Hospitality vs identity: the European alternative on the background of migration conflicts

Abstract: Intensification of migration processes in modern Europe has led to numerous clashes of identities both in interpersonal and in general cultural dimension provoking intellectual and social conflicts around cultural differences between “us” and “them”, between “natives” and “foreigners”, between “masters” and “guests” and actualizing the problem of accepting the Other, rethinking the idea of hospitality as a social practice and as an expression of charity. Considering the fact that the history of the Christian church and vicissitudes of spiritual and moral search demonstrate unique experience of the idea of hospitality transformation, particularly in non-equilibrium states of culture, and trying to find mechanisms to solve modern problems in cultural history, we will make an attempt to understand the causes and consequences of the identity crisis of Western Christian Church in the Middle Ages, which culminated in separation of hospitality and charity. It seems that now, as almost a millennium ago, the outburst of migration and provoked by it massive violations of both the Master Code and Guest Code once again actualize the alternative – hospitality in a set of social forms or identity? Only the scale is different and with it is the “price tag”: if previously the identity of Western Christian Church was meant, then today it is the identity of Western Christian culture. Thousands of years ago, separating hospitality and charity, the church declined only hospitality as a social stereotype that threatened its identity, but preserved the idea of hospitality as a way to exercise charity – for those who are really in need of charity, and not for those who claim to it violently and demand it. Which way does modern Europe follow? With no doubt, it gets to choose.

Keywords: identity, hospitality, charity, Guest–Master, Christian ethics, European Christian culture, migration crisis.
Identity today, as it always happens in times of crisis in development of cultures, appears to be an extremely acute problem on whose solution – both by single individuals and by local and global communities – self-awareness of culture depends – D. Kellner, in particular, writes about it in detail [Kellner, 1992], emphasizing the emergence of new forms of identity and warning that under the conditions of a “game of free choice” and transformation of self-identity into “a theatrical performance of the self” a complete loss of control over the process is quite possible. First, we emphasize, the control from the side of culture that strives to maintain authenticity. Quite a natural consequence of the identities collision seems to be numerous intellectual and social conflicts that arise in European countries (in particular and first of all – on the problems of immigration), systematically focusing on cultural differences between “us” and “them”, between “natives” and “foreigners”, between “masters” and “guests”. The problem of the Alien, as shown by B. Waldenfels [Val’denfel’s, 2002, p. 4–21], without being the basic concept of classical philosophy is already manifested in ancient philosophy (Plato, Aristotle), modern philosophy (J.-J. Rousseau, Kant), – the Alien “remains tamed “until the Native and Alien occupy their rightful place in the world order. Correspondingly, actualizing of the Alien correlates with those cultural conditions when the space of human existence is collapsing: in such periods the Alien just-in-time worries us because of the need to determine a new configuration of the world order on the axis of “Friend or Foe” and to develop new criteria for identity and strategy for relations with the Alien while rethinking “the very essence of otherness, difference, acceptance and rejection” under new cultural contexts [Dovgopolova, 2008, p. 4].

In recent years, migration crisis in European countries has become unusually acute – the most acute, according to the European Commission, for the entire postwar period. The number of refugees and illegal migrants who arrived in Europe just across the Mediterranean is estimated hundreds of thousands, with thousands of them having died or being missing. The media channels are full of extremely conflicting information ranging from numerous records of happy and hospitable invitations made by individual citizens, politicians, states and the European Union as a whole to the disclosure of the updating list issued by the Schengen zone countries which have introduced partial or even full-scale passport control on their borders, to the statements of politicians claiming that humanitarian possibilities
of receiving migrant flows are at their height and that the police methods are required to stop them, and to the multiple indignant claims of “ordinary” citizens about the wide-scale disregard of the European cultural and religious traditions by migrants, their violation of the Guest code. Hence, cultural relativity in situations of mass “approach to the lived-in space of what is different from it” [Dovgopolova, 2008, p. 4] acts as a factor that blocks hospitality [Zenkin, 2004, p. 88–89]. Amidst the many expressive messages somehow quietly, casually and without excessive pathos sounded the message on 6 September, 2015, that Pope Francis in his traditional Sunday sermon in St. Peter’s Square in Rome urged Catholics, monasteries and churches of the European countries to shelter those who “flee from death, war and hunger”: “Parishes, communities, monasteries and churches of Europe – everyone should give shelter to refugee families...”, said Francis referring to all the bishops of Europe to support this appeal.

