developing technologies.

From the many revolutionary aspects of today's technology, the achievement in the progress of communication is probably one of the greatest which determines and shapes the life of the people most directly and frequently. The communications in the different western models or in their followers, as in the Middle Eastern European countries, are achieved in society as a generalized communication which is powered by the mass media. The "success" of mass media is due also to the changes as people comprehend history. According to Vattimo's hypothesis modernism is coming to an end because the unilinear view and understanding of history do not seem possible anymore. The unilinear historical view required a centre-point, for example the year of zero: the birth of Christ and all the series of events are gathered and ordered to this point.[472] That view characterized the western, especially the European civilization, which would be impossible to understand without the Judeo-Christian heritage and the Greco-Roman's. This centre-focused historical

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[470] Such observations were already present in the late sixties in the western cultures. (See Victor C. Ferkiss, *Technological Man: The Myth and the Reality*, (New York, 1969), 56., Also see Brent Waters, *From Human to Posthuman, Christian Theology and Technology in a Postmodern World* (Ashgate, 2006), 1. In the Hungarian or Middle – Eastern European context one only needed to face the challenges of a new techno-civilization in the last one and a half decades.

[471] The expression is borrowed from Brent Waters, *From Human to Posthuman, Christian Theology and Technology in a Postmodern World* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 1.

[472] Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society* (translated by David Webb, Polity Press, 1992), (first published in Italian as, Gianni Vattimo, *La società transparente*, Garzanti Editore, 1989), 2. Vattimo also referred to Walter Benjamin, who already made an inquiry as early as 1938 on the unilinear historical view's weaknesses. In Walter Benjamin's view the unilinear historical presentation of the past was constructed by dominant groups and social classes, therefore not everything could take place in the past, only that which seemed relevant to this groups' interpretation. Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1983).

view then builds its events according to a certain ideal of people as a hermeneutical key. When Vattimo argues that the mass-media had a decisive role in the formation of postmodern societies, he claims that the media interprets reality in a different way. Earlier it was predicted that radio and TV would make society homogenous,[473] and on the contrary media became the means for interpreting all sorts of world views. In this process everything becomes an object of communication. The West is experiencing an explosive situation in which externally and internally it faces a pluralization of different realities through the media, which does not necessarily require a centre point nor the understanding of a unilinear history.[474]

Vattimo's hypothesis is just the right way of viewing both the western and Middle Eastern European experiences. A certain kind of delay is noticeable between the west and the post-Communist societies. The loss of time in relation to democratic surroundings in the Middle Eastern European countries put the media more in the state of infancy according to its western "older brother." The varieties of all sorts of possibilities are in an earlier stage in the former Communist countries than in the Western societies. For example, the "freedom" of information (which will be more submitted to financial backgrounds than ideologies). The basically endless possibilities of mass media, such as TV channels provides an endless variety of norms and identities, or the reproduction of these in the form of manipulations, which postmodern people can no longer face. Media pushes them into all sorts of realities or fables. Some of the consequences are vividly extensive in the western societies (and are also becoming obvious in the Middle-Eastern European context). The many realities mix and put the scale of values and norms upside down, and most of them become subjective and relative for the individuals. In a stifled and frustrated societies the fables media create can convince the viewer that what is seen is truly possible, therefore is perpetuable.

The dangers of growing technologies, not just in the case of communication, are even more frightening if it is underlined or even maintained by the uncritical adoption and utilization of moral, intellectual or religious attempts. Some of the clear signs of such threads are characterised in the notion of posthuman, or in the process of the loss of material reality by the cybernetic paradigm, etc. By the above mentioned new stage of secularization, as a result of technological revolution in communication and mass media, we get closer to a neurotic situation.[475] When the possibilities of the Christian church are considered, one can tackle the issue with such questions as: Is the Christian church truly in competition with the merchandise images and phantasmagorias of the media? How can Christianity communicate its teachings? To what extent will the Christian message be and has already been secularized? Is their really a desire and need to emphasize (perhaps merely from a nostalgic attitude), the unitary and stable

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[473] Minima Moralia and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947).

[474] Vattimo, *The Transparent Society,* 4-9.

[475] H. Van Oyen: "New Morality" und christliche Ethik, (*Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik* 11/1. (1967), 41. in Ervin Vályi Nagy: *Minden idők peremén* (Basel/Budapest: Európai Protestáns Szabadegyetem, 1993), 122.

reality which the church offered for centuries? Is nihilism at the end of the postmodern path or rather is Nietzsche's *Übermensch* ready to be born? Is there a Christian *'superman'*? What is the best way for fulfilling the mission of the church according to the divine revelation, in the midst of the challenges of the postmodern world? What role does the Christian inheritance play in a postmodern society where masses still claim this inherited identity, while also participating more or less consciously or unconsciously in the postmodern culture?

We can state provisionally that the possible answers to these questions can be great causes of divisions in the communities of the Christian believers on different levels. The theme is an ancient one: the church's relationship to the world. Only nowadays, the different forms of questions deal with new contemporary elements; one can, however, also remember that for the people in Antiquity the 'world' (*kosmos, mundus, ma'at*) itself provided a concept of orderliness. Since the 'world' is losing its orderly character and this tends to lead people into confusion, the questions which related to the religious negation of the world have always drawn attention especially since the nineteenth century. For example Nietzsche, offers a diagnosis of his age with high sensitivity in which the major focus of the problem is the world, and his remarks are still worthy of attention. Nietzsche connects the subject of the loss of the meaning of the 'world' to Christianity, and claims that Christianity often refused the value of worldly life which in turn makes Christianity responsible for the rise of nihilism in Europe. Nietzsche's solution is centred on the re-evaluation of the values of the world.

Furthermore, one needs to be cautious about answering the above mentioned questions, and before any considerations, one needs to understand what might be the loss of unitary reality, the growing disorientation and the encounter of multiplying realities, cultures and identities at the same time. What role does freedom or just the illusion of freedom which one can experience through the media, for example in the 'reality shows', play in these questions? One would also need to study the consequences of the lines of power of the postmodern age, which tend to march in the direction of an always changing interpretation of reality, well demonstrating that human beings are not pleased with what is fixed and permanent anymore, and want to play a more active part in the events of the world which is more open than it has ever been before. Postmodernity just seems to offer many new ways to try out what is new or different and to assert the local and contextual identity. Speaking about the limitation of postmodernity, it cannot be questioned in comparison for example to the absolute form (if such adjective as *absolute* still has a value of measurement in today's reality) of freedom but on the lower lever there are doubts as well regarding the postmodern age. The counter-effects within the postmodern societies are just as well important.

These sociological and cultural movements in the former Communist countries are really explosively delusive, so that the individual thinks that he or she has real freedom, emancipation and participation in the course of events

around them, which is undoubtedly true to a certain extent. The *detonation* of the postmodern in the post-communist societies is also due to the fact that with the total collapse of the Communist ideology there is not much left which could really be a challenge to postmodernity. Talking about postmodernity being a challenge for the Christian church and not vice-versa in most cases, indicates the damage to the Christian inheritance of the generation after Communism, and it indicates just as well the devastation of the communist ideology (and one should not forget that all this happened with the help of the church/leadership/ in the Hungarian context).

The world became alien in many ways for the church but in this new situation many voices from the church declare that Christianity has to be found in its enigmatic, hidden character.[476] The process is truly neurotic: while facing the decay of the traditional (institutional) church, the great growth of the different new forms of Christianity is evident.

5.4.2 Postmodernism as a Challenge for Theology

A theologian is always in trouble when the mysterious notions of postmodern and post-Christian are on the table. Bruno Latour's remark just deepens the hesitation of a theologian when he exposes the falsity of the myth of postmodernism by saying that there are direct breaking lines in cultures throughout time.[477] The concept of postmodernism itself is a very complex and uncertain notion. It is complex because pluralism and relativism are its main internal parts. It is uncertain because postmodernism suggests that we have a common viewpoint according to which our age is homogeneous enough to say that modernism is over.[478] We can see that the western culture is very far from that uniformity. Deconstruction[479] as a critical method is one of the main features of postmodernism. This becomes the fertile soil for many options. We have less certainty in our existential questions but more choices. By giving up the task of a systematic construction[480] even in theology, either the hermeneutical basis and identity is lost, or a deformed view close to subjective relativism whereby one absolutises one's own persuasion, is the result. We define what our conditions are in relation to life or church-community according to our own measurements.

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[476] Ervin Vályi Nagy under this process talked about a delitescent Justinianism which appeared in the form of *Christus incognito*: the dominant influence in history, the world, the human mind and morality can be ascribed to the Christians (even though it was hidden). See, Vályi Nagy, *Minden idők peremén*, 121.

[477] Latour claims that the different movements in cultures are not irreversible. He gives a number of examples from the Middle Ages to the early modern period to show that certain aspects of the late medieval theological thinking in fact underpin later characteristically "modern" ideas. B. Latour, *We have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter, (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

[478] D. Kolb, *Postmodern Sophistications*: *Philosophy, Architecture, and Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[479] Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

[480] As it appears in the thoughts of Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: Post-modern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

The peculiarity of our age can be detected in its irony. "In virtually every corner of the globe human beings spin around and around, living out their lives as individuals paradoxically compelled in their 'private' lives to make choices from a range of options that are enumerated and managed by institutions they cannot see and people they never meet face-to-face."[481]

Kärkkäinen makes an important point on the basis of Harvey, namely that in the postmodern context Christian (traditional) denominations (churches) are made up of a majority of those "who still call themselves Christians but their lives are distinctively secular, with the experience of God in worship and prayer not figuring very prominently in all that they do."[482] This is also one of the key issues for the understanding of the Hungarian context where we can find a more complex picture which is still interwoven with unstitched threads from the recent past of Communism.

Theology has also realised that at the beginning of the twenty-first century it seems to be more appropriate to ask whether this century's religious market will have any place for Christianity at all. More precisely, will it be likely possible for people to call themselves Christians? The term "Christian" indicates an identity of something we attach ourselves to, defining who we are. Answering the question from the point of the individual does not necessarily present great difficulties; but when we understand Harvey's observation, we see Christianity's identity more acute when we turn our attention in the direction of the church and its power. The symbolic net of Christianity interwove the religious and cultural life of the West more than any other religious or intellectual movements did for centuries. The question is if Christianity will be able to reweave its net from the broken pieces. Is Christianity's aim to serve the interest of the world or to give a different measurement of values? The process of desacralisation includes the loss of cultic symbols; and the language of adoration and worship become increasingly problematic for Christian denominations. The demythologisation of Christ and Christianity is still vividly present, just like the rationalization of Christian dogmas, which are unable to become the foundation of everyday (church) life. We should not forget that during the history of Christianity the tension between an omnipotent God and a self-contradictory humanity has always given a wonderful power and motivation to Christianity to find its place, identity and call.

5.4.3 Religious Indifference

Religious indifference is a sociological phenomenon that dominantly reveals several options, and this plurality of beliefs and opinions are built around the notion of uniqueness. The (post)modern person's aim is to find his or her self-identity. But self-identity itself is a multi-layered notion as it also becomes very

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[481] Barry A. Harvery, *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 2. the citation is from Veli- Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology, Ecumenical, Historical and Global* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 221.

[482] Barry A. Harvery, *Another City*, 222.

clear from Van de Beek's study on the question of faith and ethnicity. We often struggle with the accumulation of identities not knowing which should be dominant. This often leads to inclusiveness or exclusiveness. That ambiguity, on the one hand, makes us feel the need for redefining our self-identity. On the other hand, it makes us realize the multiplicity of self-identity according to the different settings, like historical, racial, political, social, religious, and finally we often end up in confusion. [483]

Religious indifference first of all conquers the intellectual leaders then it widens its boundaries, which leads to the religiously plural society. Today Christianity is in such a position that it needs to be aware of the changes around it in the (post)modern world. The strategies of the Christian church which worked for centuries, are not able to function as they used to. Today we can hardly speak of a Christianity which would alone characterise the whole continent or society. Modernity and postmodernity also resulted in a social layer which has no interest in religious matters at all. Their "religious hunger" is, among other choices, also often satisfied by politics, which replaces religion.

The phenomena of ideological and political motives replacing religion are very vivid in the new democratic societies of the Middle–Eastern European countries. On the one hand, these societies still have a very fresh memory of the Communist ideology which functioned in many ways as a 'political religion' – and in a way stronger than many other ideologies because of its attitude of totalitarianism. On the other hand, the new possibilities of the democratically structured politic life opened new ways to settle account with the *evil* of the heritage of the Communist regime and offer new ways of *salvation* by the means of politics. Christian churches face many dangers in relation to the 'dependence' on the promises made by politics. Finding a balanced proportion and right means to participate in the life of the *polis* (a view where politics is not reduced to party-politics) is one of the biggest challenges wherein the theological clarifications are most needed also.

With the above mentioned elements the process of individualisation in religion and in Christianity becomes more dominant at the same time as well. Christian churches face a crisis and that crisis may seem to be an agony for an outside observer (and for a church member).

While religious indifference is present on certain levels of society, the susceptibility for the transcendent is also vivid. Masses of people turn to the spiritual side of life, and the seemingly empty pantheons of the gods become full again. The rebirths of black magic, superstition and various forms of the occult have become glaringly present in society. The imbalance between Christianity and the new paganism has become one of the key problems regarding the question of identity. The rationalisation of Christianity created a situation for itself wherein myth and theory are not harmonized anymore. New paganism can find a fertile ground in that vacuum. This process points to human beings' natural

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[483] Abraham van de Beek, "In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek – or both Jew and Greek?," Eddy A. J. G. Van der Borght, Dirk van Keulen, Martin E Brinkman (eds.), *Faith and Ethnicity* vol.1 *Studies in Reformed Theology* vol. 6, (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2002).

desire for the transcendent in order to find a deeper ground for their existence.[484]

The individualisation that positively characterised the movement of the Reformation often produces anarchy nowadays. In that sense anarchy means that everybody can shape his or her relation to religion on the basis of more or less sympathetic elements from the surrounding religious syncretism. The frame of Christianity or religion or even a particular denomination does not weigh too much anymore.

5.4.4 The Return of the Archaic Form of Religion

We face ambiguity when we consider the return of the archaic form of religion. The (post)modern person is against the idea that the insecurity of his/her material life and that the fragility of existence should be the impulse for religious concerns. As a matter of fact human history proves the opposite: namely, when instability shakes the present life and a person's vision of the future, then even the most rational behaviour is ready to go beyond empirical reality. People are often pleased to find shelter in archaic forms of religion such as fate, superstition and the many forms of the occult. Many popular phenomena of our time prove this; for example, the paranormal, parapsychology, and so forth. In the past, just as well as in the present, these component forces belonged to paganism. Many forms of paganism involve the adoration of nature which mystifies the religious motif in nature, according to a flight of imagination and fantasy. The vivid imagination of paganism has not lost its power because it never appeared in a comprehensive system. It was flexible enough to be dressed in attractive forms according to the requirements of a certain age. It never had to struggle with the piddling details of rationality's harmonization with faith or to give up the one in favour of the other. On the level of the masses paganism was a conventionalized understanding of nature, and on the level of the intellectuals it was a protection in opposition to the temptation and problems of nature. Pagans can easily allow themselves to live in two worlds at the same time, therefore the possibilities of Christianity and paganism differ in many areas.[485] If Christianity was able to behave as the religious elements in paganism do, Feuerbach's critique of religion, namely that religion is a projection by human imagination expressing what humanity itself cannot be, would be right. Therefore, the Barthian statement which differentiates religion from Christianity on the basis that in religion humanity searches for God (which leads to idolatry), whereas in Christianity God addresses man by His revelation – and this is an important insight in relation to our theme. Following Barth, Bonhoeffer gets closer to the problem when he talks about "Christianity without religiosity" in order to avoid the trap of metaphysics and individualism.

Statements such as Barth's and Bonhoeffer's which distinguish religion generally from Christianity can also be criticized. One can say that all religions are built on revelation but then the question is if people respond to revelation au-

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[484] Tamás Molnár, *Pogány kísértés* (Budapest: Kairosz, 2000), 9.
[485] Molnár, *Pogány kísértés*, 67-101.

thentically, which can often lead to exclusiveness. What is important in the Barthian distinction is that revelation and religion are not equal. Religion as a human attempt always stabilizes, while Revelation's main characteristic element is the dynamic force which disturbs people and provides an ecclesiology in which the church is rather 'on the way'.[486]

Christian identity is greatly challenged by the appearance of the archaic forms of religions which lead to a new paganism in the (post)modern society and also in the Christian Church.

Taking into account the risk of returning to a new paganism which revives the archaic forms of religion, we still need to say that faith - used in a broader sense as the quest for the transcendent - cannot be understood as unrelated to the history of the world. The new possibilities of the postmodern era also multiply the insolubility of the pressing problem of humanity's relationship to the technological revolution; for example the limits of a society which depends on the manipulation of communication by the mass media, the ethical questions of bioethics, the limits of genetic manipulation to ecology, the growing violence in the world - which also relate to the new condition of existence in postmodern civilizations. That process is strengthened by the collapse of the revolutionary ideas of such worldviews as positivist scientism, Hegelian and Marxist historicism, atheistic rationalism, which all believed that they could overcome religion. Their attempt to eliminate myth was a myth itself - as Vattimo phrases it very precisely.[487]

Globalisation is also a result of the technological revolution wherein ambiguity is detectable. Globalisation in the gown of a universal age of history also became a means for the mission of the church, especially in ecumenical attempts. The one world - one faith conscience tries to synchronize the relationship of the church and world under the flag of globalisation. In relation to that we have to remember Lochman's remark, which calls attention to the paradox of such globalisation and a powerful ecumenical movement, when he says: the Kingdom of Jesus Christ as a centre can hardly be applied to our worldly context. This kind of globalising theology may produce a schizophrenic situation for the church. While the church became more and more inactive, this is directly proportional to the desire that the kingdom of Christ should be found at the centre of our world.[488]

5.4.5 The Distortion of the Holy

The notion of the holy is *unum necessarium* for people. The question is: What do we understand by the meaning of holiness and how is Christianity able to preserve it and apply it to a certain age? If we were able to follow the meta-

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[486] Vincent J. Donovan in his book: *Church in the Midst of Creation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987) makes that distinction between revelation and Religion on the basis of Jacques Ellul, and following his train of thought, I tried to harmonize it with the Barthian and Bonhoefferian thoughts.

[487] Gianni Vattimo, *Belief* (translated by Luca D'Isanto and David Web, (Polity Press, 1999). First published in Italy as *Credere di Credere, II* (Garzanti Editore, 1996), 20-33; 29.

[488] J. M. Lochman, "Herrschaft Christi in der säkularisierten Welt," *Theol. Studien* 86 (Zurich 1967).

morphoses of 'the holy', systematically, we would probably be able to solve the problem of the relativism of values. It would be possible to come to a general conclusion about the diversity of the basic values (such as existence, love, humanity, goodness, beauty, etc.) without trouble because all of these values could be suitable for the aim of the basis of the true reality, namely God.

We should not ignore the fact that the notion of something sacred is not exclusively a characteristic element of religion but is present in the secular world. In the realm of the profane, holiness is not connected to God anymore. Its main feature is to defend what belongs to this world. When the holy loses its original meaning, creating a gap, something else tries to take its place. These are often the worlds of the sciences and politics. Both territories are often in contrast with the true meaning of holy, although people have the same expectations from science and politics as they had in the past in relation to 'the holy'. Both modernism and postmodernism have a human-centred view, according to which people free themselves from the duty of obeying God's laws. People are ready to take the world's present and future into their own hands. This is also the effect of globalization by means of which humanity participants in the growing world-community, and at the same time people become lonelier and therefore they often fight for the direct shaping of their history. The contemporary situation shows many similarities to the time of Hellenism.

How is the value of holiness connected to daily reality? Let us turn our attention to the Credo in order to find the answer. "We believe in the holy church." It is a risky ground because while talking about the rejection of the secular flatness and the mentality of worldliness, the holy church bears witness to new grace giving affirmation of this world. The means of holiness is misused not only by the secular world but the church as well. It does not mean that the members of the church are holy in the sense of moral perfection, as if they had no sins at all. Certain pietistic orientations claimed this in the past (as the Donatists and the Pelagians) just as others do in the present. Christian holiness is best understood from one's baptismal identification with Christ. The Word made flesh, the incarnation and crucifixion can unfortunately be misused to support any concept of holiness, in theory just as well as in practice. Our conviction by means of *fides specialis,* that we are saved, should not be misunderstood as meaning that we are saved so that we may continue in the same sinful way. The assurance given by this *fides specialis* causes the believer to enter the world more completely, even to the very heart of its darkness.

It is also important to mention another possible misunderstanding of holiness, based on René Girard's observation, which will have implication for the secular use of holiness as well as the Christian understanding of holiness; later we shall also use this insight beneficially to understand the context of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the collapse of Communism. Girard claims that human societies are also held together because of the elements of the desire for power. When crises threaten to destroy the community, the belonging to each other may be reinforced by finding a scapegoat, and thus harmony is re-established. The mechanism described by Girard truly works by shaping socie-

ties or ending wars. It is also true that the role of a scapegoat is often character-ised by sacred attributes and made into a cultic object as a sacrificial victim. The Scripture also tends to strengthen the victim-based mechanism, especially in Jesus Christ's personality (divine-human) as a perfect victim, who satisfies God's needs for justice in regard to Adam's sin. Not denying the role of Christ as victim (as Girard does when he questions the victim-based reading of the Scrip-ture as wrong), we can still learn from Girard's point of view that too much em-phasis on Christ as victim can harm one's understanding of God, who then ap-pears in full wrath and needs to be appeased. Such a view can easily run to extremes whereby religious believers (even the official church) are close to jus-tifying violence in the name of God, who is thirsty for blood and sacrifice. The incarnation of Christ was God's act of abolishing the nexus between violence and the sacred; and his death as a victim was God's act to finish the violent tra-dition of sacrificial religion.[489]

The incomprehensible God reveals Himself in holiness and His power is ra-diated through it. In this way, our holiness becomes a new reality based on our relationship with God. Holiness cannot be the result of our own efforts since it must always be the work of God's Spirit. Christianity also will have to pay atten-tion to that – especially concerning the question of the crisis of its own identity. We still acknowledge God's existence as a far and abstract boundary but His power is not of great account in Christian concerns. He is more like a ruler who has delegated his power to people. One of the biggest challenges for *Christian-ity* in the identity-crisis is to reveal the true meaning of *ecclesia sanctorum.*

5.5 The Influence of the Changes of 1989/90 on the Reformed Church of Hungary

The changes opened new possibilities for the church in many ways which also contoured the challenges as well. That is well pictured in the great number of publications which gave reflection on a wide scale of possible levels regarding the new situation of the church. Real debate did not often happen for various reasons, but in some cases, for example in conference materials and articles, an attempt was made for public discussions, whereby the themes of "diagnosis and therapy"[490] clearly provided the framework. The lack of facts, as well as the of-ten false diagnosis of the current situation in relation to past, present and fu-ture – meanwhile coloured with emotions, temper and unrealistic or not rightly placed expectations – all of these real difficulties are clearly detectable in the

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[489] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (translated by P. Gregory, London, Athlon Press, 1988). See also Jürgen Moltmann, "Justification and Justice," *Reformed World* 44, no. 1, (March 1994).

[490] The expression is borrowed from *THÉMA* (Theologiai Élet Ma / Theological Life Today) which af-ter the changes became in recent years a significant theological enterprise as an organized schol-arly circle. The founders of the association were students of the widely respected professor, Ervin Vályi Nagy. The scholarly circles were ready to maintain ErvinVályi Nagy's spiritual-intellectual inheritance today, characterised as: 1) exemplary ways in theological inquiries, 2) the existence of the theologian centres on the Scriptures, 3) freedom in courage and 4) commitment to the service of the Church. See *THÉMA* periodical of the protestant scholars' circle (Budapest: Pro Cultura Christiana Foundation, 1991) No. 1, 15.

background of the theological elaborations, which are also now recognized in the evaluations of the evaluation.[491]

Next, as we continue to describe the ecclesiological situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary, we shall: 1) introduce the changes and challenges of the relationship of the church and state from the viewpoint of the state; 2) describe the search of the Reformed Church of Hungary for its identity and its role in the socio-political and cultural transitions; 3) sum up evaluations related to the image of the church and our theme, and how the Reformed Church of Hungary made attempts to face the first decade after the changes – especially between 1990-2000.

5.5.1 State Politics Towards the Church after the Changes of 1989/90[492]

In 1989, the church was freed from the pressure and control of the state which had almost completely paralyzed its work. A new time had started. István Bogardi Szabó differentiates three models which well characterise the relationship of the state and the church since the changes of 1989. These models reflect the different governments' politics towards the church. The first model takes place between 1990 and 1994, and its main feature was the *rehabilitation* of the church. The second model made an attempt to *restrict* the church between 1994 and 1998. The third model can be viewed as a *cooperation* between the state and the church from 1998-2002.[493] We can add that from the year 2002 until today (2007) the model of *restriction* has been playing a determinative part in the state's politics regarding the church.

5.5.1.1 Rehabilitation Model Between 1994 and 1998

As we earlier introduced and shortly described the nature and political climate around the changes of 1989/90, we came to learn that the winner of the first free election of the Hungarian Republic was the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF). The MDF which stood on a conservative value system held many similarities with the Christian values, therefore the acknowledgement of the historical churches' role in society was obvious. The MDF also made a notable effort to build a new relationship and cooperation with the churches. Their willingness was mainly restricted by their financial possibilities, and in some cases the theoretical basis of jurisdiction was not well prepared or well reasoned.

The Hungarian Parliament prepared a compensation for the church for their lost in the previous Communist System on a juridical level. The first step was the framing of the Act of freedom of conscience and the law of religious freedom. The preamble to the Act of 1990 on the churches, makes a special recognition of the importance of the church's role in maintaining the values in socie-

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[491] The evaluation of Bogardi István Szabó, Ferenc Szűcs and Gusztáv Bölcskei.

[492] Sándor Fazakas, "A Magyarországi Református Egyház politikai szerepvállalása az elmúlt tíz évben," *Református Egyház* no.3 (2002), 59-65.; István Bogárdi Szabó, "Az Állam és egyház kapcsolatának lehetséges modeljei," *Protestáns Szemle* 10 (2001), 200-206.

[493] Bogárdi Szabó, "Az Állam és egyház," 200-206.

ties, building communities, their role in culture and education, and their important activity in public health care and maintaining the national self-consciousness.[494] The agreements in 1990 guaranteed in the Constitution on the highest juridical level that the forty years were truly over. In Hungary the state's connection with the churches relates to the constitutional law as determined by Section 60 of the same Act, paragraph 3 in the Constitution and its interpretation of the Constitutional Court. According to this the state and the churches function separately from each other. As understood by the Constitutional Court, the relation of these two entities should be formed by the neutrality of the state. The following facts emerge from the principle of disestablishment in accordance with decision No.4/1993 (II.12.) of the Constitutional Court: a) the state may not join itself to a religious alliance, nor to any one of the churches separately; b) the state does not subscribe to any of the churches' teaching; c) the state does not interfere in the churches' internal affairs; d) it especially should not take sides in issues relating to faith; e) the state must treat the churches as being equal.[495]

The invalidation of the *Agreement of 1948* between the state and church was the next step, which was followed by the commitment to the recompense for the losses of the church.[496] The recompense happened basically on two levels: 1) on the level of material goods which meant the rebuilding of church institutions and the theoretical working out of public financing; 2) the reestablishment and support on the level of the public duties of the church.

The attempt for the process of recompense happened in the context of the foundation of new religious communities, which was assured by the Constitution and created a paradox situation for the so called historical churches (denominations) in Hungary. By declaring neutrality from the time of 1990 the Constitution creates a crux for the rehabilitation of the so called historical church. The Constitution prescribes that every religious community should have the equal benefit from the ideological neutrality of the state, nevertheless the historical churches' expectation in the rehabilitation process was that they would yet receive special advantages. A tension between the newly founded religious communities and the traditional churches was unavoidable. The new formations of religious communities felt discriminated. The tension was also kindled by the political propaganda.

The purpose with the introduction of the 'American' model, whereby the church and state are completely separated, served the tendencies of laicism. In that model the state guaranties to not interfere with the churches, therefore preferring the American model – and this would mean neglecting the recognition of the heritage of the historical churches. The application of the Constitution to church related matters could (or some may say should) result in an understanding wherein the historical churches are to be seen as no different from

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[494] Magyar Közlöny, 1990/12.

[495] According to the reasoning of the Constitutional decision, this derives also from the Constitution's Section 70 of the Act.

[496] Református Egyház, XLII, No. 4 (1990).

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the plethora of newly founded churches. The guarantees which were assured by the laws of recompense and recognition of churches' social role (preamble Act, 1990), became very ambivalent in the interpretation and application, which depends on the actual political climate. The nature of this paradox of interpretation is evident from the next two models, the models of restriction and cooperation.

5.5.1.2 The Restriction Model which Played a Role between 1994 and 1998

At the election of 1994, the winner was the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) in coalition with the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ). It became clear that the Hungarian population gave a priority to materialistic values in their vote. The socio-economic difficulties which occurred with the changes of the system, the effect of the Communist brainwashing and the nostalgic feelings that "everything was better in the old system," contributed notably to the political and ideological socialist restoration. The result of the election also testified that the church had lost its basis in the Hungarian society. The new historical circumstance did not allow open persecution of the churches but the MSZP could vindicate and develop its time-tested methods learned from Communism, but now applied in the new setting - and that was enough to slow down the process of rehabilitation. The secret of their success lays in the fact that they maintained a whole net of economic interest independent from the law. The national culture and education were led by a left-wing liberal intelligentsia. The conjunction of these two processes continuously weakened the condition of the historical churches' role in society. In the Hungarian society the majority became economic victims of the transition, and the result of this was that people became more exposed and defenseless, and therefore the political propaganda often could easily reach its goals.

5.5.1.3 The Model of Cooperation between 1998 and 2002

The political climate radically changed after the election of the Young Democrats' Alliance (FIDESZ). The winning by the right wing was simply the result of the fact that the Socialists could hardly fulfill any of their promises listed in their programs. Materialistic values played a major role in the election again.

With the winning of FIDESZ, Hungary was governed by a new political generation, who were freed from the troublesome earlier political inheritance. Their new understanding of the nation, church and state pushed the party to represent civil-national and conservative views. The recognition of the need for refreshed political insights and the readiness for change made FIDESZ a relevant political entity.

After 1998, the church found itself in a new situation. The new government's prime minister was Viktor Orbán, an active member of the Reformed Church who held his religious belief to be of importance. FIDESZ announced a completely different value system which circled around ethical and axiological basic notions such as honour, good and evil, truth and falsity, the protection of family life, patriotism and the cleansing of public life of corruption and propaganda,

and so forth. FIDESZ not only recognized and acknowledged the importance of the historical heritage of the Reformed Church of Hungary but also urged the importance of the future mission of the churches in the life of the Hungarian nation. Working out the model of cooperation was a tangible reality, which was realized in a number of arrangements. The process of rehabilitation was accelerated and a new system of financial order was introduced which extended care to the role of church in public life. The support of the importance for the church to be present in culture and public welfare clearly meant a continuance and development of the rehabilitation model. It became clear that neither the model based on a complete separation of the state and church, nor the model of the restriction of the church, are suitable in the Hungarian context.

