

## The Holy and Great Council of Crete – The Problem of The Eastern Orthodox Diaspora

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**Abstract.** *The following document explores the intricate problem of the Orthodox Diaspora, tracing its historical roots from ancient Jewish dispersion to contemporary Orthodox challenges. It delves into the theological, canonical, and organizational complexities surrounding this issue, examining the tensions between ethnic and territorial principles within the Orthodox Church. Moreover, it scrutinizes the proceedings and outcomes of the Holy and Great Council of Crete in 2016, which sought to address the diaspora problem but ultimately failed to achieve consensus. Amidst geopolitical conflicts and ecclesiastical schisms, the document underscores the urgent need for dialogue, peace, and restoration within the Orthodox world.*

**Keywords:** *Orthodox Diaspora, canonical principles, Holy and Great Council of Crete, ethnic organization, territorial jurisdiction, ecclesiastical synodality, geopolitical conflicts*

### Introduction

Since the great barbarian migrations<sup>1</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>2</sup>, there has not been a migration process in history like the one we are experiencing today. The current background regarding the situation of people living in conflict zones in Asia and their migration to Europe has led to an economic, social, and identity crisis. On the Old Continent, the number of people belonging mainly to the Islamic faith<sup>3</sup> is increasing.

The mixing of different peoples has led to a weakening of the personal ethos of different nations outside their borders. The Eastern Orthodox Church, and more specifically its members, find themselves in this situation. Driven by certain factors, mainly economic and social, many people belonging to the Eastern Orthodox ecclesial body have left their homes to pursue their own goals. These people often run the risk of losing their personal, national and cultural identity, being cut off from their ancestral roots and, above all, from the Church, the very place of unity and integrity. In dealing with the identity of migrants, we must sound the alarm about the tradition of

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<sup>1</sup> "Migration: the process of people travelling to a new place to live, usually in large numbers"

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/migration> (20.03.2024).

<sup>2</sup> For more details see: Orgazinația Caritas, "Epoca Migrațiilor",

[http://www.ugocsa.ro/arheologie/epoca\\_migrațiilor/index.prn.ro.html](http://www.ugocsa.ro/arheologie/epoca_migrațiilor/index.prn.ro.html), accessed at 21.03.2023.

<sup>3</sup> Although Muslims currently make up only 5% of Europe's population, according to the Pew Research Center, in the coming years the Islamic community will grow substantially, doubling its numbers. Thus, the Christian population, which in 1910 accounted for more than 66% of Europe's population, in 2010 has reached only 27%. "The Future of the Global Muslim Population", *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, <https://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/>, accessed at 21.03.2023. See: Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "The Global Religious Configuration. Realities and Forecasts", *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Reformata Transylvanica*, anul LXV, 2020, nr. 2, pp. 163-178. Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "The Changing Face of Christianity and New Outlines of Ecumenism in The 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *David Field & Jutta Koslowski, Prospects and Challenges for The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century*, Globethics.net, Global 12, Geneva, pp. 27-63.

the Church, which is often lost because of the tendency to pluralism and the lack of a common language, that is, the original language of the Church, based on Holy Scripture and Tradition.

### **The risem etymology, and history of the Diaspora’s development**

Diaspora, the term used to refer to peoples outside the territorial borders of their own countries, has been an issue since ancient times. Initially, the word "diaspora" referred only to the Jewish people who were separated after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II, as recorded in the Second Book of Kings, the Second Book of Chronicles and the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. In order to get the best possible overview of what happened, let us look at some of the verses that refer to this event: "So King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came against Jerusalem with his whole army and set up camp outside it. They built siege ramps all around it<sup>4</sup>. He arrived on the tenth day of the tenth month in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign<sup>5</sup>. The city remained under siege until King Zedekiah’s eleventh year" (2 Kings 25:1-2).

The conquest of the city of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans provoked the displacement of the Jewish people from the area of Palestine: "Nebuzaradan, the captain of the royal guard, deported the rest of the people who were left in the city, those who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the craftsmen. But he left behind some of the poor of the land and gave them fields and vineyards" (2 Kings 25:11-12). From that moment on, the dispersion of the Jewish people began, hence the term "Diaspora".

