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Icons of the Kingdom: Overlooked topics in St. Nicholas Cabasilas, some dangers of Eucharistic theology, and the mission of the Church

Abstract

The definition by Saint Nicholas Cabasilas (14th c.) that the Holy Eucharist is the icon of the Kingdom and therefore the true self of the Church, has now become commonplace for theological texts. However the present study poses the question whether this definition excludes other elements from defining the self of the Church. The study brings to the fore one more definition by the same Father. Saint Nicholas clarifies that the acts of mercy and solidarity are also icons of the Kingdom. Making use of Biblical metaphors he describes the Kingdom as the eschatological feast, where Christ is both, the minister of

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the feast and the servant of the guests. Both the sacrament and the practice of loving care comprise the self of the Church and define her mission.

Keywords

Icon, Kingdom, St. Nicholas Cabasilas, Eucharistic Theology. Mission

1 Introduction

It has now become commonplace for theological texts to repeat the famous definition bequeathed to us by Saint Nicholas Cabasilas (1322-1391): The Church *is* the Holy Eucharist.
Three times in his classic *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, Nicholas Cabasilas calls the Eucharist "the mysteries (sacraments)," and emphasizes that the Church is manifested and becomes apparent *in* the celebration of the Divine Eucharist and *by* the celebration of the Divine Eucharist:

> The mysteries (sacraments) represent the Church, which is the Body of Christ […] The Church is represented in the Holy Mysteries, not in figure only, but as the limbs are represented in the heart, and the branches in the root, and, as our Lord has said, the shoots in the vine. For here is no mere sharing of a name, or analogy by resemblance, but an identity of actuality. […] So, if one could see the Church of Christ, insofar as she is united to Him and shares in His sacred Body, one would see nothing other than the Body of the Lord. […] That is why it is not unreasonable to say that the holy mysteries represent the Church.[1]

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1 Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, chapter 38 (tr. F. M. Hussey & P. A. McNulty), St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York 2002, pp. 91-92. The Greek text: *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς θείας Λειτουργίας* (Ermeneia tes Theias Leitourgias), Patrologia Graeca

The true self of the Church, therefore, is found in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is what reifies the Church and serves as an icon of the eschatological Kingdom. It is unnecessary to repeat here how important this identification of the Church with the Eucharist is, as is the wonderful understanding of the Eucharist as an icon of the Kingdom. As I said, these have been underlined by the relevant theological literature of the last few decades, which is now both vast and significant.

At this theological crux, however, several questions arise: Is this relationship, I wonder, between the Eucharist and the Kingdom exclusive? Is the Eucharist the *only* icon of the Kingdom and, consequently, the *only conditio sine qua non* for the identity of the Church?

These questions play a particularly important role in orienting the whole of church life. In various contemporary theological works, it is clear that the identification of the Eucharist as the *only* icon of the Kingdom and the only *conditio sine qua non* for the Church's true self creates the impression that all the other elements that exist in the life of the church may be "good" and "useful," but they are definitely secondary - i.e., they are not essential elements for the identity of the Church. In this perspective, many current theological texts seem to argue that, if any of those elements of church life - which have been characterized as secondary - disappear, then the self of the

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(hereafter PG) 150, 368-492A. Personally, I believe that many of the authors of today's theological texts have not explored this identification in the works of Cabasilas himself, but have rather gleaned it second-hand from the works of the leading Orthodox theologian of our day, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, who has highlighted and explicated these passages. Cf. notably John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies on Personhood and the Church*, T. & T. Clark, London 2006, p. 79. John D. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, T. & T. Clark, London 2011, p. 68. It should be noted that this present essay is based on my article in the Greek journal *Synaxis* 144 (2012), pp. 13-21, in Greek.

Church will not be damaged, since (as these texts maintain) the Eucharist is sufficient.

Here, then, I would like to examine one of these elements which have been characterized as secondary and non-essential: solidarity and concern for social justice. Some of the theologians who see the Eucharist as the *only* image of the Kingdom and the *conditio sine qua non* for the self of the Church, deride solidarity and concern for social justice as trite activism. They disparage them as moralism or (at best) tolerate them as a secondary and incidental activity that is surely non-essential to the Church's identity and mission.