Behind the three models and most of their possible variants there are two major intellectual tendencies which predominate. One is based on a utopian fiction in which the church, the sovereignty of the state, and the individual are each other's opponents. In this tendency the inclination is more dominant in the direction of a complete separation and restriction. The other tendency acknowledges the reality of public life as an organic process, while also seeing the historical necessity of the separation of state and church to a certain extent, but the model of cooperation becomes determinative.[497]

5.5.2 The Search of the Reformed Church of Hungary for its Iidentity and Role in the Socio-political and Cultural Transitions

The previous elaboration on the introduction of the life and theology of the Reformed Church of Hungary among the twentieth century's struggles allows us to link the theoretical basis to two paradigmatic views on the theme. László Ravasz wrote the following in 1938:

> Two sharp features characterize Christianity in relation to the world. One is that Christianity significantly wants to differ from the world; therefore Christianity is in opposition to the world. Another is that Christianity wants to be attained in this world and for this reason it not only gets along with the world but it also mingles with the world. Both features are essential to the nature of the Gospel. If Christianity did not differ from the world, it would be superfluous, and would lose its meaning and purposes. If Christianity did not find connection to the world but settled down outside of the world, there would be no Christian life, but only a vain hope and fruitless meditation. The world is important for Christianity to make something out of. Christianity is important for the world in order to be able to become something. …There are two kinds of Christianity: one is from this world and the other is beyond this world. These two kinds are essentially in opposition to each other, so much so

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[497] Bogárdi István Szabó, "Az Állam és egyház," 200-206.

that all tensions and changes in history can be interpreted according to that.[498]

The other important standpoint comes from Ervin Vályi Nagy's critical analysis of *Testvéri Izenet*[499] (Fraternal Message) which was issued in 1950.

> ...the church's local colour, which originates from its special function, does not amalgamate into the universal spectrum of human life but stands out in sharp contrast to it. God's universal church, delegated with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is not one component of the homogeneous human life as liberalism thought but rather its boundary. The boundary of all order and disorder, every revolutionary activity and all reactionary lethargy.... The church is for the people, however it does not serve the people but only God's word. The church according to its purpose, while in the service of God's word, also serves the people.... We sin against not only God but the people as well if we admit those ideals and tasks which do not belong to the church. The church's tasks cannot be sub- or co-ordinated by other duties which lay a claim to it and which do not belong to the church's tasks. On thing is sure: as God in Jesus Christ is God for the people, similarly the church, also the Reformed Church and its all servants, have to be for the whole Hungarian nation. (Then he quotes Barth) "...we would sin against God and the people if we would follow the people instead of being for the people.[500]

The next chapter's task will be the analysis of the above mentioned theological standpoints in the recent Hungarian ecclesiological context. It is important to acknowledge that the above two statements (quotations) were born in two determinative climacteric moments in the Hungarian history of the church, and could clearly emphasize the duty of the Reformed Church also paying attention to the challenges.

The transformation of the structure of society during Communism and after its collapse (as we introduced above) played a major role in the changes in the view of the church. The rural lifestyle that was the social basis of the Reformed Church's congregations was ruined. The immediate new socio-political and cultural challenges after the political transition made a notable influence on the ecclesiological view of the church. The situation of the church after the changes was contradictory. The public-character of the church rapidly increased in relation to the expectation of social orientations and solutions. A number of social related duties, which seemed to belong to the church, were on the table. On the one hand, the selection and the setting up of the priorities of the church were

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[498] László Ravasz, "A keresztyénség és a világ feszültsége," *Legyen világosság II* (Budapest, 1938), 464-468, 464. Italics from Péter Kádár, "Egyházunk elmúlt tíz éve a lelkipásztor szemével," 28-34.

[499] Albert Bereczky, "Testvéri Izenet gyülekezeteink lelkipásztoraihoz és presbitériumaihoz, egyházmegyéink espereseihez és missziói bizottságaihoz, egyházunk minden szolgájához és tagjához." *Református Egyház* (15 December 1950).

[500] Ervin Vályi Nagy, "A 'Testvéri izenet'-ről," *Protestáns Szemle* no.2 (1994,),109-114, 113.

required. On the other hand, 1) An inner clarification of the Reformed Church connected to its (recent) past and its mistakes is important; 2) The duty of the present is to define an ecclesiology profile on the level of legitimate theological work, taking into account the critical reflection of faith and the adaptability of the vital functions of church life. Both are necessary in the present context.[501]

In light of the above mentioned considerations, let us now see what the understanding of the Reformed Church of Hungary was of these challenges as can be mirrored in its actions.

5.5.3 Facing the Past

There were hopes in 1989/90 that the church was heading toward a purifying process, in which the facing of its past, repentance, the confession of sins and the desire for renewal would be determinative. It was believed that those pastors and church leaders who were unprincipled servants of socialism would admit their failure with the collapse of the system and give up their leadership. These hopes were realistic only to a certain extent. Characteristically three levels can be distinguished with different motivations on which attempts were made to apply the new situation to the life of the church.

5.5.3.1 First level: Reformed Church Renewal Movement and Other Similar Attempts

A reform movement started in the Reformed Church of Hungary in 1989, which became an official association of the Reformed Church of Hungary and was called the Reformed Church Renewal Movement (Református Egyházi Megújulási Mozgalom, REMM).[502]

The effort of the REMM for repentance and confession of sins involved a number of initiatives. The community of the Theological Faculty of Budapest together with the Protestant Cultural Society urged the importance of starting necessary steps toward a 'status of confession'.[503] A few months later the Protestant Cultural Society published its appeal, entitled *Reckoning (Számvetés),* and sent it to all the protestant churches and congregations with the hope that in the established situation of a 'status of confession' the congregations would participate in forming a common declaration of the faith. The suggested directives of the declaration's draft were the followings: Preliminary concerns : 1) individually and collectively facing the sins of the past in order to be able to pray for forgiveness from God; 2) the collaborators of the church in the time of Communism should not be named. Their cases need to be discussed without anger and prejudice in order to be able to participate in reconciliation; 3) the common repentance should unite church. The draft of the declaration of faith

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[501] Gusztáv Bölcskei, "Az egyházkép változása a Magyarországi Református Egyház utóbbi negyvenöt esztendejében," *Confessio* no. 1 (1991), 22-25.

[502] The leaders of the Renewal Movement were Prof. István Török, Rev. Loránt Hegedűs, Rev. Géza Németh, Rev. Tivadar Pánczél and Rev. Olivér Czövek.

[503] *Reformátusok Lapja*, (8 Februry 1990), 3.

held the following points: 1) on faith; 2) (church) life-activity in relation to the social service of the church; 3) inner renewal of the church.[504]

Independently but close to the aims of REMM and the Protestant Cultural Society, a less formally organised Reformed Declaration appeared which tried to focus exclusively on the urgent need of repentance and confession of sin, without being influenced by the actual church-political directives. Since the Declaration was older than the other attempts, it also referred to the lack of repentance in reality by the former leaders and their supporters in the Reformed Church of Hungary. The Declaration called for collective repentance and placed the importance of renewal in the local congregations. It was signed by 65 members (pastors and lay people) of the Reformed Church of Hungary.[505]

Géza Németh wrote the following summary to introduce the REMM's struggle in the new situation, which well describes the other attempts' difficulties as well:

> The Renewal Movement, being a spiritual heritage of the Renewal Movement of 1956, demanded a new election at its conventions. As a result the general Synod dissolved itself and announced new elections. There followed a struggle over whether congregations would get true information about the treachery committed by Church leaders in the last decades. This was the purpose of many analytical studies and of countless interviews on the radio and in the press. The representatives of the old order tried to defend themselves with the well-known tools of the security police; slander, personal calumny and disinformation. There was a special significance to the international forum of ecumenical renewal, organized together with the Roman Catholic 'Bush' community led by father Győri Bulányi, which broadened the perspective of the movement with regard to Transylvania and inter-denominational relations. There was an enormous domestic and international response to our calling for the dismantling of the communist propaganda machine, the Christian Peace Conference, with its base in Prague. The Evangelicals and the Baptist Church left that miserable organization.[506]

The Renewal Movement of 1989 had a two front struggle: 1) with the old church leadership and hierarchy; 2) on a political level offering help and inspiration to Hungary in the midst of the uncertainties of the preparation of a new election. The Movement demanded a renewal of the church *in capite et in membris.*

5.5.3.2 Second Level: The Former leaders' Attempts for Renewal

The former official Church leadership also made its bid for renewal while they were active in castigation of the Renewal Movement publicly. The collabo-

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[504] *Reformátusok Lapja*, (20 May 1990), 3.

[505] *Reformátusok Lapja*, (18 November 1990), 3.

[506] *Reformátusok Lapja*, (25 February 1990), 4. and Géza Németh, *Felkiáltójel* (Budapest, 1990) 128. The quoted paragraph is also found in József Pungur, "Contribution of the Reformed Churches to the Fall of Communism in Hungary and Romania," *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, 168-189, 178.

rator church leaders' main motivation was to preserve their position while finding an acceptable solution to the newly formed situation. They showed readiness for a collective confession of the sin of collaboration in the time of Communism, but refused to acknowledge any personal responsibilities or shortcomings. Two vivid examples well describe their motivations. The first is the Christian Peace Conference's declaration. The Christian Peace Conference was one of the means used by the Communist Regime for executing and developing its political ideas against the church. Their declaration appeared on January 7, 1990 with the title: *We have to repent,* signed by the president, Károly Tóth.[507] The declaration points to the fact that according to the changes of the situation in the Middle – Eastern European block, the Christian Peace Conference's leaders believed that repentance was their personal duty. As the declaration says, the cause of repentance is the newly changed situation. This understanding – in relation to the activities of the Christian Peace Conference in the past – suggests that repentance would not have been needed if the situation had not changed. The new task of the Christian Peace Conference was therefore also set up as a priority of the new circumstances and not according to the demand of a Christian conscience.[508]

The second example is illustrated well in the list of candidates running for the bishops' office. At an exceptional Assembly meeting in 1989, Bishop Elemér Kocsis emphasized that the renewal of the church could not be exposed to the radical voices of the church which cry for a complete election of officials, creating a chaotic situation in this way. The main purpose of the Assembly was a vote of confidence concerning Kocsis, with the result that seventy-five representatives found him trustworthy and only one did not.[509] Bishop Kocsis enjoyed the absolute confidence of the General Assembly of the Transtibician Church District.

Actually, in all four church dioceses candidates were the former bishops in the time of Socialism. After the election Elemér Kocsis became a bishop again in Transtibician Church District.[510]

5.5.3.3 The Third Level: Personal and Isolated Pietistic Attempts

Several statements were composed, a variety of which tried to contribute to the elements of truth on the wide scale. Behind these statements different mo-

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[507] Lubomir Mirejovszky éd Tóth Károly, "A keresztyén Békekonferencia Nyilatkozata,"*Reformátusok Lapja*, (7 January 1990), 4.

[508] Olivér Czövek, "A Keresztyén Békekonferencia és a bűnbánat," *Reformátusok Lapja* 28 (January 1990), 3.

[509] Kürti László, "Óvjuk megújulásunk tisztaságát!," *Reformátusok Lapja* (3 December 1989), 3.

[510] In the Danubian church district the candidates were the following: the former bishop (1977-1991) Károly Tóth, Loránt Hegedűs, and Ferenc Szűcs. The winner of the election was Lóránt Hegedűs. In the Transdanubian Church District the candidates were the former bishop, (1979-1991) Attila Kovách, Mihály Márkus and Zsolt Kövy. In the Cistibician church district the candidates were István Mészáros and the former bishop, László Kürti (1977-1991). The winner was István Mészáros. In the Transtibician Church District the candidates were the former bishop, Elemér Kocsis (1987-1994) and Antal Mihály Nagy. The winner was Elemér Kocsis. *Reformátusok Lapja* (1 November 1990), 4-6.

tivations were detectable. Their nature therefore often became very ambivalent or isolated and they did not manage to come closer to a unifying process wherein the church could face its past and look forward in the direction of renewal on the widest possible scale. The ambivalent natures of these statements are well pictured in the newly elected first bishop of the Danubian Church District, Loránt Hegedűs and his mainly personal declarations. He analyses the new situation and the need for facing the past carefully. He distinguishes the different levels of collaborators well:

> Surely there is a difference between those who earned their bread by informing the secret police and others who tried to do their duties while spying on others– between the ones who served their own selfish interest, and the others who served God alone – between the ones who ruled, oppressed and abused and the others who were ruled, oppressed and abused…. [Later he calls attention to some important points concerning repentance and reconciliation.] Nobody should enter into this new historic area with a guilty conscience, with his past accusing him as an informer, while holding onto his old power and position…. Dishonesty would destroy the church…let us choose the purifying fire of the soul. [511]

Later, Hegedűs in his electoral campaign promised that concerning those collaborators who served the interest of the Communist regime: "not a hair of their head can be hurt."[512]

Ete Álmos Sipos, president for the association of the *Bible-Alliance* (Bibliaszövetség) individually called attention to some of the major difficulties, in an article entitled: *Delayed repentance? (Elkésett bűnbánat?).* Sipos questioned the church's honest motivation for facing the past, and he mentions among other things, the following reasons: 1) the need or *kairos* of repentance does not necessarily correspond to the *chronos* when the situation is eased or changed. The leaders of the Reformed Church of Hungary waited with the announcement of repentance until it became obvious that political changes were irreversible. Sipos refers to the fact that the *Agreement of 1948* was cancelled at a very late moment by the Reformed Church of Hungary when it became obvious that there would be no negative political consequences of this decision. 2) Sipos suggests that all the attempts for penitence were also very late, and this fact cannot be demolished with biblically sounding declarations by the former leaders. 3) Their repentance will only become clear during a time of proof.[513]

After the appearance of the different calls for repentance and the common declaration of faith, basically nothing happened in these matters. A number of evaluations appeared making an analysis of the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary since the changes, and these pointed out the lack of true life in the

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[511] Loránt Hegedűs, "In the Eleventh Hour: Struggle for the Renewal of the Reformed Church" (This essay was originally prepared as a lengthy discussion paper for the Study Committee of the Danubian District's Pastors, 6 June, 1990), *An Eastern European Liberation Theology*, 153.; 155.

[512] Loránt Hegedűs, "Míg tart a ma," *Reformátusok Lapja* (9 September 1990), 6.

[513] Ete Álmos Sipos, "Elkésett bűnbánat," *Reformátusok Lapja* (1 July 1990), 3.

church after the first decade of change. János Pásztor called attention to the fact that the Reformed Church of Hungary lacked collective self criticism and penitence (Neh. 9 and Dan. 9).[514] It is important to note – emphasized Fazakas – that the collective penitence of the church has to happen first in the context of faith and in relationship to God and humanity. If this dimension is avoided, we abuse the highest aim of Christian existence which inseparably connects us to the saving work of Christ, "who is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). Thus the confession of sins is part of our act of worship and independent from the actual political and ideological pressures.[515]

Szűcs explained that in 1991 at the time of the general election of office-bearers in the Reformed Church of Hungary, many people in the church thought that with the new leadership a spiritual renewal had begun. Shortly after the elections, it became clear that the changes in leadership could provide new historical, political and theological insight, but not cleanness of the soul for the church.[516]

The Reformed Church of Hungary, in regard to its goals in the new situation, was also restricted by the unsolved problems of the past. As we shall see in the following sections, this can well be illustrated in a number of areas of the church life.

5.5.4 The Comprehension of the Reformed Church of Hungary about the State's Relationship with the Church after 1989/90 [517]

A short analysis on this theme in light of some of the evident actions of the Reformed Church of Hungary gains importance for the following reasons: 1) it can indicate if any changes have occurred in the understanding of the Reformed Church of Hungary about the state in comparison to its earlier view during Socialism; 2) it will also show how the notion of the *state* is nuanced or distinguished in the Reformed Church's understanding, in relation to the other elements of society; 3) we shall also see the effects on the understanding of the own immediate and long term duties and tasks of the Refomed Church of Hungary.

The Reformed Church of Hungary also had to face (like other churches as well) the run down infrastructure and its atrophied institutional structures which seemed hopeless, especially considering the relationship with its mem-

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[514]János Pásztor, "A Magyarországi Református Egyház útja 1989 óta (1)," *Református Egyház* (October, 2002)

[515]Sándor Fazakas, *Emlékezés és megbékélés, A múlttal való szembesülés teológiai kritériumai* (Budapest: Kálvin János Kiadó, 2004), 70-79.

[516] Ferenc Szűcs, "Az elmúlt 10 év teológiai értékelése (A Theological Evaluation of the Last Decade)," *Théma, Theológiai Élet Ma – Protestáns Tanulmányi Kör*, (2000/4), 44-47.

[517] Giving an overview on the subject, we mainly folow Sándor Fazeka's points (Sándor Fazakas, "A Magyarországi Református Egyház politikai szerepvállalása az elmúlt tíz évben," *Református Egyház*, [vol. LIV, No. 3, 03, 2002]) and others (Péter Kádár, *Egyházunk elmúlt évtiszede*; Ottó Pecsuk, "Református Egyházunk – az állam és a politika," *Református Egyház*, [Vol. LIV, No. 2; February, 2002**]**, Gábor Isépy, *Tíz év az idő mérlegén, 1990-200 A Magyrországi Református Egyház ezredvégi évtiszede.*), where references on primary source first appared in most cases.

bers. The organizations and associations of the common church membership did not function well any more. In many cases, their former motivators got old or died.

A notable amount of the energy of the church was engaged with the restarting of its institutions and obtaining financial resources. One of the high priorities of the restart was the recognition of the importance of the Reformed Church's teaching task in the unity of church and school. In the midst of the compensations by the state to the church, the priority was the reclaiming and reestablishment of the lost 'nationalized' church schools, on all levels of education. The mission task concentrated on the young generation, with the hope that in the context of the aged and empty local churches the church would be renewed by the younger generation, who were now receiving their education in the reopened church schools. In the year two thousand, the Reformed Church of Hungary maintained the same number of schools it had between the two World Wars. The success in quantities is not in direct proportion with the qualities but notable results had been achieved in church education. The substitution of experts is a longer process than a decade. With the reestablishment of the relatively great number of church schools, the church did not reflect clearly on its ideas about how it will settle accounts with rapidly decreasing demography, and how it will try to keep other areas of mission in proper balance, whose importance became obvious after a decade. The attempts related to the church's understanding of its duties in correspondence to the society or the state was clear. The church mainly focused on the integration of the newly forming civil society.

After the changes of the political system, the first government started a partnership with the church, therefore the church almost without any conditions endeavoured to fulfil its field of activity in that connection, which basically bore the sign of a folk-church or state-church setting. The (re)building of the structure of the state and the church did not differ from each other as we have noted earlier. One of the principles was to continue where it had been stopped before the time of Communism, in order to find the way toward legitimacy and continuity.[518] Hence, the relationship of the church and the state was pictured according to the motives of the old 'fashion'. The observation by the sociology of religion that the church institution takes over the characteristic features of the political and social structures of its context became very evident in the Hungarian situation. The edge between the two sides, the integration of the church into society and the religious sphere engaging in politics, was very vague.[519] One of the most characteristic phenomena in the Reformed Church of Hungary after the changes circled around the following question: Should local pastors take part in party politics? It is also important to pay attention to the fact that the issue of *repentance* and the *confession of sin* shrank into insignificance beside the issue of the *local pastors' participation in party politics*. A

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[518] Sándor Fazakas, "A Magyarországi Református," 61.

[519] János Szántó, *Vallásosság egy szekularizált társadalomban*, (Budapest, 1988) 192. referred to by Sándor Fazekas, "A Magyarországi Református," 62.

great number of articles gave evidence to that in the official weekly newspaper of the Reformed Church in 1990.

The Hungarian Reformed Synod arrived at a decision on the issue and *advised* all pastors to not address any party political questions from the pulpit, nor to hold any positions in political parties, nor to be a candidate in electoral campaigns for membership in the Parliament. The Synod's advice was based on the plea that the vocation for being a pastor requires openness to all people, regardless of the political identity of the members of the congregation. Any office in party politics interferes with the pastoral work and can lead to a division in the congregation. Moreover, the Synod declared that if the local pastor accepts a mandate or political function, he or she is obliged to resign from his/her pastor's office for the time being.[520]

The aftermath history of the question proves the complexity of the problem. Basically two circles were formed around the pro- and contra arguments. On the one hand, the pastor who is active in daily politics falls into a trap easily whereby the *aim of (pastoral) completeness* (*pléroma*) can be harmed by service of a party *(pars)*.[521] On the other hand, the danger of ignoring daily life activities such as politics would restrict the church's mission to become a *salt* and *leaven* in society.[522] Rózsai's suggestion gives the heart of the problem when he calls attention to the following distinctions. The pastor has to be distinguished from other church members, as does church life from the profane political life. Rózsai added a special remark that both areas can be practiced as the worship of God.[523] The Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary changed its earlier position and all the questions related to the issue were forwarded to the decision of the local congregation's presbytery, with a special note saying if there is a contested point in the local congregation, a higher church authority will settle the question.[524]

Isépy's evaluation on the practice of pastors taking upon themselves a role in political parties describes the tendencies as early as the spring of 1990:

> Pastors who entered the political arena can draw a lesson from the election: They were measured and most of them "found lacking…" They were lacking suitability, eloquence, a competitive program, but most of all in finding their own identity…they wanted to uphold their lambkins unauthorized by the Lamb of God. [525]

The church's participation in the life of party politics did not end with these incidents. By the end of the nineties, the theme of *church pulpit and politics* became more influenced by party politics. The church slowly became a factor in

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[520] *Református Egyház* (11 January 1990).
[521] Gábor Isépy, "Politizáljon-e a gyülekezeti lelkész?," *Reformátusok Lapja* (3 December 1989).
[522] József Csontos, "A gyülekezeti lelkész politizál," *Reformátusok Lapja* (6 Janury 1990) 6. See also György Pápai Szabó, "Apolitikus Egyház," *Reformátusok Lapja* (21 Janury 1990) 7.
[523] Tibor Rózsai, "Politizáljon-e a lelkipásztor" ?, *Reformátusok Lapja* (25 March 1990), 6.
[524] *Reformátusok Lapja*, (25 Februry, 1990).
[525] Gábor Isépy, "Politizáljon-e a lelkipásztor"?, *Reformátusok Lapja* (25 March 1990).

politics while it was not prepared at all for the new possibilities and challenges, and therefore the representatives of the church were characterized by one of the extremities of party politics or being apolitical. A shifting of accent was present which threatened the theology of the church with ideologization again and became a real danger during the next decade.

During 1990-94 the Reformed Church backed the government of MDF which acknowledged the historical churches' role. The church did not begin any dialogue with the other political parties which thought differently. They were mainly seen as a monolithic enemy. Shortly after the changes it became obvious that after an impetuous start in the outward life of the church, more difficulties occurred as a result of the slowing down of the transition and development. The situation revealed that the church could not find its proper position in regard to politics. The pastors should have pointed out the good moral values of the MDF; rather, the pastors were more interested in realizing their personal political ambition and finding ways to get individual financial sources to the different projects in the church. Kádár's observation is realistic when he sees the situation of the church as ancillary and as a beggar in relation to the state after the changes. The question of the financial survival of the church overshadowed the mission of the church. The church behaved indifferently toward the civil society which was coming to life again. A critical distance from party politics[526] and a relevant presence for public life did not characterize the church.[527]

The mistakes were vivid after 1994 when the constituencies of Hungary gave authority to the MSZP. The society made its political decision on materialistic values. The only motive that formed the majority's opinion was determined by which party would guarantee a higher living standard. The majority of the electorates believed that the *changes of the system* was complete, therefore most of them did not make any considerations on an ideological basis. The ideological contrast of morally good or bad, guilty or not guilty, and Christian or atheist hardly played any role. The promises of party programs in relation to materialistic welfare were determinative. It was evident that the church missed its target when it could not fulfil its special duty, the *prophetic faithfulness*[528] according to the special call which is not from this world.

A prophetic contradiction characterized the church in the time of 1994-1998. According to the application of the *restriction model,* the MSZP made notable steps to narrow down the condition of churches' social services. These four years were a time when the church spoke out against the politics of MSZP in the matters of: economic stabilization, social and family programs, the issue of the unemployed and homeless people, social-provisions[529], the situation of the

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[526] The need for the principium of critical distance and solidarity appears in the recommendation of the Study Committee of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary. See, "Vitafórum," *Református Egyház* (February, 1996), 45-46.

[527] Péter Kádár, "Egyházunk elmúlt évtizede a lelkipásztor szemével," *Théma* (2000/4)

[528] Imre Révész, "Körlevéltervezet" (December, 1946) in József Barcza (ed.), *Vallomások (Teológiai önéletrajz és válogatott kiadatlan kéziratok 1944-1949)* (1990), 91.

[529] No. 712/1995 decision of the Synod of the Refomed Church of Hungary (Budapest, November, 1995) in *Református Egyház* (April 1996), 95.

demographic decline and surgical abortion[530], the discriminative financing program for public education in relation to church-schools, as also against the standstill of compensation for the churches,[531] and the disrespectful use of the name of God in the different media[532]. The restrictions by the government were not comparable to any open persecutions of the church. The restrictions toward the church and its programmes were a consequence of the MSZP's realisation that since they had won the election in 1994, the churches' voice and social role did not count for much. Thus, the MSZP enforced its own individual interest and purposes, which became more evident in the unscrupulous capitalism and privatization.

Fazakas's comments have significance, namely that during 1994-98 the Reformed Church of Hungary arrived at the point where it could have realize that the conditions to fulfil its social role and duties cannot only depend on outward circumstances.[533] The Reformed Church of Hungary had already faced a number of critical points of such realization in its long and short term history. In 1936, Karl Barth in his inaugural lecture in Sárospatak made the following statement which calls attention to the same problem:

> The different options which are given and could be given by the state have to be put on a scale by the church. The possibility of the church's structure as a folk-church, free-church or confessing-church are all not more than only an option which comes and can come only outwardly.[534]

László Ravasz's statement referred to another similar moment in 1945: "The question is: are we going to be a free-church in a free-state, or a second class state-church, or are we becoming a confessing-church in a hostile world? All this depends on what value the state ascribes to the church."[535]

The changes in the outward possibilities drove the church to raise a notable protest and confession during the time of 1994-1998. The behaviour and actions of the church can be evaluated as a mirroring of the power structures of that time. It became obvious that the historical churches were not alone in fulfilling a role in politics and society. A number of other tendencies, such as secu-

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[530] The declaration of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary (Budapest, 18 April, 1996), *Református Egyház* (June, 1996), 139-140. See also No. 715/1995 decision of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

[531] See the decision of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary about the agreement of Public Education. See also the letters of the church leaders to the prime minister, in *Református Egyház* (June, 1996), 140-141. Further, cf. No. 29/1998 decision of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary about the church financing issued by the Hungarian Parliament on December 2, 1997, *Református Egyház* (May, 1998), 114.

[532] No. 711/1995 decision of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

[533] Fazakas, "A Magyarországi Református," 59-65, 62.

[534] Karl Barth, "Népegyház, szabad egyház, hitvalló egyház" (Inaugural lecture on the occasion of receiving a *causa honoris* degree at the Sárospatak Theological Seminary in 1936.), *Igazság és Élet* (9/1937), referred to by Fazekas, "A Magyarországi Református," 62.

[535] László Ravasz, "Új egyház felé?," *Élet és Jővő*, (10 November, 1945), referred to by Fazekas, "*A Magyarországi Református,*" 62.

larisation, (post)modernisation, technological revolution, and globalisation called attention to the fact that the strategy to continue the organisation of the church and all its activities as it was before Communism, was now impossible. The ambivalence of continuance can be clearly characterised by the fact that the church constitution attempted to be continued where it had stopped in 1948. During the constitutional activity that started relatively soon after the changes of 1989, the church was seeking its historical traditions. The Reformed Church of Hungary sought good examples in the constitutions from the past, however it insisted on keeping the strongly centred organisational pattern, which was established in the enactment of 1967. It did not consider that the world's, the church's and the church members' way of thinking had greatly changed. Thus its structure came into conflict with its stated principles.

Another feature of this time was the vital question of nationhood in connection to the concerns of the Gospel. For Hungarian Protestantism this question was always a special task because of the difficult historical contexts in the life of the Hungarian nation. The Protestant Churches were committed to the national independence since the sixteenth century as we introduced earlier. In the post-Communist countries, which had suffered under the yoke of the interests of greater powers using the flag of internationalism, the intensity of the national self-awareness was a natural reaction after the changes of the political system. That process is also detectable in case of Hungary where the Reformed Church tried to have a notable role. The historical wounds of the Hungarian nation, especially "Trianon," came to a front, although effective answers for the historical injustice was straggling behind. Rather, the different political parties according to their limited (mis)understanding of the historical and political reality gave their different suggestions about how to settle accounts with the traumas which were often involved in the political propaganda. These tendencies also took place in the Reformed Church. And this led part of the church to involve itself in the loyalty to the aims of far right wing political parties. In some cases the concept of nation was absolutised and was raised to a metaphysical status, often dangerously approaching nationalism as a pseudo-religion. The sources of these tendencies are also clear from the socio-economical and political difficulties which we have already introduced in this chapter. The danger for the churches lay in the temptation that the boundaries of the national self- awareness and Christian identity would merge into each other - for which we have seen a number of frightening examples in recent past (church) history.[536] The above quoted Ervin Vályi Nagy's paradigmatic view also emphasises and warns against these tendencies related to the church and the world.

The outcome of the election of 1998 was that the FIDESZ - MPP[537] could form a government and in its politics gave a favourable position to the so called

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[536] Fazakas, "A Magyarországi Református," 62. and Ferenc Szűcs, "Etnikum, nemzet, keresztyénség," *THÉMA* (2000/2-3), 69.

[537] The FIDESZ went through a notable change regarding its earlier political understanding, which can also be seen in its new name: the Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civil Party (FIDESZ-MPP).

historical churches. The contradiction or restriction model between the state and church was interrupted, and the model of cooperation started, whose causes and consequences we have mentioned above. Beside the number of actions by the government which truly saw the churches as partners, the churches were not only recognized by financial data in the state budget but the service to the society by the church also took on a determinative role. The most evident outcome was an agreement between state and church[538] whereby the state and the church could set up the principles of a partnership. This was a new script in the line of the history of agreement between the state and the church. The church declared that the agreement was not carried out by any compulsion, rather its motivating source was the critical solidarity with the state and society.[539] A new dimension was opened in the debate about the church's role in politics, which seemed to be overruling the interest of party politics. The visible church in its on understanding could not avoid being a political entity, which was directly or indirectly connected to the life of the *polis*. The agreement evaded any possibilities of power struggle for any positions or professions of allegiance. According to the mentality of the agreement, the outward church politics could not be in contradiction with its inward norms which regulates its life and aims. Most evaluations - from the year two thousand[540] - rightly ask the following question, which is also obvious from the earlier description of the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary since the changes: Was the church ready for and capable of the task which was set up in the preamble of the agreement? Before answering the question we can also ask another question: what led to the success of the FIDESZ-MPP winning the election? Gyula Horn[541] bitterly noticed that the MSZP lost the election because the priests and pastors of the churches made a campaign against them on the pulpits and other places. Unfortunately, Horn's remark was not true; the church did not have such an influential role on its members. Horn's remark may ease the responsibility of the MSZP for the lost election, but in reality the population turned against the MSZP since hardly anything had been accomplished from the promises of their electoral campaign. The majority of the Hungarian population faced serious existential problems on all levels of their life. The trust of the Hungarian electorate's majority in the FIDESZ-MPP was not more than it had been four years earlier as trust in the MSZP: the hope for a better life according to the measurement of materialistic goods. The same mentality was present in most members of the church. That mentality also differed from the mentality of the principles of the agreement between the state and the church. In practice, the standard of the

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[538] An agreement was signed between the Government of the Hungarian Republic and the Reformed Church of Hungary on December 8, 1998, cf. *Magyar Közlöny* (1999/45).

[539] Gusztáv Bölcskei, "Püspöki jelentés a Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület Közgyűlésén," (December 1, 1998), *Református Tiszántúl* (1-5 December 1998).