In Hebrew, the term "goulut" referred to the dispersal of the Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. A few centuries later, during Roman rule, Jews were dispersed throughout the empire<sup>6</sup>, leading to an even greater segmentation of this historically troubled people. In addition, the Jews were scattered all over the world because of the trade, which was mainly practiced as a specific activity<sup>7</sup>. Another reason why Jews were forced to leave their homeland was the persecution to which they were subjected over the centuries, the last major

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<sup>4</sup> The siege of the fortress most likely began in December 589 BC, and lasted for 2 years, until 578 BC.

<sup>5</sup> King of Judah for 11 years, Zedekiah disobeyed the words of the prophets, including Jeremiah. Because of this, in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, the Lord turned his face away from his servant, leaving the city in the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar II, at which time the dispersion of the Jewish people and the formation of the Jewish Diaspora would begin.

<sup>6</sup> Demetrios J. Constantelos, "The Ortodox Diaspora: Canonical and Ecclesiological Perspective", *Greek Ortodox Theological Review* 2-3, 1979, p. 200.

<sup>7</sup> Ioannis Zizioulas, "Orthodox Diaspora: Facing a Canonical Anomaly", in *Kanon XXII, Jahrbuch Der Gesellschaft für das Recht der Ostkirchen*, Roman Kovar, Hennef, 2012, p. 2.

persecution taking place in the 20th century, a movement that has gone down in history as the "Holocaust"<sup>8</sup>.

Etymologically, the word "Diaspora" comes from the Greek διασπορα, and has the meaning of scattering<sup>9</sup>, dissipation, or dispersion, being made up from the verb σπειρω (speiro) and the prefix δια (dia)<sup>10</sup>.

### **The "Eastern Orthodox Diaspora" problem<sup>11</sup>**

The Eastern Orthodox Diaspora, a theological-organisational concept, refers to groups of people who are members of an Eastern Orthodox Church, groups established in certain territories where there is currently no national Eastern Orthodox Church. Some examples would be countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Norway, America, etc. When we speak of the Orthodox Diaspora, the question arises of the conflict between two canonical principles established in the canonical tradition of the Church, principles which at first sight appear to be opposed, but each of which, taken separately, expresses a truth. The principles in question are the principle of ethnic organisation of the members of the Orthodox Church outside the territories of their own countries and the territorial or jurisdictional principle.

It is well known that in the early Church the ecclesiastical centres were divided into several jurisdictions on the basis of the territorial principle. Specifically, in a city where there was also a church, it was governed by a single bishop with full authority over the jurisdiction he led, without any other bishop having the right to intervene in the affairs of another city<sup>12</sup>. Thus, the existence of two bishops in a single city was not accepted and, moreover, was considered an anomaly or illegitimate. The territorial principle is based on the 8th canon developed and established at the First Ecumenical Council<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The movement to exterminate the Jews, which resulted in the deaths of at least 6 million people imprisoned in extermination camps and beyond.

<sup>9</sup> Anatole Bailly, *Dictionnaire Grecque-Français*, Hachette, Paris, 1950, p. 490.

<sup>10</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1961, p. 359.

<sup>11</sup> Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "Unitate de credință și bariere jurisdicționale. Cazul ortodoxiei americane", *Teologie și viață*, serie nouă, anul XX, nr. 1-4, ianuarie-aprilie, 2010, pp. 69-84. Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "Ortodoxia în America. Radiografia unei probleme complexe", *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa*, anul L, 2005, nr. 2, pp. 217-240. Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, Marius Eppel, "The Romanian Emigration to the United States up Until the First World War. Revisiting Opportunities and Vulnerabilities", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 11, nr. 32, Summer 2012, pp. 256-287. Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "The Drama of the Romanian Orthodox Diaspora in North America during the Instauration of the Communist Regime in Romania", *Teologia*, vol. 58. No. 1, 2014, pp. 113-136. Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "Demographic mutations in the structure of the Orthodox ethnic jurisdictions in America", *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XIX, Supplement no. 2:2, (2011), pp. 33-50. Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "From dream to reality: Orthodox Unity in the United States of America", *Calendarul Solia – An Annual Almanac*, ROEA Vatra Românească, Michigan, 2015, pp. 200-252.