2 Has something been overlooked?

Here is something that should perhaps surprise us. In the same work *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, Nicholas Cabasilas made another identification that (to my knowledge) seems to have gone completely unnoticed in the current theological works in question. This identification is found at the point where St. Nicholas comments on the laity's short plea during the Divine Liturgy, "Lord have mercy." "To beg God's mercy, says Cabasilas, "is to ask for his kingdom," because "the kingdom of God is signified by his mercy."[2] "If," Cabasilas continues, "among the actions of merciful men, one wishes to contemplate the aim of the divine mercy, he will find that it corresponds exactly to the kingdom itself."[3]

Is it a coincidence that this passage clearly has the same structure as his aforementioned passage on the Eucharist? See, for example, how in both cases Cabasilas uses the verb ""is"" and how he refers to the Kingdom. In short, for Cabasilas, solidarity—love for one's fellow human as an action (and not just a feeling)—is an *icon* of the Kingdom within history. Indeed, it is

2 Cabasilas, *op.cit.*, Chapter 13, p. 47.
3 Cabasilas, *op.cit.*, Chapter 14, p. 48.

very interesting that in order to defend his position, Cabasilas immediately invokes gospel passages which have both *eschatological* and *eucharistic* content. On the one hand, he invokes Christ's words at the imminent final judgment, "for I was hungry and you gave me food…" (Mt. 25:35-36), and on the other hand Christ's description of the banquet in his future Kingdom, where the merciful Lord himself will personally minister to his guests: "Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37; see also 22:29).[4] In other words, Cabasilas does not mock solidarity as trite activism, nor does he disparage it as moralism, nor does he simply tolerate it as a good but secondary and non-essential element of the Church. On the contrary, St. Nicholas connects solidarity with the Kingdom itself! And, of course, he knows that there will be no hungry people in the Kingdom. And yet, from this it does not follow that solidarity is a secondary, incidental, and non-essential element within history, which will be abolished when the Kingdom comes! He considers the act of solidarity an expression of a permanent, essential, and eternal element, namely love (and here, of course, Cabasilas is not inventing something novel, but simply restating the primacy of love as the given faith of the Church). This loving movement toward the other will continue and will form the heart of the Kingdom. After all, Paul himself also told us this, speaking of the triptych of "faith, hope and love," with love being the most important (1Cor. 13:13). And that is why ministry, solidarity, and practical love within history are an *essential* element of the Church's nature and an *icon* of the Kingdom! Indeed, this kind of activity—both God's initiative and human beings' response—is what makes history a creative work in progress, allowing the

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4 Cabasilas, *op. cit.*, Chapter 14, p. 48 (cf. Chapter 44, p. 100). It is particularly significant that the first of these passages is followed by Christ's promise, which marks the eschatological gathering (*synaxis*): "you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk. 22:30).

Kingdom to break into the present, and not simply a static idol of a fixed future.

Cabasilas' perspective here is deeply rooted in the tradition of the Church. As just one example, I point you to St. John Chrysostom (ca. 349-407), some ten centuries before Cabasilas. "Do you want to honor the body of Christ?", Chrysostom asks the faithful. "Do not honor him by offering him precious silken cloths inside the temple while passing him naked and frozen outside the temple." It is striking that Chrysostom then directly connects the Eucharist's words of institution with solidarity. Emphasizing that Christ himself said "this is my body." (Matt. 26:26), while also saying that whenever we see the hungry and the least, we see him, Chrysostom points out that therefore, if we ignore them, we ignore him (Matt. 25:31-46).[5] Like Nicholas Cabasilas, Chrysostom considers not only the Eucharist as a place where believers encounter Christ, but also solidarity. He identifies the body of Christ not only with the Eucharist, but also with the poor in person. Ultimately, Chrysostom (also like Cabasilas) connects solidarity with eschatology, as he highlights practical love as a criterion of the Kingdom.

Similarly, the connection between *God's mercy* and *human action*, as well as the connection between *human action* and the attainment of the *likeness* (καθ' ομοίωσιν) of God, is striking in the following text by St. Gregory the Theologian (as St. Maximus the Confessor gives it to us):

> Without charity, the soul remains fruitless. Without it, everything is impure and useless. The way we can become like God is to have mercy and compassion. Christ did not say "If you believe, you shall be like your Father." He didn't say, "if you remain virgins." But what did he say? "Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful." "For I desire mercy," he says, "and not sacrifice."[6]

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5 John Chrysostom, *Homily 50 on Matt. 14:23-24*, PG 58:508.

