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CAN THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM BE NEGLECTED IN THE LIFE OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF HUNGARY?

Introduction

In this paper we wish to answer the question in the title by throwing light on the environment of our Church's condition and the temptations of the tendencies deriving from it. For a better understanding, we try to outline a possible hermeneutical connecting point that can be compared to dominant perspectives of our time, and to the present situation of the Christian Church, and to the main theological message of its mission. In this presentation we intend to draw your attention to the Heidelberg Catechism in a way that we are not trying to find the relevant message of history of dogma today by a historical exegesis of the Catechism. On the contrary, our aim is to try to find the possible scope of interpretation in the present situation, in which it is possible to highlight the need for confession of faith in the Church's mission, and stress what role the Heidelberg Catechism can play in this.

1. *The Changing Value Orientations and the Transitional Status of the Present Time*

The changes of values influence our social and church life in a quite ambivalent way today. On the one hand, we can see the structure of a world which can be more or less easily understood and categorized, with types and hierarchies. But at the same time, at definite points in these structures, among the clear-cut categorized statuses, there are cracks, breaking points and limiting points. These are in-between situations – or using a more adequate anthropological and sociological notion - *liminal*¹ circumstances,

¹ It was not until the second half of the 20th century, though, that the terms "liminal" and "liminality" gained popularity through the writings of Victor Turner. Turner borrowed and expanded upon Van Gennep's concept of liminality, ensuring widespread usage of the concept not only in anthropol-

which result in structural changes. Gaps opened during the changes set the new directions of the transitory state. In other words, they indicate the place of *re-generation* in the structures left behind us. The individual crossing such breaking points 'goes through such a cultural sphere which hardly possesses or totally lacks those features that characterize either the past or the future situations,'² - says Turner. In this process, common sense and real experience can have a decisive role, which speak against obtaining or taking possession of what one has experienced, and putting this into dogmas and objective doctrines, and in then integrating these into the structure. The essence of this process is an '*stepping beyond*', which promises the possibility of the *wholly other* (the *numinous* by Rudolf Otto)³ - in opposition to the all-surveying, measuring, and all-judging and condemning attitudes. Changes in the structure of thinking can be detected in the liminal processes of the transitional stage, which is both a destructive and creative process. In accordance with this, the social differences, the differences in status, possession and individual interests, disappear, and a so called *communitas*⁴ of puritan mentality and creative power is formed, which creates new solutions for human relational structures. We have to be careful with the description of the borderline experience and the thus created *communitas*, since the *communitas* of fully developed personalities - as purely estrangement-free states of human relationships - are statements which are hard to maintain. They suggest that the impersonality of the structure is merely a mask under which there are whole persons (accomplished personalities), and thus only the masks should be put aside. According to this, *communitas* could be understood as a kind of heavenly and utopian or millennial state of this world, and both the community and the religious acts of the individuals should strive to reach it.⁵ In order to avoid the trap of the tame utopia, the emphasis should rather be put on the dramatic character of the borderline experience that gives a hermeneutic frame for the thought indicated in the title. Namely, the essence of the *liminal* (defined as the in-between or borderline

ogy but other fields as well. Turner first formulated his theory of liminality in the late 1960s, and it continued to be a central theme in his work until his death in 1983. See VICTOR TURNER, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," from *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), "Liminality and Communitas," from *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), and "Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas," from *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (1974).

² VICTOR TURNER: Liminalitás és communitas. In: Zentai Violetta (szerk.): Politikai antropológia. Osiris-Láthatatlan Kollégium, 1997. 52-53.

³ See: RUDOLF OTTO: *The Idea of the Holy*. Trans. John W. Harvey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923; 2nd ed., 1950 [*Das Heilige*, 1917.].

⁴ VICTOR TURNER,.: *The Ritual Process*, (London: Routledge, 1969), 96-97.; Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," from *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), 95., Victor Turner, "Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas," from *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (1974), 233.

⁵ VICTOR TURNER: Átmenetek, határok és szegénység: a communitas vallási szimbólumai. In: P. Bohunán-M. Glazer (szerk.): Mérföldkövek a kulturális antropológiában. Pannem Kft., 1997. 681.

process), is given by the fact that the structure is fragmented and opens up, and the *existing person grasps his or her existence*⁶ - and faces the possibility and risks of regeneration.