<sup>12</sup> For more details see: Peter Erdo, *Teritorialita e personalita nel diritto canonico ed ecclesiastico*, Szent Istvan Tarsulat, Budapest, 2002, p. 208.

<sup>13</sup> "...And if (there is) a bishop or presbyter of the sovereign Church, who returns (from the Cathar clergy), it is understood that the bishop of the Church shall have the dignity of a bishop, and he who is called bishop among the

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On the other side of the question is the ethnic principle based on the 34<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon<sup>14</sup>, which provides that the bishops belonging to a nation should all come together under the primate in synods, the highest governing body of the Church. Thus, in addition to the ethnic principle, this canon also invokes the synodal-hierarchical principle.

The challenge posed by these two canons is the organisation of the Church's neutral mission territory, a territory in which there are also members of the Eastern Orthodox Church to be served. Under whose obedience and responsibility is this territory? According to the first canon, the neutral territories constituting the Eastern Orthodox Diaspora must be under the jurisdiction of the "Mother Church", namely the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, this does not seem to be a correct position, given the equality of the Patriarchates throughout the Eastern Orthodox world, all of which enjoy autocephaly. We will deal with these issues when we talk about the organisation of the Orthodox Diaspora on the basis of the decisions approved by the Holy and Great Council of Crete.

### **The Holy and Great Council of Crete. Generalities**

Since the Church can only manifest itself within the framework of synodality, "twice a year the synod of bishops should be (assembled), and together they are to examine the dogmas of the right faith and resolve the problems (the ecclesiastical controversies that will arise...)"<sup>15</sup>. For this reason, the Church as an ecclesial body is obliged to resolve any kind of dissension or problem of a doctrinal nature according to the synodal-hierarchical principle.

Due to various factors specific to the present time, problems which have had and have repercussions on the ecclesial environment, it has become necessary to organise a pan-Orthodox synod in order to make certain decisions concerning the Church at a universal level. The organization of a synod of such a scale has been desired since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first initiative came from Patriarch Joachim III in 1902. Later, in 1923, Ecumenical Patriarch Meletius IV invited the autocephalous Churches to dialogue, requesting the participation of several delegations from each Church in a pan-Orthodox synod to be held in Constantinople. The proposed desire was not

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so-called Cathars shall have the dignity of a presbyter; unless it should seem to the bishop (proper) to give him the honour of the name. And if he does not like this, (then) in order that it may be seen that he is of the clergy, a place shall be found for him, either as a bishop or as a presbyter, so that there shall not be two bishops in one city".

<sup>14</sup> "The bishops of every nation must know the first among them and regard him as their head, and do nothing special without his will. But each should do only those things which belong to his own diocese and the counties under it. Let no one do anything without the will of all, for in this way there will be good understanding and God will be glorified through the Lord, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (our translation). See: *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, Canoanele Apostolice și Canoanele Sinoadelor Ecumenice*, vol. I, traducere de Răzvan Perșa, Editura Basilica, București, 2018, p. 116.

<sup>15</sup> 37<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon.

entirely successful. However, in the same year, the Patriarchate of Constantinople enjoyed the participation of several delegations from the Churches of Serbia, Greece, Romania, and Cyprus in a synod of Primate. The successor of Patriarch Meletius, Gregory XVII, called in an encyclical for the participation of all autocephalous Churches in a synod. At the time, the Churches in question were not happy with the Ecumenical Patriarch's initiative, citing the need for more solid preparation for such a large-scale event as the reason for not participating.

