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ИСТИНА И ВЕРОТЕРПИМОСТЬ:
ГРАНИЦЫ ДОПУСТИМОГО ПЛЮРАЛИЗМА В ХРИСТИАНСТВЕ

В статье, основанной на лекции, прочитанной в Санкт-Петербурге (24.10.2017), анализируется христианская концепция истины, которая отличается от философского понимания предмета и опирается на события, пережитые в истории, экзистенциальное значение которой лежит в основе религиозной идентичности и записано в виде принципа *regula fidei*. Касательно основных вероучительных вопросов христианская концепция истины не знает толерантности, так полюбившейся современному сознанию. Тем не менее, в ходе миссии Церкви также необходимо объяснять правила веры в разных культурах на их родном языке и применять методы, которые отличаются от тех, которые имели место во времена апостолов, и здесь необходима толерантность. Религиозная свобода также нужна, когда мы говорим об отношении к вере. Однако исторически этот принцип часто попирался, что приносило серьезный вред. Когда Константин использовал христианскую веру как идеологическую основу единства государства, он отказался от религиозной традиции Римской Империи, то есть религия правителя являлась с этого времени государственной религией для всей Империи, и этот принцип исторически соблюдался (*cuius regio, eius religio*). Вторая основная тема этой статьи экуменическая: автор задается вопросом, насколько христианское единство, расколовшееся на множество локальных и глобальных традиций, возможно восстановить? Лютеранская церковь предлагает определение в 7 главе Аугсбургского вероисповедания, которое справедливо как в отношении основ веры, так и для культурной терпимости. Экуменическая связь достигается за счет внимания к общей традиции как основании, нежели к различиям иных уровней.

Ключевые слова: Аугсбургское вероисповедания, Лютер, Церковь, символ веры, конфессия, Реформация, экуменизм

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Truth and tolerance: what are the borders of the acceptable plurality in Christian faith?

This article, based on the lecture read in St. Petersburg (24.10.2017), at first discusses the Christian concept of truth. It differs from the philosophical concept of truth, which relies on the commonly accepted knowledge-based arguments. The Christian concept of truth relies on events experienced in history whose existential meaning, it's most important identity, is recorded in the rule of the faith - regula fidei. Within the core domains of the rule of faith, the Christian concept of truth does not know the tolerance liked by modern thinking.

It is, however, also necessary for the Church mission to interpret the rule of the faith in different cultures in their own language and to apply practices that differ from the original. This means: tolerance also is needed.

Religious freedom is necessary concerning the assumption of the faith. In the history, however, this freedom has been damaged, causing great harm. When Constantine used the Christian faith as an ideological creator of the unity of the state, he still did not change the old Roman law of religion: the religion of the ruler was also during the Christian era necessarily the religion of the empire. This principle has been followed until the new era (cuius regio, eius religio).

Key words: Confessio Augustana, Luther, Church, creed, confession, Reformation, ecumenism

Any person who wishes to be saved, must above all remain in the common Christian faith. It must be observed in full, and forge. Anyone who does not do so, no doubt will face eternal damnation ...
This is a common Christian doctrine. The one who does not believe in it firmly and strongly, can not be saved.

(Athanasian Creed, —
the beginning and the final words)

When we discuss about faith and theology of the Church and do it in context of the secular debate dealing with truth and tolerance, we should always keep in mind one crucial fact: we are moving in a different area of language than that, which is used when we are discussing using terms of philosophy or logic. Between philosophical schools has, naturally, over the times, been many disputes concerning the criteria for knowledge and truth, but the partners have not promised to their adherents reward of eternal bliss or threatened their opponents with eternal damnation. But so is doing, for example, the Athanasian Creed. It is a part of the Lutheran confessional base.

The identity of the Christian faith is not based on a series of philosophical statements whose truth could be weight on commonly accepted philosophical methods. It is not that kind of *dogmatic*. The use of word *dogmatic* has not originally pointed to the doctrinal formulations of Christian faith but to the basic phrases, axioms of different ancient philosophical schools.

But Christianity is not like an axiomatic system of some philosophical school. No theoretical or philosophical structure like those is therefore in the background when the Christian faith presents itself on its own assertions telling that they are *true*. Their truth-mediating body is different. It is deeply significant historical *series of events* — the life, death and the Resurrection of Jesus — which has been experienced amidst the Jewish faith tradition. The content and significance of this event-series forms the tradition conveyed forward.

The Jewish historic and religious heritage, which until these new experiences, given them the meaning and perspective to the life, has, because of those events, received among first Christians a new multi-faceted overall interpretation. Intensive study of the Bible

during centuries and the modern exegetical and historical methods used during last two centuries have classified this new perspective of faith, may be until the slightest nuances, but the *very basis* and the source of the faith of the early Christians has all the time been *in those events themselves and this new salvation-historical overall-interpretation,* not in the different rationalistic statements made on grounds of them.