[540] Sándor Fazakas, "*A Magyarországi Református*," 62.; Péter Kádár, "*Egyházunk elmúlt évtizede*," 59.; Ottó Pecsuk, "Református Egyházunk – az állam és a politika," *Református Egyház* no. 2 (2002). Gábor Isépy, *Tíz év az idő mérlegén, 1990-200 A Magyarországi Református Egyház ezredvégi évtizede*, 52.

[541] Prime Minister of the Government of the Hungarian Republic between 1994 and 1998.

agreement was measured on the scale of finances: How much financial support will be given to the church? The principle of *a free-church in a free state* must be maintained for the church, step by step, to reach spiritual and financial self-maintenance. Révész's clearly phrased the main reason for that in 1946: "Opportunistic aims cannot impede the church in the preaching of the Gospel, which is the lifelong task of the church, and the state as social or political organism cannot make itself dependent on the church to fulfil its duties which come from its nature."[542]

Provisionally, before any theological evaluation, it is important to make the following remark: The complete separation of the state and the church is impossible; either we see the question from the standpoint of the state's jurisdiction over the church, or we see this from the standpoint of the church's autonomy. The individual, who practises his or her rights according to the freedom of religion, could be a member of any kind of religious organisation; however, the individual's right in this matter will be transformed to a collective right because he or she is the citizen of the state as well.[543]

The exact definition of the state-church relationship in Hungary has not started yet in a way that any notable practical consequences could be detectable. While these perspectives are not actualized in the church, the church is forced to accept the outward possibilities and thus its commitment to its context may overrule or even contradict its own existential nature. Financial dependence (negative or positive) on the state and the mentality which gives priority to materialistic values can easily put the church into service of an ideology. One of the sources of the problem is that since the changes the Reformed Church of Hungary only concentrated on the definition of the state in the perspective of executive authority (actual governments).

5.5.5 Viewpoint on the Theological Situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the Changes

In this part the major point of our interest in connection to the theme of the study is to see the effects of the former official theology on the current situation and to give a general view of theological work after the changes. We shall include a summary of the different theological trends which are present in the current situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

First of all, we have to see that the *"theology" of the servant church,* which dominated the theological life of the Reformed Church of Hungary during the communist time, lost its foundation after the collapse of Communism. It lost its meaning because it was not a proper theological reflection but was based on church-politics, which gave an ideological method for the legitimatization of the church leaders in order to fulfil the instructions of the Communist regime. The

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[542] Imre Révész , "Szabad állam szabad egyház," *Debreceni Protestáns Lap* (15 April 1946), italic first by Sánor Fazakas, "*A Magyarországi Református,*" 64.

[543] Béla Szathmáry, Veled vagy nélküled? Gondolatok az állam és egyházak szétvállasztásának lehetőségéről Magyarországon, manuscript of the lecture held at the Congress of the Pax Romana Society (Budapest, 12 April 2007).

often used rhetoric of the *"theology" of the servant church* can be misleading. The church became a function of the state and hence in service of the state the major task of the church was to give a hand to the state in the execution of its ideological and political program in the church. The program simply aimed at the atrophy of the church, because the Communist ideology saw the church as a major source of "alienation" for society. The Communist regime found the most cunning ways of persecution. The totalitarian system of Communism had to be applied in Church life as well. If the highest level of church hierarchy was controlled by the state, then the church itself would apply the aims set by the government. The reform of the church constitution did not happen when it was possible during the years 1945-48; and during the next four decades the church was under the monopoly of the state, and was not free to reform anything. The urgent need for the separation of the church and state (*free church in a free state)* was attempted in a most deformed way during the totalitarian years. The ideal separation could not be realized between the secular world (state party) and the church, but separation did happen between the church leadership and the congregations of the church. The result of these processes was basically the complete stagnation of a really reflective and critical theological work. Theological reflections which did not mach with the *"theology" of the servant church* had no publicity at all. The faculty of theology was excluded from the universities. The theological training of the future generation of the pastors was hermetically sealed from the context of the academic world, and it was strongly controlled by the state through its employees in the church leadership. The so called official theology usually had no effect on the congregations or when it did, it was only negative.[544]

We can conclude that the official theological self-construction of the Reformed Church of Hungary during Communism became very deductive in relation to the world. Looking at the classic models of the church, we can say that the church behaves as an acting subject which makes an impact on the world, for example: i) as *societas perfecta* beyond the world; ii) as *communio mystica* which grows into the of Kingdom of God; iii) as a sacrament which manifests the grace of God; or iv) as the prophetic ambassador of God's message. In the theology of the servant church we saw the opposite: the world made an impact on the church. The purpose of the church was to create a secular dialogue with the world and to serve the most important interests of humanity. The church was for the world, but the intention for its existence also came from the world.[545] Another difficulty was the strange mixture of the Barthian dialectic theology with the Hungarian "official" theological programs, as we illustrated earlier in Bereczky's *"narrow way"* theology. The selective use of Barth and some of his political statements in relation to socialism marked the future of dialectic theology in wider circles in Hungary. This became clear after the

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[544] István Bogárdi Szabó, "A belső vérzés hosszú időszaka – A "Szolgálat theológiája," mint a Magyarországi Református Egyház nyomorúságának tükröződése-," *Confessio*no.1 (1990) 111-117. See also: István Török, "A megújulás teológiai feltétele," *Confessio* no.1 (1990) 122-124.

[545] Bogárdi Szabó, *Egyházvezetés és teológia*, 70.

changes of 1989 when dialectic theology fell into disuse because of the misuse in the past. We may also mention that there were followers of Barth who did use this dialectical theology to evaluate Communism. However, there is a lot of chaos about the role of dialectical theology because of the mixture of use and misuse. The need for a shift in the theological situation is now recognised and some fundamental issues have been addressed.

The restart in the theological work itself was very difficult, not even to mention its renewal. The *"peculiar Hungarian theology"* (Tibor Bartha's designation for the *theology of the servant church*), rapidly lost its "popularity" after the changes of the political system and easily sank into the waters of forgetfulness. Not even the maintainers of the formerly *official theology* of the Reformed Church of Hungary wanted to remember their theological work. Those who were active or passive participants of this dead-end theological work have been mainly indifferent towards any evaluations which would have created a basis for theological clarification of this movement. That is clear from István Török's lecture at the conference of REMM on 12 October, 1989 in Debrecen. Török also states that the start of any renewals in present theological work partly has to come from the same generation who were educated in the former *"official theology"* of the Reformed Church of Hungary.[546] Probably that is the most difficult thing to realize but is also the most important as well. It is not easy because many uncomfortable situations and troubles will be found along the road when an attempt is made to truly face the past, also on the level of theological work. This is important because if the church neglects an evaluation of the old models and methods, the clichés of the past could easily be inherited by the next generations.

Generally characterising the task of theological clarification and renewal without the confrontation with some of the causes of the deformation is unavoidable after 1989. Bolyki gives the following major points on this: 1) *Acknowledgement of the shrivelling of spirituality and intellectuality.* According to the "salami tactics" of the communist leaders in the church, they managed systematically to cut off most of major parts and possibilities of mission, evangelisation, church education, etc. There were hopes that some compromises would allow for some freedom. These hopes did not come true. Instead, the power of fear and opportunism spread and the extensive and intensive effects were measurable on all actions of the church; this past also strongly marked the restart of the theological work in the new situation. 2) *The lack of an ethical standard* weakened the morals of the church. The Communist regime could benefit from personal moral failures of the pastors or church leaders making them collaborators with their ideas. Along with the spread of the pseudo-theological work even heresies could easily find their ways. 3) *Spirituality lost its main target,* Jesus Christ as the head of the church. Human authority often replaced the Head of the Church in the eyes of pastors of the church. Perspec-

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[546] Török, "A megújulás teológiai feltétele," 122-124.

tives for a Christian life, in light of the context, seemed hopeless for many members of the church. The loss of Christian identity was a clear fact. [547]

After this appraisal concerning the inheritance of *the theology of the servant church,* it is quite difficult to tell what kind of theology characterized the Hungarian theological work in the first decade of the new situation after the changes. There was no lack of new theological issues. Generally speaking, the Hungarian theological work always tends to be conservative. The real challenge was that the sign of conscious theological work was missing, or stated more precisely: the contemporary answers proposed did not show how to find the never changing reality of God in the new situation. A more conscious theological approach would have required the right evaluation of the actual context after the changes. However, the evaluation which set up the priorities of the church was based rather on a false understanding than on a realistic one. Szűcs rightly points to the fact that the false evaluations of the situation of the church after the changes were due to the following factors: 1) There were often falsely used biblical analogies (as we discussed in chapter one). About the changes of the political climate, wherein the church could be eased from the pressure of ideology, most people thought that the *wandering in the desert* had come to an end. 2) Another false realization believed that the historical-political changes themselves provide the renewal of the church. 3) There is a problem of continuity and discontinuity, whereby the major metamorphosis in the structure of society did not play a determinative role in theological thinking. The historical churches put too much emphasis on their traditions, strengthened by the motif of being the only *people of God,* who are obliged to continue and build on past generations. This understanding is not false if the continuity clearly follows the God-given *telos* for the church. It can be dangerous if the continuity is used mainly to go back and not to go forward, because of nostalgic feelings. [548]

As we have noted in the preliminary concerns of this chapter, Hungary was in delay in all areas of life in comparison to the west. The so called west also went through another set of crises where a number of attempts to formulate the right theological message did not fulfil the expectation. The challenge of the age could not be theologically answered in such a way that the process of the depopulation of the church could be stopped in the western churches. Therefore the different attempts of the western theological solutions cannot be models for the Hungarian situation. This should not lead, however, to a neglection of acknowledging these attempts, which often made approaches to the current situation with considerable care. The challenges for theology in the current context in light of the two sets of sources (the inheritance of the *theology of the servant church* and the general crisis of our post-modern age) give a complexity of difficulties. Let us turn our attention to the different recent theological movements.

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[547] János Bolyki, "Az egyház megújulásának teológiai alapjai," *Confessio* no.1 (1991), 12-22, 17-18.

[548] Ferenc Szűcs, "*Az elmúlt tíz év teológiai értékelése,*" THÉMA, (2000/2-3).

The following major theological trends were present in the theological life of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the changes.[549]

5.5.5.1 The Fundamental – Evangelical Movement

After the changes of the political system the *Bible-Allience (Bibliaszövetség, BSZ)*, the maintainer of the fundamental-evangelical movements became dominant to a certain extent. The following principles characterise the BSZ: 1) v*erbal inspiration* of the Scriptures; 2) the sinful nature of humanity, therefore the necessity to acknowledge God's grace; 3) conversion and the self-assurance of salvation. The pietistic source of the BSZ found its root in the conversion-centred German pietism and thus preaching of the Gospel was understood as evangelisation. The emotional feelings and the self-assurance of salvation are essential in the BSZ as well, while the rational elements have a lesser role. The BSZ is the spiritual inheritor of the different alliances and associations from the turn of the twentieth century (Bethania CE Association, Soli Deo Gloria Alliance, Mission Alliance, the Association of Christian Youth) and countrywide spiritual awakening, beginning in 1950. There some non official gatherings of the (later named) BSZ during the years of Communism. They did not play too much role in the eyes of the church leadership because of their introverted and apolitical nature. At the end of the Communist era in 1988 the possibility was opened to give a newly organized form for the activities of the revivalist people. The BSZ has existed officially since May 1, 1989.[550]

Since the changing of the political system the BSZ has shown increasing influence[551] as a counter-reaction to the subjective and relativist tendencies of our ages, although it keeps a radical distance from the world and follows strict ethical norms. Unfortunately, some of their members are often intolerant toward other theological movements.

Their biblically based consequential statements could have given a good start to the debate on the ecclesiological problems after 1989 - as we have introduced above in the statements of Ete Álmos Sípos, who is the leading figure of the BSZ. Unfortunately, the debate did not gain much significance.

By the time of the year two thousand, when a number of evaluations appeared about the ten years after Communism, Sipos's paper talked about the *Shifting of Accent in the Theology of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the Changing of the System[552]*. According to Sipos, the shifting of accent included the following factors: 1) non effectiveness of the principium of *sola scriptura*; 2) the mission projects of the church (at this point in 2000) are not much more than a facade; 3) instead of the vindication of the kingly office of

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[549] The summary follows Gábor Isépy's description, see Gábor Isépy, *Tíz év az idő mérlegén,* 21-28. When it is otherwise it will be noted in the footnote.

[550] www.bibliaszov.hu/index.php?open=4&load=tartalom – 19 June, 2007.

[551] Nowadays the BSZ counts about 1000 members from which approximately 50 are pastors of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

[552] Ete Álmos Sipos, "Hangsúlyeltolódások a Magyarországi Református Egyház teológiájában a rendszerváltozás után" (Shifting of Accent in the Theology of the Hungarian Reformed Church after the Changing of the System), (lecture, Cegléd: 2000).

Christ, in practice a new political ideology plays a major role; and 4) there is a notable hesitation about the assertion of the principle of *universal priesthood* and the good ordering of the church's projects.

5.5.5.2 Influence from Holland: Cocceian and Kuyperian Forms of Historical Calvinism

Since the Reformation, the theological movement that was connected to strict Calvinism and its Dutch variant, was the most influential on the pastors of the Reformed Church of Hungary and through their sermons, on the members of the congregation. The Dutch and Hungarian nation share many similarities in their church history. The two rather small nations have a close historical view. Israel's connection to God is seen as a prehistory of their own history. For centuries the history of the nation was measured in relation to God's will. The Loss of independence was evaluated as God's judgment and the positive historical experiences were seen as the blessings of God and as a result of the people's conversion to God. For example, Johannes Cocceius' federal theological view made a notable impact on Hungarian Calvinism. Also, the puritan movement in the two countries had a very similar reception. The Hungarian theological students' peregrination was a determinative factor in the theological life of the church since the seventeenth century.

Abraham Kuyper's return to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' Calvinistic tradition provided a working alternative to the dominant liberalism and rationalism at the turning point of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - not only in the Dutch context but also in the wider circle of the Reformed world, including Hungary. With some delay a theological movement, which called itself 'historical Calvinism', was founded between the two World Wars in Hungary, motivated by Jenő Sebestyén (1884-1950), professor of the Theological Seminary in Budapest. In this movement the strictness of Calvinism, the Dutch pietistic tradition and traditional Puritanism were all combined. Sebestyén found in Kuper's thought as one of the most important characteristic elements, that the sovereignty of the people is in opposition to God's sovereignty and the revolutionary ideal is in opposition to the lawfulness and the principle of continuity. Similar to Kuyper he believed that the state should be reformed according to the Calvinistic spirit. Sebestyén displayed dedication to his commitment to the Kuyperian thoughts in a number of articles in the journal of *Protestáns Szemle* and the *Protestáns egyházi és Iskolai Lap.*

Sebestyén's personal relationship with the Kuyper family started in 1916 when he came to know Henriette and Johanna Kuyper who were directors of the Dutch Mission Hospital in Budapest. As one result of their relationship Henriette Kuyper published a book, *Oorlogstijd in Hongarije,* which brought the interest and sympathy of the Dutch Calvinists towards the Reformed Church of Hungary. However there were a number of differences between the Holland and Hungarian circumstances which hindered the application of the Kuyperian thought in the Hungarian context. 1) The influence of distinct theological movements in the Hungarian context was mostly relevant in the circle of the

leadership of the church, while in Holland the realisation of such distinctions were widely spread, for which the foundation of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* is an example. 2) While in the Dutch context Kuyper could find a solid basis for his programme among the small landowners and lower middle class, in the Hungarian context this class of society was formless regarding their world view. 3) The Reformed Church in Hungary was not willing to split the way this happened in Holland. 4) While in Holland on the basis of worldviews the Christian right wing was in opposition to the liberal, atheist left wing, in the Hungarian context such opposition between Christians and atheists was not determinative in the times of Sebestyén. 5) The Hungarian situation had not arrived at a Calvinist political party, as happened in Holland, so this led to a different approach to church and politics. 6) Sometimes concepts were confused. For example, the use of the concept 'liberalism', had a different understanding in the Dutch and Hungarian understanding. Kuyper formed his party politics overagainst 'atheist liberalism', while Istvan Tisza used the concept 'liberalism' to refer to a national idealistic struggle for freedom, whose sources were in the Hungarian Protestantism. These differences became evident at a meeting and discussion between István Tisza and Kuyper in 1916. Apparently the concept led to considerable confusion.[553]

Sebestyén uses quite a lot of Kuyperian thought in his ethics and when he addresses the role of Christians in society, and this promoted Kuyperian theory about Christian organisations, for example, in Hungary as well. However, we can conclude that even if the Hungarian application of the Kuyperian thought did not succeeded in political party attempts the same way as it did in Holland, it yet had a great affect on Hungarian theological work. There is a notable group of pastors in the Reformed Church of Hungary who carry this tradition in their pastoral work, giving a solid basis to the often vacillating church life. Kuyper was often referred to during the time of renewal attempts. Also, the relationship between the Dutch the Hungarian Calvinists reached a higher stage through Sebestyen's admiration of Kuyper.

5.5.5.3 Charismatic Movements

The appearance of these movements was simultaneous with the appearance of the so called non-traditional churches at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their establishment was a counter reaction to the crisis in the life of the folk-church setting in the time of rationalism and liberalism.

According to Péter Nagy, the charismatic movement became noticeable in the Reformed Church of Hungary in 1960. The dissolution of the number of mainly mission orientated association such as the Bethánia Alliance resulted in the infiltration of its members into the congregations. Their presence was fruitful because of their generosity in the difficult times of the church. For a number of people the charismatic movement was the basis of the renewal in the church although it also meant great extremity as well. Because of its extremity the opin-

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[553] Tibor Bérces, "A Magyar Kuyper," *Confessio* no. 14 (1987), 3-11.

ion about them was often quite negative. The modified wing of the movement was willing to stay within the main channel of the Reformed Church. Their characteristic leader was Imre Szabó.[554] The charismatic movements – on a different degree of intensity – aimed and still aim for a more radical Christian life. In the midst of the emptiness in the critical historical time of Communism, they searched for some of the same spiritual experiences as that of the time of the New Testament congregations. In most cases a deep theological insight was missing from their consideration. The enthusiastic attitude mixed with strong emotional feelings provided the commonly typical problems, such as separation, believers' pride, infallibility and exclusiveness. The lack of consensus and the lack of readiness for dialogue or debate with other movements within the church separated the movement. To have seen the importance of dialogue would have been needed the most, since there was a notable tension in the faculties as well among the theological students.

After the changes of the political system the borderlines grew stiff between the multifarious groups in the church. After the collapse of Communism, the charismatic group's role did not gain significance similarly to the other movements.

5.5.5.4 The Representatives of Liberal Theology and the Later Critique of Theological Liberalism

It is important to recall shortly that the paradigm of liberal Protestantism was a leading tendency since 1840, which is after the *patent struggle*[555] of 1859 was crystallized in the public role of the Protestant churches.

The view of liberal Protestantism, according to the contemporary critics of liberalism, expressed that there was no independent Hungarian theological consciousness which would differ from the foreign theological trends.[556] Hungarian Calvinism became the source for the Hungarian liberal Protestantism, and connected the theology of national development to the general European understanding of progression. The domestic liberal theological thinking was under the influence of the German theological thinking of 1840's. Behind the need for the *protestant union,* there were the secular tendencies and the concerns of the Hungarian nation, which became obvious in 1860. Protestant identity (not exclusively) did not mean doctrinal concerns but rather the fostering of the historical and cultural tradition. Somebody could be a good Protestant, Lutheran or Reformed only on the condition of being a good patriot.[557] The *philosophy of church*

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[554] Péter Nagy, "Milyen egyházban élünk?," *Théma* no.2-3 (2000/), 8-13, 11.

[555] In the years of Habsburg Absolutism, the Protestant churches' struggle for their autonomy (1850-1860) is called *patent struggle*. The Protestant *patent* was issued on September 1, 1859.

[556] Sándor Koncz, *Hit és vallás. A magyar református vallástudományi teológia kibontakozása és hanyatlása,* (Debrecen, 1942), 4.

[557] László Kósa, "Katolikus és protestáns magatartásformák az abszolutizmus korában," *Egyház, társadalom, hagyomány,* (Debrecen , 1993), 181-185.

renewal was dependent on the spirit of the age (Zeitgeist). For example, Hetényi was convinced the *Zeitgeist* in parallel with general rationality could provide better principles of life, although in that view the foundational truth of religion cannot be neglected.[558] Protestant liberalism in the Hungarian context was open to a national idealism and by this way it was open to a horizontal universalism,[559] but the same liberalism did not want to question the transcendent and hierarchical order of the society radically. The dilemma of the above mentioned statement characterised the Hungarian context in the years before World War I, and later culminated in the cultural Protestant theological view under the influence of Troeltsch. That viewpoint is detectable behind the early work of Imre Révész[560] and László Ravasz[561].

A shift in the acceptance of a liberal theology had happened. The intellectual theological turn happened because of some of the influence of the evangelical revivalism of John Mott and the deeper studies of Calvin's work in 1909-1910. The theological consequences of this shift were due to Ravasz's deeper understanding of predestination. He thought that an existence of a nation, its language, territory, progression, constitution, historical personality is not accidental but is under the predominance of the everlasting order of God.[562] One of the greatest motives of Protestantism is that in the situation of intimidation the belief based on predestination can strengthen one's faith. God's message, according to his election, is that one does not have to be scared of losing one's faith during persecution, however that does not mean that God's message would bring condemnation for those who do not believe.[563]

Révész also believed that the liberal Protestantism with the mixture of national triumphalism had no future. Protestantism can fulfil its historical mission if it understands itself as Christian religion and therefore it has to stand on its own feet and not be in the service of anything else.[564] We also have to note that the truth of Revész's statement cannot overrule the fact that many elements of cultural Protestantism had beneficial effects on the Protestant and even the Roman Catholic Church, because it was a committed maintainer of human culture - although it had a false trust in humanity's progress. Cultural Protestant-

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[558] János Hetényi, "Az egyházújítás filozófiája, és annak múlhatatlan szüksége," *Protestáns Egyházi és Iskolai Lapok,* (1842), 234.

[559] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), 7.

[560] Imre Révész, *A tudományos egyháztörténetírás* (Kolozsvár 1913); *Vallomások Teológiai önéletrajz és válogatlan kiadatlan kézitratok. 1944-1949*, (A Református Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya, 1990, János Barcza /ed./), or József Brcza, "Révész Imre az egyháztörténész," *Confessio* no.3 (1989) 25-31.

[561] We know from Ravasz himself (from his memoirs), that he sympathized with the radical wing of the Freemason Movement. László Ravasz*, Emlékezéseim*, (A Református Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya, 1992), 122, 120.

[562] László Ravasz, "Kálvin és a kálvinizmus," *Látások könyve* (Kolozsvár, 1917), 1-32. also Pál Németh (ed.) *Magyar református önismereti olvasókönyv. Válologatás a XX. Század első felének teológiai irodalmából* (Kálvin Kiadó, Budapest, 1997), 44-60.; 50.

[563] László Ravasz, "Az eleveelrendelés," *Legyen világosság* (Franklin Társulat, Budapest, 1938)

[564] Imre Révész, "A magyar protestantizmus útjai," *Magyar Szemle*, (November, 1928), 237-238.

ism helped to deepen the understanding of the surroundings of the church on many possible levels in many ways.

Connecting the historical elements – which we have earlier introduced separately in this thesis – is important in the following way. In the personality of Ravasz and Révész as pastors and church leaders, and in their theological understanding, we find the most effective views which characterised the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary between the two World Wars and its aftermath up to 1950. That period of time can be evaluated as the time of prosperity in church life, whose roots were somehow in the nineteenth century's liberal Protestant idealism. That made it possible to realise the weakness and also to understand the Protestantism's inward dynamism. This understanding can provide a number of insights for the current situation as well. While the thesis of secularization assumed that with the progress of modernism, religiosity will be marginalized in society, one can see many regressive anomalies in contradiction to that view. The religious life between the two World Wars in Hungary was also one of the exceptions. The Hungarian context was characterised by spectacular conflicts of cultural pluralism instead of a consensus of the political and social life in the frame of religious culture.

Liberalism or liberal theology has a modified meaning in the Hungarian context that is quite true after 1989. The politics gave an ominous ring to the word *liberal,* therefore its classification was often connected to pejorative meanings after 1990. We also have to take into account that the inheritance of cultural Protestantism is still present in the Hungarian context. The realization of that would be important especially in a world where the cultural values rapidly lose their effects as well. The realization of the inheritance of cultural Protestantism would gain importance in order to understand the past better. By this elaboration, it might be obvious that those who form the circles of the so called liberal theological movement in Hungary are basically open to the recognition of the inheritance of cultural Protestantism, just as well as to study of the different western theological approaches. However, those liberal theological attempts which focus on themes such as feminism and homosexuality, have hardly any role in the Hungarian context.

5.6 The Image of the Reformed Church of Hungary after 1989

In light of the above given description of this chapter we make an attempt to draw a picture of the image of the Reformed Church of Hungary. The analysis follows three levels for the introduction of the theme: 1) a general description of the religious situation and the situation of the churches, 2) the outward image of the Reformed Church of Hungary, and 3) the inward image of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

5.6.1 General Description of the Religious Situation and the Situation of the Historical Churches

 Miklós Tomka made comprehensive analyses on the religious transition in the Middle-Eastern European countries, focusing especially on Hungary[565]. Most of the statistical data come from Tomka's research and the different researches which he followed.[566]

 Statistics show different trends in the case of Middle-Eastern Europe than those in the Western societies concerning religiosity. It could be assumed that the transition to democracy and a free market economy would bring to society different elements suitable for secularisation (that is, a decrease of religious influence in a particular society) – however, such social processes did not yet take place in post-communist European countries. To put it clearly and simply, transition began with an increase in religiosity in most cases in the post communist countries, while the western societies show the opposite.

 Tomka calls attention to the fact the mere data of statistics should be handled with reservations. The reason for a more positive estimation of religiosity in Middle and Eastern Europe, is that it happed in a context where the restart of religious life was in a very disadvantageous situation (in post communist countries). However, the new outbreak of religion even though significant, was insignificant on the whole scale of society. The sudden realizations of the crisis of values in the post Communist societies can easily push their religious understanding into a service of some ideology which shakes the true understanding of religion fundamentally.[567]

Figure 1: *Conversion and apostasy*[568]

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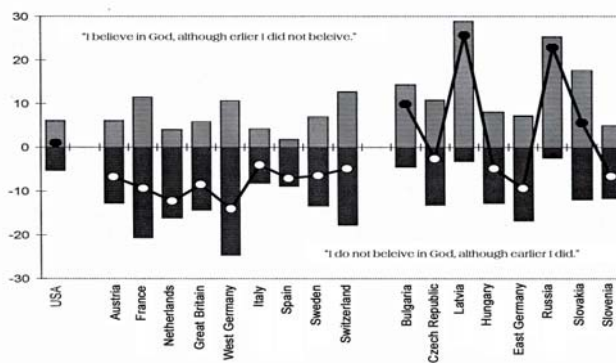
[565] Miklós Tomka, "Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában, különös tekintettel Magyarországra," *Confessio* no. 2 (2001/), 24-52. See also part of his research published in German and English:

[566] European Value Study (EVS), World Value Study (WVS), Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and the Aufbruch – New Departures.

[567] Tomka, "Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában," 25.

[568] The rate of conversion and apostasy in the adult population of some of the western and post-Communist societies. The data are in percentage. (Sourece: ISSP, 1998) in Tomka, "Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában," 25.

Mostly the dominant historical churches started to revert to their previous positions before Communism from which they would be able to continue their impact on society and fill the value vacuum created by the fall of the Communist regimes. Some authors try to show that for those societies religion is still crucial for the overall functioning of a particular society.

Because of the complex nature of the transition, there are great differences in religiosity among the post-communist countries (see figure 1) of Central and Eastern Europe, which is manifested in a high degree of variance between the nations and inapplicability of the modernisation thesis, mostly because of different histories and religious traditions and also the peculiarities of communist modernization and other particularities of communist rules, as some relevant data (EVS in 1999.) show.[569] The role of religion and the church in society also show a more positive picture in case of the Eastern block. However, no one can deny that religion still has a place in the western societies' culture.

In the Eastern block after World War II, the churches greatly helped in the rebuilding of society. Probably the sympathy towards the church is a part of this positive historical remembrance - according to Tomka. The forced break of Communism in the life of the post communist societies in relation to the collective experience of the churches can also result in a more optimistic picture under the influence of hope and expectations, rather than the actual experiences about the church.[570]

Figure 2: *The social demand of the role of religion in society*[571]

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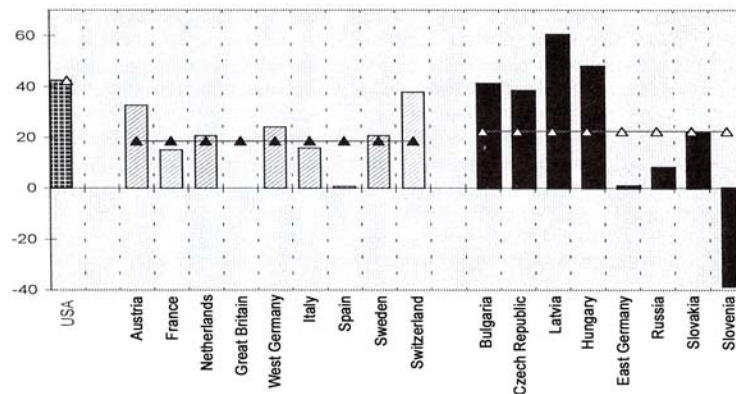
[569] Miklós Tomka, "Contradictions of secularism and the preservations of the sacred," R. Laermans, B. Wilson, J. Billiet, (eds.), *Secularization and Social Integration. Papers in Honor of Karel Dobbealaere* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998).; Miklós Tomka, "Religion, Church, State and Civil Society in East-Central Europe," I. Borowik, (ed.) *Church-State Relations in Central and Eastern Europe* (Krakow, Nomos, 1999).

[570] Tomka, *"Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában,"* 25.

[571] The rate of *the social demand of the role of religion in society* in the adult population of some of the western and post-Communist societies. The data are in percentage. (Source: ISSP, 1998) in Tomka, *"Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában,"* 26.

It is clearly shown in figure 2 that the culture and worldview of the west is more homogenous then in the region of the post-Communist countries. The debate on secularization often refers to the matter that the institutional form of religion is weakened by secularisation and not religiosity itself. The situation is even more complex in the Eastern - Middle – European region where the divergences are marked. Tomka explains that with the observation that the people in the post-Communist countries are in the process of a changing system and are in transition, often the church's role in the new forms of societies is referred to without having real experience about church life.[572]

Figure 3: *Confidence in the church*[573]
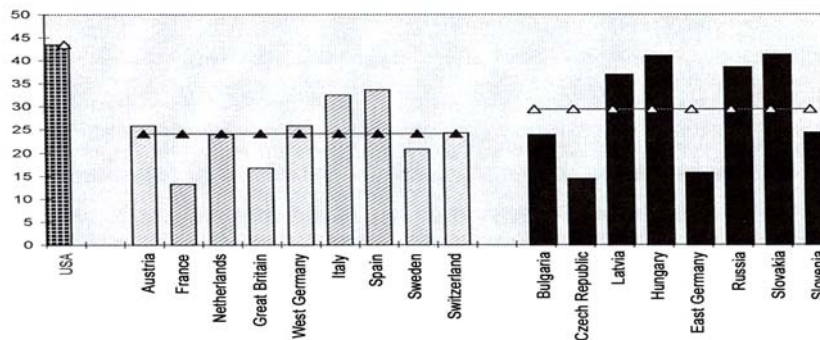
The confidence in the churches – according to the above introduced factors – does not show any surprise. Even if we consider that the confidence in the social institutions generally is decreasing, yet the church so far could save its social prestige, and even a very slow increase is measurable.[574] By this way the estimation of the power of the church in the social consciousness can have important results.