The first Pan-Orthodox meeting took place in 1930 at the request of Patriarch Photios II in the Monastery of Vatoped on Mount Athos. Between 1951 and 1952, the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras sent several encyclicals to the autocephalous Churches, inviting them to participate in the organisation of a Pan-Orthodox Synod. Later, in 1961, the first preparatory conference for the Holy and Great Orthodox Synod was held in Rhodes. This assembly was preceded by three other preparatory conferences: in Rhodes in 1963, in Rhodos in 1964 and in Chambesey in 1968. A few years later, in 1971, the first Preparatory Commission of the Holy and Great Synod was established, followed by two further meetings of this Commission. In 1990 and 1993, Patriarch Bartholomew organised two further preparatory commissions, which also addressed the issue of the diaspora. Also at the request of Patriarch Bartholomew, a Congress of Canonists was held in Chambesey in 1995, which drew up regulations for the Assembly of Bishops in the Eastern Orthodox Diaspora. The last phase before the constitution of the Holy and Great Synod was the organisation of two Synods of the Primate of the Autocephalous Church, the first in 2008 in Chambesey and the second in 2014 in Istanbul, after which it was decided to organise the Holy and Great Synod in 2016, during Pentecost, on the island of Crete<sup>16</sup>.

In January 2016, the Organising Committee approved the Synodal Regulations, which consisted of six documents dealing with several issues to be discussed and resolved by the Holy and Great Council. The issue of the Patriarchal Diptychs was excluded from the discussion list of the Holy Synod due to certain misunderstandings<sup>17</sup>. For Patriarch Kiril, this meeting was a joyful occasion because some issues that would have affected the Moscow Patriarchate, such as the calendar or the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church, were removed from the agenda of the Holy and Great Council.

The Churches of Russia, Bulgaria, and Serbia did not attend the Synod. The Russian Church announced its non-participation through the spokesman of the Russian Patriarchate, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, citing the fact that the absence of some Churches from the Synod invalidates its

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<sup>16</sup> For more details on the preparation of the Holy and Great Council see: Viorel Ioniță, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe. Documente Pregătitoare*, Editura Basilica, București, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Patriciu Vlaicu, Răzvan Perșa, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod, Eveniment Eshatologic sau normalitate Canonică?*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2018, p. 232.

status as an Orthodox Church Synod, since the non-participating Churches are no longer subject to the decisions taken at the Synod. The dispute between the two Churches has taken on new proportions, especially in the current context where Russia has launched a war of conquest against Ukraine, whose Church has been split into two. One part is under the patronage of the Russian Patriarchate and the other is under the direct patronage of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

It should be remembered that the Greek and Cypriot bishops were also unhappy about the fact that not all bishops were called to attend the Synod as in the past. Metropolitan Athanasius of Limassol expressed his indignation regarding Patriarch Bartholomew's attitude: "The voice of the hierarchs has been nullified"<sup>18</sup>. In response, the Ecumenical Patriarchate argued that if all the hierarchs had participated in the assembly, the most profit would have been reaped by the Church with the fewest bishops. The claim in question is clearly a reference to the large number of bishops in the Russian Church. Thus, the Ecumenical Patriarch could not risk losing his primacy and influence in the Synod because of the participation of the Moscow Patriarchate.

After a hundred years of preparation, the Holy and Great Council began on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016 on the island of Crete and lasted until 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016. The main issues dealt with during the Holy and Great Council were:<sup>19</sup>

- Unity of the Orthodox Church and the Confession of Faith
- The importance of inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue
- Secularisation
- Marriage
- Natural sciences, technology, and the environmental crisis
- Respect for fellow human beings
- Politics
- Youth and openness to the world
- Orthodox Diaspora

Many conservative hierarchs were outraged that the rules of the Synod required the participation of those hierarchs who were specialists in the issues on the Synod's agenda. As a result, many bishops withdrew and no longer wished to participate, citing the fact that during the Ecumenical Synods, the hierarchs relied on grace and not only on science<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Gheorghiu Ciocoi, *Ortodoxie și schismă*, Lumea Credenței, București, 2019, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> For more details see: „Sfântul și Marele Sinod | Documente sinteză”, *Basilica.ro*, <https://basilica.ro/sfantul-si-marele-sinod-documente-sinteza/>, accessed at 22.03.2024.

<sup>20</sup> Gheorghiu Ciocoi, *Ortodoxie și schismă*, p. 64.

### **Problem of Orthodox Diaspora**

In the following, we would like to highlight those synodal decisions which are related to the issue of the organization of the Eastern Orthodox Diaspora.