1.1 *The Church in a Transitory Situation*

Taking a stand on the changes of value orientation has always been the Church's task. Its precondition is to take notice of the social changes without accepting a kind of *logic of conformity* or following the force of the spirit of the times. The church should be able to examine the effects of value change carefully from the faith definition's point of view. It is decisive in what theological scale of value the self-interpretation of Christian faith and church finds their norm. The fact that the religious orientation of church fellowship is not at all homogenous is essential in regard to the evaluation of the situation. The church can be characterized by plurality to such an extent as the world around it. One of the determinant tendencies in this diversity of today's context is the maintaining of a sort of independent ideology which can take in even the elements of the Christian faith according to choice. The matter in hand is an autonomous ambition having its roots in the *subjective relativist* view, which features our times. This process is affected in a negative way by the *consumer culture* in which the modern person is not surrounded first of all by people, but gadgets, and that can easily result in an objectified world. The accumulation of objects becomes overgrown, and this indication of abundance creates the illusion of completeness, or even perfection. The constant collection becomes a duty and consumption creates a social-symbolic status. Consumption is also an attitude in which the illusory signs of happiness are piled up in everyday life. Not only the specific items, but also the symbols, religious as well, have all become consumer goods. Today's culture shows ambivalence: on the one hand, it is unreserved and characterized by creativity. On the other hand, it is determined by the control of rule of consumption, which paves the way to nihilism through objectification and the illusion of endless surfing.

In many cases we can realize that we see an entirely new interpretation of reality, in which the boundaries between illusion and reality grow blurred, and they quite often give us a manipulated outcome. This outcome is very disappointing because people who can easily be manipulated are characterized by foolishness.

Foolishness makes us vulnerable, even if a little Freudianism, Marxism, some kind of Christianity, racism or militant chauvinism are poured into an empty head – and then impulsive reactions will overwhelm you. From then on everyone will have opinions about everything, and everything becomes fanaticized. An empty head remain even more foolish in the disguise of false cleverness. Foolishness will become even more dangerous because it is filled with prejudices and unjustified generalizations. It is characterized by naive belief 'locked into openness' to everything –

⁶ MARTIN HEIDEGGER: *Lét és idő*. Bp. Gondolat 1989., 2. jav. kiad.: Osiris Kiadó, 2004.; p. 5.

and then false and naive concepts and beliefs make people easily influenced.

It is not difficult to admit that dictatorships and globalized societies need the same kind of dumbed-down masses who can be directed with empty slogans, advertisements and outdated and empty ideologies.

However, in today's secularized, typically stupefied consumer society there is a growing demand for transcendence. In groundlessness, in the midst of relativism, and in the various-ways-emptied context, the desire for experience which points to the need for meaning, - all of these are emphasized while blazing a path toward values.⁷ But the question is whether openness is indeed able to establish contact with the transcendent, or if it merely labels as transcendent something immanent, including some elements of the contemporary world around us. Plainly speaking: admitting his or her limits, can a person become more open, or does he or she see the many programs of self-fulfillment as transcendent?

The wide range of experience of society's demand on the Church urges the Church to a theological reflection that today is called *public theology*. This publicity of theology comes from of the Church's testimonies and mission in this world. Basically, the following three aspects of human life give guidance to the above formulated reflections: 1) the world in relation to God and God's relationship to the world, 2) their relationship to each other and to love for our neighbor, and 3) the practice of solidarity.⁸ The areas listed above can lead to the question of identity, the diagnosis of reality-crisis, and the definition of the tasks and goals within the different public areas of the dialogue between the Church and the world. The Church can become an important player in the changes of value-orientation.

1.2 Possibilities within the temptations of the liminal status in relation to the mission of the Church

In the following brief analysis I want to highlight whether there is a possible connecting point regarding the mission of the Church in the midst of the challenges of liminality.

According to their denominational and theological orientation, Presbyterian and Reformed Churches try to enforce the power of Jesus Christ and the Word in their public theological manifestations. It is a complex phenomenon, in particular when the nature of the church's mission is characterized by the external and internal shifts of emphasis that affect the Church. One can observe the intensification of this phenomenon in the present situation of the Church, which I earlier mentioned as an opportunity created through the breaking lines of the in-between stages. It makes the situation more complicated that the changes which are un-

⁷ M. COOKE, 'A secular state for a postsecular society? Postmetaphysical political theory and the place of religion', *Constellations* 14(2), 2007, 224–238.