At latest during the second century AD this fundamental sequence of events with its key wordings has been named to *the rule of the faith —* Greek *canon tees pisteoos,* Latin *regula fidei.* Its written form complies approximately with the structure of the Apostles' Creed. In life of the Church it has been maintained both by the idea of apostolic tradition and the institutional and liturgical practices, created for its transmission and preserving. *Summa summarum*: it is the question of the fundamental definition of the identity of the Christian faith.

After presenting the content of the rule of the faith in his book *On the prescription of heretics (De praescriptione haereticorum)* the Church Father Tertullian writes:

Now, provided that the form of this Rule be preserved in its own place, thou mayest seek and discuss as much as thou pleasest, and pour forth thy whole desire for curious inquiry if any point seem to thee to be undetermined through ambiguity or obscure from want of clearness. There is surely some brother, a doctor gifted with the grace of knowledge, someone amongst those well-skilled ones who are intimate with thee, and like thyself curious, who although like thyself a seeker will know that it is better for thee in the end to be ignorant, thus avoiding thy knowing what thou oughtest not, since thou already knowest what thou oughtest to know. «Thy faith, Christ said, hath saved thee», not thy argumentative skill in the Scriptures. Faith is posited in a Rule : it hath a Law, and Salvation that cometh from the observance of the Law (Tert. Praesc. haer.,14: 1–4)[1].

The rule of faith contains several paradoxical wordings springing from the original experience: God has become man, but at the same time remained as God, immortal has become mortal, but this immortal, combined with this mortal, won through his

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[1] Cited from: Tertullian. On the «prescription» of heretics // URL: http://www.tertullian.org/articles/bindley_test/bindley_test_07prae.htm (22. 11. 2017).

death the death, not only for itself, but for the whole fallen mankind. However, this goal will be realized only in the living communion of faith with the winner of the death, and through him to God. Only this way a human will be a partaker of salvation — that is, could get forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

The rule of the faith is, therefore, at the same time paradoxical and exclusive. Its truth is different from the truth of philosophy and within its core areas do not blow the gentle winds of tolerance. There is nothing partial, not temporary, may be later free to correction with some better way of reasoned information from it. From the very beginning its weight is covering and touching the whole human existence. It is a matter of life and death — summarized in the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John Jesus: *I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (14: 6).

It is easily overlooked, that the above-described, with the understanding of the truth of philosophical discourse incompatible features of Christian faith have from the very beginning been driven in conflict with rational thought. It is not a new challenge coming from modern idea of truth. The earliest known example of a radical criticism, which rests on the philosophical conception of truth is expressed from middle-platonic philosopher, Celsos, in his extensive and well-informed work *Aleethes logos, True doctrine,* which has been completed Around the year 178. Although it's text has not as such been preserved, its content has been reconstructed through Origen extensive counter-writing *Contra Celsum, Against Celsos,* written between years 245–248. It is definitely worth of acquainting with, because the allegations of Celsos are repeated almost verbatim by the modern critique of Christianity[2]. But the critical questions were not coming only from the educated class. The rule of the faith has always collided also with the common-sense arguments of the not educated people. The Christian truth is opened, if it is opened, only from the basic and deep existential human questions.

On the other hand, the truth of the Christian faith, which is relying on a series of historic events in of organic, non-philosophical nature in a way described above, has opened opportunities for many

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[2] A thorough presentation and analysis of content cf.: *Origenes.* Contra Celsum — Gegen Celsus. Bd 1 / Eingel. und komm. von M. Fiedrowicz; Übers. von C. Barthild. Freiburg im Breisgau, 2011. P. 9–122.

to influence of the cultural environment open phenotypes. Applying a biological analogy, it can be said: when genotype, that is the internal structure, which is embodied in the rule of the faith, will be the same, then the cultural and linguistic phenotype can be obtained in a considerable variety of forms. This has indeed been necessary in ensuring the Christian mission.

Such a contextual flexibility may well be called from the point of view of Christian truth absolutely justified accommodation. Common feature with the current secular concept of tolerance it has, is this: it also requires a wide acceptance of diversity, sometimes even its a little bit reluctant tolerance. The latter always includes some feelings of discomfort, sometimes active efforts of the will.

Above I mentioned that the perception of the truth of the Christian faith is not a dogmatic in words original meaning. It is not possible to hammer it to the forms required from philosophical concepts. But around the middle of the second century began in the Christian environment emerge Christian writers, who said that they represent *the true philosophy.* They tried, saying so, express, that they think they had the right philosophical solutions to the wrong philosophical solutions of the philosophers of their time. Tertullian warns from a that kind of approach in the beginning of the third century:

The Apostle had been at Athens, and in his argumentative encounters there had become acquainted with that human wisdom which affects and corrupts the Truth, itself also being many times divided into its own heresies by the variety of its mutually antagonistic sects.