In general, the problem of migrants is not a new one to Europe, as well as its philosophical problematization rooted in Kant’s project of perpetual peace within the planetary scale, where the insistence on non-alien relation to a foreigner is specified in the right to pay a visit, but not in the right to permanent residence. Over the last several decades, in the face of increase in the number of migrants, the problem has moved to the epicenter of intellectual debate. Being verbalized in one form or another, the issue of “the right to pay a visit” and, moreover, “the right to common ownership of the earth’s surface” (Kant) has found itself among the most pressing issues of practical politics, ideology and law, and it also serves as a more or less clear conceptual background for any modern European reflection on hospitality (E. Balibar, M. Gai-Nykodymov, J. Derrida, J. Kristeva, E. Levinas, A. Montandon, R. Scherer et al.), which, according to E. Levinas, is nothing but subjectivity with the ability to accept the Other [Levinas, 2000, p. 70]. Considering the evident socio-political accents of the European philosophy of accepting the Other, the call of Pope Francis to hospitality as charity reminded us of at least two things: firstly, the “relations with the Other directly determine ethics” (E. Levinas), and therefore, the delineated range of problems requires, first of all, ethical and philosophical reflection, including the categories of Christian ethics; secondly, hospitality is not just a stable social and political practice of modern multicultural Europe, it is the long-standing requirement of the divine law that is sanctified by century-old practice of the church. Hence, the history of the Christian church and peripeteia of the spiritual and moral searches prove the unique experience
of the idea of hospitality transformations, in particular in non-equilibrium states of culture. In view of this, trying to find mechanisms to solve modern problems in cultural history, let us make an attempt to understand the causes of identity crisis in Western Christian Church in the Middle Ages, which finished according to A. Montandon’s apt remark, by separation of hospitality and charity.

**Hospitality as a manifestation of Christian love of the neighbor: the experience of Western Christian Church**

Hospitality, elevated to the rank of Christian love of the neighbor in apostolic epistles (1 Pt 4.9; 1 Timothy 3.2; Titus 1.8; Rom 12.13; Heb 13 etal.), appears in the period of the Early Church to be an essential part of Christian moral teaching. In particular, St. Clement of Rome in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians (mid 90ies of I century A.D.) mentions the virtue of hospitality immediately after piety (Clem. Rom. Ep. I ad Cor. 1); the “Shepherd” of Hermas (mid II century A.D.) emphasizes that a Christian must be hospitable, “since hospitality is itself a good thing” (Herma. Pastor. II 8), and distinguishes hospitable bishops: “they are respected by God and are among angels if abide to the end in serving the Lord” (Ib. III 9.27). The Christian philosopher, apologist and preacher of the Holy Scripture Clement of Alexandria introduces the term “philotechnia” (φιλοτεχνία– love of art, skill, mastery), speaking of hospitality as of art to care of travellers’ benefit (Str. 2 IX 41.5). The virtue of hospitality has become one of the most important factors of the spread of Christianity in Europe. On the other hand, the spread of Christianity and emergence of the monasteries contributed to hospitality development, increasing the number of inns for pilgrims, lay people and visitors and crystallizing principles and rules of hospitality in the mainstream of Christian tradition – let us at least compare teaching and experience of hospitality done by Anthony of Egypt, the “father of all monks”, Pachomius the Great, the founder of the first monastery, bishop of Caesarea Basil the Great and other fathers of the church. But since the proliferation of monasteries (IV century A.D.) – first in Italy and then in the whole West – the practice of creating shelters for travellers (xenodochium) at them and at the Episcopal chairs became widespread, forming eventually a system of infirmaries as independent charitable institutions that provided
free shelter and a meal for Christian travellers, also for the needy and poor, to whom strangers deprived of protection and help were equal.