⁸ See: HABERMAS response in 'Transcendence From Within, Transcendence in This World', in Don S. Browning and Francis S. Fiorenza, eds, *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 226–50

balanced and unpredictable bring forth several logics for meeting the exigencies of the time - which often has opposite effects that do not strengthen a dialectical relationship but bring about confusion and a loss of orientation.

The Church has in many ways become on the periphery. The temptation in the in-between state can be detected in the more and more common phenomenon that people in their spirituality turn away from institutionalized religious forms. They, in fact, just want to live their spirituality over against religiosity today.

Subjective relativism wants to create such a spirituality suitable for the *me*, which is solely mine. In Mannion's analysis this leads to the elaboration process of *individual identities*, where the *I* becomes the foundation of reality and truth, and instead of grasping the personal meaning of existence outside of oneself, the individual him or herself creates one's own spiritual meaning.⁹

It is the Christian apologetics task to counteract this tendency. Groothuis calls our attention to the fact that spirituality is the essential element of objective truth.¹⁰ The uncertainty of the borderline state becomes evident when rational objectivity is called into question in this process. This leads to distrusting the truth of normative interpretations, which causes the corruption of truth.

The universal Christian Church presupposes the foundations for such a solid Christian worldview whose main narrative - from the beginning to the very end of the world - establishes also ontologically its mission and fills it with universal validity. It even has hope for the future, and offers to the individual and to collective efforts the gift of commitment, with eschatological fulfillment.

The question is how to determine the position of the Church in the context of its own identity in regard to the liminal process in which the structure's fault lines are stretched. Moreover, what interconnections are found between the liminality and the *existing one standing in one's existence*? Our theological message is at this point first of all and principally based on a unique confessional position, since its foundation is determined by the *incarnation*.

Through the incarnation of the Word, God calls in a personal and historical sense - and the theology of the Church confesses that the Word is both divine and human. God has every reason to say: "he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isa. 57, 15) From this point of view, Christian mission and the task of the Church can be understood as a call into the liminal situation in which the *wholly other* appears.

⁹ G. MANION: *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity. Question for the Church in our Time*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007, p. 4.

¹⁰D. GROOTHUIS: *Truth Decay. Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism.*, 2000, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, p. 164-165.

2. *A Theological Reflection of the Call into Liminality in Relation to the Heidelberg Catechism*

There is no doubt that the Heidelberg Catechism makes us sensitive to the realization of our situation in our contemporary circumstances. And due to its confessional nature, it presents a focal point of faith that does not want to connect us with God through some kind of dogmatism, but where ever the concept of God appears in the H.C., God is always present in Jesus Christ (see Q&A 26¹¹). In this context, the only theology that the church faithfully can refer to the Heidelberg Catechism, is grounded in Jesus Christ who is the only Word of God. But if we lose the existential reality of the divine word, or if it is formalized, then we lose the essence. Namely, all God's mercy is centered in Jesus Christ, as expressed in many ways in the Heidelberg Catechism. He is the one and perfect salvation, he is the only proclamation of forgiveness, and God's claim upon us is the only one for our lives. The outcome of all this is a liberated life – which in the liberation for service and mission finds its call in praising His name (Q&A 86, 99, 102, 128,) - and then in “winning our neighbors for Christ” (Q&A 86). This is the starting point that helps us to develop our ways in our Christian mission and in the Church.

2.1 *The Liminal State of the Existing one, Grasped in his or her Existence*

The Heidelberg Catechism clearly suggests the in-between situation or liminality at several points. The threefold nature of the Catechism's theological structure indicates the liminal experience regarding *ordo salutis*: that the lost human being, who is justified in Christ, has a thankful and consecrated life, is also the reality of the fruit bearing person. It is sufficient to concentrate on the first question of the H.C., to show the validity of this statement. The Catechism's emphasis on *consolatio* is in itself in opposition to our own seizure of our life situation, and by comparison the message of the gospel becomes the good news. The reality of our personal existence is emphatically in an intermediate state, namely the liminal situation between life and death.