What then hath Athens in common with Jerusalem? What hath the Academy in common with the Church? What have heretics in common with Christians? Our principles are from the «Porch» of Solomon, who himself handed down that the Lord must be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with those who bring forward a Stoic or Platonic or dialectic Christianity. We have no need of speculative inquiry after we have known Christ Jesus; nor of search for the Truth after we have received the Gospel. When we become believers, we have no desire to believe anything besides; for the first article of our belief is that there is nothing besides which we ought to believe (Tert. Praesc. haer., 7: 8–13)[3].

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[3] Cit. from: Tertullian. On the «prescription» of heretics // URL: http://www.tertullian.org/articles/bindley_test/bindley_test_07prae.htm (22. 11. 2017).

РЕЛИГИЯ. ЦЕРКОВЬ. ОБЩЕСТВО

If you are identifying yourself with the philosophical community and joining in its discussion culture, it requires from you the adoption of conceptual tools that community represented. But then also the paradoxical content of faith must be modulated into a form that at least modest fulfils the general rational requirements in use of your times scientific community. Paradoxes must in one way or another be eliminated.

Tertullian, however, thinks that such of increasing the credibility of the philosophical adaptation is always cutting away something from the essential content of the Christian faith, which essence is all explanations escaping mystery. It may — to be sure — make the faith presentable at the court, but the good tasting product it presents to public, is no longer the Christian faith, but a heresy.

The whole ardent struggle for the identity of the Christian faith, which culminates in the dogmatic development of the Old Church during 300 and 400 centuries, can be defined as the struggle against surgeries or amputations following the use of philosophical truth conditions.

The basic problem in that time was that the Christians did not have in their use tools other than what philosophical work of their counterparts in general had applied in their analyses. When talkers and debaters are trying to explain the Christian image of God — that is, how God is one, and how a three-differentiated — they are driven to one dead end after another. If you have started like «from the inside», from the one substance, then following the rules of philosophy you could not get any other conclusion, that there «out» is only one concrete being and its one and only manifestation — not three. And if you started like from «outside», from three concrete beings with their three manifestations, and has gone inwards towards the substance, following the rules of logic you could get only three separate substances — three gods.

Corresponding philosophical problems were encountered when the paradox of Christology, in other words the simultaneous full divinity and full humanity of Christ, has been attempted to be infused in the philosophically acceptable mould.

The basic setting is not changed until now: the same problems are encountered also with the intellectual tools applicable to the modern world view and its context.

Without passing through this issue more extensively, I would just briefly say that in the councils of Nicea in year 325, Constantinople in year 381 and Chalkedon in year 451 shaped key specifications of the Christian faith are not philosophical doctrinal sentences, but on the contrary, they are rejecting the changing the Christian faith to philosophy. Yes — the used tools have been drawn from the philosophy of their time, but they are applied intentionally wrong so that outcome always is a paradox. Dogmas are signs of the fairway, life is not in those doctrinal signs, but in the fairway between them. No rational reasoning can reach the bottom of this fairway[4].

The Christian faith has always had to remind where the sings of demarcations are located — in that role sometimes fierce intellectual battle. These signs are not transferable and can't be deleted. This deep-identity does not have room for tolerance. This internal radicalism, parallel with the above-mentioned outer flexibility, is also part of its mission — safeguarding of its internal identities.

However, within the history of the Christian Church an essential dimension, which strictly demands tolerance, it is often forgotten in a fateful manner: faith itself arises only by God himself and it is not allowed to use for its awakening any form of compulsion. This is precisely why the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, who self had converted to the new faith in consequence of his personal experiences, indeed gave to the Christian Church in year 324 absolute preference, but at the same time allowed the non-Christians continue worshipping their old faith traditions freely and publicly. The truth was on the side of the Christian faith, this the emperor was personally assured. It had to be preached and confessed publicly, but it could be absorbed only in freedom, without any compulsion. But if you were already a Christian — that is, already a partaker of saving truth — a departure from it was a much, much more serious matter. Status of Tolerance was then substantially narrower[5].

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[4] This is the bearing ground-perspective in the monumental work of Grillmeier: Grillmeier A. Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche. Bd 1: Vonder Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalkedon (451). Freiburg im Breisgau, 1979.

[5] Dörries H. Konstantiniche Wende und Glaubensfreiheit // Wort und Stunde. Bd 1: Gesammelte Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts. Göttingen, 1991. S. 1–117.

This is the principle of limited tolerance, which Constantine's closest followers, at least tried to follow, but Theodosius put the end to the last ounce of it. He created the ruler-controlled state-church. Among it the non-Christians, and Christians, who worshipped theologically differing from the prevailing orthodoxy, were handled of in the same harsh way as Diocletian in the past had treated all Christians. Only their positions are reversed, not the legislation, not also its practical applications. This model, which has been followed to a large extent until to the 16th century, has collected during centuries on the shoulders of all majority-Christians extremely heavy burden of guilty. It has created many severe ideological dead ends and produced a large amount of human suffering.

Public fixing of boundaries is, however, necessary in the Christian truth-community, as I already stated when I told the thoughts of Constantine. Its core areas have been the question of God — that is, what kind of God is the God of Christianity. It is concentrating to doctrine of the Trinity, interpretation of which during the first four centuries has been a necessary and at the same time a very difficult process. From Jews Christians have inherited a legacy of self-evident monotheism, but the unity of God is a unity of three one another inextricable linked but at the same time differentiated personalities.