6 Maximus, *The Chapters on Theology*, Chapter 7, "On Almsgiving," PG 91, 765D (the quotations refer to Luke 6:36 and Matt. 9:13, respectively).

In fact, in the last chapter of his "Mystagogy," Saint Maximus puts special emphasis on "works" (ἔργον) (i.e., practical love and mercy toward every person in need) as the most excellent path to *theosis*, since Christ himself showed us the person in need as God Himself (cf. Mt. 25:40).[7] Fr. Dumitru Staniloae's (1903-1993) commentary on this passage from Maximus was, characteristically, almost prophetic about the monisms that haunt our liturgical understanding today:

> To demonstrate that his explanations do not encourage people to confine themselves to the solitary contemplation of God, Saint Maximus ends his work with an encomium to mercy and love for people. As in his other works, he places these virtues above all else.[8]

In my opinion, equating diakonia (service)/solidarity with the Kingdom does not contradict the aforementioned identification of the Eucharist with the Church. The sacrament of the Church is illuminated by the osmosis of these two. Cabasilas recognizes diakonia (service) as an element of the eschatological supper. He does not consider the supper to be one thing and diakonia to be another. On the contrary, the sacrament of the Church is wronged by any theological construction which bypasses or degrades the sacrament of the brother/sister. The sacrament of the brother/sister, i.e., practical love, neither stands in contrast to the Eucharist, nor is it simply one of its consequences. In a critical consideration of Fr. Alexander Schmemann's theology, which is related to our topic, I have argued that love is not only an outgrowth and byproduct of the Eucharist, but also a

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7 Maximus, *On the Ecclesiastical Mystagogy*, 24, PG 91, 713A-B.

8 Cf. *The Mystagogy of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (introduction and commentary by Protopresbyter Dumitru Staniloae, translated into Greek by Ignatius Sakalis), Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1973, p. 248 (in Greek). See also Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, "Social Engagement as Part of the Call to Deification in Orthodox Theologies," *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 57.1-4 (2016), pp. 75–84.

condition for its validity.[9] If (contrary to what I have argued) we accept that diakonia is only an outgrowth, incidental to the Eucharist, this would mean that the Eucharist can be celebrated without the sacrament of the brother/sister! But this would mean something tragic: that the Eucharist is something like a magical ritual, which suffices to be performed according to a script that does not require an ethical commitment from the believer. In magic what is required is simply the exact execution of the recipe. In church life this is essentially "ritualism," i.e., the belief that the performance of the sacraments (and especially the Eucharist) is sufficient to produce salvific results in an automatic way! But let's remember that, according to the Gospel, no recipe can save without the experience of love on the part of the person, and for this reason Christ himself will expel from his presence people who call him Lord, but have not practiced love for their fellow human beings (Matt. 7:21-23).

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas' comments are thus valuable in that they preserve the fullness of the Christian life, beyond any monism. As is well known, the liturgical life and ecclesiastical art are dominated by exquisite representations of the Kingdom as a gathering of the apostles around Christ, as a communal dinner. Therefore, to these representations, our theology must add another representation: the forgotten representation of the ministering Christ, who (I remind you) in Cabasilas' precious comments is the eschatological Christ. Not just the historical Jesus!

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9 See Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, "The Church as Mission: Fr. Alexander Schmemann's liturgical theology revisited," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 60 (2010), pp. 6-41. It should be noted that when I speak here of love as a condition for the realization of the ecclesiastical event, I do not mean arriving at some kind of supposed moral perfection, but rather recognizing love as the highest criterion and the noble and decisive orientation of human existence towards it—with all our inadequacies and failures.

3 Ramifications

Cabasilas' liturgical theology also has other, social ramifications. As I have emphasized on another occasion,[10] his perspective, regarding the materials of the Eucharist, is not a matter of chemical composition. That is to say, he sees the bread's ingredients not only as what a microscope can see (wheat, yeast, water, salt, etc.), but he also sees the ingredients of human labor, human ingenuity, and the activity inherent in the production of the bread.