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[572] Tomka, "Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában," 27.

[573] The rate of *the confidence of the church* in the adult population of some of the western and post-Communist societies. The data are in percentage. (Source: ISSP, 1998). Tomka, "*Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában,*" 26.

[574] Tomka refers to a sociological appraisal which demonstrates that church prestige is 1.15 greater than the first ten social institutions' prestige in Hungary. Tomka, "*Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában,*" 27.

Figure 4: *The estimation of the power of the churches*[575]
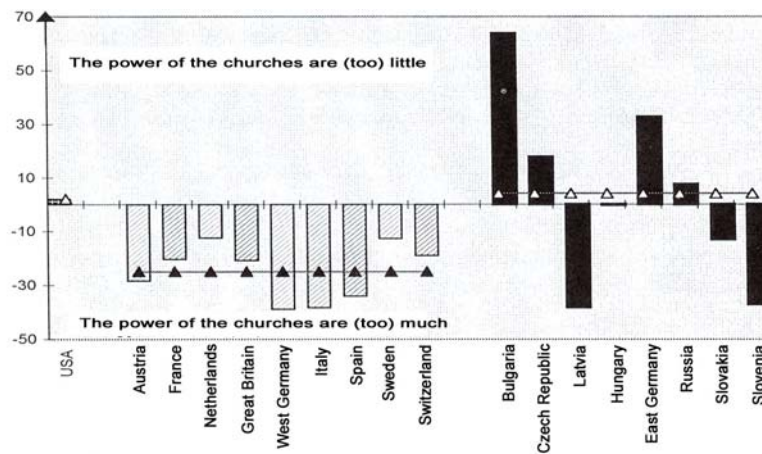
Figure 4 shows that in the dimension of the West and the post Communist region the same tendencies are detectable, whose reasons have been discussed above. The significant divergences in the post-Communist countries are mainly due to the different socio-political transitions, and this precisely shows the role the actual political climate assures for the churches. In Hungary we see a neutral result, which shows the consequence that the transition did not develop far enough to take one or the other side. The possibility that we are facing a permanent situation is rather questionable because of the open inquiry of politics toward the church and vice versa, as we discussed earlier.

Tomka lists three systems of coherence which strengthen religious traditionalism with regard to the inheritance of Communism in Hungary. 1) the specific socio-demographical components; 2) the religious politics of Communism resulted in that the practicing Christians are isolated in all areas of the society; 3) persecution of religion provided spasmodic efforts for defence which are still present after the changes. Religiosity is not equally present in the different segments of society. The relative majority of the Christians are present in the rural areas of Hungary among the older people. That relativity becomes obvious if we take into account that only 5-6% of the inhabitants of the cities under age fifty are practicing Christians.

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[575] The rate of *the estimation of the power of the churches* in the adult population of some of the western and post-Communist societies. The data are in percentage. (Sourece: ISSP, 1998) in Tomka, "*Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európába,*" 26.

Figure 5: *The religiously active population in the structure of Hungarian society in light of age and residence in the beginning of 1990*[576]

Urban population
younger than age 50
(37% of the Hungarian
adult population;
12% of the religiously active
adult population)

Towns

Urban population
older than age 50
(37% of the Hungarian
adult population;
12% of the religiously active
adult population)

Adult Hungarian population

**Religiously active
and their rate from
the right category**

Under age 50

5,6   23,2%

12,6   37,3%

**Older than
age 50**

Rural population
younger than age 50
(22% of the Hungarian
adult population;
16% of the religiously active
adult population)

Villages

Rural population
older than age 50
(22% of the Hungarian
adult population;
16% of the religiously active
adult population)

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[576] Tomka, *"Vallási Változások Kelet-Közép-Európában,"* 49.

Those who are religious in Hungary are culturally isolated according to their (Christian) norms in the profane culture. That partly comes as the inheritance of the time of Communism and as the social determination of age, social status and environment. The postmodern characteristics often widen that gap on all levels of life (politics, communication, technological revolution, media etc), and the counter effect on the isolated part of the religious communities is that they are often viewed as extreme representatives of traditionalism. Any attempts to break free from traditionalism will culminate in pluralism inside the church as a reflection of a dominantly pluralistic society, and this could lead to enrichment in church life as well as to the danger of schism.

5.6.2 The Outward Image of the Reformed Church of Hungary

After describing the general image of the church in the post-Communist region compared to the western societies to a certain extent, we arrive at a number of results and directions of tendencies in relation to the theme of the *outward image of the church*. Our attempt is to give a sharper focus on the Reformed Church of Hungary in this part. The possibilities are very limited since there has not been any sufficient religious-sociological statistical measurements relating to the Reformed Church of Hungary. Therefore the picture we can draw must be evaluated as a viewpoint.

A seemingly vivid debate started in the year of 2000 in the weekly official newspaper of the Reformed Church of Hungary. László Kósa published a polemic essay entitled: *Nine Hundred Words about Us, Reformed People.*[577] It can be said that Kósa in his article contoured the image of the church as a Reformed intellectual scholar (he is not a pastor), and through his diagnosis an important image of the church is given.

Kósa organized his *nine hundred* words in twelve points and connected to five themes. 1) Writing in the year two thousand, he focused the attention on the *mission of the church* which lacked effectiveness. The church was not able to actualize its mission. Communication with the secular society has a misplaced strategy. The language and concepts of the church are alienating for the majority. His remarks clearly touched upon the transition of social structure (in the village and the city) during the last fifty years. 2) The Reformed Church of Hungary is in a *moral crisis* in almost all areas of the church life: on the level of office bearers, finances, juridical and personal life. 3) *Reform in the theological training*. Kósa positively recognizes that replacement of pastors is not a problem anymore. The reform would need to go in the direction of making the scientific theological education available in a wider circle. The postgraduate programs and the specification of the different new areas (chaplains for the army, hospitals, jails, etc) have to be taken into consideration in the reforms. An organized education of the elders and other members of the congregation is just as important as the other areas'. 4) To *strengthen the dialogue between the intellectual class* and the church in order to build a Reformed intellectuality so

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[577] László Kósa, "Kilencszáz szó rólunk, reformátusokról," *Reformátusok Lapja* (26 March 2000), 4.

that the reformed identity can have a more significant role. 5) Finally, Kósa calls attention to the importance of *fraternal collaboration* among the different denominations, especially in prominent questions of society. The fraternal collaboration should not be overruled by the increased maintenance of the faith-identity. He, however, testifies that any renewal in the church is impossible without the renewal of the faith, which is still in delay since the historical changes of 1990.

The debate did not last long and after a few months hardly anyone was willing to show any sign of activity for the further consideration of Kósa's points. One part of the actual church-leadership, bishop Mihály Márkus, provided a mechanism of defense on a superficial level which was an explanation of the situation rather than any real facing of the actual situation of the church.[578] László Abloncy completed Kosa's consideration with his personal inner experiences from the Reformed Church of Hungary as a counter reaction to Márkus's answer. The *THÉMA Association* was the only church organization which significantly, with deep theological consideration, supported the elaboration of Kósa's challenging points on the image of the Reformed Church of Hungary, by means of a series of conferences and publication of the materials of these conferences.[579] The wider circle of the church showed indifference and no activity of interest in taking part in the debate.

Another measuring of the image of the Reformed Church can be the population census in 2001 to a certain extent. The census also measured the denominational identity. Out of the total number of the Hungarian population 1.622.796 (15.9%) people declared him/herself to be Reformed. The number of those who declared themselves to belong to the Reformed Church was not equal with the number of active membership, which is less. The statistic result of the census indicates possible and real sympathy for the Reform Church.

5.6.3 The Inward Image of the Reformed Church of Hungary

The ethics and sociological department of the Reformed Faculty of Debrecen made a sociological investigation of the church in order to locate the current situation, and the results also provide some orientation points for a description of the inward image of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

Out of 1400 questioned people who declared themselves members of the Reformed Church, 30% answered that in order to solve their problems they turn to the help of astrology, the horoscope, yoga transcendental meditation, and holistic medicine, beside or instead of pastoral care. Out of the 37% who sometime attend church worship services, only 24% attend church services weekly, and 19 % attend church services more than one time a week. The consequences of the survey suggest that faith toward (any) transcendental is present inside

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[578] Bishop Mihály Márkus, "12 pontban kilencszáz szó... 'Tíz év életünkben rengeteg, az örökkévalóság tekintetében elhanyagolható'," *Reformátusok Lapja* (2 April 2000), 4.

[579] The THÉMA Association dedicated two complete journals to the theme, entitled: "Rólunk reformátusokról van szó – állásfoglalás. Konfliktus és konszenzus az egyházban," *THÉMA* no. 2-3 (2000), 1-4.

and outside of the church as well. As the relatively high rate shows, the doctrinal teaching of the church about God is rather weak among the active church members. It also became clear from the investigation that 37% thought that believing in God was possible without the church, and 36% declared that the matter of church membership was not connected to attending church services. A relatively small rate of 4% declared that they did not agree with the teachings of the Reformed Church.[580] The *optio* as freedom of choices and *mobilitas* in opposition to stability are a great challenge for the church, which is also obvious from the investigation.

Bishop Gusztáv Bölcskei highlighted the notion of *consensus* about the present situation in the Reformed Church of Hungary. He claims that there is no doubt that a *consensus* has a necessary priority in order to make further steps. Such a consensus has three major functions in relation to the church. Firstly, it declares something that the church obligatorily admits for itself any time and any place. Secondly, this declaration also contains the concrete situation. The "when" and the "how" are addressed for the clarification of the church's essence, which cannot be given up regardless of the circumstances. Thirdly, this consensus has to be obligatory for the members of the church as well.[581] If there had been a functioning consensus about the doctrines, about the teaching of the Gospel and the practice of the sacraments according to the Word of God, the problems we inherited from the past 40 years could have been rightly placed, and the attempts for solutions in relation to the new challenges of the present could have had more constructive results. We could have come closer to the Tillichian notions of the *protestant principium[582]* and the *catholic substances*,[583] which should be in an ideal correlation with each other, as stated in István B. Szabó's evaluations.[584]

Furthermore Szabó focuses on the following ecclesiological characteristics which are more or less still present and cannot be neglected, because they universally belong to the Reformed Church of Hungary from a historical perspective. 1) The Reformed Church of Hungary is a confessional church with solid bases on the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *II. Helvetian Confession*. This cannot solve all the problems of mission suddenly but one can hardly talk about commitment without confessional bases. 2) The Reformed Church of Hungary is *historical*. Historicity, besides all its rich understanding also means historical sensitivity for the actual happenings of history and for God's providence and

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[580] Sándor Fazakas, Mit nyújthat még az egyház? Az egyház feladatáról és szabadságáról az ezredforduló plura-lista társadalmában, (manuscript of the lecture held at the Assembly of Transtibician Church District, 8 December 2000).

[581] Gusztáv Bölcskei, "Konszenzuskeresés és hitvallásos helyzet," *THÉMA, Theológiai Élet Ma – Protestáns Tanulmányi Kör* no.2-3 (2000), 14-23.

[582] Under the notion of *Protestant principium* we understand the spiritual force which is able to defend the church from the destruction of the profane and the demonic powers.

[583] By the notion of *Catholic substance* we mean that spiritual presence which is manifested in culture.

[584] István Bogárdi Szabó, "A MRE elmúlt tíz évének írásos értékelései," *THÉMA, Theológiai Élet Ma – Protestáns Tanulmányi Kör Lapja*, (2000, special edition), 30-43.

leading in history. 3) The Reformed Church of Hungary has shown sensitivity and *solidarity* with the local context where the (universal) understanding of mission of the church has to be fulfilled. 4) The Reformed Church of Hungary searches for the truth of God which can overrule all relativism. God's truth also has an eschatological dimension in the believers' life. This truth has to be presupposed behind all action of the church in order not to miss the goal. 5) The Reformed Church of Hungary is *theocentric*. This is the deepest layer of the image of the church and by this centre all the above mentioned points can be held together.[585]

5.7 Concluding Remarks

Now, we are only summarizing the list of challenges which the Reformed Church of Hungary has to face since the political transition of 1989/90.

It is clear that the Reformed Church of Hungary found itself in a complex and very difficult situation after the changes. On the one hand, instability, the lack of self-identity and the missing concepts for the present and future were fed by the earlier mentioned circumstances. The effects of Communism did not vanish without a trace. Its marks more characterise the Hungarian people than anybody could have foreseen. On the other hand, all the major changes in the world such as the long processes of secularisation, globalisation and the sudden dominant force of capitalism, with all their negative effects, postmodern threats and self-emptiness made a great impact on Hungarian society as was discussed in this chapter. These major lines of contemporary challenges required an urgent response from the Reformed Church of Hungary as well. Regarding the order of the task, the Reformed Church of Hungary mainly mixed up its priorities. That was due to the unsolved problems of the past forty years, and the lack of a desire for a deep and honest theological elaboration which could give a solid basis for further actions.

In accordance with the earlier described history of the Reformed Church of Hungary, we may come to the conclusion that a theological foundation which defines the church primarily according to its dialogue with the world, does not guarantee any sufficient truly ecclesial programmes. The self-understanding of the church concerning its own existence – taking the reality of the context of the past, present and future into account – is an unavoidable task for the church. With the above mentioned statement we do not mean that the church's ultimate foundation is in this world. We simply mean that while Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, the context of the church in which this message is being proclaimed is not the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Therefore theology, which does not want to neglect the context, needs to be reflective by nature as well. The efficiency of any reflection is always determined by the timing along with the inseparable factors of the content and the form. By the time of the changes the *content* and *form* were inadequately addressed by the Reformed Church of Hungary. We can conclude that the transition of the

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[585] Bogárdi Szabó, "A MRE elmúlt tíz évének írásos értékelései," 30-43.

church did not differ from the typical process of the country on a political level, whereby the whole transition of the political system was a "negotiated revolution" - and therefore, taking the past into account by means of a responsible reckoning, did not happen. The consequences of this determined the Reformed Church's relation to its members, and to the new political situation and the church's role in society. According to the earlier given description of the state-church and church-state relationship, the comprehension of the Reformed Church of Hngary did not essentially change. The modified, mainly political situation formed the actual attitude of the church to the state, which was to not take the economic, cultural transformation of society and its effect on the community of the church into account. The priorities of the church have been therefore often confusing and rather spontaneous, so that occasional solutions characterised the steps taken by the church. The negative effect of this attitude of the church is clearly illustrated in its theological work, which was dominantly shaped by the possibilities of the context. The church experienced the same consequences that the entire society went through. It could not even define its essence on a theological basis and therefore it was unable to set up its boundaries. The loss of the Christology for ecclesiology, which began by the time of the *theology of the servant church*, became evident. In the new situation the church was not able to bridge that ecclesiological gap adequately which was the consequence of the lack of Christology. The subject of the theological concerns of the Reformed Church of Hungary was dominantly related to socio-political issue as we have demonstrated it in this chapter. None of the above described theological movements were able to play a determinative role in relation to any solutions. From the Donatist Factors point of view this facts will take an important role at the theological consideration.

In the next concluding chapter our attempt will be the theological analysis of the present ecclesiological situation in light of the special focus (the Donatist Factor) of this study.

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6.

UNA SANCTA CATHOLICA ET APOSTOLICA ECCLESIA –
ECCLESIA SINE MACULA ET RUGA

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6.1 Introduction

In this last chapter of our study, which has a special focus on the ecclesiological concerns of the *Donatist dissent*, we make an attempt to develop a systematic theological evaluation of the ecclesiological situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary, with special reference to the times after 1989/90. Our inquiry concentrated on the characteristic theological questions and answers of the third and fourth centuries' debate between the Catholic Church and certain initiatives and movements. The differentiations became more marked and finally separation took place after the difficult times of the persecution of the Christian church in North Africa in the fourth century. Christianity experienced one of the first notable church divisions, which came to be known as the Donatist schism. In the course of events the prehistory of the debate, as found in the theological insights of Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Novatian schism, also carry importance in relation to Donatism and to the formation of ecclesiology in the land of North Africa, the effects of which made a notable impact on the whole Western tradition of the church.

In opposition to the often one-sided negative view on Donatism, we took into account the number of scholarly treatments from the second half of the twentieth century which suggest a reconsideration of the Donatist dissent, and in this way, also of their ecclesiology. According to this new approach the problems which were raised by the Donatist movement can stand as a *signpost in ecclesiology,* which in turn has a number of *factors,* and this provides an interesting way to form paradigms for the ecclesiological analysis of the Hungarian situation. This gives a special focus for our present study. The basic ecclesiological issues of Donatism are under a continuous *test* in the history of the Church, which also shows the legitimacy of their relevance from time to time.

From a systematic theological point of view the number of challenges for the church vividly brought forward by the Donatist *identity* can be pictured in the dynamics of this last chapter's title: *Una sancta catholica et apostolica ecclesia – Ecclesia sine macula et ruga.* On the one hand, the last article of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed ("*The Profession of Faith*"), points to the touchstones of the 'true Christian faith' which were already present in various forms before and after 381 – by testifying that *we believe (in)*[586] *one, holy, catholic and apostolic church* (Πιστεύομεν εἰς μίαν, ἁγίαν, καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν) - which we think should be correlated with the view on the church as *without spot and wrinkle (ecclesia sine macula et ruga).* On the other hand, when the

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[586] In the Latin version of the creed which is used by the Western tradition, the word *in* is missing. The different convictions behind the use of *in* by the Eastern tradition and its lack of use by the Western tradition are explored by Van de Beek's study, "Credimus in Ecclesiam," *Genius Loci* (Sárospatak: Sárospataki Református Teológiai Akadémia, 2006), 17-39.

Christian church sometimes uses the phrase *ecclesia sine macula et ruga* as not only referring to an eschatological reality but to a present reality as well, then the concept could become a source of division and schism in the church. This way of breaking the correlation with the belief (in) the *una sancta catholica et apostolica ecclesia,* results indeed in *macula et ruga* on the unity of the church.

The various ecclesiological considerations in the Christian tradition have used different modes and methods to create a framework of ecclesiology. The Scriptures reveal the ultimate authority of the Christian religion, therefore the person of Jesus Christ as concretely experienced by his disciples, has a major role in it. From this perspective the person of Christ determines the concept of the church historically, as *terminus post quem*, although on the level of salvation history the church itself claims to be older, as is well expressed for example in the Heidelberg Catechism's question and answer 54. The original word *ekklesia* in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) signifies the concept of the gathering of the people of God ('church') on three different levels. These are: the liturgical assembly, local community, and the universal church. What was forgotten in the Christian tradition was that religion might step into the trap of ideology, although this was clearly pointed out by Paul (1 Cor. 1, 10-17); and in John 19 Jesus also seems to foresee it. The church is always more than any mere ideology; it is an existential way of life and involves theory put into practise according to the biblical witness. The church is on the way (*in via*).

In our ecclesiological inquiry we systematically aim to develop our analyses on the church by means of the doctrine of faith depicted by biblical imagery. In our case studies on Donatism and the Reformed Church of Hungary, the church was also looked upon as an institution in historical settings with a certain context. These two aspects of the doctrinal and the institutional setting are always a source of the general presentation of ecclesiology, whereby the focus is upon the distinguishing and the combining of these two aspects. We also recognised that a balance is very necessary in order to avoid the classical history of heresies (which most vividly appeared in Christological approaches such as *Nestorianism* and *Monophysitism)* – and these also had results in ecclesiological understandings. Neither the human nor the divine dimension should be accentuated at the expense of the other in ecclesiology, just as well as in Christology.

Our aim in this last chapter is to give a comprehensive overview on the understanding of the *una sancta catholica ecclesia* in the time of the Donatists, when the view on the church's present reality was highly seen as *sine macula et ruga* by them. In parallel to our investigation we turn our attention to the history of the situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary since the sixteenth century and we try to reveal what was common and different in the ecclesiological understanding of the Refomed Church of Hungary, in comparison to Donatism, and how the comparison of similarities and differences can help to understand the present ecclesiological situation of the Reformed Church in Hungary since the changes of 1989/90.

The *unity* and *sanctity* of the church, and the theme of *ethnicity* in relation to ecclesiology are at stake in the ecclesiological concerns of Donatism – and these

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also are combined together in the various factors of Donatism, which we have introduced at the end of the second chapter (2.7). These three characteristic themes vividly reappeared from time to time in the life of the church, also in the case of the Reformed Church of Hungary. Therefore, the core of our elaboration will follow these major categories. We also aim to discuss and organise some of the Donatist Factors and their relevance on a scale of similarities and differences in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary under the above mentioned three major ecclesiological themes. In this way we hope to bring together the historical and theological elements, to a certain extent, and we hope thereby to deepen the conclusion of our study. We find it useful that the analysis also takes into account Christian perspectives on the local and universal changes in the world, whereby this important issue might strengthen the understanding of the results of the last chapter. The sub-themes in this last chapter have the importance of clarifying some of the bases and limits of the analogy between the time of the theological challenges of Donatism, and the situation of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

We will now conclude our introduction to this chapter by posing a number of general questions, which will serve as a hermeneutical tool throughout our elaboration. The definition of the *marks of the church* is a characteristic source of ecclesiological problems, just as well in the past as in the present. When the *notae ecclesiae* are the focus of ecclesiology, on the basis of the belief of *una sancta catholica et apostolica ecclesia,* a number of questions always need to be settled in order to understand the ecclesiological concerns of that given time. We find important the following questions: What are the conditions by which the church might claim the attribute of being a 'true church'? What enables the church to distinguish itself from other communities and organisations, which are not called to be a church? Are the attributes in the list of the *marks* of the church merely illustrative or are these marks at the same time also constitutive features as well? Can only these four classic marks be determinative for defining the *true* church, or can more features be added to the classic list? Are these *other* marks on the same level with the *classic* marks of the church? What are these marks really attempting to prove? Is there any certainty that the church in a historical setting is a church as God intends it to be? How can these signs or *marks* of the church function so that the church can be recognised as a community of God's people, while one can also experience that these marks in their human application might become contradictory to each other by favouring one better then the other?

6.2 Unity in diversity

Although we make an attempt to elaborate the Donatist Factors' importance in the ecclesiological challenges of the Reformed Church of Hungary according to the above given arrangement of subjects, namely, the *unity*, the *sanctity* of the church and the question of *ethnicity*, we also have to realise that there are overlapping factors among these themes.

The concept of *unity in diversity* expresses well the overlapping characteristic of the number of factors which describe the *notae ecclesiae* in any given time of the history of the Christian Church. The principle of the *unity in diversity* is

not an invention of the church itself according to its challenges and difficulties, but it is clearly Biblical. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are many and distributed differently to churches and individuals in various places. According to the New Testament teachings the whole body of Christ is enriched by the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, while none of the members can claim to have every gift. The different gifts are united in the Spirit who is present as "the same God [who] works all of them in all people" (1 Cor 12: 6) and "each of the manifestations of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1Cor 12: 7) Paul's letter to the Ephesians echoes the same conviction when it declares: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Eph. 4: 3-6)

One of the continuous dangers and challenges for the understanding of the *unity in diversity* seems to be the natural desire of the Christian (individual) existence that there be something precious and God-given is in its *own mode* of Christianity in a particular place, culture, ethnicity or tradition. This clearly raises the challenge of the *universal* and *contextual* understanding of the faith of the Christian Church, which points to the theme of *ecclesiological responsibility*. The paradoxical nature of unity that should manifest itself in legitimate diversity - and the paradoxical nature of universality which should be in harmony with contextuality - is always very difficult to balance. The scandal is not in the differences but when the differences lead to separation, which creates an obstacle to communion. These obstacles lead to all sorts of confusions, whereby it is less evident that unity in diversity is God's will for the church.

6.2.1 Unity in diversity and the schism of the Donatists

Our case study of Donatism acknowledged the complex nature of these ecclesiological problems taking into account the prehistory of the movement which was only a thin line away from also becoming extreme. On the one hand *uniformity* is one possible extreme of unity which without doubt suppresses diversity. On the other hand, the opposite extreme is *radical individualism* which aims to exclude unity.

The interplaying of social-economic-political and ethnic forces along with various religious ideals made Donatism become a paradigmatic church-historical phenomenon. So, let us see how the unity in diversity was comprehended in the context of Donatism.

The timeless questions of Christianity and the Church are: how Christianity can preserve itself in the changes of the world in a way that does not renounce God. Is it possible to find shelter on a Firm Basis among the shattering changes of human history? On the one hand, the nature of transitions can be evaluated as a positive motion, while at the same time nostalgia appears in relation to the time before the changes. On the other hand, transitions can be evaluated as stagnant when nothing significant happens. It is a danger not to realize that false beliefs or expectations can occur in relation to the changes of history, especially when the transition itself seems to be salutary. An understanding of the nature of transi-

tions becomes more focused when one can distinguish the intentions of the forces behind the changes. When these motivations are revealed, making a distinction between good and bad is easier. The concept of *peripeteia*, the unceasing process of alteration, has always influenced Christianity. On the one hand, the understanding of *peripeteia* in the Church, and on the other hand, the orientation of the Church among the changing course of events, has affected the attitude of the Church and provided different ecclesiological perspectives. These two elements are clearly distinguishable beyond the complexity of the specific problems of Donatism, and also are to be found on the other side, namely, the reaction by the Catholic Church.

One solution is to find a solid basis beyond the ever changing reality of the world in an unchangeable timeless *immobilitas*. The various philosophical perspectives of Greek idealism and the politicized Latin version of Greek thinking, found such a perspective in the *Pax Romana* which called for a defence against the chaos and anarchy, which are always the unavoidable results of *peripeteia*. Similarly, the ideologists of the twentieth century sometimes aimed at the same purpose when their utopian constructions had no open window, hoping to control the future, by means of "*a system against the Everlasting, which thought itself Eternal.*"

Another solution, which begins with the prophets of the Old Testament, is the opposite in its understanding, by finding help not in the concept of something timeless and motionless, but rather in a God who expressed Himself as the "one who will be" (*ehieh aser ehieh*) in the transition of human history. In this second view, the transition is taken seriously; it is not seen as only an illusion, or as something which does not matter - which would create some sort of immunization from *peripeteia* – rather, the point is to find a firm ground in God among the insecurities of changes. By means of this certainty it is possible to face the changes of history with all their tragedies, which at the same time also means staying inside history. Since the beginning of Christianity, in opposition to outside influences, this view has been determinative in the Christian's thought and life. That becomes obvious in the Logos who became flesh, who took up human history, who lived and died, and who was resurrected in time. In the name of the *Kyrious,* Christianity did not acknowledge the *Imperium Romanum* and did not find its *salus* in the Roman political concept of *Pax Romana,* but rather in the concept of the *basileia* announced by Jesus Christ.

This view was modified with the growth of Christianity, which also resulted in the strengthening of the institutional form of the church. On the one hand, one can recognise the oppositional forms of Christianity towards its context and culture while on the other hand, as already in the second century's apologetics, a notable attempt is sometimes made to reveal the values of antiquity, as forerunners of Christianity. The *universal feature* of Christianity has its orientation towards the whole world as the field of its mission. The Christians did not want to appear to be *anarchists* but rather loyal citizens of the Empire. The *locus classicus* of apostolic literature also points in this direction, in Rom. 13 and in 1 Pet. 2: 13-17. The lives of the Christians were determined by loyalty and at the same time they

held a critical distance to their altering surroundings. The concept of having a *double citizenship* which points to the residency on *earth* and the residency in *Heaven* (Phil. 3: 20) helped to maintain this ambivalent nature of Christianity, which was even strengthened by various practices such as *asceticism.*

The understanding of the changes by the Christians under Roman domination in North Africa went in the direction of setting up the boundaries of the church in opposition to its external enemies. Opposition to the dominant Roman religious culture promoted unity but at the same time also created internal diversity. The well defined boundaries of the church in the time of Tertullian protected the unity of the church and did not allow differentiation to grow to extremes on various issues, such as holiness, which would lead to division. The influence of the *New Prophecy* on Tertullian's theology increased the differentiation between the *ecclesia numerus episcoporum* and the *ecclesia spiritu.* Tertullian's radicalism resulted in an ecclesiological view of an *ecclesia in ecclesiola,* which rejected the surrounding Roman cultural and religious practices, along with the alternative forms of Christianity such as Marcionism and the different forms of Gnosticism.

 Cyprian found a good basis in the well worked out circumference of the church, although he was more flexible in its enforcement by making a distinction between the roles of clergy according to the status of the penitents. He saw the possibility of reintegration of the fallen bishops after they repented of their apostasy. In Cyprian's understanding of ecclesiology the unity of the church became stronger than his view on the purity of the church. Any schismatic attempt was equal to apostasy in his eyes. The principle of the *nulla salus extra ecclesiam* demonstrates this.

The Donatists, indirectly on the basis of Tertullian and directly on Cyprian's teachings of opposition to idolatry, insisted on separating the church, in this way abandoning the world wide unity of the church in order to maintain the purity of the church.

We also have to note the gradual acceptance of Christianity, starting with the reign of Constantine, which besides the number of positive effects also challenged Christianity radically, especially with the tendencies in the changes of the model for ecclesiology - namely, that the reign (*exsusia*) of Christ should be realized by the union of the churchly and the worldly power. These facts even kindled the situation of the separation of the Donatists, along with the socio-political aspect of the indigenous people in the Land of North Africa.

After the death of Constantine the restoration of the Donatist movement took place and it was followed by a rapid growth of the Donatist church. The unity of the divided church of the Donatists was established, which was built on an oppositional attitude to idolatry and to the Roman Government, as well as opposition to Catholic communion. The number of factors which our study has pointed out support and describe how Donatism was able to maintain its own unity after the schism. Among the number of elements, one important factor is the *role of the Image of Israel as collecta,* which could maintain the Donatist unity. This factor of the image of *collecta* as the holy assembly of Israel, helped to maintain and

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strengthen the Donatist community's identity among the unclean enemies – which they thought included the *traditores* of the Church. In the Donatist ecclesiology we see, on the one hand, the continuance of the development of their particular *African ecclesiology* in opposition to the ecclesiology of Rome, which came from 'over the sea', as the Donatists said. This was the basis of Augustine's view in the debate. The universality and the locality or contextuality of the church became unbalanced in the debate, whereby separation became unavoidable. The major cause of unbalance circled around the understanding of the concept of the *true church*, favouring one aspect better than the other. The Donatist's stress on the contextual elements in their ecclesiology led scholars to assume that their view on the *sancta ecclesia* was exclusively restricted to North Africa. However, upon viewing the whole of the Donatist history, that assumption cannot be held consequently. The task of the next points will be to analyze the particular *notae* of 'holiness', which became a source of schism.

In relation to the questions which we stated in the beginning of this chapter, we can answer that Donatism was deeply convinced that the marks of the church are not only illustrative but constitutive as well. The history of Donatism supports the fact that in their understanding the so called classic marks were not always on the same level in their application to the 'true church'. However, when the circumstances require it, certain marks needs to be emphasized in order to reach a new state when all the marks might be in harmony with each other. The persecution of Christianity by Diocletian and Christian martyrdom was such a central issue which also tested Christian *faithfulness* – according to the Donatist understanding. This opinion firmly stood on the heritage of the earlier North African and Novatian theological conviction. For example, Tertullian's understanding of martyrdom as a *second baptism with blood* signifies that martyrdom is a divinely appointed task.