It is for this reason the Church of the Late Antique rejected the Arian heresy, which applied middle-platonic philosophy to Christian theology. The god of middle-platonic religious philosophy was absolute transcendental One, totally «outside» of the existing created world. In its Christian application this absolute One was identified to Father. But in this way the trinity of God broke down, although there are still talked about God in accordance with the tradition of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The latter two, however, belongs now to created reality — certainly higher than people and angels, but not transcendent divine beings. Recovered at the beginning of the modern times, Platonism has created new Unitarian movements, which are following the Arian model and are still vital today.

The second core area for fixing the boundaries has been the question how Jesus Christ is God and how a human being, and how these two dimensions are on the other hand the one and same, and on the other hand different. This Christological demarcation-

process in early Christendom has continued longer than the debate concerning the Trinitarian faith — and is still today an important issue, because it tells us how the salvation ought to be understood and how it applies to the whole human being.

The third core area has been the just the issue of salvation. In the concept of salvation God and Christ are inextricably linked. If you are taught — as the second and third century Gnostics — that the world is not the creation of the highest, good god, but it has been mistakenly brought about from some of the lower divine beings resulting an incomplete or even a bad reality, and that our human corporeality is part of this evil and delusional world. Salvation is described in this context as freedom from the illusory and bad material world.

Such Gnostic ideas have been dressed also in clothing resembling the traditional Christian beliefs, but by this interpretation has been denied the biblical belief, that the material world is God's good creation and the human corporeality as such is good, although we as sinners need grace and renewal with all creation.

In the same ideological environment is Christ a man only seemingly, so that he could teach and show to human beings the way upwards and towards the sublime spiritual world. He is dressed in the human form, not in human reality — under this dressing he is only a divine being. He has landed from the divine spiritual glory into the dark material world to save the human immortal spirit, not his corrupted body. The body is the prison of upper soul, from which only the information of the heavenly origin may set the human soul free.

The fourth core area for fixing the boundaries has been the concept of sin — that is, what kind is the source of evil in man and in the world. The Christian faith has seen the roots of sin in the will, pride and selfish autonomy of human being, in his desire to be god itself. He is detached from the concrete life of connection to God, *the divine life* — as the Orthodox tradition is used to express the matter. Sin is therefore not coming from the human body and not established in our bodily dimension, but from his spirit. The body, created by God as good, is indeed now corrupt, but not because of their physical characteristics, but because the human mind has turned away from God. When the grace of Christ leads him

anew to connection with God, this communion step by step renews him both spiritually and corporally — the Orthodox tradition is using from this process the term *Theosis*. He gradually begins to approach the condition in which God has created him originally.

The fifth core area is associated with the theology of religion. Early Christianity has grounded his mission on the belief that also after the Fall the image of God is remaining in every human — albeit corrupt. The deep longing for the lost paradise is his heart, sometimes morphed its way into secular, but still existing. This longing and encrypted influence of the Holy Spirit are for human religious search as a source. That is why all religions includes something which the Christian mission may also be positively associated with.

The sixth core area is in a way covering all the previous ones. It is the *principle* of *apostolicity,* of which the spiritual ministry of Church is due to take care through the charisma given in ordination, conveyed from generation to generation. Following this principle means, that The Church keeps her core-identity during all the historical and cultural changes. The Church is bond to the law of apostolic beginning.

I have briefly surveyed the areas in which the truth of the Christian faith — in the sense in which I have outlined above — does not allow to the Church very extensive latitude, even if the it does not rule out the cultural colouring, which is necessary for its mission.

When we are looking for the cultural acceptance, when we are adapting to the prevailing culture, which is essential so that the Christian faith could be absorbed, we are not allowed to deconstruct[6] the salvation-historical identity embodied in the rule

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[6] Postmodern philosophy has radicalized the idea of hermeneutic philosophy, according to which any historical text can't be understood in exactly the same way as the writer has been thinking. The reader's own historical situation converts it with relation to the original idea, it therefore can't be reconstructed exactly, but you must try to go as close to it as possible. Postmodern thinking goes further. By representatives of it favoured term *deconstruction* means, that because between the original meaning and the current interpretation will always remain *difference*, which can't be exceeded (Derrida J. Writing and Difference / Transl. with an introduction and additional notes by A. Bass. London; New York, 2002), the reader is entitled to *deconstruct* the text, to give it its own subjective total-interpretation. «The story», the external shape can be maintained, but to it has been given a new content, which corresponds the ideas of the current reader. See also: Postmodernism: The Key Figures / Ed. by H. Bertens, J. Natoli. Oxford, 2002.

of faith. If the faith of the Church is cut off its paradoxical elements, if it is reduced to the shape of the current secular scientific understanding of the reality, the result is not Christianity, even though there could be used traditional Christianity wordings and liturgical forms. The purchase price of possible approval of modern man is then leading to all-out bankrupt.