This view opens up a broader perspective, which is inextricably tied to the liturgical experience as well as the Church's mission and social relations, and which forms the context in which the bread functions. By social relations, I do not mean only interpersonal communication, but also the whole structure of our common human life. There is, as is well known, a very long tradition—which begins in the Old Testament, continues in the New and permeates the Fathers of the Church—which sees bread not only as a thing, but also as a symbolic field composed of work, creativity, exploitation, suffering for injustice, the desire for justice, etc.[11] It is typical of the Old Testament that the voices of the wronged reach the ears of God and enrage Him (Ex. 2:23, Deut. 24:14-15, Wisdom of Sirach 34:22). This motif passes into the New Testament with the epistle of the Apostle James, which vividly paints—and denounces—

an inverted Eucharist: The workers who go unpaid, writes the Apostle James, cry out; and this protest reaches the ears of the

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10 Thanasis (Athanasios) N. Papathanasiou, "Only with bread? Only with wine? The possibility of using other materials in the Divine Eucharist" *Synaxis* 105 (2008), pp. 55-73 (in Greek).

11 Cf. Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, "Liberation Perspectives in Patristic Thought: An Orthodox Approach," *Hellenic Open University. Scientific Review of Post-Graduate Program Studies in Orthodox Theology*, vol. 2 (2011), pp. 419-438.

Lord, who will hasten to punish unjust employers who accumulate wealth (James 5:4). In the plutocrats' perspective, in other words, the goods of creation are not communal goods, i.e., objects of communion. While Jesus took the bread, broke it, and distributed it ("Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples"; Matt. 26:26), the plutocrats receive the bread, but neither break it nor distribute it. Thus, the goods of creation are confined to individual possession. Trapped there, they can neither be offered up to God, nor shared with their fellow human beings. So, the only thing that reaches God's ears is the anguished cry from the rupture of communion from social injustice.

In contrast to this, the Church is called to point the way toward a eucharistic attitude, which is not only concerned with the performance of a ceremony, but concerns the faithful's entire way of life. As pointed out by the great liturgist Dom Gregory Dix (1901-1952), the Eucharist is structured around four fundamental and unchanging acts, which exist in both East and West, despite the wide variety of liturgical forms:

a. Taking the bread and wine and placing them on the table,
b. The eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving,
c. The breaking of the bread, and
d. The distribution of bread and wine.[12]

I believe that the meaning of these basic acts is particularly relevant to our topic. The first of these acts (taking the bread and wine and placing them on the table) indicates a missionary opening to the world (i.e., the reception of the world so that it is transformed into the flesh of Christ) as a vital component of the ecclesial event.[13] The last two, *breaking the bread* and *distribution*, also pertain to the church's mission in everyday human life. There can be no authentic Eucharistic way of being if breaking the bread and distribution do not signal a plea for the

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12 Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of Liturgy*, A. & C. Black, London ²1993, p. 48.

13 See my "Only with bread? Only with wine?", *op. cit.*, p. 71.

practical transformation of everyday life (such as the sharing of all things that was attempted in the first church of Jerusalem and led to the emergence of seven deacons, so that social injustice in the heart of the community would not invalidate the common Eucharist; see Acts 6:1-6).

I thus find it no surprise that Cabasilas has also highlighted this dimension. In his work "Sermon against those who lend money with interest," he critiqued—based on the eucharistic ethos—the exploitative credit system of his time. This text (theological and at the same time political in the broadest sense, like the related memorandum he sent to the Empress Anna Paleologina in 1351)[14] denounced the schizophrenia of celebrating the Eucharist as a religious ceremony which does not permeate everyday life and is not verified in human relations. If your life is dominated by disdain for the bread, labor, and freedom of others, then think—says Cabasilas to the banker—how awesome it is to dare to receive the Eucharist yourself! How horrible it is to accept the blood of Christ, which is the ransom of captives, at the moment when you are enslaving your fellow man! How abominable it is to sit at the same table with him against whom you contend![15]

In the context of this philanthropic attitude, it is worth noting an area in which Cabasilas is particularly open: the saint points out that during the Divine Liturgy, the faithful offer prayers "not only for the Church and the Empire […], nor only for those who are in danger, but in general for all people throughout the world." And

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14 Rodolphe Guilland, "Le Traité inédit 'Sur l' Usure' de Nicolas Cabasilas," *Εἰς Μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* [*In Memory of Spyridon Lampros*]. Athens, 1935, pp. 269-277. See, indicatively, p. 277, where he invokes the saints as his advocates in his fight against usurious lending, although in this text (apparently by its nature) the political argumentation is more extensive than the theological.