In the present context, the Ecumenical Patriarchate enjoys an honorary primacy based on the primitive diptychs in which it occupies the first position. Because of its status as Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Church of Constantinople has historically held that neutral territories around the world ("oikumene") should be under its direct obedience and protection. This canonical interpretation is also supported by the Church of Greece, the Church of Cyprus, the Church of Alexandria, and the Church of Jerusalem<sup>21</sup>. However, the order of the diptychs remains a problem that needs to be resolved by the Church.

Although the Diaspora problem was on the agenda of the Holy and Great Council of Crete, it is still waiting to be resolved without delay. This is also noted in Article 1, paragraph „a" of the document: "It is affirmed that it is the common will of all the Most Holy Orthodox Churches that the question of the Orthodox Diaspora is resolved as soon as possible and that it be organized in accordance with Orthodox ecclesiology and the canonical practice and tradition of the Orthodox Church"<sup>22</sup>. There is no unanimous consensus on this desideratum, we believe, for at least three reasons :

1. Not all autocephalous Churches took part in the work of the Holy Synod.
2. The complexity and magnitude of the conflict surrounding this problem.
3. The dissension between the Russian Patriarchate (which includes more than 40% of the Eastern Orthodox Church) and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

However, the members of the Holy Synod approved the functioning of the Episcopal Assemblies as a decision-making and organisational forum at the level of the neutral territories. The synodal document on the diaspora problem contains seven articles on the episcopal assemblies and the diaspora problem, which in turn contain several sub-articles, as well as a regulation on the functioning of these assemblies, which consists of 13 articles divided into several paragraphs.

The synodalists also affirmed the impossibility of canonically organizing the Orthodox diaspora solely on the basis of historical and pastoral criteria, more precisely by the fact that there is only one bishop in a diocese/archdiocese<sup>23</sup>. Thus, the participants agreed to maintain the model set out at the 4th Presynodal Conference in Chambesy, specifically the functioning of episcopal

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<sup>21</sup> Ioannis Zizioulas, "Orthodox Diaspora: Facing a Canonical Anomaly", p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> "Sfântul și Marele Sinod: Diaspora Ortodoxă (document oficial)", *Basilica.ro*, <https://basilica.ro/sfantul-si-marele-sinod-diaspora-ortodoxa-document-oficial/>, accessed at 22.03.2023.

<sup>23</sup> Patriciu Vlaicu, "Canoanele Sinoadelor Ecumenice. Nomocanon", <https://nomocanon.com/canoanele-sinoadelor-ecumenice/>, accessed at 22.03.2023.

assemblies on the territory of the diaspora. The existence of several bishoprics in a city in our times is nothing other than an iconomic act. Normality at the canonical-ecclesial level would consist in abolishing the notion of a neutral territory, *i.e.* the Eastern Orthodox diaspora, and in consolidating the local Churches in the mission territories that currently exist. Mono-episcopacy at the organizational level is a problem without a solution at least for the moment. This is due to the multi-ethnic population residing in the diaspora area. Father Vlaicu Patriciu gives as an example the territory of Latin America: "If in Latin America there were in one region a single bishop, a member of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and Orthodox believers of different origins, to be integrated into the Serbian Church, would this be canonical normality? Certainly not. Canonical normality is when the people of a region are organized in a local Church and consider themselves first and foremost Orthodox, and the local bishop fully assumes canonical responsibility without being integrated into a jurisdiction thousands of miles away"<sup>24</sup>. The absence in the synodal document of the formula "Local Church" can be categorized as an attempt by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to consolidate a certain supremacy in the Diaspora area.

It was unanimously decided to create Assemblies composed of the Bishops of all the autocephalous Churches present in neutral territory, who remain subject to the canonical jurisdictions of which they are representatives. Letter "c" of article 1 regulates the tasks to be undertaken by the Episcopal Assemblies in order to maintain the best possible order at the universal ecclesial level: "The activity and responsibility of these Episcopal Assemblies is to care for the manifestation of the unity of Orthodoxy, for the development of the common action of all Orthodox in each region, for the pastoral needs of the Orthodox living in that region, for the common representation of all Orthodox in relation to other religious faiths and to the society of the region as a whole, for the cultivation of theological knowledge and ecclesial formation, etc. Decisions on these matters will be taken by consensus of the Churches represented in that Assembly"<sup>25</sup>. In this way, all the activity and breath of the Church must be directed to the service of the faithful and to the mission undertaken towards persons outside the ecclesial body for their introduction into the bosom of the Church. It is noteworthy that the Synodal Council was aware of the importance of the Diaspora, considering it as a place of witness and a meeting place between Orthodoxy and other cultures.