When the apostates broke the union with Christ by their idolatrous actions, at the same time they also spoiled the whole church- in the eyes of the rigorist understanding. On the basis of the documents of the Conference of Carthage in 411 we also referred to the Donatists' claim that they did not argue that there was no orthodox church outside of North Africa. They merely stated that the members of the Catholic Church in Africa had communion with the *traditores*. The original motivation of the Conference was to settle these questions which led to the climacteric ecclesiological situation. The willingness of the Donatists to participate in the debate weakens the view that the Donatists, throughout their history, claimed to be the only true church. If they had held such an exclusive view, which ignores the rest of the universal church, the Donatists would not have participated in a conference which was organised by the Catholic Church whom they did not acknowledge as a church. Here we also have to refer to another important Donatist Factor, namely to the *role of construction of time*. By that factor the Donatists were able to form their theological understanding and their Biblical interpretation according to *times of suffering* and *the times of glory,* combined and strengthened with the image of the *collecta*. Such a construction of time by the development of the Donatist movement went in a direction in which the impor-

tance of glorious suffering gained importance in relation to the past rather than in relation to the *glorious end of all times*, thus strengthening in this way a *Donatist tradition* which marked their world-construction and world-maintenance. In their *revitalisation of the Christian message* a number of the Donatist Factors are brought together. The holiness and unity of the church, and Christological and ecclesiological concerns, are at the core of their views. In such an extreme situation when schism is unavoidable, and when the revitalization of the Christian message is in focus, one of the most problematic issues is how the church can remain part of the one body of Christ and also remain the spiritual home for a specific formation of Christian community in the given context. The questions of church-discipline, church-membership, the role that laity plays in relation to clergy or vice versa, were crucial in these matters –and their answers strictly followed their biblical understanding, namely, that the Bible was comprehended as the Law of God.

We also have to highlight the readiness of the movement to take into account changes in the context, as seen in certain Donatist's initiatives such as Parmenian's theology or more radically in the teachings of Tyconius (*Liber Regulam*). Tyconius' influence especially carries significance since his teaching on the church as a *migrant people,* and his teaching on the bipartite nature of the Church, led to the concept of *corpus permixtum* as the source of the Augustinian view. However, Donatism could not avoid one of the biggest dangers of separatist movements, namely, further schism (as the *Maximianist schism, 391 or 392*). Donatism vividly teaches us that any break-up of the unity of the church, threatens with more frequent further schisms. Church history seems to prove this phenomenon even if we only take into account the last two centuries' schisms in the Reformed family. The misbalanced view on the universality and contextuality of the faith of the church, and the over exaggeration of one or other factor of the *notae ecclesia* might be one source of the problem.

The Augustinian view took a different approach to these matters, which defined the unity of the church more positively, as the body of Christ joined together in mutual love, forgiveness and the service through the indwelling Holy Spirit. In this way the Augustinian view hoped to avoid some of the more exclusivist definitions of purity and holiness, and at the same time more *marks of the church* were added to the four 'classic' ones; and these new ones were on the same level as the classic ones, and served the purpose of a living realisation of the marks of the church. The Augustinian understanding of *ecclesiological responsibility* lay in the fact of shared responsibility for the identity of the church and put Christian virtues into the front line; and their practice was obligatory for all Christians. It was thought that in this way the unity of the local and universal church ought to be more egalitarian. The Donatists stressed one-sidedly the *office* of the church from the *classic guards* (canon, creed and office) of the church, replacing in this way the *creed* with Christian life and the *office* with the confessors, until the Cyprianic and Augustinian Catholic view made a notable effort to hold these formal, structural elements together.

In regard to our theme of the unity of the church on the basis of purity in relation to secularity, one of the questionable parts of the Augustinian ecclesiological view is that such a view did not take into account that the church itself might be sinful, not only by means of its individual members but also as an historical entity. Augustine, on the one hand never accepted the dualist conflict as it was argued, more or less in the North African theological tradition. He was ready to maintain a certain kind of principality of *secularity* which allowed the recognition of the political order as fully legitimate, while on the other hand, he was assured that humanity's final and true home is not in history but in eternity.

After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire (476) the view on the union of the state and church had radically changed. The ideal of the Christian Empire found its continuance in the successor of the Petrian office which was supposed to hold together the state and the church, and resulted in the struggle of the imperial rule with the papacy in the Middle Ages. The church's comprehension followed the Augustinian understanding of the state whereby the state was rather equal to the whole of the people in the state. By this way notable differences occurred between the Eastern and Western church's theory of the state. The Western church's view could move in the direction of constitutional monarchies, while the Eastern understanding stood firm on the analogy of God in its more absolutist monarchical view.

6. 2. 2 The Relevance of the Donatist Factors after Donatism

Some of the most fierce emotions and thoughts were present in the age of schism in the sixteenth century – as Wright David indicates. Augustine's writings against the Donatists ensured that the sixteenth century would be well informed – from the Augustinian point of view – about the Donatists. Almost every church party had a good reason to accuse the other with the charge of Donatism. That is also true as for the pre-runners of the Reformation, for example Wycliffe and Hus were often seen as a rebels and they were described as neo-Donatists by their opponents, just as well as for the mainline churches of the Reformation era.[587] Protestants and Roman Catholics traced the origin of the heresies of their time from ancient errors. That was the case when Protestant Reformers found neo-Donatism in Anabaptist Radicals, and when Roman Catholic apologists exposed Donatism in the mainstream of the Reformation itself.[588] Wright in his conclusion emphasizes the fact, on the basis of William George[589], that during the Reformation the Protestants were very similar to the Donatists, except for their theo-

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[587] Jaroslav Pelikan, "Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)," *The Christian Tradition,* vol. 4 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 92-98.

[588] David Wright, "The Donatists in the sixteenth century," *Auctoritas Patrum II, New Contribution on the Reception of the Church Fathers in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, ed. Grane Leif, Schindler Alfred and Markus Wriedt, (Mainz, Verlag Philip on Zabern, 1998). Here Wright gives a number of evidences from the sixteen century theological literatures to show how certain characteristic (negative) elements from Donatism vividly stayed alive. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, "Reformation of Church and Dogma," 272-274.

[589] William George, "Radical Reformation," *Sixteen Century Essays and Studies* XV (Kirksville, MO,1992), 361.

logical devotion to Augustine, which in his opinion is one of the anomalies of the Reformation era. Perhaps because various Protestants showed many similarities to the Donatist movement, their interest was to accuse their opponents of being Donatists. They did so with no little success in the case of the Anabaptists, as we can see for example, in Calvin's sharp admonitions whereby the Anabaptists are put in one line with the Cathari (Novatians) and the Donatists, who he says were "imbued with a false conviction of their own perfect sanctity"[590].

With the reconsideration of the Donatist movement we come closer to an understanding of what the Donatist Factor can mean in ecclesiology, not only from the Donatist Church's mistakes but also from their specialties, which consists of some considerable elements as well.

The recognition of the Donatist Factors beyond their own historical context is possible not only because the label '*Donatist*' was inherited as an accusation later in the history of theology, but also because the different elements of the Donatist movement reappeared from time to time in the history of the Christian Church with varying intensity.

6.2.3 The Essentia Ecclesiae – Short Overview of the Reformers' Ecclesiological View in Light of the Donatist Factors

Before turning our attention to an evaluation of the relevance of the Donatist Factors in the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary, it is important to point to some of the special themes wherein the Donatist Factors may have played a role in the ecclesiology of the Reformation. We are faced with a complex ecclesiological situation in the sixteenth century. The ecclesiology of the Reformation returned obsessively to the problem of distinguishing between the false and true church. As we have seen earlier, the accusation of Donatism was vividly present in the debates of the Reformation. Some of the most characteristic elements under the theme of the unity and sanctity of the church became also the source of conflict in the debate between the Catholics and the Reformers.

The Reformation's concept of the church is largely dominated by the following issues: 1) A personal relationship with God; and 2) the definition of the true church. These concerns are inseparably related and vividly bring forward the patristic watchword *nulla salus extra ecclesiam* (no salvation outside of the church) which was assumed on all sides.

The ecclesiology of the Reformation as we find it in Luther is evangelical and Christological. The nature and the essence of the church in Luther's understanding solely depend on the Christian Gospel and the reality of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The church was created by the living presence of Christ through his Word. Where the Gospel is found Christ is present, and where he is present the church must truly exist. This conviction is the basis of the Reformation struggle and shared by all the Reformers (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and Anabaptist). In Luther's thoughts the church was spiritually based on the Christian life, which did not need external sanctions imposed by secular authorities, and there

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[590] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (4. 1. 13.), in John T. McNeill (edit.) *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. XXI, 1026-1028. See also IV, XII, 12.

was no need for ecclesiastical jurisdiction or discipline until the second genera-tion of the Reformers (Melanchton and Calvin), who attempted to rationalize Lu-ther's ecclesiology and gave shape and form to the evangelical doctrine of the church. The Reformation concept of the church inspired more attention to the doctrine of the marks of the true church (*notae ecclesiae*) and also more teaching on ministry and mission. This way it was not enough to claim to be the church, one must bear the marks of the church. That concept was combined with the two aspects of the church: visible and invisible. The concept of the church developed by the Calvinist Reformers gave more consideration to the church's circumfer-ence, than in Luther's thought, which was more concentrated on Christ as the centre. In the line of development represented by Bucer, others such as Calvin, the early Puritans, the Anabaptists and English Separatists also stressed disci-pline. One of the crucial questions has circled around the *notae ecclesiae*, as to whether the marks are to be understood in a definitive or in a descriptive sense. If one considers the Word and the sacraments to be the true marks of the church, one also had to realise that the pure empirical evidences of the *notae* are not a guarantee of the existence of the true church. Faith, as the concomitant element, is required and determinative in relation to understanding what the church is all about. The *notae* may be seen but also need to be grasped by a trusting faith. Therefore their essential meaning is hidden from empirical and rational under-standing alone. This paradoxical nature of the identification of the true church causes most of the challenges concerning distinctions among the different de-nominations and movements in Christianity, as one can discover in the ambigu-ous statements of the Reformers in relation to the Church of Rome. The Augus-tinian concept of the *corpus permixtum* found its parallel in the Reformation doctrine of justification *simul peccator et iustus*. Calvin developed Luther's thoughts on ecclesiology, while not losing sight of the Christological centre. A more pragmatic view appears in the concept of the visible church. The doctrine of the *notae ecclesiae* holds importance as a qualitative conception in Calvin's un-derstanding. That can be well pictured in the ministry of the Word,[591] which bears importance in the *notae ecclesiae* – in Calvin's thoughts. Calvin's ecclesiological position might be seen as transitional between Luther and the Puritan tradition, not losing sight of the Christological centre and finding ways to emphasize disci-pline. While the first is the *esse* of the church, the second is the *bene esse*- accord-ing to Calvin's understanding.[592]

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[591] „...the church is called the "pillar of the truth" because by its ministry the truth is preserved and spread. God does not himself come down from heaven to us, nor does he daily send angelic mes-sengers to publish his truth, but he uses the labours of pastors whom he has ordained for this pur-pose. Or, to put it in a more homely way: is not the Church the mother of all believers because she brings them to new birth by the word of God, educates and nourishes them all their life, strength-ens them and finally leads them to complete perfection? The church is called the pillar of adminis-trating doctrine which God has put in her hands and is the only means for preserving the truth, that it may not pass from the memory of men. In consequence, this commendation applies to the ministry of the word for if it is removed God's truth will fall to the ground. " Calvin's comments on I Timothy 3: 15 in John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, translated by William Pringle, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, reprint 2003), 90.

[592] See also R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh and London, 1959), 207.

In practice it was important to supplement the *notae ecclesiae* with quantitative concepts in order to define the church's circumference. The ecclesiology of the Reformation from Bucer to the Puritans, and from the Anabaptists to the Separatists, moved in the direction of stressing discipline in order to avoid the anomalies concerning the definition and application of the *notae*. The seeds of the stressing of discipline can be already detected in Calvin or even in Luther's thoughts, when they stated that the pure church is to be found where the Gospel is purely (*pure*) preached and the sacraments correctly (*recte*) administrated. With the theology of Bucer and Bullinger the marks of the church became more explicit and discipline was interpreted as a pastoral task, and as part of our discipleship as followers of Christ. With the stress on pastoral care, the mixed nature of the visible church was acknowledged. The integration of the church and state, and a resistance against separation from the mixed multitude (in both church and society), provided the direction for the ecclesiology of the Reformers, as one can picture it for example, in Zwingli's approach in the city-state structure of Zurich's society.

A rigorous approach was emerging with the theology of Martin Bucer and a distinct Puritan tradition was developed by William Perkins and Thomas Cartwright, whereby discipline was an unavoidable element of the true church.

The so-called radical reformation went a step further than the 'magisterial' Reformers. We only call attention briefly to the relevant ecclesiological issues. For example, the Anabaptist movement argued concerning the spheres of the church and state, that if the Reformers rejected the temporal jurisdiction of the papacy, believing that the church by its nature could only exercise spiritual power, the complete separation of the church and state would be a logical conclusion. The Anabaptists' views on ecclesiology have resulted in mutually exclusive concepts of the church. While Zwingli was irrevocably committed to the state church with its inclusive parish system, the Anabaptists - according to their understanding - were maintaining the restoration of apostolic Christianity. It is assumable that the real cause of the suppression by force of the radicals in Zurich was more about their opposition to the state-church setting than the act of baptism.

A similar understanding happened in relation to the concepts of the visible and invisible church. Luther, Calvin and Zwingli aimed at the purification of the church. They all made the distinction between the invisible church of the elect, which is only known by God, and the visible Church which will always be imperfect. The radical movements' dissatisfaction provided a desire for perfection and separation from the worldly church. One of the consequences of the radical movement's ecclesiology was that they understood the efficacy of the sacraments according to the *ex opere operantis* view.

We can conclude that most elements of the Donatist movement were vividly present in the ecclesiology of the Reformation. These elements were interwoven in the life of the church with various intensities. This can be seen in the following patterns: 1) the division between sacred and secular affairs; 2) the rejection of *Corpus Christianum*; 3) the distance between or the total separation of the

church and the state; 4) the different approaches to defining the pure Church, either by means of *reformatio*, or be means of *restitutio*; 5) exclusivism leading to spiritual pride; 6) the manifestation of a powerful eschatological vision in the sense of being the remnant; 7) and the importance of discipline.

6.2.4 Unity in Diversity in the Life of the Reformed Church of Hungary since the Time of the Sixteenth Century

6.2.4.1 The Donatist Factors' relevance in relation to the unity of the church before 1989/90

The theme of unity in diversity in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary after the separation of the Protestant churches during the Reformation era from the Catholic Church, needs to be analysed in the context of the separation between the mainline Protestant churches, and in our study unity in diversity will be restricted to one denomination, namely the Reformed Church of Hungary.

Following the catastrophe of Mohács, in the unstable political aftermath whereby the divided country of the Hungarians was on the one hand exposed to the Turks and on the other hand to the Habsburg Royalty's ambitions, a context arose in which opposition to external enemies was present on all levels of the Hungarian society. In that critical situation, largely independent from the royal supremacy's interest, the thought of Reformation prepared the basis of the "new" religion among the communities of the common people. In this way the source of their decision was their natural suspicion toward the Roman Catholics, which led to a strong commitment on either side. On the one hand, the Roman Catholic religious practice which the average Hungarian people knew well, and on the other hand, the illuminating faith of the Gospel, were juxtaposed. The elements for reformation were already present among the Catholic monastic orders, especially the Franciscans. The influence by the movement of the Hussites, especially concerning their emphasis on the independence of secular power from papacy, and their view on the nature and authority of the church, also combined with the interests of the higher classes of the feudal system. In the first half of the sixteenth century the morality of the Hungarian society became weaker and traditional Christian values had lost their influence – and this was also kindled by the politics of the Ottoman Empire against the Habsburgs. On the basis of these problems from various external and internal threats, the formation of the Reformed Church of Hungary offered a new situation whereby the identity of the church could be maintained and even strengthened. A differentiation of communities often happens through a clear definition of the boundaries which identify them in opposition to a given surrounding, and at the same time can establish a certain level of unity among the members on the basis of what they all reject. This oppositional form of organisation was not only evident in the Christian North African context of the second and the following centuries, but it was true for the Hungarian context as well ever since the reception of the thoughts of the Reformation.

Protestantism became a self-confident support and hope for the Hungarian nation when there were anxieties concerning Christianity and the country. Ref-

ormation meant *sola consolatio*[593] in the Hungarian context of being the border-land for East and West. The Protestant piety was able to activate all areas of life around the centre-point of the personal mutual love relationship with God. The religious and socio-political climate of Hungary provided a fertile ground where the movement of the Reformation with all the characteristic elements of the Donatist Factors could find its root. The causes of depravation and the way out through the filter of the Donatist Factors in the Reformation gave an opportunity for the cleansing of morals after being faced with the corrupted nature of humanity and its consequences. Reformation also meant a possible way of liberty from the pagan Turks and the Habsburgs who were seen as enemies in most people's eyes.

We can see that at the reception of the reformational thoughts in Hungary the ecclesiological and related theological issues became very much contextualised in the given historical context of Hungary. Such contextualization happened rather by the *common people* in the beginning of the movement, than by the higher classes of society.

The role of Israel as 'collecta', as one of the Donatist Factors, became a part of the mixture of the possible understanding of the notion of 'protest' in the Hungarian context, and it could be understood as an upholding of self-confidence, but also as a protest against the given order. In these circumstances the Deuteronomist historical view of the Old Testament gained importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and since then it was a reappearing *motif* in Hungarian literature and theological thinking up to the twentieth century.

In comparison to the Donatist typology of *Israel,* which was referred to in a positive way, the Hungarian application used this kind of typology in a negative and positive manner as well. The sufferings of the Hungarians were regarded as a righteous punishment of God. In this way a corporate meaning of sin, justification and liberation was worked out, especially in relation to the question of remaining the true people of God.[594] And it was also used in a positive sense to make a notable distinction between the believers and unbelievers, for which we can see a number of examples in the sixteenth century's confessions. For example, baptism as a sign of the covenant is also a sign to make a distinction between the children of believers and unbelievers.[595] Unbelievers were the pagan Turks and Jews, but not the Habsburgs or Hungarians who belonged to the Catholic Church. The people of the Reformation were regarded as the people of God. The direction of this interpretation is clear: it started with the church as the elect of God and arrived at the ethnic group of the nation. However, the Israel typology never went beyond its analogical character; therefore the elect of God were never identified only with the Hungarian nation.[596]

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[593] Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 1.

[594] We also have to note that the Counter-Reformation also employed the same argument on their side when they referred to the rejection of the Virgin Mary, to whom the country was dedicated by the first king St. Stephan.

[595] Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 74.

[596] See also Ferenc Szűcs, "A reformátori teológiai és az ébredési teológiák feszültsége," *Theológiai. Szemle* no.1 (1997), 21-24, 21.

The role of separation, as another Donatist Factor, was also detectable to a certain extent in life of the Protestant churches. In Hungary, the differentiation of the confessional trends of Protestantism had started after the death of Luther. Melanchton's authority in Hungary was not as wide as Luther's was earlier. On the basis of the theology of Bullinger, Johannes Oecolampadius and Bucer, Calvin was able to work out a completely new profile which came more into the frontier in Hungary. The religious life of the second half of the sixteenth century was especially characterised by separation according to the differentiated confessions. The followers of Luther were a minority in opposition to the followers of Calvin. The Calvinists found their competitors in the Antitrinitarian, Unitarian movement. The separation within Protestantism gave a wider spectrum on the effects of the Donatist Factors.

One explanation of why the Reformed Church of Hungary did not have any notable formal schism might be that the Reformed Church was involved with the continuous struggle for independence of the Hungarian nation – and this encouraged cooperation rather than separation. (Even the signs of cooperation by Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church are detectable in the number of attempts for unification in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.) Another fact is due to the system of bishops and superintendents, by which the unity in the Reformed Church of Hungary was maintained. In later Hungarian church history there were no schisms in this church, but rather only diversities and different trends.

From the point of view of our theme, an important movement was Puritanism. Puritanism, in opposition to reformed orthodoxy, has similarities with the positive attempts of Donatism and it became the first notable revival movement in the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary. We may note that the refusal of Puritanism in Hungary was also due to avoiding the problems which occurred in England.[597]

In the following centuries of the Reformed Church of Hungary the tendencies of the church's universal communion were rather due to the external circumstances. The Donatist Factors hardly can be detected in these contexts until the late ninetieth century and the first period of the twentieth century, when the various associations of the Reformed Church of Hungary made progress in the renewal of spiritual life. The Donatist Factors have an importance in all the attempts which tried to fight against the ossification of church life. These attempts were also traceable in the growing separatist churches: Christ-Believing Nazarene Congregation, Seventh-day Adventist Mission, Methodism, etc. We see this just as well in the number of revivalist movements that stayed within the Reformed Church of Hungary: Scottish Mission, German-speaking Reformed congregation, Christian Student Federation, Home Missions, Bethania Fellowship, etc. On the one hand, the positive results of these last mentioned movements could enrich

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[597] These were the first (1642–1646) and second (1648–1649) civil wars in England. The Second Civil War led to the trial and execution of Charles I, and to the exile of his son Charles II. The English monarchy was replaced first by the Commonwealth of England (1649–1653) and then by a Protectorate (1653–1659), under the personal rule of the Puritan military leader, Oliver Cromwell.

the religious lives of the congregations inside the church; on the other hand, they never grew beyond the boundaries of being associations and were not a real challenge to the official church leadership during Communism. We also have to face the fact that due to the lack of an organised program for renewal, many of the Reformed people left the church and found their new spiritual home in the separatist churches. The separatist churches membership was 90-95% comprised of those who were members of the historical Protestant churches earlier. The identity crises of the Reformed Church of Hungary became one of the biggest ecclesiological problems during the last two centuries. In these processes the dramatic situation after Trianon had a significant role in the inner mission of the church. The tendencies toward the loss of identity in the Reformed Church slowed down and alternative possibilities which were hidden in the internal diversity of the church began to support the revival of religious life. The Donatist Factors had a positive emphasis on the church, but we also have to take into account the fact that most people who formally left the Reformed Church went to the separatist church movements, because they thought that the distinct requirements of Christianity would be more satisfactory in these churches. By 1951 the official church leadership had blocked the revival movements and local mission attempts of the first half of the twentieth century in the Reformed Church.

In their attitude the early twentieth century revival movements showed a number of similarities to the role of separation in Donatism as well.

For an evaluation of the Pietistic movements in relation to Donatism, it is important to call attention to the following ecclesiologically related changes between the Middle Ages, the Reformation and the Modern Age, which is summarized by Szűcs very precisely. The view concerning the relationship of the individual and the church, as well as the community and the church, has radically changed in the Modern Ages compared to the time of the Reformation. The Reformation's understanding was able to reduce the authority in the church compared to the Middle Ages' comprehension. The importance was placed on the freedom of conscience (duty) and consciousness (awareness), instead of on the institutional authority. This, however, did not mean that the Reformation only wanted the conversion of the individuals to the Christian faith. In the focus of the Reformation the whole reformation of the church happened according to *ecclesia semper reformanda*. The individual and the community were in a dialectic correlation according to the view of the Reformation. On the one hand, faith was seen as the most personal *fiducia* (trust), whose source was the *certa notia* (certainty of knowledge).[598] Faith was understood as exclusively the gift of God which has nothing to do with human virtue. On the other hand, faith which must reflect divine Revelation in its objective content (*fides quae creditur*), was not determined by individual subjective decision, but it was due to the tradition of the correct interpretation of the Bible; and this was unimaginable without the community of the church and the *consensus ecclesiae*. This view cannot lead to the modern interpretation of the church as constituted by the piety of the believers. The church

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[598] Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 21

is created by the Word of God. In this way the ontological reality of the church is prior to one's membership in the church.[599]

After World War II, the renewal of the church found common acceptance by means of confessing sin publicly (in relation to the war), and the search for some way to *reform* the church. The further conceptions of *how,* displayed a divergent nature.

By the time of Communism these awakening movements' attempts for separations were completely paralysed, or their often used phrases were directed toward church-political purposes. The signing of the Agreement between the Church and the State in 1948 was the start of a slow liquidation of the church toward full control by the Communist regime. The establishment of the State Office for Church Affairs (ÁEH) and its detachment, the State Security Department (ÁVO), ensured the control and the open as well as hidden terror against the churches. Certain pietistic and revivalist movements tried to find ways to maintain church renewal, especially during the hard-dictatorship between 1948 and 1956. They had a deep devotion through their faith and by following the Reformed tradition. The elements of the Donatist Factor played a central role in their religious life. The hostile surrounding did not distort the people's spirit, but rather strengthened their religious identity, although their possibilities were limited since the official church leadership collaborated with the Communist regime. In this way the external enemy became more effective since its elimination attempt against the church was executed with the cooperation of collaborators in the church. The high peak of the non-collaborating confessors' struggle arrived in the 1956 Revolution. Any separation between the revivalist movements and the official church was almost impossible, which is shown by the thoroughly thought-out system and control by the Communist regime over the whole of the church - as we have introduced earlier in the beginning of chapter 4.6.

6.2.4.2 The Donatist Factors' Relevance in Relation to the Unity of the Church after 1989/90

After the changes of 1989/90 the most vivid parallel between the time of Donatism and the time of the Reformed Church of Hungary might be found in the question concerning the collaborators in the church after Communism. This single issue, as a *casus belli* for church dissent, made the Donatist movement 'infamous'. According to our introduction and analyses of the Donatist movement, we made an attempt to demonstrate that Donatism was more than this issue about collaboration. Therefore, the question of the collaborators of the church after the changes in the Hungarian context, bears importance and cannot be neglected - but it should not be a central issue of ecclesiology. The dealing or non-dealing with the collaborators, rather, is a side effect of the essential understanding of the church. The Reformed Church of Hungary decided rather to neglect the problem, since a consensus about individual and collective confession of sin was not developed, and this fundamentally questions the empirical church's understanding of

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[599] Szűcs, "A reformátori teológiai és az ébredési teológiák feszültsége," 21.

itself and its authenticity. All of this means that the church could not truly face its past under Communism. The unsolved problem of handling the question of collaborators therefore became a manipulative form of party politics, which could always be used for political interests and propaganda. Even though there was a great expectation by the Hungarian society for a resolution, the topic became politicized and was never fully solved. It will remain an open question what would have happened if the names of the collaborators had been identified. In that case, the possibilities for separation would have been a real danger.

We also have to mention that a *collective* recognition similar to the Donatist movement, the *role of Israel as 'collecta',* was missing in the Reformed Church of Hungary and thus there was no proper solidarity at the time of the transition during 1989/90. Any renewal of the Church should start with the confession of sin and the confession of faith. The time of the changes could have created the possibilities of a *status confessiones*, but the nature of the changes, as we have discussed under the title: *negotiated revolution*, prevented that. Basically, the same motifs are detectable on the level of the Church as we have also seen on the political level. By means of the missing of well-stated boundaries for the church, which would be similar to the image of *collecta,* the church was unable to create a necessary foundation whereby any effective renewal could have been started; rather, the accustomed reflex of *survival*, which was the most common feeling during Communism, had a determinative role. The notable difference, comparing the attitude of the church toward survival during Communism and after, was that the church lost its straight forward picture of who was now the 'enemy'. That is even clearer when we take into account the number of initiatives of the *Reformed Church Renewal Movement* and other similar attempts, which remained hardly without any echo in the life of the church. Their attempts held similar motives as this particular factor did in Donatism. We also have to call attention by this point, to some of the spiritual inheritors of the earlier described pietist movements in the Reformed Church of Hungary, such as the fundamental-evangelical movement of the *Bible-Allience* (BSZ), whose concerns for the renewal of the church were interpreted as especially based on personal faith and morality. However, one result of their programmes is a differentiation of directions in the church, which is however not equal to schism. But the danger of schism, without doubt, is present - not because any theological movement's main interest would be schism, but by the means that on a similar basis other movements will spring from these initiatives itself or in parallel with them, whose aim may be very similar to the Donatists' aim of not having communion with the 'fallen' church.

We also have to note that the whole Hungarian society as well as the church got used to a certain amount of separation in a negative way during Communism. The concept of a *scapegoat* (as we have earlier introduced Rene Girard's understanding of the concept) was an important element for 'survival', whereby a certain amount of accumulated aggression and frustration could be forwarded to the scapegoat. When the 'real enemy' which caused much suffering disappeared unpunished, the need to strengthen inner-identification was most urgent in the labyrinth of the new ways and possibilities, because of the sudden appearance of

the postmodern age by the time of 1989/90 in Hungary. A stable point for further orientation is strongly desired in the complicated new situation wherein most people become insecure and their self-esteem has been damaged. These people often felt and feel that in their closer and wider context people are unjust to them, and that they are not handled on equal terms. They often project their negative attitude on to others in their insecure state of fear which has been brought forward by the collapse of Communism. This often paralyzes the relationship of Christians even belonging to the same denominational families, which have also started relationships between the churches in both the west and east. It has often been thought – also by Christians who were faithful under Communism - that western Christianity's tendencies of secularism, whereby many people have abandoned the church, and also the superficial reliance on technological possibilites and the media, have disqualified it from being a model for central-eastern Europe. This hinders a useful dialogue about the shared problems of Christianity on a universal level, and creates in this way a closed world wherein everything looks 'healthier' than in other places. These tendencies remind us also of similarities with the Donatist dissent, in which the 'high' Roman culture was different than *Berber-Punic* community, which had hardly any interest in the Roman civilization, nor in its state, nor in the Catholic Church which was part of this Roman Empire.

Provisionally we can also conclude that at the heart of the concept of *unity in diversity* in ecclesiological problems one has to realise the limits of human efforts in these matters and acknowledge that the church lives by *faith* and lives in *hope* of being the *ekklesia tou Theou.* The living realisation of the *notae ecclesiae* enables the church to avoid an ecclesiological view wherein the marks would only function as a checklist. If the church (unity) is understood as gift of God, this is a basis for an ecclesiology that can save the church from thinking that the church can be reduced to an object of human comprehension. The unity of the church in diversity points to the major differences of the unity of the church from *below* and the unity from *above*.

6.3 Credo Sanctam Ecclesiam – Ecclesia Sine Macula et Ruga

In the context of the introductory questions of this chapter further considerations may be mentioned. When the members of the church confess that the church is holy, this *nota* of the church without doubt can become a prior issue among the other *marks* of the church. The significance of the holiness of the church immediately can be linked to other associations such as *spotlessness* (*sine macula et ruga*) and in this way with *purity* and *perfection.* It seems that these features must not be neglected to a certain extent, but it is also obvious that by these qualities the danger of building up a higher and higher self-praise of the individual members of the church-community is possible, which can endanger the church by means of ecclesiastical *egotism.* The confession of *credo ecclesiam sanctam* resounds in the context of the *world,* whereby the church intentionally claims a notable difference from the world. Therefore, the question becomes: in

what ways it is possible that the church can give such a positive evaluation about itself in the world?

The *holiness of the church* also asserts in one or another way the fellowship of the saints. But how can this holiness be proved, taking into account the number of contradictory facts of the life of the church in any given time? How can the holiness of the church be applied to *all* members of the church? Is this possible? Is this even necessary? Does the confession of the *sancta ecclesia* not become too vulnerable after the confession of *unity*? Or, one can also reverse the question: Is the confession of the unity of the church not endangered by a particular understanding and emphasis on the confession of holiness? While one can see the possibility of comprehending the unity of the church in diversity, for the question of the holiness of the church more obstacles seem to be in the way for comprehension. The belief of holiness obviously creates a connection between holiness and *faith* in the Holy Spirit, and also with the theme of the forgiveness of sins. In the history of the Catholic Church this becomes clear in the veneration of the saints and especially the martyr saints with their radically devoted life and witness to Christ.