It is obvious that in the comfort of question one (H.C.), there is a strong emphasis on *death*. This is an *eschatological edge* in our human life which strengthens our existing in a borderline state. At this point (death) the decision is made: *judgment resulting in existence or nonexistence* (the destruction of one's existence, body and soul, or; Q&A 57). It is in this life-or-death situation that the Gospel

¹¹ *What do you believe when you say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth”?*

That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of nothing made heaven and earth with all that is in them,¹ who likewise upholds, and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence,² is for the sake of Christ, His Son, my God and my Father,³ in whom I so trust as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul;⁴ and further, that whatever evil He sends upon me in this valley of tears, He will turn to my good;⁵ for He is able to do it, being Almighty God,⁶ and willing also, being a faithful Father.

gives us comfort. The Catechism places *I belong to Jesus Christ* in the centre of consolation. All the consequences are based on this fact: namely, belonging to Jesus Christ without hesitation. He is the acting subject. His existence, deeds and uniqueness are the basis: the basis of creation (Q&A 26), of the church (Q&A 54), of sacrifice and atonement (Q&A 61, 66-67, 80), of our speech about the one true God (Q&A 25, 94, 95, 117) and of our salvation (Q&A 29-30).

Belonging to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, means that he owns me. *He is the centre of my existence and this essence is outside of me.* This is the ground of our liminal situation, in which suddenly a new Springtime occurs in front of the existing one aware of his or her existence - and one's personal existence is opened up, in contrast to the closed, abstract and impersonal impingement of the structures. We can also put it this way: the human being steps out from "service of the law", since Our Lord has called us to be free (Gal 4,5; 5,3). This is the ground for that wonderful and mystic experience, which is not at all strange to the human way of living in this world, since the *Wholly Other* appears in the fault lines of this world's structure, and so becomes the shaking point which goes counter to the logic our world's order, which is dominated by convenience. All of this shows the transitoriness which is the heart of liminality. Christian theology describes this liminal experience as an analogy between the eschatological event of the crucifixion and of baptism. This is indicated by the Catechism's Q&A 70 where the renewal by the Holy Spirit and the consecration to be part of Christ's body are connected to dying for sin. The Apostle Paul writes: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him." (Rom 6, 4-8) Christ as the 'second' or 'new Adam' is in opposition with the 'first Adam, and the 'old person' dies on the cross so that the 'new person' can be born, who is not under the Law that judges sins but under grace. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2Cor 5, 17) This is the language of liminality in which the original essence determined in creation is fulfilled by regeneration.

2. 2 *The Christlike Sense of the Concept of Love in Regard to Liminality, Calls the Logic of Overflow into Existence*

In the following, we shall present a sketchy introduction of the previously defined connecting points, through deepening the concept of love. The teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism mediates not only the message of the Christ's story, but it also adheres to the teachings of Jesus, the essence of which is the great commandment of love.

Just think of Q&A 4, as well as the theme of Church discipline in Q&A 83.

The way Jesus put the heart of the Law into words shows its crucial importance. The concept of love is in opposition to the notion of law creating overly objectified structures. In this context, love aims at regulating not merely religious life but human life as a whole. It regulates marriage, kinship, private property, trade, farming and jurisdiction.

Love is not merely bound by the concept of religious law categories, but it also means ethos. It is the standard for a *good life* on the basis of which one can decide what to serve and what one deserves credit for. These questions will be the basic issue of righteousness within the given structure. Moreover, these questions can only be decided by the people within the structure. The debate of love and law erupts at the borderline of the inside and the outside of the structures.

As far as - in agreement with von Rad - we can see a close relationship between the commandments and the covenants, it will be clear from this that the commandments of Yahweh show the confrontation with decisions concerning life and death faced by his people. Despite the fact that Yahweh expects decision from his people on the basis of the commandments, the commandments were not prerequisite requirements for the covenant, as if the covenant coming into effect was conditioned by the obedience rendered by Israel. It is quite the contrary. The covenant is made and thus Israel will start to hear the commandments.¹²

The concept of love (*agape* and *charitas*) requires a much deeper understanding. Love cannot be reduced to a particular emotional binding that connects us only to a restricted group of people. Ricoeur's theory of symbols shows that Jesus view on love as assuming emotional attachment, also refers to another symbolic meaning of agape, making use of the surplus in the symbolic meaning of love.¹³ In this sense love can be made universal which goes beyond mere emotional attachment. We can clearly see this in Paul's letters.