Discussing these questions we are in the same time approaching the core areas of ecumenical discussion. A large part of the factors which have led to mutual disputes of the Christian churches, and in the end to the breaking of the Eucharistic communion, are in fact due to differences in culture and language. There are also other reasons, indeed, not least the political and ecclesiastical aspirations of power. But without the cultural dimension they could not have affected so much as they have done in fact.

The adaptation of the Church to the life forms its cultural environment, necessary for its mission, has sometimes led also to religious encapsulation and the illusion that other forms of cultural adaptations are false or incomplete. For this reason, already during the early Church, schisms had been born between Eastern and Western interpretations of Christianity and the same process has repeated elsewhere over and over again. The history of ecumenical work, therefore, is in fact, equal in length with history of Christianity itself. Sometimes it has been successful, sometimes it has failed. The search of the visible unity of Christians has still all the time been crucial important. It is the matter of the credibility of the whole Christian message.

That ecumenical search of Christian unity, which intends to visible unity, has through two millennia of history assumed that the partners of discussion are committed to the core policies of the *rule of faith*. This approach is clearly reflected in the Augsburg Confession of our own Church, in the Seventh Article:

> Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. But the Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is Rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered.
>
> And unto the true unity of the Church, it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human

traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men should be alike every where, as St. Paul saith: «There is one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (61:2–3)»[7].

The Lutheran Church has, thus, for beginning or continuing of ecumenical dialogues a fortunate position — at least in principle. Firstly, our main confessional text, the Confessio Augustana is unity-oriented. In the foreword is convincingly and unequivocally pronounced, that disputes which have led to the drawing up of this document are *internal disputes* in the One, Catholic Church. They have happened and will happen «*sub uno Christo*» (44, 2–5; 46, 9–13). They may have no other purpose than «brought back to the simple truth and Christian concord» (44.3) «so that hereafter the one unfeigned and true religion may be embraced and preserved by us, so that as we are subjects and soldiers of the one Christ so also in unity and concord, we may live in the one Christian Church» (44.4).

The signatories of the text are submitting to emperor earnest wish to convene a Council so that it could restore the Christian unity in peace and in-depth discussions (48, 18–20; 44, 2).

Preface, therefore, expresses what is essential to take into consideration, so that the articles of Confessio Augustana could be understood correctly.

In the Confession, therefore, is clearly said, how to earn back the broken unity and what could maintain the restored connection. It is said, *which is sufficient* and *what is not necessary*. The factors that create and maintain the Church are: «the Gospel is Rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered» and what is said in the fifth article «the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administration the Sacraments», they will create and maintain the unity

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[7] *Et ad veram unitatem Ecclesiæ satis est consentire de doctrina Evangelii et administratione Sacramentorum. Nec necesse est ubique esse similes traditiones humanas, seu ritus aut ceremonias, ab hominibus institutas. Sicut inquit Paulus* (Eph. 4:6): *Una fides, unum Baptisma, unus Deus et Pater omnium, etc.* The source of English translation of Confessio Augustana is: Creeds of Christendom. Vol. 3: The Creeds of Evangelical Protestant Churches / Ed. by Ph. Schaff. New York, 1876 // URL: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.toc.html (29.3. 2017).

References to the exact places are taken from the official, scholarly edition: Die Bekenntnischriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche / Hrsg. im Gedenkjahr der Augsburgischen Konfession 1930, 6.; Durchgesehene Auflage. Göttingen, 1967.

of the Church. Everything else belongs to the human traditions, which are not necessary but could be contextually used, if they are not against the Gospel.

The analysis of the statements of Confessio Augustana and its Apologia indicates, indeed, that the words «teach» and «preach» sometimes are used as alternatives. This is most noticeable in the classical passage *Evangelium rite docetur* (61.1), which is expressed in the German text: «das Evangelium rein gepredigt... werden». During the second half of the 1900s some interpretations appeared claiming, that the question is not of the doctrinal approach, but of the pure *event of preaching.* The unity of the Church — after this interpretation — is based on mere proclaiming the gospel of justification. The saving event itself in hearts of believers is the basis of consensus. If we find consensus of this internal *event*, then the outer doctrinal expressions could and may have many different forms. This seam to mean doctrinal minimalism[8].