Referring to the New Testament, the believers are called to be saints who are sanctified by Christ (2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:2 or Rom. 1:7), and who live in the everyday reality of the world - for example in Rome, Corinth, Colossae or in the rural areas of Numidia and Mauritinia, and so forth. The believers in God as the people of God are always reminded of their sanctity as a holy nation, as we can read in Peter's letter: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1Pet. 2: 9-10) On the one hand, it is clear that holiness is not due to one's own achievement but is received in the context of election and mercy. On the other hand, the church becomes visible in its holiness. At this point one needs to see the relevance of the concerns on different levels for the *sancta ecclesia.* When there is a sign that the church itself is not able to take seriously its own *articles of faith,* certain initiatives in the church may grow to radicalism, which more easily claim that the members are holy, pure and even perfect, in order to clarify their difference from others.

In the history and prehistory of the Donatist movement such radicalism often went to extremes causing in this way a number of arguments on church discipline and doctrinal matters. If we recall from the prehistory of the Donatist movement the ecclesiological struggles of the Novatians, who by their often used name, Cathari (pure), were pointing to this ecclesiological understanding about the holiness of the *communio sanctorum.* We saw something very similar and an even more developed idea on this, at the time of the schism by the Donatists. We also have to take into account that their view was developed in their context after the fierce persecution of Christianity. This fact is not only psychologically important but a clarification is most needed in relation to ecclesiology as well, in order to find out how the suffering and deep conviction of the people who were ready to

die for their beliefs, could be taken into account in relation to those people who were behaving in just the opposite way. The contrast between the confessors and collaborators was one of the burning issues behind the schism of the Novatians and the Donatists. In this matter we are faced with a decisive issue, because such differentiations between faithfulness and unfaithfulness during a critical time for the church (such as persecution), cannot be minimized by saying that there were 'misunderstandings' about the holiness of the church - when witness to Christ through martyrdom was the only possible way to remain faithful. Therefore if one clears that up, further problems can be more easily solved. One of the most difficult tasks for the church is to take into account its confession of *credo sancta ecclesia* in a way that holiness does not become an abstract theological concept, but becomes an inseparable part of the reality of the church in the world, as is indicated in many ways in the New Testament. This is clearly indicated for example in the letter to the Ephesians: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4: 22-24). One is able to pass from death by being set free from the law of sin, to life (Rom. 8: 2 and 1 John. 3:14); and we find similar testimonies in 2 Cor. 5: 1 and Gal. 6: 17. Besides the irreversible trust and hope which we experience through the salvation by Jesus Christ, one can also experience the discouraging reality of the corrupted world, just as well as the corrupted nature of humanity, and then one also realizes that the weakness and perversity have not yet disappeared, even though there is salvation in one's life (2 Pet. 3: 4). Therefore, the question becomes: how is it possible to take under consideration Paul's words in his Christ-church and husband-wife analogy (Eph. 5: 21-33)? : "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ *loved* the church and *gave himself* up for her (v. 25) to *make her holy, cleansing* her by the washing with water through the word (v. 26), and to *present her to himself* as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (v.27)."

6.3.1 The Donatist Understanding of Holiness

For the above raised questions and some of the different possible understandings on the *credo sanctam ecclesiam*, the Donatists found their solution whereby the reality of the holiness of the church was seen as *sine macula et ruga*. The context after the times of persecution deepened their ecclesiological conviction on the holiness of the church whereby a complicated ecclesiological situation arose - as we have just earlier indicated. Their understanding of Christian identity was highly influenced by the martyrs of the persecution in the pre-Constantine area. The Donatist church became a self-conscious movement as a church of martyrs, which showed a number of similarities with the times of Tertullian and the early times of Cyprian and the Novatians in Rome. The *casus belli* for the Donatist schism was strongly related to their understanding of the *sancta ecclesia* whereby they considered themselves to be the true church, justified by their own acts of not becoming *traditores*. Their concept regarding the Donatist movement as a

collecta similar to the holy assembly of Israel, became a positive conception which helped to maintain and strengthen the Donatist community's identity among the unclean enemies. Holiness by this way was maintained by the perseverance in following the Sacred Scriptures, and later the Donatists could build their argument saying that they were those who kept the Law. In this positive approach to that typology, Israel was sanctified as ritually holy and pure in order to encourage good morals and enhance the community solidarity. This view by the Donatists had its overall effects on the understanding of the *works of God's grace* and the *administration of the sacraments* in opposition to the Catholic Church's comprehension.

According to the Catholic, Augustinian view, only the grace of God can guarantee the holiness and perfection in the historical existence of the church. Therefore the holiness and perfection of the church was not connected to the clergy or the bishops but to the sacraments of the church. Augustine was talking about the holiness of the church in an *objective* sense as a divine gift in the sacraments. That simply meant the objection to the Donatist's view that holiness and perfection as a moral condition is a constitution of the church. On the one hand the Donatist claim of *subjective* holiness easily can lead to the overruling of God's grace and to the understanding of the administration of the sacraments as *ex opere operantis*. On the other hand, there is a notable tension between the *objective* holiness of the church and the church which confesses holiness in its empirical appearance.

The biblical concept of holiness itself points to separation in many ways for a particular purpose.[600] Holiness without doubt also implies relatedness to God in its objective form, and in this way it is a setting apart for the service of God. In the Donatist understanding the subjective holiness overruled the *dynamic correlation* of the subjective and objective side of holiness, with the result that their high esteem of being a pure and holy church by their own human possibilities became a basic element of *separation*. By their separation they expressed their opposition to the indiscriminate mixing of the church with the sinful world; and also saw the Catholic Church as fallen into secularity. The *role of suffering* through martyrdom gained significance in relation to their belief of the holiness of the church. Through martyrdom a true believer could be identified. The importance of martyrdom went to an extreme, as we could see in the case of the *circumcelliones*. Their *construction of time* along with the various factors which can be identified in their comprehension of holiness was due to their pragmatic understanding rather than doctrinal. With the growth of the Donatist church doctrinal considerations were also taken into account, which could recognise the negative consequences of their exclusive attitude. Tyconius' example is clear evidence to that. Because of the other circumstances of their context, such an ecclesiological view by Tyconius, which became the basis of *corpus permixtum* developed by Augustine, could not be rooted in Donatism, yet this would have tipped the scale of *universality* and *contextuality* into a more balanced position.

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[600] We can read about: holy ground (Ex. 3: 5) holy city (Isa. 48: 2), holy temple (Isa. 64: 11) holy offerings (1Sam. 21: 4).

Even if we see the Donatist view on holiness as mistaken, with such a moralistic interpretation in its focus (especially because such a perspective does not take into account its Christological and Soteriological consequences), we also have to consider their socio-political context with the intense changes in the Roman Empire which was a real challenge in many ways for the Church. This way the Donatist identity was marked especially in the first half of their history by their one-sided view on holiness and but it could also function as a living consciousness of the church calling attentions to various dangers in their context.

6.3.2 Credo Sanctam Ecclesiam in the Life of the Reformed Church of Hungary since the Time of the Sixteenth Century

6.3.2.1 The Donatist Factors' Relevance in Relation to Holiness of the Church before 1989/90

In the complex ecclesiological situation of the sixteenth century, among the essentia ecclesia the notae ecclesiae had a leading importance, as we have earlier explained. Therefore among the marks of the church, holiness was also in the focus of ecclesiological concerns. In light of the Donatist comprehension of holiness we may better understand the theme of *sanctam ecclesiam* in the various stages of the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

Protestantism maintained the church as holy, not in the sense of the community's own state or activities, but according to what they receive (the Word, sacraments, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the self-giving of Jesus Christ). Therefore the holiness of the believers is relative, and the believers can be seen as holy because of the inner principles of their lives, which are destined for perfect holiness. This concept led to the realization that the church is the *communio sanctorum*. As we can see from the Reformers' view as well, a notable differentiation is possible on the theme of holiness, both on the level of the church and on the level of the members of the church, which has a long tradition of usage already before the Reformation. But such a distinction has a number of challenges, whereby the objective holiness of the church may end in a view wherein the church is viewed so highly "in itself" that it cannot participate in sin.

The Protestant understanding did not make such a gap between the church and its members, therefore the sin of the members also could become a real power in the church. For example as we read in the *Institutes*, Calvin's aim was to realize the purity and holiness of the Church as far as human weakness will permit. He kept constantly in view the ideal of "*ecclesia sine macula et ruga*," which Paul describes in the Epistle to the Ephesians 5: 27. He wanted every Christian to be consistent in their daily profession, to show their faith by good works, and to strive to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect - as we can see in the twelfth chapter, book four of his *Institutes*. We also have to mention that the human limits on the way to complete perfection were highly recognised by the Reformers through the principle of *simul justus et peccator* (at the same time righteous and sinful) in their understanding of justification. *Simul*, the two aspects, was also applied to the church. Tyconius already discussed the bipartite nature of the church (*De Domini corpere bipertito*) as his second rule in the *Liber Regulam*

which led Augustine to the principle of the *corpus permixtum*, which was also worked out as a critique of Tyconius' *bipartite nature of the church*, in the *De doctrina Christiana*.[601] Some of the Protestant thinkers draw their conclusion on the Augustinian view according to the double concept of the church as an empirical and spiritual community, while others have interpreted his view in a way that Christians can be sinful but the church cannot be. Augustine's *corpus permixtum* did not allow such a dualistic concept of the church; rather in the Augustinian view a distinction was made, but not radical separation, so that the mixture of the good and the bad is visible but indistinguishable due to the eschatological tension of the church.

As we can see after the Reformation various understandings and applications in relation to the *credo sanctam ecclesiam* were possible and came to life in various forms, also showing similarities with the Donatist understanding, just as well as differences. We now collect the various Donatist Factors together to give a comprehensive view on the understanding of the Reformed Church of Hungary in the various stages of its history.

The Reformers' understanding of the holiness of the church was also present in the Hungarian context at the reception of the teachings of the Reformation. The rejection of the medieval church's corruption was the basic element in the renewal of the church, which was also combined with the defence against external threats to the nation, which were seen as God's punishment in the Hungarian case, whereby one of the major features ecclesiologically was due to the Reformers understanding of the holiness of the church. The acrimonious state of the opposing main line churches (Roman Catholic and Protestant) basically was a concomitant feature of the church history of Hungary for centuries, just as well as it was for most parts of Europe, as a consequence of the doctrinal and practical separation. In the case of the Reformation the title of the 'true church' was not claimed exclusively by the Protestants; as we have seen in the ecclesiology of the Reformers, the *notae ecclesiae* could be interdenominational. The exclusive attitude defining the 'true church' was more characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church.

The *revitalization of the Christian message*, also an important element of the Donatist Factors, was in focus under the theme of *una sancta ecclesiae*, as important *marks* of the church; therefore it is also a connecting link for holding together the different Donatist Factors. In regard to that, the theology of the Reformation had fought its battles in relation to the revitalization of the Christian message. Firstly, it happened with the Roman Catholic Church, later with the radical wings of the Reformation. The consequences of these battles are found in the hermeneutical theories of the Reformation: the *tota Scriptura* and the *Scriptura sacra sui ipsus interpres*. These hermeneutics are valid in our days as well. However, the Reformation, similarly to Donatism, could not avoid schism while it tried to apply a revitalization of the Christian message according to its Bible interpretation.

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[601] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 3. 32. 45.

By the time the differentiation of the confessional trends of Protestantism started in the second half of the sixteenth century, one of the major conflicts between the followers of Luther and Zwingli circled around the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was also strongly connected to the theme of the holiness of the church. Major differences had occurred in the understanding of Christ's body and blood as a *signum* or a *res signata.* Luther's followers interpreted these as a *signum;* in this way everybody, believers and unbelievers could take part in this sacrament. Zwingli and a number of mediatory movements taught that the elements are a *res signata*; therefore the unbelievers only receive the bread and wine, while the believers experience the *unio mystica cum Christo.*

The seventeenth century's Counter-Reformation brought a time of persecution for the life of the Hungarian Protestant people. As a consequence of the Counter-Reformation by the Catholic Church, in hand with the Royal House of the Habsburg's church politics, the Protestants rapidly decreased in number and in influence. The tactics against the Protestants seemed to be religious, whereby Protestantism was seen as a heretical movement, while the political interest of the Habsburgs was also maintained by the Roman Catholic Church. (In the case of the Donatsist movement something very similar happened at the conference of Carthage in 411.) In the feudal setting of the time of the Reformation the idea of the separation of church and state was unimaginable, although the Protestants strived for religious freedom with all effort. Calvin's ecclesiology made a chief emphasis on the *distinction* of the church from the *saeculum,* as the elect of God on earth. In the often critical periods of the Counter-Reformation in Hungary martyrdom gained significance, which without doubt strengthened the holiness of the church through the high demand for witness to Christ.

Puritanism continuously made a notable impact on the Hungarian theological life in relation to the elements of the Donatist Factor *as the revitalization of the Christian message* and the *role of separation*, although the Hungarian application of the thoughts of Puritanism showed a slow acceptance or sometimes refusal. Their emphasis on ecclesiastical and moral purity, according to the Bible, was a dominant focus. The content of religious life, ministry and personal piety formed the Puritan mind, in opposition to the already existing church structure of the bishops and superintendents, and also favoured the introduction of a church constitution based on the elders' system. Reformed orthodoxy and the Puritan views, as applied in Hungary, had a synthetic character which strongly marked and shaped the piety of the Reformed people, which culminated in its confessional attitude (emphasis on the Reformed creeds). The pious Hungarian individual of that age can be characterised as one who had assurance of God's elective work in Jesus Christ. Passionate love for Jesus and a self-torturing penitence were harmonised with the teaching of predestination. In this way, instead of a mystic experience of conversion, the practical reality of being converted was important, which did not depend on the individual's own possibilities.

The seventeenth century's struggle also resulted in religious formalism in Protestantism when the re-catholicisation was eased after the expulsion of the Turks. On the one hand, the Calvinistic trend became the "Hungarian Religion,"

while on the other hand, dogmatism weakened the religious everyday life, wherein the inner demand for renewal was suppressed by what had already been achieved.

The various stages of the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary since the sixteenth century point to the fact that any renewal in the life of the Hungarian nation depends on confession of sins and a personal and collective relationship with God. That relationship can result in a firm basis for a personal experience of faith, which is to be found in God's speaking through his Word from day to day.

In the meantime we also have to take into account that modern thinking almost completely lost the notion of *corporate realities*; and in this way religion could be used for individual utilitarian interest. This process had a notable effect on the Christian communities as well, which could also lead to the revival movements' aptitude for separation. These movements overemphasised personal holiness, similarly to the Donatists, which often resulted in a very dualistic view between them and the world. Militaristic pictures often characterised their interpretation of the struggle of the world and the church. We do not mean that such a tension is not present, but when it is overemphasised religious thinking can be damaged.

The other source of attempts for separation – in relation to holiness - is completely parallel with the Donatist thinking, which neglects the unity and catholicity of the church. The theology of the awakening groups seems to neglect the historical continuity of the church, whereby their activities concentrate more on the restart of the church, creating the danger of separation and schism.

By the time of the revivalist awakening movements in the beginning of the twentieth century, these movements often talked about the need of an unbreakable continuity with the time of the Reformation. According to their view, the Reformation itself was the *Great Awakening* which forms a unity through the movement of Puritanism and pietism to their age. Beyond the number of basic elements which became a common ground in the Reformed family, such as the *particula exlusiva*, the teaching on sinful humanity as only to be saved by Christ, and the concept of *communio viatorum*, one can also see several breaking points which make a notable difference. These differences were already present in the time of the Reformation in the number of attempts by the *radical wings* of Reformation which often became a source of reference for the Awakening movements of later times.

Some of the typical *constructions of time* by these awakening groups are detectable in their interpretation of the Scriptures. They often identify themselves with one of the congregation models described in the Bible, or their expectation circles around the repetition of the life of the first congregations. In most cases they also hold chiliast and dispensational views, and thereby view the apocalyptic Biblical eschatology as a linear, historical time-table.[602] Therefore, these elements of the revival groups' construction of time are very similar to the *earlier* Donatist understanding as well.

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[602] Szűcs, "A reformátori teológiai és az ébredési teológiák feszültsége," 21.

By the time of Communism, the themes of repentance, the responsibility of the church for the Hungarian nation, and the prophetic task of the church were in the focus of the different programs, and these themes were interpreted in such a way that the growing church-political interest of the Opposition Party could be maintained. As we have learned from the historical evidences of the National Free Council, the organization of the "opposition party" misused these theological concepts to gain power in the church at the time of the new formation under Communism, and thus promoted solidification of the communist ideology in Hungary. The simplicity of the revivalist logic could be more readily misused than the historical Calvinist and Barthian ideas. "The Theology of the Narrow Way" was worked out by Bereczky and the 'grace coming from outside the church working inside the church', interpreted by János Victor, are clear evidence to such a collaborative use of revivalist ideas. In these views the heart of soteriology was seemingly only the personal saving work of Jesus Christ, while in reality redemption was replaced by history, according to the dialectic-Marxist schema, as has been analysed by Ervin Vályi Nagy[603]. The manipulation of theology ended in the working out of an ideological system, which was labelled "The Theology of the Servant Church." In this newly created quasi theological system, for example, the content of repentance was narrowed down to a watchword, the use of which could give silence to those voices in the church which could have critically evaluated the existing socio-political order. Therefore, in such circumstances repentance could only make the church remember that the prophetic task of the church had been lost, and also the right to resist. In this way the renewal of the church by the saving work of Christ lost its theological meaning, because loyalty to the propaganda of the state overruled all areas of faith. The whole theological system and its main theological concepts became instruments of the political order and resulted in the deformation of the Hungarian Reformed ecclesiological views. Christology was lost in the ecclesiology of the 'official theology' by the Reformed Church of Hungary. In this way the existential crisis of the Reformed Church was unavoidable, and the influence of this on the time after the collapse of Communism is significant. By means of these circumstances, the feature of the *construction of time* was radically changed according to the teachings of the *official theology* of the Reformed Church of Hungary during Communism. In Bereczky's theological view (*The Theology of the Narrow* Way and *The Theology of the Servant Church*), the socialist historical and sociological reality was given by God's self-revelation in history, whereby one could meet God's judgement in the catastrophes of the war, and God's act of mercy in the liberation by Socialism. The rhetoric of the church leadership often misinterpreted the biblical concepts and phrases of the revival movements in order to maintain their collaboration with the Communist Regime which considered itself *an everlasting system against the Eternal One.*

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[603] Ervin Vályi Nagy *,* "Igazság és történelem," *Minden idők peremén* (Basel/Budapest: Európai Protestáns Szabadegyetem, 1993), 81-88.

6.3.2.2 The Donatist Factors' Relevance in Relation to the Holiness of the Church after 1989/90

After the changes of 1989/90, in relation to a number of Donatist Factors we can only point to the differences in comparison to the time of the Donatists. Not because there were no similar signs of the construction of time according to the Donatist understanding, but because these initiatives had hardly any effect on the whole of the church. The Reformed Church of Hungary, because of its lack of self-identification, can now hardly find a consensus about what the church wants to reject concerning its former life during Communism, and what the main priorities of the church should be in light of the changed circumstances. The biblical-sounding themes, such as confession of sins and repentance, were on the table most loudly also by some of the collaborators who did not have the courage for personal responsibility; rather they still continue to build an image of their past leadership as if they were then the true maintainers of the church. Basically, the prophetic task (*prophetic faithfulness*) of the church has been lost because of this single issue. One of the characteristic features of the prophetic task is timing, and any delay ruins the importance of that duty, as has been pointed out by the movement of the *Biblical Alliance*. In this way *the construction of time* as another element of the Donatist Factor, failed to give clear lines for the Reformed Church of Hungary, by which the church would find the right method to deal with the recent past and the present in the light of the (eschatological) future.

We can see almost the same tendencies after the changes of 1989/90, in the case of the *revitalization of the Christian message,* which happened only in small circles of revival groups, which did not have a strong impact on the whole life of the Hungarian Church, and did not enable it to reorganize in its practice (church-discipline, church-membership, church-leadership and so forth). In this way the revitalization of the Christian message is a task still ahead for the Reformed Church of Hungary. The most important area where this revitalization can take place is in the worship services in the first place, precisely by means of the preaching of the Gospel. This area is in a crisis which is related to the ecclesiological problems which we have already discussed.

We find a clear analogy between the victims of Communism who were imprisoned or died, taking up in this way the highest form of witness for Christ in their martyrdom, and the martyrs of the church in the prehistory of Donatism, which also became the Donatist emphasis on the role of the *necessity of suffering*. In the martyrs' thinking who stayed alive after Communism and could experience the changes, the same attitude that we could see in the Donatist understanding on martyrdom is found. (Certain differences, however, were also recognisable.) On the one hand, they emphasized that their martyrdom was due to the courage for which they received strength from God; on the other hand (in some cases) the categories of true and false believers appeared in many ways. It was often the case that after the changes they were the most frequently confused, because the loss of a clear 'enemy' did not allow a straight forward continuance of their way of Christian life as martyrs (witness to Christ) – as had been the case during Commu-

nism. However, the majority of the church failed to recognise the importance of martyrdom during Communism, which would have started with the naming of the collaborators who had responsibility for the persecution of the Christians. This element of the Donatist movement was revealed to a certain extent by the *Reformed Church Renewal Movement,* placing a chief emphasis on the martyrs of the church during Communism, and an emphasis on being spiritual inheritors of the renewal Movement of 1956. They called upon the whole church to face the sins of the past, individually and collectively as well, in order to pray for the forgiveness of God. They declared that the collaborators of the church should not be revealed individually, in order to avoid intense emotions and to be able to participate fully in God's reconciliation. They also made attempts to call upon the church to declare a statement of faith. Such a confession of faith as a serious act requires freedom of purpose, and a *status confessiones* appears when the faith of the community is confronted and questioned, a good example of which is found in the *Statement of Faith* in 1956.[604] The majority of the Reformed Church of Hungary, together with the formal church leaders, successfully suppressed these endeavours. This can be seen in almost every action of the church after the changes, as we have summarized earlier.

One also has to take into account the fact that the majority of the church was rather subjected to a "long-term inner-bleeding" - as Szabó phrases it so expressively - during Communism.[605] During this age the number of passive survivors was far most determinative for the situation than the number of confessors and martyrs.

6.4 The Role of Ethnicity in the 'Una Sancta Catholica Ecclesia'

Before any further elaboration it is important to define in what sense we are using the term of *ethnicity* in this section. The concept of ethnicity itself is a multidimensional notion as it includes aspects such as race, origin or ancestry, identity, language and religion. It may also include more subtle dimensions such as culture, the arts, customs and beliefs and so on. It is also dynamic and in a constant state of flux. An *ethnic group* therefore can be viewed as a collectivity within a larger society, and such an ethnic group shares the same ancestry, memories of historical past, and a cultural focus on different symbolic elements such as tribe, language, nationality or religious affiliation, which can be connected to locality.[606]

If one takes under consideration the issue of ethnicity in the context of the *notae ecclesiae*, then on the one hand, the concept of the church in many ways points to its universal phenomenological character (*una* and *catholica*), whereby handling the theme of ethnicity might become a real challenge. On the other hand, one may also realise that the catholicity of the church as a matter of unity is acculturated in various contexts and ages with many frontiers of diversity -

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[604] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2; 20.2

[605] István Bogárdi Szabó, "A belső vérzés hosszú időszaka, mint a Magyarországi Református Egyház nyomorúságának tükröződése - " *Confessio* no.1 (1990) 111- 119.

[606] John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15.

wherein ethnicity along with other aspects is playing an important role – so that this only allows the realisation of the unity of the church in diversity.

The particular questions which we find important in relation to the context of ethnicity, are as follows: What role should ethnicity play in the faith of the church? What are the positive sides of ethnicity in ecclesiological concerns? What are the limits of ethnicity in view of the confession of *una sancta catholica ecclesia*? What challenges does ethnicity create for Christian identity? In the theme of ecclesiological responsibility what role can ethnicity play for the church and for the society?

Among the continuous identity struggle with its aspects (religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, political and so on), one is still certain that these identities refer to *belonging*. Christian identity, even in its various nuances, is very particular because it connects us to God in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's confession was on the one hand, very *particular* as it appeared in a given historical, geographical, ethnic, cultural and religious context; and on the other hand, was *universal* as it gave a solid testimony of God's will to be present with humanity.

6.4.1 The Role of Ethnicity along with other Socio-political Issues in the Time of the DonSatists

In the times of the Roman Empire, most Christians did not want to be solely identified with any ethnic groups' traditions or cultures, therefore they appeared as a *tertium genus*. (The situation radically changed in Europe by the time of the sixteenth century, when the entire continent could find its roots in Christianity, both in a religious and socio-cultural sense.) On the one hand, the formation of a Christian identity for the second century's groups in Northern Africa, for example, was also rather difficult because they lacked the ethnic base and attachment to a particular land (like the Jews). On the other hand, we also have to take into account on the basis of Frend's studies, that the victory of the Christian Church in North Africa in the third century coincided with economic and social changes, which resulted in deep pessimism and insecurity, and which also led to the decay of the cities and the predominance of the rural villages, along with the villas, while the inhabitants of the indigenous people had hardly any interest in the Roman Civilization. This way they accepted Christianity's promise of immortality for its followers, and this in turn led to a moral superiority of the Christian teaching over paganism, while the conflict of the two different cultures (Berber and Roman) came more into the frontier and played an important role in the context of the Donatist schism, especially after the Constantinian changes. The Donatists found most of their support in the rural areas where Roman culture and lifestyle had little or no effect. These areas were almost untouched by the Roman civilization which meant that the Donatist movement could especially find its root among the *Berber-Punic* native inhabitants. Since the indigenous people had no interest in being part of the new culture, and the Roman State only saw them as a 'food pantry', their opposition became stronger. The problems of witness to Christ during persecution and its aftermath situation, especially considering the question of the *lapsis* re-entry to the Church, and later on the universal recogni-

tion of Christianity as the state religion – these problems together kindled the situation in North Africa, while the Donatists' goal of cleansing the church according to similar earlier attempts (Tertullian, Novatians and Cyprian), resulted in an alternative form of Christianity which was expressed in an institutional separation. The new Christian endeavours of the Donatists were inseparable from the social and ethnical questions as we have describe in 2.4.1 and 2.4.2. A characteristic feature of the Donatist movement was their close connection to the Berbers and Punics, who could also maintain their dissatisfaction with the Roman Empire's politics through their support of Donatism. So not only their religious identities could be strengthened but their ethnic identities as well. As we have described earlier under the theme of *Understanding the Church, State and Society as a Structural part of the Donatist Factor*, Donatism tended to look for a solution whereby an alternative society is offered through the community of the church, and this included the right to resist and revolt. Although we also have to notice that by the time of Tyconiu's theological concerns the Donatist church's primary aim was not to drift out of the Roman world but rather to be the true church in society.

   Augustine saw a danger in the tendencies of the Donatist movement, such as nationalism or tribalism. He was in opposition to the idea of plurality in communion because various elements might be maintained in communion and some not. This led Augustine to be convinced that Christ is in communion with the Catholic Church in most points and the Catholic Church is the whole church.[607] Following this, his arguments made an ambivalent distinction between the concept of *partly* being in communion and *fully* being in communion with the Catholic Church. Only in full communion with one universal church can salvation be found, because the members of Christ are joined together by the love of unity and they can be only truly united if they belong to the one Head, Jesus Christ. This way, those who are dissenting are not in the church. Therefore, those who make a breach of faith or communion by forming a distinct ecclesial entity over against the universal church, are no longer part of the Catholic Church nor do they have part in salvation– according to Augustine's points as he developed these in the *Contra Epistulam Parmeniani.*[608]

   The interrelation of the indigenous people's ethnic interest and the Donatist Church's interest was not as unequivocal, as was later experienced in the history of the church. The interrelation was social-culturally based, which is also due to the fact of the completely different political backgrounds. The formation of a *Berber-Punic Christian Church* could have happened, as it for example did in the case of the Coptic Church (the word Coptic is derived from the Greek word *Aigyptos*, meaning Egyptian). Discovering the reasons to answer the above mention problem of forming an ethnic church could deserve a study of its own. Our assumption is that in the Donatist movement's teaching, the theological elements were strongly connected to the Catholic Church's teaching, especially in the con-

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[607] Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, 1.1. 2-2. 3
[608] Paola Marone, "The Use of the Term "Catholic" in the Donatist Controversy," *Pomoerium, Vol.5* (2004-2006), 6-11.

text of the Catholic tradition in North Africa. When the separation began Christianity was just about to become the state religion of the Roman Empire, whose interest was not to accept church separation, and by this way it tended toward the risk of a socially and ethnically based revolt. However, the Donatist church did not make any attempts, as far as we know, to translate the Bible into Punic language and develop its own liturgy related to its cultural background.

6.4.2 The Role of Ethnicity along with other Socio-political Issues in the Various Times of the Reformed Church of Hungary

6.4.2.1 The Donatsist Factors' Relevance in Relation to Ethnicity and various Soci- political issues before 1989/90

In accordance with Szűcs' analysis, we also have to call attention to the fact that there is a notable difference in the meaning of ethnicity and nationality in the context of the Roman Empire and Christian Europe in the late Middle Ages, which also has an affect on the understanding of these notions in relation to the church. Basically, while in the fourth and fifth centuries ethnicity and nationally was a more natural formation, by the time of the *Corpus Christianum,* ethnicity and nationality were rather due to political formations whose connotation was different from time to time. Ethnic identity could mean the *political elite* just as well the opposite, the *common people*.[609]

When the Reformation broke the unity of the C*orpus Christianum*, the *church* and the *state* started to become differentiated entities, although we cannot talk about the complete disintegration of the *Constantinian unity* of the church and sate. By the time of the French Revolution, society was breaking away from its roots in the Christian faith. In the Modern Age, the definition of *nation* was further developed. It was interpreted in two ways: 1) an ethnic group creates a unity in the boundaries of a state, and in this way the nation is a historical reality; 2) one can talk about a nation formed by the unity of the citizens, while the ethnic roots have less importance, since the common political will is the dominant feature.[610]

The outcome of the different peace treaties after World War I (like 'Trianon') led to the notions of a *cultural nation* and a *political nation,* and these began to play a role especially in the case of ethnic groups which formed a minority in Europe. Due to the often aggressive settlement of the new borderlines these minority ethnic groups often found themselves within the borders of a foreign country. Therefore these minority ethnic groups are connected to their *motherland* with a peculiar conscience of their historical identity.[611] These facts are important for the clear understanding of the limits of comparison between the time of the Donatist and the Hungarian situation in different historical settings.