It is necessary to note here that today due to modernity's striving for a straightforward understanding of the slogans of liberty - equality - brotherhood, our present age fits agape into brotherhood, and that way agape is merely understood as basically only a matter of solidarity in human relationship, and this view cannot do anything with the particular additional meaning of the concept. The concept of brotherhood is unintentionally overshadowed and becomes unmanageable in today's contemporary impersonal and seemingly straightforward structural changes. The universal category of love carries the *economy of grace*, and as soon as it concerns practice it attests the *logic of overflow* - as Ricoeur refers to it¹⁴. This helps us to understand Jesus' new commandment of love in compari-

¹² GERHARD VON RAD: *Az Ószövetség teológiája*. Osiris, 2000. I. 158–159.

¹³ PAUL RICOEUR: *Liebe und Gerechtigkeit*. Tübingen, 1990. See also: PAUL RICOEUR: *Nyelv, szimbólum és értelmezés*. Fabiny Tibor (szerk.): *A hermeneutika elmélete I (Ikonológia és Műértelmezés 3.)*. Szeged, 1987, 179–198.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur: *Liebe und Gerechtigkeit*. Tübingen, 1990.

son to the old one (You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies ..." (Mt 5, 43-44) In light of our earlier perspective, when Jesus talks about loving our enemies he does not refer to a positive emotional attachment, but expanding its range of meaning he calls us to go beyond the friend - enemy distinction. The old commandment does not call us to have an emotional binding with my friend and to turn against my enemy emotionally, but to relate to a friend as a friend and to an enemy as an enemy: in other words, to act justly, since the new commandment does not require from us only an emotional response. Does this mean that the great commandment of love does not embarrass us anymore? Not at all. In a very strict sense, it is shocking and disturbing since, - similarly to our Heavenly Father, the Lord of the Holy Trinity, who "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good" (Mt 5, 45) - the commandment of love wants us to step out from that structure of mutual recognition, which is controlled by the common *ethical logic of suitability*. By leaving this structure behind, the commandment of love indicates a broader context, and it only becomes understandable by the Jewish-Christian *liminal* eschatological way of thinking, which promises salvation from this world. This idea is expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 113-115. It is Christ who teaches us the essence of the Law. An opportunity to stand by God's side is given by getting close to Him through Christ. (Q&A 113). Referring to Buber, love is between the *you* and *I*. Whoever stands in this love and looks at the world from there, for him or her other persons will unfold from the world of hustle and bustle, good and bad, wise and foolish, beautiful and ugly, and their impersonality will turn into the most real personality - not by the standards of this world's mutual recognition, but by grasping the existence opened up for us as belonging to Christ.

Liminal experience means particularly the experience of the existing one as a whole in the Christ-story. People want to move beyond themselves or to somersault, because they know they are not what they are. Using Heidegger's words: we can talk about the *hiddenness of existence*, or its resistance, that can be traced back to Parmenides and Heraclitus (up to 2500 years of the history of thought). However, the crucial point we want to make, is that the liminal experience can be grasped in *communitas*. As we have seen in regard to statuses and roles, rights and obligations, the disintegration of the objectified recognition-relations, pushes a person to cross the gaps, but this does not mean that we enter into nothingness: since whoever begins to recognize his or her new self as a member of the fundamental solidarity relationship given in *communitas*, becomes an *existing one grasped in his or her existence*, as a *new being in Christ*. Emphasizing the word of God, the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the purest forms of the fundamental solidarity relationship is the love community of those who have died and been reborn in Christ. Where "in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body".