This kind of minimalist interpretation, however, is not theologically and ecumenically sustainable. The words «pure» and «righ» (*pure, recte*, dem göttlichen Wort Gemäß) in the Confession are clearly doctrinal Attributes. They are showing, that both the real base and the knowledge base of the Christian faith are only different aspects of the same reality. Both aspects — or at least the knowledge base — could theoretically be met separately and it is possible in a certain way to measure and mark the limits of them. The Justification, the birth of the real saving faith as act of the Grace of God in heart of believers, implies necessarily, that also the outer characteristics ought to be correct. But with the right characteristics do not necessarily cause justifying faith. The Holy Spirit creates through purely preached word and trough the rightly administrated sacraments faith «where and when it pleaseth God» (*ubi et quando Visum est Deo*) (58.2). These statements are consistent with Luther's deepest intentions. He does not consider the word and the sacraments

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[8] I have analyzed this issue at the time the debate in an article (Finnish) I published in 1979 (Pihkala J. Yhteys Luterilaisesta näkökulmasta, Augsburgin tunnustuksen seitsemännen artiklan satis est ja non necesse est sanojen tulkinta, Teologinen Aikakauskirja nr. 4 1979. Helsinki, 1979. P. 292–308). Part of the then arguments have been included in this presentation and in the article, drawn up on basis of it.

of the Church only as its internal foundation in the hearts of believers, but also its outer doctrinal basis, as *signa Ecclesiae*.

Article eighth of Augustana shows that the externalone hallmarks, from which the true Church could be identified, are emphasised due to the fight against that kind of understanding of the faith prevailing midst Donatist: «They condemn the Donatists and such like, who denied that it was lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the Church, and held that the ministry of evil men is useless and without effect»(62.3). The true Church cannot be defined only on the basis of internal, personal human experience. There are necessary outer hallmarks for Church, which should always pay attention.

Satis est — it is sufficient

For «the true unity of the Church», therefore, «is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.» Doctrine of Gospel, or the doctrine of Apostles (doctrina Apostolorum, Aposteln der Lehre und klare Wort, 244.38), can be found in the Bible but only interpreted in accordance with the ancient creeds. The structure and content of the Confessio Augustana shows, that it's Articles I–XXI are from Lutheran part such kind of doctrinal codification, which is enough for reaching the unity. This codification tells «what is believed everywhere, always and by all believers» (*quod ubique, quod semper et quod ab omnibus creditum est*). To these words, written from Vincent of Lérins (died 445), are not referred in the text of Augustana, but they are reflected, for example, in the article six of the Apologia of Augustana: «That is why we are not confused by the criticism of opponents, because they are defending human opinions which are in conflict with the Gospel, the authority of the Holy Fathers of the Church and the testimony of pious minds»(233, 37–40)[9]. The correct form and content of the submission of the sacraments can be found on the same basis.

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[9] Proinde non perturbent nos iudicia adversariorum, cum humanas opiniones contra evangelium, contra auctoritatem sanctorum patrum, qui in ecclesia scripserunt, contra piarum mentium testimonia defendunt.

English citations from Apologia are taken from: The defense of Augsburg confession // The Book of Concord, The confessions of the Lutheran Church // URL: http://bookofconcord.org/defense_greeting.php (29.3. 2017).

It is important to note that the consensus is not just something that is achieved and agreed here and now. The unanimity and unity Lutheran confession requires has a long perspective reaching out until the apostles and prophets. It is not something that we should now create, but instead of that, in many historical situations we should certainly dig it out. This is evident from the perspective of Confessio Augustana (eg 107.44.), but especially the Apology is emphasizing it: «It ought to be said certainly that the consensus of the prophets is the universal consensus of the Church. We can and we do not grant the Pope and to the Church the power to resolve things contrary to this consensus of the prophets»(265, 20–25; cf.: 177, 30–35)[10].

This understanding of the nature of the consensus has many similarities with the way the Orthodox Church is understanding the way towards unity. The church is based on the consensus of the fathers and to their consenting biblical teachings, but is letting their not-consenting opinions aside. The fathers of Lutheran confession wanted to show, that there was no any question of a new beginning of the Church, but accession to what for centuries has been unanimously perceived in accordance with the word of God.

On the grounds of prevailing discussion, the word «enough» (*satis est)* is not to be interpreted as a minimalistic connecting factor, but as an extensive surface of connections. The first twenty-one Articles of Confessio Augustana does not form a small punctate connection point. Every single doctrine there is already in itself much more than a point, and, in addition to it, all of them are intrinsically related to each other.

The words «it is sufficient» (satis est) could naturally give to some people a semantic impression that the consensus would require only a very small section of the doctrinal corpus, a *scintilulla doctrinae*. But it is not this way to read them, if there is a will to pay attention to the original intentions of the writers of that text. When Lutherans are searching for consensus and then unity, they must commit to at least the doctrinal corpus indicated in the articles I–XXI of Confessio Augustana. The confession itself says, that these passages are the summary of biblical «doctrine of Gospel». In ecumenical dialog,

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[10] Profecto consensus prophetarum iudicandus est universalis ecclesiae consensus esse. Nec papae nec ecclesiae concedimus potestatem decernendi contra hunc consensum prophetarum.

which seeks ways for restoring the broken unity, you, of course, should again and again test, in the light of the grown historical, exegetic and hermeneutic knowledge, whether the truth claims, expressed in the conflicts during the time of reformation, are valid today. In any case, the Lutheran partner keeps the sufficient consensus of the passages of faith, expressed in Augustana, as the condition to the unity. It is not at all a small claim.