Among the number of challenges in relation to the *life and death matters* of the Hungarian nation in the sixteenth century, Protestantism was able to form a

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[609] Szűcs, "Etnikum, nemzet, keresztyénség," 75
[610] Szűcs, "Etnikum, nemzet, keresztyénség," 76
[611] Szűcs, "Etnikum, nemzet, keresztyénség," 76.

solidarity with the Hungarian people's problems, which also bears significance ethically. This way the question of ethnicity, among the pressure of foreign rulers, became inseparable from the ethically related issues. This means that since the sixteenth century Protestants have had an effective biblically based message for the Hungarian nation. The Protestant churches of the Reformation in Hungary supported and maintained the national commitment to independence in opposition to foreign domain. The application of Calvin's teaching and the modification in the Hungarian context allowed the universal tendencies and the contextual, national characters to go together well. The Calvinistic doctrine put the church in the centre, establishing the horizontal unity and coalition of the autonomous and equal congregations and church denominations, meanwhile ignoring the structural hierarchy in the church. The Calvinistic (church) model was a precursor of the most important organizing theory of modern Europe, which brought serious challenges to the Roman Catholic Church's centralized hierarchical system. 'Pluralisation', as an organizing principle, was detectable not only in the church but also in the political system. One of the most common features of religion in society is its power of organising and holding together a community, by a credo and doctrines, and these were also expanded by the Protestants, until the other areas of social life were influenced by them, leading to a conjunction of politics and the Protestant ethic. The relationship between the Calvinistic ecclesiastic model and society was mutual. While the social (political and economic) teachings of Calvinism could have a positive influence on any given context, the receptive surrounding also could have an influence and a negative modification on Calvinistic thought. The signs of that negative tendency are detectable in case of the feudal setting of Hungary, although this only became characteristic in the eighteenth century. We also have to call attention to the fact that the Calvinist church model according to the structure of elders (the Presbyterian system) has never completely found its roots in the Hungarian context. Rather, one finds a strange combination of the Calvinist church-constitution with the Zwinglian and Bullingerian. That fact is well demonstrated by the slow introduction and acceptance of the system of elders in the Hungarian context. Most of the later debates and the refusal of Puritanism on the level of church governance happened because of the fierce attacks of the Puritans against the existing church models. Some elements from the Roman Catholic tradition also remained in the Reformed Church's structure, with the consequence of the distinction of the laity and minister from a church structural point of view. The bishop-system in the Hungarian context often became more a means of power than of service to the church.[612]

We also have to mention that behind the various confessional debates in the end of the sixteenth century the increase of the Helvetic Reformation spread mainly among the Hungarians in the historical boundaries of Hungary, while Lutheranism had its major influence among the Slovakian, German and Croatian nationalities in Hungary. Therefore, separation of the mainline Protestant

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[612] Imre Révész, "Presbiteri rendszerű-e a magyar református egyház"?, *Theológiai Szemle* (1935), 133-141.

churches was due to the fact of ethnic differences, just as much as to doctrinal differences.

From the seventeenth until the nineteenth century the external enemies were the Habsburg Royalty with varying intensity, whose political interests often became harmonious with the interest of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the time of the Counter-Reformation. It is interesting to look at the formation of the "Hungarian religion" in the given circumstance of the European context, from the Donatist point of view. This is mainly due to the fact that the national affairs intertwined with Protestantism. That can be well pictured in the significant role of Protestantism in the various struggles for freedom (War of Independence by Rákóczi Ferenc II in 1707, the War of Independence in 1948-49, and later on the Revolution of 1956). Here we may refer to the sensitivity to social need and the maintenance of the national identity, which without doubt were present in the tendencies of the Donatist movement in the *Berber-Punic* context.

By the time of the nineteenth century the effects of enlightenment rationalism, romanticism, and the growing secularism, arrived with some delay in Hungary. After the Edict of Tolerance (Joseph II) the religious life of Hungary became formalized and the Hungarian culture was becoming unified around the theme of *national identity*. The rationalised and liberalised theological thinking resulted in the so-called C*ultural Protestantism,* whereby the social and cultural duty had priority over the ecclesiastical tasks.

The independent struggle of the Hungarian nation united with the Protestant churches and the growing secularisation produced a deficiency in fulfilling the task of the church according to its God-given calling in the time of the second half of the nineteenth century. By the time of the end of the nineteenth century the Hungarian situation also demonstrates that the maintaining of national identity can over influence one's Christian identity, which weakens the church's aim, as we have discussed earlier.

After the outbreak of World War I, at first the Protestant churches supported the war but finally they turned toward opposition to the war. After the revolution of 1918-19, the Red Terror and then the White Terror became an external threat, while Hungarian political life was drifting to nationalism, which became a real danger for Christianity as well. The Peace Treaty of Trianon (1920) was the crowning of the problem concerning nationalities in Hungary, which started basically with Charles III. The loss of the Refomed Church of Hungary was the greatest among the Christian churches in Hungary. More than a thousand congregations of the Reformed Churches were forced into a minority status, ethnically and religiously, and were now living outside of Hungary because of the new borderlines and they were facing hostile surroundings which required new programs and activities to be able to handle the situation. The theologies of the minority population among the Hungarians in the new setting of border lines, especially in Transylvania, aimed at the renewal of spiritual church-life and the independence of the church along with the cultural identities of the Hungarians. This way a *Transilvanian Hungarian identity* was developed which meant being Reformed and Hungarian was almost inseparable. The Hungarians' main interest was to

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live in peace with the actual political and majority population in Romania. However, the many difficulties which we have pointed out earlier gave a difficult time for the Hungarian as an ethnic group just as well as for the Reformed Church community.

The various external threats toward the Reformed Church of Hungary offered a new situation whereby the identity of the church could be maintained and even strengthened. A differentiation of communities often happens through a clear definition of the boundaries which identify them in opposition to a given surrounding culture, and at the same time can establish a certain level of unity among the member on the basis of what they all reject. This oppositional form of organization was not only evident in the Christian North African context of the second century and so on, but it was also true for the Hungarian context as well, ever since the reception of the thoughts of the Reformation.

In the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, a number of revival movements were organised on the basis of some German and English models. Their goals were to find ways out of the ossification of church life. A new stimulus was received in the life of the church through its home mission by these movements. Their supportive work for society had great results. Beside the good results, several problems had to be faced as well. Their often exclusivist behaviour was very similar to that of the Donatists. Their attempts regarding church membership often followed the same patterns of the Donatist view on perfection. They laid a chief emphasis on personal holiness and purity by a radical change (*metanoia*) in the believer's life, which was seen as a basis to participate in the true church, and by means of this they wanted to develop their influence to a collective nation-wide conversion. Characteristically, in general they did not announce the consequential teaching which was stated by the Donatist, namely that the holiness of the church depends on the holiness of the members of the church, however their attitude often suggested that.

Between the two World Wars three characteristic directions were present in Reformed theology: 'Barthianism', 'Dutch Kuyperian Historic Calvinism', and the 'Awakening' movements. The Barthian movement and the Historic Calvinism movement both maintained the confessional character of the church and also worked on compensating the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church's cultural influence, which was also seen as a quasi state-church status. The refusal of totalitarianism clearly set the position of the Reformed Church of Hungary in line with the earlier struggle for religious freedom. The possibilities of the Reformed Church circled around the necessary establishment of a flourishing church life and self-conscious Christian demeanour, which would be able to resist the growing ideological pressure. The leading theologies of the Barthian students from Hungary and high church leaders, especially Ravasz and Révész among others, drew the lines clearly between the church and state, by declaring that the responsibilities should be separate on both sides. Along with the questions which circled around the state and the church, the concept of the 'Hungarian nation' also bore significance in the theological notion that the calling of the church cannot neglect the fact of being Hungarian.

The relatively peaceful time of 1945-1948 resulted in some different approaches for renewal, beyond the already existing patterns. As we have noted earlier, these tendencies showed an ambivalent ecclesiological view. On the one hand, a conformance appeared about the principle of holding a critical distance from the state (Révész and Ravasz), while on the other hand, the principle of relative acceptance of the new communist formation was present. The supporters of the folk-church setting, the accelerators of the inner revival of the church, and the so called "Opposition Party," tried to harmonize the goals of the church with the antidemocratic transition toward a socialist society.

During Communism a number of the 'Donatist Factors' also became the means for the collaborators in the church to maintain their programme, while on the other side – the non-collaborators - the reality of the Donatist Factors also could become more concentrated. On the one hand, during the last four decades of the Reformed Church of Hungary before the changes, the ecclesiological viewpoints were narrowed down, and most criteria for the essence of the church lost their true theological meaning. On the other hand, the various attempts by the different revival movements for real renewal, independently from any political interest, in the context of their Donatist tendencies could only in a very limited way maintain the church's interest in its God given call. Their limitations were not only restricted by their hostile context, but the individualization of the main theological concepts hampered their efforts. Their concentration was on the lack of moral integration in individual lives, and this weakened their analysis and understanding of the actual historical dimension. While the official theology of church leadership argued that the only way for survival for the church is in its *service* to the existing political formation, just the opposite seemed to be true.

It is also important to call attention to Bereczky's argumentation that after losing the war not only the church was under the punishment of God, but the Hungarian nation as well, and yet the survival of God's judgement was a sign of God's grace for both church and nation. This way the 'new' *narrow way theology* had an important message for the Hungarians as a nation as well. In the collective repentance announced by Bereczky the whole entire country was addressed, yet this also allowed an unjust misinterpretation from the side of the newly forming totalitarian Communist Regime, which talked about the Hungarians as a 'sinful nation', and this then was followed by political actions against the Hungarians.

From a church-sociological point of view we have to call attention to the process of secularisation. On the basis of western European examples, we can suggest that the avoidance of secularisation would not have been possible for the Reformed Church of Hungary. During Socialism the situation in Hungary had a unique character in which the Communist Regime's church-politics did not allow the church to face the problem of secularisation, because this would have harmed the socialist society's outward image, which did not want the title of persecutor. The prolongation of the identity crisis of the Reformed Church was unavoidable; moreover, the transition of Hungarian society, the liquidation of rural community life, and the contradictory forces in urban society all worked against the

church's possibility for autonomous community, especially since the largest amount of supporters for the Reformed Church were coming from the rural areas. The loss of the social basis of the Reformed Church directly contributed to the marginalisation of the laity in the church, which resulted in the disappearance of critical voices in the congregations.

It is important to mention the attitude of the *Reformed Confessors* in 1956 as a characteristic 'Donatist Factor' – and by their declaration (*Statement of Faith*) they had a major role in preparing the Revolution. This attitude did not differ from the Hungarian Calvinist tradition's attitude for which the spirit of revolution has always been an organic element ever since the political struggles of the seventeenth century.

With the transition since 1989/90 Hungary has faced a number of political, economic and cultural changes. On the one hand, the context of our time and that of Augustine have certain similarities, as both ages are characterised by great changes in the course of civilization. On the other hand, while in the time of Augustine paganism showed signs of demolishing, in the postmodern age (traditional) Christianity is facing the same challenge, which gives a wider framework to the Hungarian ecclesiastical situation.

We also have to call attention to the fact that in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary some of the above mentioned negative tendencies after the World Wars arrived at their fulfilment during the time of Communism; we must also recognize that the challenges the Reformed Church faced in the time of Communism are only partly responsible for the present situation of the church. The negative tendencies, especially the identity crisis of the Reformed Church, had started much earlier. The various attempts of the different revival movements of the nineteenth century are clear evidence of that. Their effect could not be realized because the pressure of the folk-church's official theology was too strong, and because the reality of the church showed a marked decline, both in the laity's and the pastor's attitude. On the contrary, the time of 1945-1948 offered a chance for the church to get beyond the many centuries' long crisis, which began around the time of the Counter-Reformation. The ambivalent nature of Communist church politics, on the one hand, concentrated on the stunting of church life; while on the other hand, the regime used the church for its advertisement purposes. Let us see more closely the post-communist times after 1989/90.

6.4.2.2 The Donatsist Factors Relevance in Relation to Ethnicity and Various Socio Political Issues after 1989/90

The economic instability and often emerging political vacuums resulted in that masses of people were left without an ideological basis. East Europe started an enormous struggle to catch up with the western societies' living standard. This resulted in a strong capitalist view in the life of the post-communist countries, built on a very unstable value system.

The Reformed Church of Hungary did not have many possibilities to offer a solution because of the failure of the Reformed Church of Hungary to define its

essence in a way which would have given clear guidance for its immediate orientation. This meant that the church missed a number of possibilities for renewal after the changes in and after 1989. On the one hand, some of the power struggles about the election of office-bearers, and about the over-involvement with party politics by the pastors of the church, are evidences of the misplaced orientation. On the other hand, all the good effort which tried to stabilize the church in all areas of its life, without a consensus of faith in Jesus Christ as the essence of the church, became dependent on the political climate. The church could only grow when politics was interested in supporting the church and its development slowed down when the political interests changed. The tendencies after the transition of 1989 pushed the Reformed Church of Hungary close to becoming a "second class (state) church," to use Ravasz's expression from his statement in 1945. The various models of church and state (rehabilitation, restriction and cooperation) show that the understanding of the Reformed Church of Hungary about the state did not reach a sufficient level, whereby the state could have been defined independently from the given party politics and the executing power. These arguable tendencies are evident from the THÉMA Association's publication of a number of articles and analyses on the decades of the Reformed Church of Hungary after 1989, the *diagnosis* of which we summarized in the previous chapter. On the basis of the results of these evaluations we shall now call attention to those issues which are directly connected to the Donatist Factors.

Donatist Factors are present in a number of programmes and appeals by a variety of theological movements and associations. A characteristic example of the presence of Donatist Factors in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary is found in the efforts of the association of the Bible-Allience (BSZ). The Bible-Allience strongly emphasised *the revitalisation of the Christian message* in light of the *sola Scriptura* principium. The BSZ's presence in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary forms a separate association whereby the moral standards of the Christian life are more rigorously required. In the discussion of the *role of the church in the state and church relationships with the state* (a typical question also for the Donatists), the BSZ calls attention to the vindication of the kingly office of Christ in the church, and points out that in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary since the changes of 1989, instead of the church participating in Christ's kingly office, political ideological concerns have played a major role in the church.

For a proper view on the empirical church it is also important that the number of notions about the church need to be well distinguished on a firm theological basis. These notions are often mixed and even put in opposition to each other, although their nature would not require this. For example, the notion of a confessing church and a folk church are often put in opposition to each other. While a confessing church points toward the essence of the church, the notion of a folk church is a church-sociological term. In the crucial matter of church membership a clear distinction is required to maintain a good order in the church. The folk church and the confessing church are not measurable by the same standards. The folk church bears witness to God's 'order of creation', which always displays the

aspect of religion, while the confessing church bears witness to God's *grace*. God's *grace* is a clear sign of God's restoration of the broken order of creation. And God's saving work is always embedded in his creation, thus there is a connecting point between the folk and confessing church. This comes to focus in a missiological perspective. In terms of the Donatist elements it is crucial to find the right balance when one defines the boundaries of the confessing church and the folk church. The confessing church will always have a mission toward the folk church. And the folk church provides a framework for the confessing church. The possible extremes can lead to misunderstandings and end up in false practice, as we have seen in examples at the beginning of the history of the Donatist movement.

The empirical church never can be complete and it is less complete without a proper perspective on the church. Ervin Vályi Nagy's critical analysis of the *Fraternal Message* exactly pointed out the importance of the church, as we have referred to in the previous chapter. He differentiated the church duties and boundaries from the disorder of human society, and did not picture the church to be the main component of any given society. The church can best understand its duty and purpose when it does not serve the people, but in the first place God's word, and through that service the people of society are also served. The church's task should not be divided according to the number of duties which arise from society's expectations.

The problem cannot be solved only by a clarification of the different ecclesiological notions. Nominal Christianity in the church has to be changed into a confessing Christianity, which requires a renewal in the practice of confirmation, church membership and church disciplines. The *reform orientation* of the Donatist Factors, aims at that purpose with a strong emphasis on discipline.

We find the same misleading problem concerning the notions of *state-church* and *free-church*. These categories belong to the area of civic law, in the first place. The variety of possible regulations for the relationship of the church and state in the present situation in Hungary can be dealt with if these entities are carefully distinguished on a theological basis. When the church is essentially defined by theology, then the boundaries of the church should become clearer. The notion of the state also has to be developed in theology. This way the essence of the relationship between church and state will not only be determined according to the external possibilities; rather, the external possibilities also need to be adjusted to a proper role for the church in society. Either it is expressed in separation, in some sort of cooperation, or in conflicts (and usually in a mixed pattern of these). The motivations of separation and some sort of cooperation, are clearly detectable in the Donatist movement, which we also emphasized as one of the Donatist Factors, under the title of *The Understanding of the Church, State and culture as a Structural Part of the Donatist Factor*

The social differentiations as a consequence of the transition had the result that the traditional values lost their leading force. In the case of the postcommunist countries the brainwashing of society by Communism even had resulted in a more dramatic metamorphosis in the orientation of values. The value-

crisis of the individual broke out in subjective relativism whereby the personal emotional feelings outweighed society's objective normative order. On the one hand, in the long run, religion loses its recognised characteristic role due to the social and individual orientation of values. In this way the values of religious institutions are also exposed to these changes. The social demand of the role of religion in society would allow a more optimistic picture, according to the statistic measurements in chapter 5 (figure 2 and 3) - however, as we have noted - such a positive view is rather the influence of hope and expectation of the personal emotional value orientation rather than actual experiences about the church. That fact becomes more obvious if we take into consideration that the "power" of the church (figure 4), hardly reached any measurable level since the changes.

On the other hand, the Reformed Church of Hungary lives in a pluralist situation. This pluralism can be described in several ways: the pluralism of institutions in society, the pluralism of worldviews, the pluralism of the churches, and the pluralism in the church. The multi-religious context has created a notable tension in the Christian church, whereby it feels in competition with other religions groups and movements. However, the church according to its own nature should not change its values in order to attract more people. The message of the church needs to be the message of the Gospel through which humanity faces its sinful nature, in order to find the *alienated truth* (justification). The forces of secularization and the forces of religious pluralism together have become a source of tension for the church.

The Christian churches are also multifarious, while each different denomination in itself is also pluralistic, to a certain extent. Each generation has the task to understand the Truth of Christianity, therefore the interpretation of Scripture is always a challenge, and this challenge always is related to our understanding of the *essence* of the church and to the possible continuing life of the church. Therefore the recognition of pluralism or diversity in the church will be always a test of the understanding of the present situation.

In this way the internal plurality of the church can be evaluated as a positive tendency to a certain extent, which well reflects how the church is able to handle the plurality of the context according to a clear understanding of the foundation of the church. Therefore the definition of the basis of the church needs to go beyond the various descriptions, such as pluralistic, socialist, and so forth - in order to be able to point to the only foundation in Jesus Christ. That foundation can most vividly be expressed by worship in the church, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the practice of the sacraments. We also have to remember that through worship, the reality of human life is embedded in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ which should not be disconnected from every day life outside of the church, as Paul in the letter to Romans says, in chapter 12:1ff.: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

We also have to call attention to the inherited responsibility of the Reformed Church of Hungary towards the Hungarian nation. After the time of the Communist *internationalist* propaganda the national and ethnic consciousness suddenly started to play a determinative role in most cases. It became a characteristic phenomenon because the unstitched threads of the past in relation to the ethnic-related unjust historical problems were never answered and treated effectively; therefore the trauma of Trianon also could come into the focus of party politics, which often found some partners in the Reformed Church of Hungary. A properly worked out theological basis gives a better possibility for the church to be able to carry responsibilities in ethnic-related issues and gives an answer for the burning issues of the decrease of the Hungarian population and all the challenges which were brought up by the integration into the European Community. The church needs to point toward hopeful answers and Christians need to apply their perspectives to these matters. All of this requires more than the usual Donatist perspectives.

6.5 Conclusion

The church according to the biblical witness can only be a confessing-church. The confessing church's determinative task is to point to its Lord, Jesus Christ. Giving witness to Christ is the existential reality of the church. This existential reality creates the unbreakable bond with Christ, which is the essence of the church. This element has the prior importance, and is based on the *orientation*, in the original meaning of the word, which is to turn to the direction of East, Jerusalem, to the place where Jesus' life, death and resurrection took place – thereby becoming the source for the Christian faith. This basis for orientation is true whether one talks about the church as *invisible* or *visible*. This understanding concerning the existence of the church in Christ does not allow for the assumption of two different churches under the notion of *visible* and *invisible,* from an essential point of view.

One's orientations provide a consciousness by which one's identity can be realized. A person's orientation provides an outline for his or her actions. In this way a stable identity is maintained, by which the essential conditions are interpreted, and therefore self-reliance can be strengthened in this way. By making a clear distinction among the different levels of orientation which are determinate for the church's identity, we try to locate the Donatist Factors' relevance in the ecclesiology of the Reformed Church of Hungary before and after the changes of 1989/90, in light of their characteristic themes on the *una sancta catholica ecclesia.*

Any breaking of the unity of the church was and is a scandal. It was a scandal in the time of the Donatists, in the time of Reformation, and also in the time of modern age church dissents. The definition of the existence of the Church according to the essence itself, defines the role of conflicts and diversities. The existential reality of the church in Christ does not neglect the conflicts and critiques, but marks the limits and the purposes of these (self-) critical elements. One of the biggest temptations for the church is when Christ is left out of its self-definition,

and when the church itself takes the place of Jesus Christ. This way the *orientation* of the church in the world is misplaced: instead of pointing to Christ it then points to itself. In the struggle concerning the unstable definition about both the 'essential reality' and the 'existential reality' of the church, we face a double threat, which was a typical tendencies in the Donatist-Catholic debate just as well as in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary:

1) *The secularisation of the church.* In the process of secularisation in society, the church tends to believe that its influence can only be maintained in the world if the church tries to find those connecting points with the world which would make it possible to address the surrounding context. This way it can easily happen that the method of connecting everything to the Gospel makes the addressee more important than the message that the church wants to give.[613]

2) *The sacralization of the church.* This was dominant in the Donatist type of movements and initiatives. When the church turns inward its main theme becomes the church itself. In this attempt the 'world of the church' wants to be the only world, and then the world no longer recognizes the value of the church for society. Separating the church from the world can lead to a false theological and ecclesiological understanding, whereby perfection and holiness become the exclusive reference for those who are inside the circle of the remnant. In this way a formal self-reliance can be maintained by means of autonomous discipline, but the concern of the Gospel and the task of finding consensus are lost. This double threat was well recognised by the Reformed Church of Hungary, as we demonstrated in the previous chapter, by Ravasz's statement from 1938 and Vályi Nagy's statement from 1950.[614]

Our analysis of the Donatist Factors may result in a crucial role for Hungarian ecclesiological approaches, especially by calling attention to the following aspects we have learned through this study: 1) the importance of the self-identification of the church, in relation to its essence which always should determine its empirical existence; 2) that the concrete historical situation requires concrete confession about the certainty of faith and about the essence of the church - otherwise the church's true reality is endangered, 3) the need of consensus on the central content of the Gospel.

In our overview of the long-term history of the Reformed Church of Hungary we demonstrated that the Donatist Factors' relevance played an important role in church renewal. After the transition of 1989/90 some of the hidden forces of the church which display many of the elements of the Donatist Factors, came to the foreground, although their emphasis was not strong enough to give a workable solution in the challenging situation after the changes of 1989/90.

Concerning the changes and the ecclesiastical challenges of the Reformed Church of Hungary in relation to the three major themes of our last chapter (unity, sanctity, and ethnicity along with the socio-political issues) we come to the following conclusion.

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[613] See also Bölcskei, "Konszenzus keresés," 18.

[614] See also Bölcskei, „Konszenzus keresés," 19.

One of the most important features of the Reformed Church of Hungary is its *unity*. The real challenges occur concerning how this unity is understood and maintained. The hard years of Communism and its effect on church life with so many negative tendencies, have resulted in the fact that the importance and realization of Christology in ecclesiology was damaged and it was even lost for the Reformed Church of Hungary. After the changes, the realization of that issue was not handled with meticulous care, therefore the *orientation* of the church was misplaced in most cases. This way the unity of the church was more or less due to external circumstances rather than to a deep internal conviction and the *consensus ecclesiae* through faith of Christ. This way one can also find a real ecclesiastical challenge to unity whereby such unity is more dependent on the outside circumstances, and this becomes a *survival mechanism* for the church. It may be possible that the surroundings will not change for a longer time - therefore unity will be not be endangered - but in such circumstances the church cannot benefit from the important *nota* of unity. However, with the intensification of the different theological trends and movements the *unity in diversity* will be more fragile and can more easily lead to divisions.

The *holiness* of the church in light of its opposition to heresy and sin is also always fragile. Holiness is expressed in the church by its teaching, by the lives of the members, by means of the sacraments and in the liturgy. These phenomena are regarded as holy because they have their origin in God. The distinction between history and salvation-history is needed in regard to the ecclesiological consideration of the holiness of the church as well. This way the *credo sanctam* should guarantee the existence of the church from the Christological and Pneumatic aspects. The mystery of the church is the mystery of Christ – and such a mystery calls attention to the importance of dialogue in the empirical church in a historical setting, since the 'mystery' needs to be understood and applied time and again.

One of the biggest challenges arose from the unstable ecclesiological views after the changes in relation to the question of collaborators. The large number of social agendas of the church after the changes has been isolated from the *message of reconciliation*. Among the great number of events during these changes one of the leading features was the radical *injustice* in relation to the past as well as in the new circumstances. Therefore the matter of *justice* seemed to win a primary focus in the church instead of God's grace. This way justice and liberation seemed to be pre-requirements for reconciliation. This resulted in the thought that since justice is not yet available in a sufficient way, the message of reconciliation also seems out of reach. However, with the right theological understanding of reconciliation one needs to see that in the first place God is the one who reconciles human beings with Himself. In this way God's grace has a pre-eminence over justice. Then the meaning of reconciliation has a greater message in the social dimensions as well, whereby interpersonal as well as group relations are expanded into the *telos* of God. In that way the neglect of the question of collaborators or the lack of rightly handling this, as in some cases as we have described earlier, would have been avoided in the case of the Reformed Church of Hungary

– thus reducing the number of problems and challenges which the Reformed Church of Hungary has to face from time to time regarding this unsolved problem.

The tension between the secularisation and the sacralisation of the church creates one of the biggest challenges in the Hungarian situation, which vividly brings forward the problems of church membership and church discipline. None of these factors in the life of the Reformed Church of Hungary situation after the changes were in the focus of the ecclesiological considerations and solutions. The disorder of church discipline creates a greater risk for the increase of *subjective* holiness which will bring forward exclusivism and more possibilities of separation among the secularised and indifference church life.

The question of *ethnicity* is strongly connected to the identity crisis of the post-modern age. The new emphasis on identity and the search for openness and dialogue in an increasingly secular way can also be seen as a part of globalization. This tendency in the meantime is challenged by a new quest for cultural, national, ethnic, confessional and also personal identity. The new question is: Who are we? Who am I? How can we, how can I avoid being absorbed in a faceless, bigger whole? The identity question is a form of self-affirmation and often an expression of the fear of losing oneself. These questions in the Hungarian situation are also very relevant. According to our elaboration we can conclude that the Hungarian culture in regard to ethnicity was and is rather a defensive culture. The cultural isolation and historical circumstances, in accordance with our earlier given analysis, isolated the Hungarians more than most countries in Europe. The result of that fact demonstrates well that the religious questions were closely connected to national, ethnic and cultural elements, and that in a positive rather than in a negative way. Protestantism was able to maintain in a responsible manner the ethnic and other socio-political questions in the Hungarian situation in such a way that the meaning of being Reformed and Hungarian were rightly balanced. The challenges occur in regard to responsibility in the Hungarian situation after the changes of 1989/90, circling around the question of how to avoid extremes in these matters and find workable biblical messages for these issues. The inheritance of Communism, which is highly connected to the *brain washing* of that time, has harmed the Hungarian self-awareness and has accelerated the identity crisis, and in this way also strengthens some radical enforcements of nationality which are also present in the life of the church. A realisation of the Christian identity for individuals and also in a corporative sense can balance the ethnic and socio-political perspective in such a way that the national identity receives advantages also.

In the difficult ecclesiastical situation after the changes of 1989/90 tendencies similar to the Donatist pattern have been growing. Therefore, acknowledgment of the Donatist Factors is important in order to avoid the possible extremes which might push any solution in the direction of a radical separation in the church. Neglecting of the important insights of the Donatist Factors for today, would also create a problem. We also have to be aware of the fact that there will always be a tension in the different layers of the Donatist Factors, as a source of conflict in

the church. Such awareness is an important step for handling our problematic situation in a way that the *notae ecclesiae*, especially the three major themes (unity, sanctity and catholicity of church), should be kept in balanced and dynamic correlation.

We also believe that there will be no final solution for the problems which this study is dealing with since the church is to be seen as *in via* toward its eschatological completeness. The Truth itself and our history are always against such solutions. The history in which we participate, and the Truth we believe in, liberate us from the obligation of the myths of historical final solutions. We are wrong if we want to find the absolute Truth in our own answers. The coming Christ himself forbids us to find final solutions in history and saves us from becoming possessive towards the Truth.

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Ecclesia sine macula et ruga
A donatista tényezők jelentősege a Magyarországi Református Egyház ekkléziológia kihívásaiban, különös tekintettel 1989/90 után.

Figyelem a természetfölötti felé. Ez olyan meghatározottság, amely nem csupán a földiességre beállított életfigyelemet, nem is az értelem munkáját segítő eszméleti feszültséget, hanem elsősorban a lélek kinyílását jelenti az örökkévalóság felé. A lét nem merülhet ki a cselekvésben és annak megokolásaiban; mindezeken túl más erezetbe is kapcsolódnia kell. Ennek forrása az a tágabb Valóság, az Istené, amelybe beletartozunk, ahonnan erőink fakadnak, amely körülvesz és éltet bennünket. Az egyházról szerzett tapasztalataim, mint a Magyarországi Református Egyház gyülekezeti tagja, mint lelkipásztor, és mint a Sárospataki Református Teológiai Akadémia oktatója, gazdagon alakítják egyházképemet, amely önmagában, az egyetlen Isten személyének kiáradására és az általa teremtett és teremtődő Valóságra eszmélés nélkül sok esetben a sorvadásnak, a betegségnek, az élet látható részének árnyképe lenne. Egyházról sokféleképpen beszélhetünk, mégis ahhoz, hogy egyház alatt ne a befalazott lelkek tömegét értsük, észre kell vennünk a rést, amelyet Isten Jézus Krisztus által hasított egyre vastagodó falainkon, hogy új életre éledjünk, és a Teremtő akaratának megfelelően tölthessük be emberlétünket. Ezek a benyomások alapvetően nem különböznek a keresztyénség tágabb kontextusából szerezhető élményektől, ahol a történelem változásai eltérő hitbeli felfogást, teológiai megközelítést, kultúrát és gyakorlatot eredményeznek, amelyek megannyi módon járulnak hozzá az egyház sokféleségéhez. Az egyházi lét egyik változatlan körülménye az a meghatározottság, amelyben az egyházat *in via* értelmezzük annak eszkatológiai beteljesedéséig. A keresztyén egyház története számtalan példát szolgál arra, hogy az *úton lévő* egyház olykor hogyan adta fel merev uniformizmusát a sokféleségben való meggazdagodás érdekében, vagy hogyan eredményezett együttműködést az egységtörekvésekben az elszigeteltségből való kitörés. Természetesen, ezekeknek a folyamatoknak a fordítottjára is találhatunk számos példát.

Az 1989/90-es történelmi fordulatok jelentős átalakulások folyamatát indították el a magyar társadalom életében, így a Magyarországi Református Egyházban is. A négy évtizedet meghaladó kommunizmus összeomlását követően megindultak a demokratikus változások, melyekben a Magyarországi Református Egyház új és egyben meglehetősen ambivalens helyzetben találta magát. A kialakult szituációban kulcsfontosságúvá vált, hogy a Magyarországi Református Egyház készen áll-e a közelmúltjával (1948-1989) való szembesülésre úgy is, hogy nevén nevezi azokat a tévtanításokat, amelyek az egyház hivatalos teológiáját jelentették. Mindeközben meg kell vallanunk azt is, hogy csak töredékesen vagyunk képesek felfogni (1Kor 13, 9) Isten egyházának végső meghatározottságát Jézus Krisztusban. Megfelelő ekkléziológiai támpontot találhatunk az efézusi levélben,

ahol Pál az egyházat úgy jellemzi mint ami folt- és ráncnélküli (*ecclesia sine macula et ruga*).

Jelen tanulmány az úgynevezett rendszerváltás utáni Magyarországi Reformátusság Egyház ekkléziológiai kihívásait jellemzi és elemzi, amihez rendszerező paradigmául a Krisztus utáni negyedik századi donatiasta mozgalom meghatározó teológiai elemeit hívja segítségül, melyeknek - meggyőződésünk szerint - kiváltképpen is meghatározó üzenete van a mai egyházunk számára. A magyar helyzet párhuzamba állítása az első jelentős egyházszakadással (donatista) egy szélesebb spektrumú teológiai értékelést tesz lehetővé, és részben olyan történelmi távlatot is jelent, ami mindenképpen kívánatos egy ilyen elemző feltárásnál.