15 Nicholas Cabasilas, "Sermon against those who lend money with interest," PG 748D-749A.

Christians do this simply because they know that their Lord is the common Lord of all and that He cares for all. If, therefore, one takes care of one's fellow human beings, concludes Cabasilas, then one honors God more than offering him a sacrifice.[16]

His words demonstrate here once again the precious synthesis that must exist in the life of the Church: the synthesis between the *Divine Liturgy* and diaconia / solidarity. Moreover, they also give us a particularly interesting piece of information: that (contrary to the dominant Byzantine ideology, which used the term "ecumene" only to indicate that part of the earth that was considered civilized—that is, basically just the Empire),[17] Saint Nicholas did not equate the "ecumene" with the Empire, but rather with the whole world. Likewise, in his other seminal work, *On the Life in Christ*, it is clear that Cabasilas identifies the "ecumene" with the whole world. Christ, he says there, entrusted his disciples with stewardship of the whole world, making them rulers over the entire earth.[18] Of course, it is unnecessary to note here that it would be a monumental distortion if ecclesiastical people understood these expressions (stewardship, rulers) in a spirit of conquest and theocracy and not (as is evident from the whole of Cabasilas' work) in a spirit of ministry and self-sacrifice.

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16 Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 13, p. 46. He goes on to clarify that we do not pray only for the goods that contribute to our spiritual benefit, but also for the necessary material goods, "for favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth," so that we realize that God is the source and provider of all things, and we look only to Him, since Christ also commanded that we ask our daily bread from him.

17 See Dimitri Obolensky, "The Principles and Methods of Byzantine Diplomacy," *Actes du XIIe Congrès International d' Études Byzantines*, 1, Beograd 1963, pp. 52-53.

18 Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 6, PG 150, 669d.

4 Political context

With these thoughts and criteria in mind, it is very interesting to study the whole socio-political attitude of Nicholas Cabasilas, particularly within the historical context of the Zealots' socio-political rebellion in Thessaloniki in the 14th century, a rebellion with egalitarian ideals and anti-aristocratic demands.[19] Historical research shows that, politically, Cabasilas was inclined towards the Emperor John Kantakouzenos (with whom the aristocracy had sided) and not towards John Palaiologos (with whom the Zealots and the masses were aligned). This stance may raise the question "why didn't Cabasilas side with the Zealots?" The answer, in any case, should not be hasty and formalistic, but should consider his whole life and work. Cabasilas' text "Speech against those who illegally dare, with the power of the rulers, to interfere in ecclesiastical matters" provides a window into the complexity of that historical juncture (and also demonstrates that it needs careful research). Previously, primarily under the weight of the opinion of Professor Orest Tafrali (1876-1937), this text was considered a treatise against the Zealots. But the historian Ihor Ševčenko (1922-1945) argued that the text is a more general expression of Cabasilas' opposition to imperial policy and the bishops, and that it should be disconnected from the Zealot question altogether.[20] Be that as it may, some interesting points from the text are that Cabasilas:
- defends monastic property,

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[19] For an outline of the Zealot rebellion and the issues discussed in scholarship, see Fr. Georgios Metallinos, "Hesychasts and Zealots: Spiritual Apex and Social Crisis in 14th c. Byzantium," in idem, *Hellenism at War*, Athens: Tinos 1995, pp. 13-40 (in Greek).

[20] Ihor Ševčenko, "Nicolas Cabasilas' 'Anti-Zealot' Discourse: A Reinterpretation," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 11 (1957), pp. 79-171, as well as Ihor Ševčenko, "A Postscript on Nicolas Cabasilas' 'Anti-Zealot' Discourse," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962), pp. 403-408.

- depicts the monks as the property's administrators and not as its owners,
- exposes the financial exploitation of the faithful by the bishops and
- denies the state the right to confiscate monastic property, even if it does so to strengthen the defense of the land.

Cabasilas maintained this stance even though the empire was in a very difficult position. In 1430, eighty-five years after his texts, Thessaloniki was occupied by the Ottoman Turks. Cabasilas does not condone the confiscation of monastic property, even if it is done in the name of supporting the poor (which of course seems to contradict him). Cabasilas believed that, although the bishop may thus nourish the bodies of the poor, he nonetheless fails by pushing the soul of the one who suffered the confiscation into sin, since he will feel hatred against the one who does the confiscation.[21] This is undoubtedly a peculiar position. Cabasilas does not deny charity, but rather rejects any measure that does not require the consent of all parties.[22] It thus seems that in this work he opposes social reform of a coercive character, but this utopic vision puts him at odds with other, more radical Fathers of the Church. For example, Saint John the Merciful (556-619) declared that in order to help the poor, it is not bad at all if one could figure out ways to even denude the rich.[23] St. John Chrysostom declared that those who commit illegal acts under the pressure of hunger are not to blame,[24] while St. Athanasios, Patriarch of Constantinople (1289-1293 and 1303-1309) and one of the first proponents of Hesychasm, pioneered social reform measures and met fierce opposition from bishops and

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21 Ševčenko, "Discourse", *op. cit.*, pp. 121-122.