Although God justifies the sinner and the faith, which receives the salvation could, as experienced subjectively, can sometimes be quantitative very small one, a «scintilulla fidei», for the unity of the divided Churches a grain is not enough. Therefore, for restoring the broken unity, sufficient unanimity concerning the gospel of Christ and the sacraments is required. This sufficient unanimity ought to be doctrinal. In addition, this ecumenical concept permits either the same or different human traditions. It does not deny cultural and language-dependent differences.

Nor is it necessary — nec necesse est

So, the subjects, which from point of view of the unity are *adiafora*, in other words, not necessary, are «human traditions, rites, or ceremonies *instituted by men*». They can be by the partners either the same or different without the unity of the Church will run into danger.

But what is meant by the words «the human tradition, rites and ceremonies»? Weight is on the word *human*. The idea is not to say that all the traditions, all rites and all ceremonies had been created by man, but in those traditions, which *are* man-made, unanimity is not necessarily required. For example, the unanimity in the administration of the sacraments belongs to the consensus which is needed and necessary.

The article of Apologia concerning sacraments characterize them as *ritus*, which in this context are baptism and Eucharist (292, 3–5). But not all rites are sacraments, because some of them have a human origin and therefore do not mediate the grace of God: «If we call sacraments rites which have the command of God, and to which the promise of grace has been added, it is easy to decide what are properly Sacraments. For rites instituted by men will not in this way be Sacraments

properly called. For it does not belong to human authority to promise the grace«(292, 3)[11].When Apologia has told, which after the Lutheran view are sacraments, the text continues: «And God, at the same time, by the word and by the rite, moves hearts to believe and conceive faith, just as Paul says (Rom. 10:17): «Faith cometh by hearing. But just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike our heart, so the rite itself strikes the eye, in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same, as it has been said by Augustine that a Sacrament is a visible word, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore the effect of both is the same»(292, 5)[12].

Baptism and the liturgy of Eucharist ought *jure divino* have such a form that it is possible to recognise them to be in accordance with the Gospel. Similar «divine» traditions can be found in also in other places. The ordination to the spiritual ministry of the Church, for instance, should happen by laying-on hands and prayer.

As a summary, therefore, can be said that the true unity of the Church is requiring in addition to the doctrinal consensus also a certain resemblance in the constitution of the Church.

In accordance with the inherent logic of Confessio Augustana the articles XXII–XXVIII are dealing with things, for whose part different practices are possible, but not necessary. There are numerous practices in the tradition of Church, which are malpractices only if someone tells them be *jure divino* necessary. Otherwise, they are acceptable: «Inasmuch as the churches among us dissent in no articles of faith from the holy scriptures or the Church Catholic, and only omits a few of certain abuses, which are novel and contrary to the purport of canons»(84. 1)[13]. Customary, human-derived practices do not,

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[11] Si sacramenta vocamus ritus, qui habent mandatum Dei et quibus addita est promissio gratiae, facile est iudicare, quae sint proprie sacramenta. Nam ritus ab hominibus instituti non erunt hoc modo proprie dicta sacramenta. Non est enim auctoritatis humanae promittere gratiam.

[12] Et corda simul per verbum et ritum movet Deus, ut credant et concipiant fidem, sicut ait Paulus: fides ex auditu est. Sicut autem verbum incurrit in aures, ut feriat corda: ita ritus ipse incurrit in oculos, ut moveat corda. Idem effectus est verbi et ritus, sicut praeclare dictum est ab Augustino sacramentum esse verbum visibile, quia ritus oculis accipitur et est quasi pictura verbi, idem significans, quod verbum. Quare idem est utriusque effectus.

[13] Cum ecclesia apud nos de nullo articulo fidei dissentiant ab ecclesia catholica, tantum Paulos quosdam Abusus omittant, Novi qui sunt et contra

therefore, be fought as such, only the wrong reasons of their use: what is *adiaforon* does not become necessary for salvation.

The Apologia of the Confessio Augustana makes it clear that human traditions, rites and ceremonies are breaking the unity of the Church *only* if they are obscuring the righteousness of faith. At the same time, it is clear, that there are traditions, rites and ceremonies, which are necessary for the unity of the Church. They are mainly related to the administration of sacraments and the spiritual ministry of the Church, and therefore constitutive for the «true unity of the Church». They exists after the language of our Confessional books *jure divino* and are as such necessary for salvation.

Although after the current exegetical and theological knowledge concerning the division between *jure divino-* and *jure humano-* aspects is not as categorical and as unambiguous as it was thought in the time of Augustana and Apologia, the intentions behind the concepts are entirely understandable. When Lutherans are involved in ecumenical dialog and are searching the right model of the unity of Church, they ought to be conscious of what is enough and what is not necessary. Clear understanding of the content of the seventh article of Augustana necessary affects to the practical ecumenical solutions.

What could be the right model for ecumenical work?