Also in the document entitled "Orthodox Diaspora", the territories that are part of the Orthodox Diaspora were regulated, namely: Canada; United States of America, Latin America;

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<sup>24</sup> Patriciu Vlaicu, Răzvan Perşa, *Sfântul și Marele Sinod, Eveniment Eshatologic sau normalitate Canonică?*, p. 248-289.

<sup>25</sup> The Holy and Great Council. <https://basilica.ro/documentele-oficiale-ale-sfantului-si-marelui-sinod-in-limba-romana/>, accessed at 22.03.2023.



Australia, New Zealand and Oceania; United Kingdom and Ireland; France; Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg; Austria; Italy and Malta; Switzerland and Liechtenstein; Germany; Scandinavian countries (except Finland); Spain and Portugal.

At the level of the Regulations for Episcopal Assemblies, the Synodal Members have defined the powers and duties of the Bishops and, by implication, of the Auxiliary Bishops who participate in these Assemblies. In particular, the purpose of these Assemblies is defined in the second article of the Regulations: "The purpose of the Episcopal Assembly is to manifest the unity of the Orthodox Church, to promote cooperation between the Churches in all aspects of pastoral ministry and to maintain, preserve and develop the interests of the communities dependent on the canonical Orthodox bishops of the region". The article in question shows the clear desire of the members of all autocephalous (participating) Churches and of the Church in general to strengthen the unity of the ecclesial body.

It should be noted that the presidency of this Assembly is entrusted to the Bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is not insignificant in the present context, in which the Russian Church is in conflict with the Ecumenical Patriarchate precisely because of an alleged canonical primacy that the latter abrogates by its own power<sup>26</sup>.

Articles 6-12<sup>27</sup> deal with the organisation and functioning of the Bishops' Assembly, the duty of its members, who are bishops, to meet at least once a year, and how they are to discuss, draft and adopt new decisions. Article 13 refers to the manner of dissolution, establishment or merger of an Episcopal Assembly, which is carried out by a decision of the Synod of Primate of the Autocephalous Churches, under the direct auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, at the request of the Episcopal Assembly concerned.

In the present context, when the two Patriarchates, of Moschow and of Constantinople, are in conflict, and while the Orthodox schism expands, we can not speak of a general reception of the decisions adopted by the Council of Crete. The problem of the Orthodox Diaspora will be left unresolved for a long period of time, judging by the geo-political and religious global context, especially the breaking of the eucharistical communion between the aforementioned patriarchates.

## Conclusions

It is fair to say that the Council of Crete failed to achieve its goal and even aggravated the conflict between the Patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople. With the passage of time, things

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<sup>26</sup> See also: "Αποστολική Διακονία της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος," [https://apostoliki-diakonia.gr/en\\_main/catechism/theologia\\_zoi/themata.asp?cat=hist&NF=1&main=texts&file=18\\_2.html](https://apostoliki-diakonia.gr/en_main/catechism/theologia_zoi/themata.asp?cat=hist&NF=1&main=texts&file=18_2.html), accessed at 22.03.2023.

<sup>27</sup> For more details see: "The Orthodox Diaspora - Official Documents - The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church," <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/diaspora>, accessed at 22.03.2023.

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have degenerated to the point where there is now a schism within Eastern Orthodoxy, fuelled by the unfavourable social and geopolitical context. The two sides, the Pan-Slavs on the one hand and the ethnophilosophists on the other, continue to damage the life of the Church out of a desire for power, financial gain and dominance in the Eastern Orthodox world. The power struggle seems to have corrupted some spheres of influence in the Church. Because of this, the clergy began to be subservient to politics and no longer followed the principles, values and ordinances of the Church. We believe that it is more than necessary to stop the armed conflicts and the disputes in the ecclesial environment everywhere and to resume the dialogue in order to restore the balance and the reign of peace in the whole world.