2.3 *The Experience of Liminality and its Consequences for Existing Structures*

First of all, the crossing person in liminality is not a lonely wanderer but belongs to the love community of those, who became one Spirit in one body. So what is a human being? Christian anthropology finds the core of human existence in this call into community; “in the community chosen for eternal life”, as it is highlighted in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 54. This can be seen and become experienced in our time. These moments, however, are not only immortal but also the most mortal, when they get into interaction with structures of our world on the level of human consciousness. But as Buber says: when our world of structures clashes with the influential foundation that determines the nature of humanity, these structures melt time and again. Thus the world becomes double-faced just as the behavior becomes double-faced as well.¹⁵ The overturning, or the influence of liminality’s tension and dramatic nature, appear in this world and also in the structure of constant self-inadequacy. Christ is the center of this dramatic point, and as the result of this the Church, which confesses itself to be the Body of Christ, becomes similarly influential since *God and the human being are both there in Christ*.

3. Summary

We can arrive at God’s righteousness only by means of the belief and creed that He raises in us through His Word. This faith means a living relationship with the living God. It does not parrot learned truths but is willing to question the picture about itself in all circumstances. This is a questioning faith, because such a faith that stops thinking becomes worthless after a while. Faith that stops thinking ceases to have self-critique. Without critical insight about our own thoughts, we will understand neither God, nor the world around us.¹⁶

The Heidelberg Catechism is still present in the Hungarian Reformed Church’s theology and teachings, along with the need to encourage dialogue. It shows us the script of this dialogue, which should be relevant especially at particularly intense dramatic points of borderline situations as in our age. In this dialogue, on one side is the existing one, who addresses one’s questions due to one’s general circumstances of existence, to our divine Majesty on the other side. And not less is at stake – referring to Calvin - than an unbreakable unity of knowledge of God and of ourselves.¹⁷ And in this unity we come to the realization that we need not only *the logic of suitability according to the structured world of today, but the logic of overflow, which is brought to life as the ecology of grace*.

Regarding thi Kálvin János: A keresztyén tanítás rendszere, Pápa: Református Főiskolai Nyomda, 1909., I kötet, 37-39.s, it is possible to reveal the qualitatively deeper layers of Christian spirituality, which is not limited to an idealized subject-

¹⁵ MARTIN BUBER: *Én és Te. Európa*, 1991. 39

¹⁶ See EBERHERD JÜNGEL: *Das dunkle Wort vom Tod Gottes*, in Von Zeiz zu Zeit, München, é. n. 18. kk.

¹⁷ KÁLVIN JÁNOS: A keresztyén tanítás rendszere, Pápa: Református Főiskolai Nyomda, 1909., I kötet, 37-39.

tivity, but is a gateway to the whole creation, which can be seen as the new scene of God's glory, thus creating a new kind of *communitas* in the dramatic liminal situation of the current context. What makes this approach more vividly descriptive is that a gap overwon through time by the resurrection of Christ, who became eternally present, turned the eschatological experience into a liminal one.

Laying stress upon God's will, we focus on God, which opens the way in a personal and communal sense, so that going beyond ourselves we can glorify Him with the whole cosmos, and that glorification is the subject of spirituality. This may have impacts not only on the Church but can have effects on a social level as well, that can show tested ways out of the surrounding changes of value orientation.

The life and love of the community, however, is essential to all this, which actually can only be gained through the mysterious union with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. In *unio mistyca cum Christo* we find the solution for the modern person's desires, in which the lack of relationship and the emptiness of not belonging somewhere, fulfilled and resulting in a living experience concerning the worship of God both liturgically and in an every day sense as well.

The Christian message, which can be interpreted as a paradigm of the call into a liminal position, as mentioned above, may carry significant alternatives and answers in the transitory nature and liminal processes of our age, and in the critical situation of these. The stress of this approach does not only provide a unique perspective for Christian theology, but can create a connection with the present that looks both back and forward at the same time, putting the Christian eschatological message at the forefront.

The Heidelberg Catechism was written in a strained transitory situation within its age and determined those still valid elements of the *Protestant principles*.¹⁸ The ignorance of the Heidelberg Catechism would mean overlooking the Church's core and mission concerning Christ, in the teaching and practice of the Hungarian Reformed Church's everyday life.

¹⁸ ANDREAS RÖSSLER: Dogma nélküli keresztyénség?; Freies Christentum 2001/6.

Catechismus

Oder

Christlicher Vnderricht /
wie der in Kirchen vnd Schu-
len der Churfürstlichen
Pfalz getrieben
wirdt.