During the numerous theological discussions at the time of Reformation, aiming the restoration of broken unity of the Church, has been the «ecumenical program» of Augustana VII. in use. The goal has been the widest possible quantitative doctrinal consensus, which then, after discussions, has been recorded in books, called by name Concordia. That time there was going on many dialogs between Lutherans and Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed, but also intensively within Lutheranism.

During the ecumenical work of the last hundred years, the method has in principle been substantially the same as that used in the discussions at the time of Reformation. Efforts have been made to develop such kind of statements, in which the conflicts could be resolved and reconciled. Old problems have been reassessed

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voluntatem canonum vitio temporarum recepti.

by means of advanced study of the Bible and Church tradition. The impact of the medieval philosophical thought at the time of Reformation to the confessional conflicts has also obtained much new light, and it, also, has been used to solve problems. Thus, progress has been going towards a convergence, which could be sufficient for a new situation, where former contention points no longer are Church-separating.

It is clear, that the modern application of this old method does not mean, that the sticking points of 16th century should be encountered by their previous form, but that all old and newer dividing questions should be handled in the currently reached overall-perspective. It will not absolutize the controversial topics of the 16th century, but, on the other hand, does also not make their original intention relative, and suggest, that the disputes had been based on pure misunderstandings. The new overall-perspective take into account, that much has been occurred both before and after the reformation. Both before and after are essential in the search of unity.

Common documents obtained with the traditional method often follow the Trinitarian-Christological–Soteriological-diagram, but also other kinds of dispositions may occur. This largely depends on how extensive discussions have been. The traditional method has reached the end of the 1900s with remarkable results — at least at the negotiating table and document level. More problematic is how the results are affecting to the official statements made by the Churches and what is the relationship of the new statements with the old Confessional — sometimes very polemical — statements.

In ecumenical dialogs the Orthodox partner has frequently denied, that any kind of anticipated Eucharistic unity could be used as a practical preparation to the final unity, which should later be earned in doctrinal discussions. Eucharistic unity is possible only after doctrinal consensus. This hesitating has sometimes hampered the ecumenical efforts, but obviously rightly so. If severe doctrinal problems are ignored too fast, it always creates new problems, which are by no means necessarily smaller than the original. Although one Christ unites all Christians, we must have the courage to openly see how Christ and the absolute requirement of truth sometimes separates us. If this is not recognized, the disputes of past generations

are put in a very strange light. There have not been only some misunderstandings, but also some real problems. If we do not recognise that reality, then we underestimated fateful way the religious discernment of our predecessors and apparently badly overestimate our own. Longing for a unity should never blur the claim of the truth.

The true unity of the Church can only be achieved through a responsible ecumenical work, which leads to agreement over «the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments» *(consensus de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum).* Trivializing this arduous and often slow process will certainly lead to setbacks.

The ecumenical search of unity, which is committed to the classical, apostolic tradition, has found during recent decades a new, fertile way of working. In dialogues until the second half of 1900s the focus had been of those doctrinal differences which the long confessional controversy has distilled to very high percentage. They were compared and attempted to find a consensus or at least convergence.

The new way of ecumenical working is diving below the surface. There it has looked for uniting factors, which always have been there, but hidden because of the concentration in dividing questions. It is leading to rediscovering the depths of our old, common tradition, common treasures that have remained hidden. Thus, this way it has been possible to overcome very fruitful way the surface level polemical clichés.

In fact, we in Finland found this method of dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church[14]. It has since been used in both the LWF dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, which led to the *Joint Declaration Doctrine of Justification*, and in the dialogue with the Anglicans, the fruits of which is the *Porvoo Agreement* between Lutheran Churches in the Nordic and Baltic and the Anglican Churches of Great Britain and Ireland. Its sphere of influence is recently expanding elsewhere.

Porvoo agreement is an excellent example of what could be achieved working following the classical tradition and the rule

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[14] In my new book, which is at first appeared in print in Russian language, I tell what this method means and how it has been used: Пихкала Ю. Вера и любовь, Общая доктрина, сформировавшаяся на основании диалога между Финской Евангелическо-лютеранской Церковью и Русской Православной Церковью. Хельсинки, 2016. С. 26–31.

of faith, when for it has found new methodological instruments. Fine, functional connection and interaction has been established between truth and tolerance. Also, the Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification drawn up and accepted with the Roman Catholic Church, shows that this new method can be a real step forward, so that dividing differences could be overcome. There are also many other examples I could raise, but the time and room is not enough to it now.

However, the global situation has raised new challenges which are difficult to face using the traditional ecumenical methods. What could be that *satis est,* which would create opportunities for joint testimony of the Christian faith with the new non-traditional Christian communities, number of which is increasing, especially in Africa, but also in Latin America. How to create the conditions for reciprocal recognising all the basic structures of identity — it's the same, which was struggled during the late antiquity in a global cultural environment? These questions will have to find the answer in the just now ongoing global transformation of Christian witness. It seems that on the surface our Globus is moving a lot of fresh, Scripture raised effects of the Spirit of God, which are difficult to identify by the means of classical ecumenism. How does truth and tolerance of classical Christianity contact this movement right and a creative way?

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