22 Ševčenko, "Discourse", *op. cit.*, p. 118.

23 H. Delehaye, "Une Vie inédite de S. Jean l'Aumônier," *Analecta Bollandiana* 45 (1927), p. 45. See also Ševčenko, "Discourse", *op. cit.*, p. 148.

24 John Chrysostom, *Homily 14 on the Epistle to the Romans*, PG 60, 535.

monks when he attempted to dispose of monastic property in favor of the poor.[25]

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas' attitude towards this particular question was apparently the typical attitude of certain aristocratic circles, who, as has been observed, denounced social injustice and political corruption, but had no real experience of the lower social classes and did not particularly promote social action.[26] How far, of course, Cabasilas' opposition to compulsory social measures is compatible with his aforementioned memorandum to the empress, in which he asked her to legislate against usurers, is an open question. Also interesting here is the fact that in an anonymous manuscript under the title "To those who are in authority," which is probably by Cabasilas (and indeed likely a reworked version of his treatise "Speech against those who illegally dare, with the power of the rulers, to interfere in ecclesiastical matters"), the author seems to be in conflict with large landowners, as he castigates people who force the poor and weak to buy and sell against their will.[27]

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25 John L. Boojamra, *The Church and Social Reform. The Policies of the Patriarch Athanasios of Constantinople*, New York: Fordham University Press 1993, pp. 48, 104.

26 Boojamra, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

27 Ihor Ševčenko, "The author's draft of Nicolas Cabasilas' 'Anti-Zealot' discourse in Parisinus Graecus 1276," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14 (1960), pp. 179-201.

5 Epilogue

For the ecclesiastical conscience, it must be clear that social injustice and social exclusion belong to the demonic forces that oppose the coming of the Kingdom of God. St. Nicholas Cabasilas has shown that both the sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacrament of the brother/sister (i.e., solidarity) usher the light of the future Kingdom into history and transform the life of the world. Cabasilas' observation here helps to avoid the danger of ritualism, which always jeopardizes the life of the church. Cabasilas reminds us that Christians' way of life and practical love have a catalytic role on the path to salvation, and are an essential component of the church's mission.

Additionally, Cabasilas' emphasis on the inseparable relationship between the Eucharist and ministry/solidarity confirms the value of the "liturgy after the Liturgy" (proposed in the 20th century by Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania Anastasios Yannoulatos as a formula that explains the scope of the church's mission[28]), and proves it has deep roots—both Biblical and Patristic—in the theology and life of the church. I think we need to pay particular attention to the emphasis that Nicholas Cabasilas gives to human action—that is, on that which only man can do, and which, if man does not do it, will never exist. In considering solidarity as a manifestation of the Kingdom, it is important to understand that the icon of the Kingdom is not a self-sufficient gathering of the church (i.e., the Eucharistic *synaxis*, in which only the existing members of the community participate), but a *synaxis in motion towards the other*, who may or may not be a member of the Church. This movement of practical love is a witness to the nature of the coming Kingdom (which is the eternity of love) and the Triune

[28] See my "Social Engagement," *op. cit.,* p. 82. In this article I repeat my suggestion for the use of the formula "the liturgy before the Liturgy" also, meaning reconciliation with our fellow human beings, i.e., the sacrament of the brother/sister.

God of the Church ("God is love"; 1 Jn. 4:16). It is, in other words, a missionary movement. These acts of love, which transform human social relations, reify the love of the Holy Trinity and manifest the Kingdom. That is, it is a real event, and not a marketing trick to promote Christianity's ideas. This reference to the Kingdom differentiates the ecclesiastical act of love from any humanistic charity, just as the reference to the Kingdom is what differentiates the Eucharist from any non-Christian sacrament. It is therefore very important not to forget this perspective and thus become trapped in any kind of monism. The Kingdom is manifested in both the Eucharist and loving solidarity: in both, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.