A donatizmus mint szakadár egyházi mozgalom a diokletiánusi keresztyénüldözéseket követően (303-305) vált jelentőssé az északnyugat-afrikai térségben, és ezt a szerepét egészen a hetedik századig, a mohamedán invázióig fenntartotta. A Donatista mozgalom hosszú fennállása során számos összetett teológiai probléma merült fel a katolikus egyházzal való polémiában. Északnyugat-Afrika keresztyénségének negyedik századi ekkléziológiai megoldásai sok esetben nem voltak mentesek a szélsőségektől, és befolyással bírtak és bírnak az egyház történetére egészen napjainkig. Augustinus írásai is jól tükrözik a donatisták által felvetett ekkléziológiai problémáknak azt a komplexitását, amelyben alapvető teológiai megfontolások mentén rajzolódott meg az egyház természete és képe olyan szorongattatott helyzetben, amikor a meghatározó környezeti adottság a keresztyénséggel való ellenséges szembenállás vagy éppen az üldözés volt. A donatista-katolikus vitában az ekkléziológia fő kérdései kerültek előtérbe, amelyek a keresztyén egyház szentségének és katolicitásának függvényében kívánták meghatározni a Krisztus testeként értelmezett egyház lényegét, annak egyetemes és lokális színterén. A fő probléma az alábbi rövid kérdésben összegezhető: *Ubi ecclesia?* - amely időről-időre felmerülő kérdéssé vált, kikövezve ezzel az ekkléziológiai kihívások útját. Mindezek alapján a donatista mozgalomra nem úgy tekintünk érveléseinkben mint ami kizárólag az egyház történetének múltjához kapcsolható jelenség, hanem sokkal inkább úgy, hogy annak teológiai kérdései és megfontolásai bármikor életre kelhetnek különböző ekkléziasztikai szituációkban, különösen is a keresztyén egyház üldözését követő időszakokban. Az ilyen időszakokra nyomatékosan is érvényes a múlttal való szembesülés kötelezettsége annak érdekében, hogy felismerhetővé váljon Isten akarata a jelenben és - reménység szerint - a jövőre nézve is. A donatista mozgalom teológiájának megértését az úgynevezett *donatista tényezők* szerint összegezzük, amelyek alatt azokat az alkotóelemeket értjük, amelyek létrehozzák a *donatista identitást*. Ezeknek az elemeknek a meghatározása a tanulmány második részének végén található. Azt is meg kell jegyeznünk, hogy a különböző donatista tényezők nem mindig egyforma számban és intenzitással vannak jelen a különböző egyházi helyzetekben. Sőt, ahogyan a donatizmus saját történelmében is láthatjuk, ezek az összetevők a mozgalmon belül is további szakadásokhoz vezettek, vagy éppen a katolikus ellenfelek ezeknek a tényezőknek a hatására képesek voltak módosítani saját teológiai álláspontjukat. A donatista probléma mélyére ásva sok meglepetéssel találkozhatunk, amely arra figyelmeztethet bennünket, hogy ne kötelezzük el magunkat az ilyen és ehhez ha-

sonló szakadások megítélésében túl elhamarkodottan az egyik vagy másik oldal mellett. Meggyőződésünk, hogy azok a teológiai kérdések, melyek a donatista - katolikus vitában felmerültek, nagyon is időszerűvé tehetők a 1989/90 utáni Magyarországi Református Egyházban. A donatista tényezők ugyanis alapvetően érintik az ekkléziológia, a krisztológia, a misszió és a kiengesztelődés teológiájának tanításait.

A feldolgozás módszere egyfelől egyháztörténeti beágyazottságú, amely igyekszik figyelembe venni a szociális, politikai és kulturális dimenziókat. Az argumentációk fő vonala mégis rendszeres teológiai. Elsősorban ekkléziológiai megfontolásokat kíván előtérbe helyezni. Az elemzés elsődleges célja a mai Magyarországi Református Egyház teológiai egzisztenciájának feltárása a múlt és jelen párhuzamai és az ebből leszűrhető következtetések nyomán, amelynek fókuszát a donatista szakadás ekkléziológiai felvetései adják. A tanulmány igyekszik figyelembe venni a témával kapcsolatos elsődleges és másodlagos forrásokat a magyar helyzettel kapcsolatosan, és főként másodlagos forrásokra épít a donatizmussal kapcsolatos fejezetekben. Ennek fő oka, hogy a huszadik század második felének kutatásai nyomán a donatista mozgalomról alkotott képet sokkal árnyaltabbá sikerült tenni az általános teológiai közfelfogással szemben.

A *donatista tényezők* az alábbi teológiai kérdések csoportosításában és együttállásában ragadhatók meg:

1) Keresztyénüldözések során az alábbi döntő kérdéssel szembesülhetünk: Az ellenséges hatalom nyomása alatt a hit konfrontációban vagy kompromisszumokban juttatható-e leginkább kifejezésre? A hívők a bátorság és mártíromság útját választják-e vagy inkább az alkalmazkodás és belátás ösvényeit? Ezeknél és ehhez hasonló kérdéseknél a bűnbánat teológiájának érvényre juttatása szükséges az üldözés utáni helyzet rendezéséhez és az előrehaladáshoz.

2) A szentség és elkülönülés problémájánál az egyházban fontos kérdésként merül fel: Milyen szerepe van a krisztológiának és eszkatológiának az ekkléziológiában? Az *egység* két egymással szemben álló meghatározás szerint árnyalható leginkább, amely érvényessé tehető az egyház egységére nézve is: i) *Uniformizmus*, amely az individualitás és az egyén egyediségének figyelmen kívül hagyását jelenti. ii) *Együttműködés*, ami az egységnek, a harmóniának bizonyos keretek szerinti meghatározottsága, amelyből a résztvevő felek ki is vonhatják magukat. Mi az *egység* értelmezésének legmegfelelőbb meghatározása? Milyen szerepet tulajdoníthatunk a tradíciónak ebben a kérdésben? Hogyan lehet az egyház egyszerre a *Krisztus (egyetemes) teste* és otthona egy adott helyen lakók közösségének, például nemzetnek? Lehet-e a *konfliktus* olyan kulcsfontosságú elem, amely alapvetően határozza meg az egyház természetét? Az egyházvezetés teológiai kérdései döntően befolyásolják a lehetséges válaszokat.

3) Egyház és állam és az egyház és társadalom főbb kérdései. Milyen kapcsolat van a Krisztus testeként értelmezett egyház és a társadalom között? Hogyan viszonyulhat a pásztori szolgálat megfelelően a világban jelenlevő kollektív bűnhöz? Mi a keresztyének feladata a különböző társadalmak struktúráiban? Az egyház feladata-e a társadalom átformálása, vagy sokkal inkább egy alternatív társada-

lom kialakítása a cél? Hogyan segíthet a keresztyén önértelmezés az egyháznak valóban egyház lenni úgy, hogy a keresztyének egy adott államnak a polgárai is?

4)   Milyen szerepe van az nemzeti hovatartozásnak az ekkléziológián belül különösen is akkor, amikor egy nemzet idegen hatalom elnyomását szenvedi el? Milyen mértékben hozható kapcsolatba a nemzeti meghatározottság valakinek a keresztyén identitásával?

Ezek a kérdések szerves részét képezték a donatista - katolikus vitának és jelen vannak a komminzmus bukást követő időszakban a Magyarországi Református Egyház életében is.

A tanulmány főkérdése éppen ezért az alábbiak szerint összegezhető:

Hogyan segítenek a donatista - katolikus vitában felmerülő teológiai kérdések megérteni és tisztázni a Magyarországi Református Egyház helyzetét a kommunizmus bukása után?

A tanulmány az alábbi felosztás szerint keresi a válaszokat:

1)   A bevezető első fejezetet követően a második fejezetben a donatizmus bemutatása a cél (*A donatizmus mint útjelző az ekkléziológiában*), amely során a mozgalom előzményein, történetén és főbb teológiai meghatározásain túl figyelembe vesszük a doantizmust meghatározó szociális és politikai kontextust is. Fontosnak tartottuk a donatista kutatásnak azokat az új meglátásait (huszadik század második feléből) is beépíteni, amelyek a mozgalomnak eddig egy kevésbé ismert oldalát helyezik előtérbe. A donatista mozgalom teológiai értékelését követően, az azt meghatározó előzmények összefüggéseiben (Tertullianuson és Cyprianuson át egészen Augustinusig) kísérletet teszünk arra, hogy a legfontosabb teológiai elemeket, amelyek majd a Magyarországi Református Egyház ekkléziológiai értékelésénél játszanak főszerepet, az úgynevezett *donatista tényezők* szerint csoportosítsuk.

2)   A harmadik fejezetben (*A Magyarországi Református Egyház történelmi vonulatai XVI-XX századik*) röviden bemutatjuk azokat a főbb histáriai eseményeket a Magyarországi Református Egyház történetéből, amelyek témánk szempontjából különösen is fontosak.

3)   A negyedik fejezetben (*A Magyarországi Református Egyház 'hivatalos' szolgáló egyház teológiájának bemutatása 1945-1989/90 között*) a Magyarországi Református Egyház rendszerváltás előtti (1945-1989/90) teológiai diszpozícióiba tekintünk bele, figyelemmel kísérve az adott időszak politikai, szociológiai és kulturális jellemzőit.

4)   Az ötödik fejezetben (*A Magyarországi Református Egyház ekkléziológiai kontextusának áttekintése a kommunizmus bukását követő közvetlen időszakban*) bemutatjuk azokat a sajátos környezeti tényezőket, politikai, szociológiai, kulturális és teológiai vonatkozásokban, amelyek meghatározták a Magyarországi Református Egyház rendszerváltás utáni (1990-2000) időszakát.

5)   A hatodik fejezetben (*Una sancta catholica et apostolica – Ecclesia sine macula et ruga*) tárgyaljuk, hogy a donatista tényezők, hogyan segíthetnek meg-

érteni a Magyarországi Református Egyház ekkléziológiai kihívásait az 1989-es időszak után. Ebben a részben elsősorban annak a rendszeres teológiai feladatnak kívánunk megfelelni, ahol az egyháztani, történeti és rendszeres teológia elemeket párhuzamosan szemléljük és értékeljük az egyház *egységének, szentségének és a nemzeti identitás* összefüggéseinek a meghatározottságában.

A tanulmány következtetései az előbb felvázolt fejezetek eredményeire nézve röviden az alábbiak szerint összegezhető. A *donatista tényezők* szerepe az 1989/90-es fordulatot követően alapvetően három fő területen segíthet megérteni a Magyarországi Református Egyház ekkléziológiai helyzetét és kihívásait: 1) Az egyház *önértelmezésében*, amely nem hagyhatja figyelmen kívül egzisztenciális valóságának lényegi meghatározottságát, az Úr Jézus Krisztust. Ennek során az egyház empirikus valósága nem korlátozódik csupán a környezet lehetőségeire és elvárásaira. 2) Konkrét történeti helyzetben, ahol konkrét hitvallási szituációt jöhet létre, amelyben az egyháznak számot kell adni Uránnak. 3) Az egyházi konszenzusra nézve, az evangélium központi üzenetének meghatározásában.

A Magyarországi Református Egyház helyzetére nézve az utolsó fejezet három fő témájának (az egyház egysége, szentsége és a nemzeti identitás) az összefüggésében megállapíthatjuk, 1) hogy a Magyarországi Református Egyház *egysége* kihívásként áll előttünk abban a tekintetben, hogyan értelmezzük és őrizzük meg az egységet. A kommunizmus éveiben jelenlevő ekkléziológiai deformitás nem tűnt el nyomtalanul a rendszer bukása után, amely a Református Egyház elvi és gyakorlati orientációjának tévedéseit hívta életre.

2) Az egyház *szentsége* a gyülekezet istentiszteletében, sákramentumi gyakorlatában, liturgiájában, a gyülekezet életében juttathatók leginkább kifejezésre, hiszen itt kapcsolódhat legközvetlenebbül szentségének forrásához a Szentháromság egy Istenhez. A jelent részben meghatározó negatív ekkléziológiai modellek alapjaiban állítják próbák elé a Magyarországi Református Egyházat a szentség kérdésénél, ahol az Isten kegyelmének elsőbbsége háttérbe szorul az emberi igazsággal és igazságszolgáltatással szemben, és a megbékélés teológiájának félreértéseit eredményezheti. Ezt tapasztalhattuk meg például az 1989 utáni időkben, amikor az egyház nem találta meg a megfelelő kiutat a múltbéli egyházi kollaboráció jelent meghatározó feszültségeiből. Az egyházfegyelem és egyháztagság akkut problémái is hasonlóképen az egyház szentségének elvi és gyakorlati félreértésére vezethetők vissza.

3) A *nemzeti identitás* a posztmodern kor identitás krízisének összefüggéseiben részben a mindenre való nyitottságban, részben az önértelmezések (nemzeti) felerősödésében realizálódik. Nagy kihívást jelent éppen ezért az, hogy a Református Egyház hogyan találja meg azt az egyensúlyi állapotot, amelyben a nemzet iránt érzett felelősségének úgy képes hangot adni, hogy elkerülje a szélsőségeket. Mindeközben pedig azzal is számolnia kell, hogy a kommunizmus egy nemzeti öntudatában (is) teljesen szétzilált társadalmat hagyott maga után.

Ezeknek a röviden bemutatott kihívásoknak az összefüggéseiben analógiát találhatunk a Magyarországi Református Egyház 1989 utáni ekkléziológiája és a donatista mozgalom létrejöttét kiváltó ekkléziológiai okok között. A tanulmányban arra a következtetésre jutunk, hogy a donatista tényezők megjelenése bizo-

nyos fokig tetten érhetők a Magyarországi Református Egyház 1989/90-es évei után, és várhatóan hatásuk fokozódni is fog. Ennek tudatosítása megóvhat a donatista identitás szélsőségeitől. Következésképpen, nem számolni a donatista tényezőkkel, komoly ekkléziológiai problémához vezethet, aminek felismerése egyházi életünkben még nem realizálódott megfelelőképen.

Samenvatting

Ecclesia sine macula et ruga
Donatist Factoren onder de ecclesiologische uitdagingen voor de Magyaországi Református Egyház met name na 1989/90

Aandacht voor het bovennatuurlijke is noodzaaklijk daar de aandacht op meer gericht is dan alleen het leven in deze wereld, en op meer dan enkel bewustzijn - het is de manier van de Geest om de weg naar de Eeuwigheid voor ons te openen. Daar het volle bestaan uit meer bestaat dan ons dagelijks denken en doen, moeten wij in verbinding staan met een wijdere en hogere werkelijkheid, namelijk, dat van onze Heer, wien wij toebehoren en van waaruit onze kracht stroomt. Deze kracht omringt ons en inspireert ons. Mijn leven als gemeente lid van de Reformatus Kerk (Magyarországi Református Egyház) van Hongarije en als predikant en docent is verrijkt door de vele verschillende ervaringen van de kerk. Sommige van deze ervaringen lijken die van verval en ziekte te zijn, alleen een schaduw van het echte leven, tenzij wij ons de wegen van de Ene en Enige God herinneren en zijn verzoening met de werkelijkheid die Hij heeft geschapen. Maar al te vaak lijkt de kerk te bestaan van zielen achter muren zonder veel uitzicht, maar dan moeten wij de lichtstraal niet vergeten: Jezus Christus door God gezonden als een teken van nieuw leven en hoop, zodat wij onze opdracht kunnen vervullen door Christus te volgen. Waarschijnlijk verschillen mijn gedachten amper met die die in de bredere context van het Christendom gevonden worden.

In de bredere context van het christendom, door de veranderingen door de tijd heen, hebben de verschillende gewoontes, opvattingen, theologie en culturen enorm bijgedragen aan de verscheidenheid van de kerk. Een van de constante kenmerken van het kerkelijk bestaan is dat de kerk als `in via` wordt begrepen tot haar eschatologische vervulling. De geschiedenis van de kerk biedt talloze voorbeelden van deze `in via`, zoals wanneer starre uniformiteit plaats heeft gemaakt voor een rijke diversiteit, of wanneer isolement een ervaring van eenheid terweeg brengt, - of juist het omgekeerde. In de loop van de geschiedenis was het jaar 1989/90 een intense tijd van verandering voor de hongaarse maatschappij, met een aantal interne en externe uitdagingen; ook voor de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije. Na vier decennia van communism begonnen democratische veranderingen in Hongarije, waar de Reformatus Kerk zich in een nieuwe, zij het dubbelwaardige situatie bevondt. Een van de kern kwesties van die tijd was of de Reformatus Kerk bereidt was de waarheid onder ogen te zien wat betreft de ketterse status van haar recente vier deccenia (1948-89).

Wij moeten erkennen dat wij alleen maar ten dele God`s uiteindelijke zorg voor de kerk van Christus begrijpen (1 Korintiers 13:9), maar het lijkt goed om als uitgangs punt de beschrijving van de kerk in de brief aan de Efeziers (5:27) te nemen: de kerk 'zonder vlek of rimpel` (Ecclesia sine macula et ruga). In de huidige ontdekkingstocht van dit proefschrift, in de ecclesiologie van de

Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije, na 1989/90, zijn de theologische elementen van Donatist beweging in de vierde eeuw en hun relevantie tot de huidige situatie het organiserende paradigma. Wij zijn van mening dat de analogieen van deze vermeldingswaardige kerkscheuring ons in veel opzichten een bruikbaar leidraad voor de hongaarse situatie biedt; zij bieden een bredere kijk voor onderzoek en evaluatie aan en helpen ons wat historische afstand te nemen.

Donatism, als een schismatische beweging, ontstond na de Grote Vervolging (303-305) van Keizer Diocletianus en zette zich voort in Noord-Afrika tot de overwinning van de gehele regio door de moslim invasies van de zevende eeuw. Een aantal gecompliceerde problemen ontstonden tijdens de lange geschiedenis van de Donatist beweging in polemiek met de Katholieke Kerk. Wij zijn van mening dat sommige extreme variaties van mogelijke theologische antwoorden in NoordWest Afrika van de vierde eeuw beslissend zijn geweest voor de kerk geschiedenis, en tot op de huidige dag van invloed zijn. De complexe aard van de kwesties die door de Donatisten naar voren waren gebracht blijkt zeer duidelijk uit de pastorale, theologische en andere polemische geschriften van Augustinus. Fundamentele theologische kwesties stonden op het spel, die de aard en perspectieven van de kerk openbaren, en haar situatie in de wereld als er een vijandige omgeving en zelfs vervolging aanwezig zijn. In dit Donatist debat zijn belangrijke ecclesiologische thema`s aanwezig, die de essentie van de Christelijke Kerk proberen te defineren volgens haar heiligheid en katholiciteit, als het lichaam van Christus op zowel universeel als lokaal niveau. Het grote probleem van het debat kan in een korte vraag worden gesteld: Ubi ecclesia? - welke van tijd tot tijd zijn hoofd opsteekt in het leven van de Christelijke Kerk, de weg van ecclesiologische uitdagingen vereffende. Daarom zijn wij van mening dat Donatism niet alleen een specifieke beweging uit het verleden is, dat bij de kerkgeschiedenis hoort, maar haar theologische elementen kunnen worden gezien als een impuls dat weer tot leven zou kunnen komen bij eventuele dubbelzinnige ecclesiatische situtaties, vooral na vervolging van de kerk. Want in zo`n tijd wordt de kerk uitgedaagd om haar eigen verleden te verwerken om God`s wil voor het heden te vinden en naar te hopen, ook voor de toekomst. Wij vatten ons verstaan van Donatism samen in een algemene vorm door het gebruik van de uitdrukking: `Donatist Factors`, waarmee wij die elementen die de Donatist identiteit vormen bedoelen. Deze elementen worden tegen het einde van het tweede hoofdstuk uitgelegd. Wij moeten ook constateren dat het complex aantal elementen in de Donatist beweging niet altijd in dezelfde samenstelling aanwezig zijn in de verschillende ecclesiologische problemen. Maar zoals de geschiedenis van de Donatisten laat zien, zouden zij een scheuring onder de Donatisten zelf kunnen veroorzaken, zoals zij ook de katholieke theologen tot wijziging in hun denken in relatie tot deze factoren zouden kunnen leiden. Wij zijn van mening dat door dieper op het Donatist probleem in te gaan, er menig verrassende elementen naar voren komen, die ons waarschuwen om niet te snel een kant te kiezen in dit sort scheuring. De tendensen en kern elementen zijn nooit verdwenen uit het leven van de Kerk. De kwesties die naar voren worden gebracht tijdens de Donatist-Katholieke debatten, zijn ook nu relevant voor de

ecclesiologische situatie van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije vandaag. Deze vraagstukken raken de kern betreffende ecclesiologie, Christologie, zending, en een theologie van verzoening.

De onderzoek methode van dit proefschrift is vanuit een historisch perspectief benaderd en neemt ook in aanmerking de sociaal-politieke en culturele dimensies, alhoewel de hoofdlijn van denken op het gebied van de systematische theologie zal blijven, in het bijzonder ecclesiologie. Het primaire doel van deze analyse van het verleden in relatie tot het heden is om te wijzen op de gedeeltelijke parallellen en enige werkelijke gevolgen in relatie tot het theologisch bestaan van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije. Enkele van de hoofd theologische problemen van de Donatist afscheiding zorgen voor een focus voor het onderzoek. Het onderzoek is gebaseerd op primaire en secundaire bronnen wat betreft de Hongaarse situatie, en hoofdzakelijk secundaire (uit het verleden en vanuit het huidige debat) betreffende het Donatist deel.

De Donatist Factors in ecclesiologie kan worden afgebeeld in de constellatie van de volgende thema`s.

1. De vervolging van Christenen (of anderen) leidt tot een cruciale vraag waarmee elke religieuze gemeentschap wordt geconfronteerd. Wordt geloof het best tot uiting gebracht door confrontatie of door compromis met de vijandige seculaire machten? Moeten gelovigen voor de weg van dapperheid en zelfs martelaarschap kiezen, of voor de weg van accommodatie en discretie? Men moet ook rekening houden met een theologie van boetedoening en mogelijkheden voor ontwikkeling na vervolging.

2. Heiligheid en scheiding in de kerk. Gezien de heiligheid en eenheid van de kerk of kerkgenootschap: Welke rol hebben christologie en eschatologie? Eenheid wordt gecontrasteerd met twee concepten die aan beide zijde ervan staan: uniformiteit en samenwerking. Uniformiteit is om de eigenheid en het unieke karakter van de persoonlijkheid te ontkennen. Samenwerking is een beperkte mate van eenheid, van waaruit de partijen zich gemakkelijker kunnen terug trekken. Hoe kan echte eenheid het best worden verstaan? Welke rol speelt de traditie in deze vraagstukken? Welke rol speelt de verscheidenheid in het behouden van eenheid? Hoe kan de kerk deel blijven van het lichaam van Christus, en het geestelijk thuis zijn voor de inwoners van een bepaalde plaats? Kan conflict een belangrijk factor zijn voor het begrijpen van de aard van de kerk? De kwestie van kerk leiderschap is van essentieel belang in deze zaken.

3. Kerk en staat, en kerk en maatschappij. Hoe functioneert de kerk als het lichaam van Christus in de maatschappij? Hoe gaat het pastoraat om met het gezamenlijk kwaad in de wereld? Wat is de taak van de christen in verschillende soorten van samenleving? Is het het doel van de kerk om de maatschappij te hervormen of biedt het eerder een alternatieve samenleving? Kan de kerk een zieke wereld gezond maken? In welk opzicht helpt christelijke self-identiteit de kerk om echt kerk te zijn, terwijl de leden van de kerk ook lid van de staat zijn?

4. Welke rol kan etniciteit spelen in ecclesiologie, met name, in de context van buitenlandse imperialistische overheersing? Hoe is nationale identiteit verweven met christelijke identiteit in de kerk?

Deze thema`s, als structuele onderdelen van de strijd van de Donatist met de katholieken, kunnen als leidraad dienen wat betreft de situatie van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije sinds de val van het communisme in 1989-90 en ook daarna. De concrete onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschift kan als volgt worden omschreven:

Hoe verduidelijken de vraagstukken die in het Donatist-Katholiek debat naarvoren komen de ecclesiologische situatie van de Reformatus Kerk in Hongarije na de val van het communisme?

De structuur van de studie kan als volgt worden samengevat:

1. Na de inleiding in hoofdstuk een, introduceren wij in hoofdstuk twee Donatism (*De Donatist Dissent als wegwijzer in Ecclesiologie*), in aanmerking nemend de belangrijkste tendensen en de historische en sociologische context van de beweging. Wij vinden het ook van belang om die wetenschapplijke proceduren op te nemen - voornamelijk uit de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw - die een andere kant van het Donatism laten zien. Na een evaluatie van de verschillende vraagstukken die naar voren kwamen in de debatten die in het kader van algemene kerkelijke standpunten van Tertullianus via Cyprianus, de Donatist, tot Augustinus, werden vastgesteld, maken wij een poging om de meest kenmerkende elementen (Donatist Factors), die als leidraad zullen dienen in het onderzoek van de ecclesiologische situatie van de Hongaarse Kerk naar voren te brengen.

2. In hoofdstuk drie (*Historische lijnen van de Reformatus Kerk in Hongarije vanaf de Reformatie tot de twintigste eeuw*) beschrijven in het kort de geschiedenis in grote lijnen (van de zestiende eeuw tot de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw) van de Reformatus Kerk in Hongarije ten opzichte van onze speciale focus.

3. In hoofdstuk vier (*Inleiding tot de geschiedenis en de `officele` theologie van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije tussen 1945-1990*) wijden wij verder uit over het recente verleden van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije tijdens het communisme, in aanmerking nemend, de historische, politieke, sociaal-culturele en theologische standpunten van de officiele kerk-leiderschap.

4. In hoofdstuk vijf (*Overzicht van de ecclesiologische context van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije na de val van het communisme*), geven wij een algemeen overzicht en analyse van de ecclesiologische context van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije na het communisme, concentrerend op de jaren 1990-2000, in relatie tot de politieke, sociaal-culturele en theologische gebieden.

5. In hoofdstuk zes (*Una Sancta Catholica et Apostolica - Ecclesia sine Macula et Ruga*), analyseren wij hoe de Donatist Factoren ons kunnen helpen de

uitdagingen van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije te begrijpen, met name, na de tijd van 1989/90. De belangrijkste systematische taak kan in dit laatste hoofdstuk worden gevonden, waar wij een kerkelijke, historisch-systematische conclusie samenvatten met betrekking tot de Donatist beweging binnen de verschillende theologische standpunten van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije na 1989, rekening houdend met de overeenkomsten en verschillen met Donastism.

Volgens de boven genoemde structuur van dit proefschrift kunnen wij de resultaten in `t kort als volgt samenvatten:

1. onze analyse van de Donatist Factors zou in een beslissende rol voor de Hongaarse ecclesiologische benadering na 1989 kunnen resulteren, vooral door de aandacht te vestigen op de volgende aspecten die wij door deze studie hebben geleerd;
2. het belang van self-identficatie van de kerk werdt duidelijk in relatie tot haar wezen, dat altijd beslissend zou moeten zijn voor haar empirisch bestaan;
3. er bewust van te zijn dat de historische situatie altijd concrete belijdenis van de zekerheid van het geloof vereist - anders wordt de echte werkelijkheid van de kerk in gevaar gebracht;
4. de noodzaak van consensus betreffende de kern van de inhoud van het Evangelie.

Met het oog op de hoofd thema`s (eenheid, heiligheid, en etniciteit samen met de socio-politieke vraagstukken) van het laatste hoofdstuk, komen wij tot de volgende conclusies betreffende de ecclesiologische uitdagingen voor de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije:

1. De eenheid van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije wordt geconfronteerd met een uitdaging in relatie tot het begrijpen en onderhouden van haar eenheid. De kerkelijke deformatie tijdens het communisme heeft lidtekens achtergelaten op de kerk na de veranderingen in 1989; zodoende was de theoretische en practische orientatie van de kerk vaak misplaatst.
2. De heiligheid van de kerk met oog op haar oppositie tot ketterij en zonde is ook altijd fragiel. Heiligheid wordt in de kerk uitgedrukt door haar onderwijs, door de levens van haar leden, door de sacramenten en in de liturgie. Deze fenomenen worden als heilig beschouwd daar zij hun oorsprong in God hebben. Sommige tendensen van de huidige ecclesiastische situatie van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije creeren een uitdaging betreffende de vraag van haar heiligheid, en dit probleem vindt haar oorsprong in de negatieve ecclesiologische voorbeelden die zij vanuit het recente verleden hebben meegekregen. Een van de grootste uitdagingen ontstond uit de onstabiele ecclesiologische meningen na de veranderingen in verband met de kwestie van collabrateuren. Het grote aantal sociale onderwerpen van de kerk na de veranderingen is losgeraakt van de boodschap van verzoening. Onder het grote aantal van gebeutenissen tijdens deze

veranderingen was een van de hoofd kenmerken het radicale onrecht in relatie tot het verleden zowel als tot de nieuwe omstandigheden. Zodoende leek de zaak van het recht een primaire focus in de kerk te veroveren, inplaats van de genade van God. Op deze manier leken recht en vrijheid voorwaarden voor verzoening te zijn. Dit resulteerde in de gedachten dat sinds voldoende gerechtigheid nog buiten bereik is, de boodschap van verzoening ook buiten bereik lijkt te zijn. Men zou ook de spanning tussen secularisatie en sacralisatie van de kerk kunnen noemen, die weer een andere uitdaging vormen voor de Hongaarse situatie, en dit brengt duidlijk naar voren de problemen van lidmaatschap en discipline.

3. De etniciteits vraag is sterk verbonden met de identiteits crisis van de post-moderne tijd. De nieuwe nadruk op identiteit en het zoeken naar openheid en dialoog op een steeds meer seculaire manier kan ook worden gezien als een deel van globalisatie. Deze tendens is ondertussen alweer door een nieuwe zoektocht voor culturele, nationalistische, etnische, confessionele en ook persoonlijke identiteit aangevochten. De uitdagingen doen zich voor betreffende verantwoordelijkheid in de Hongaarse situatie na de veranderingen van 1989/90, en omringen de vraag van hoe uitersten in deze kwesties te voorkomen en bruikbare bijbelse boodschappen voor deze vraagstukken te vinden. De erfenis van het Communisme, dat zeer nauw verbonden is met het hersens-spoelen van die tijd, heeft het hongaarse zelf-bewustzijn beschadigd, en heeft de identiteits crisis versnelt, en heeft zo ook sommige radicale versterkingen van het nationalism versterkt, die ook tegenwoordig zijn in het leven van de kerk. Een verwerklijking van een Christelijke identiteit voor individuelen en ook in een corporatief opzicht, kan de etnische en socio-politieke perspectief in evenwicht brengen op zo`n manier dat het ook de nationale identiteit ten voordeel kan zijn.

Deze korte samenvatting van de conclusies van dit proefschrift vestigt de aandacht op enige belangrijke aspecten in de analogie tussen de ecclesiologische bronnen van de Donatist Factors en de situatie van de Reformatus Kerk van Hongarije na de veranderingen van 1989. Volgens onze analyse groeien de vergelijkende tendensen met het Donatist patroon. Derhalve, is erkenning van de Donatist Factors belangrijk om te ontkomen aan de mogelijke extremen die elke oplossing zouden kunnen voortduwen in de richting van een radicale scheuring in de kerk. Verwaarlozing van de belangrijke inzichten van de Donatist Factors voor vandaag zouden ook een moeilijkheid scheppen - en hiervan is nog geen voldoende bewustzijn.