Later, church hospitality in the West developed under decisive influence of the Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia which was written in the tradition of Western asceticism – “Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ” (Reg. Ben. 53, 61); the same attitude was recommended for sick brothers (Reg. Ben. 36). “The rule of monastic life,” according to K. Ivanov, is the best source to get acquainted with the spirit of Western monasticism, at the same time it reveals our inner beliefs, the soul of the legislator himself: “It is as if a mirror which fully reflects the soul of St. Benedict; so, the rays of the charity light which are reflected and multiplied by the transparent and moving water surface become more accessible to spectators’ sight” [Ivanov, 1915, p. 31–33.]. The main vitality “secret” of the basic tenets of the Rule of St. Benedict researchers (including representatives of the Eastern branch of the Christian church that commemorates Benedict as Reverend) find his balance and harmony: in the Rule one feels “the force that organizes, disciplines and arranges everything decently [Sidorov, 1998, p. 349]; Benedict managed to combine the ideals of the East with the features of the Western life and culture, he gave grounds for the “monastic service”, happily avoiding, on one hand, unfeasible and, on the other hand, humiliation of the ideal.

The Rule organically combined the two trends in monasticism: asceticism of Egyptian monastic tradition (through the ideas of St. John Cassian the Roman and the Statute “Regula Magistri”) and the experience of coenobite life embodied in the teachings of St. Augustine. The spiritual foundation of the monastic rule written by St. Benedict of Nursia was the motto “Ora et labora” (“Pray and work”) – this principle, we recall, was defended by St. Augustine in his moral and ascetic works. This formula is the center of Benedictine monks’ spiritual life who in their work seek to combine together a contemplative prayer and physical labour, while the monastic rules derived from it meet historical and cultural conditions of the Christian West: it is more active and less contemplative than in the East type of monasticism, in particular through the practical embodiment of the virtue of hospitality that ensured a continuous dialogue with the world. Without denying specific details to arrange monastery hospitality St. Benedict emphasized both its supernatural nature and insisted, in view of this, on the hospitality of universal and equal for all Christians, without considering any social differentiation. In the Rule of St. Benedict the reception of a guest is seen as an extraordinary event (Reg. Ben.53): Abbot together with brothers come
out to meet a guest, doing a prayer, giving a kiss of peace and falling prostrate before him; after another prayer and divine readings a meal follows (Abbot is permitted to break fasting for the guests, but not the monks); immediately after the meeting or before going to bed in the presence of the entire monastery Abbot solemnly washes the guest’s hands and feet; two brothers are in charge of cooking for the guests, and the third is responsible for providing a guest house with plenty of beds for all newcomers with no exception. However, as Ivan Dubrovsky says [Dubrovsky, 2003], neither at that time nor later there were any stable personal relationships that were inherent to archaic hospitality.

However, the history of hospitality shows not only a positive experience, but also a negative one: cases of refusal in hospitality or insufficiently diligent implementation of its laws that always and everywhere was the subject of condemnation (let us recall – even the Messiah on his coming to our world finds no hospitality: Holy Mother “laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2.7)), and also cases of hospitality misuse, – an analysis of such experience is extremely important in the context of the objectives put forward by our study. Obviously, due to the facts of non-compliance with the Guest code and desire of the church not to promote idleness it is already “Didache” (I century A.D.) while instructing “Let everyone that cometh in the name of the Lord be received” still warns: “… but he will not remain with you more than two or three days, unless there be a necessity. But if he wish to settle with you, being a craftsman, let him work, and so eat. But if he know not any craft, provide ye according to you own discretion, that a Christian may not live idle among you <italicized by the author – MB>. But if he be not willing to do so, he is a trafficker in Christ. From such keep aloof” (Didache 12.1, 2–5). Such a requirement to a guest – after two days on the third one to work along with the monks – is contained in the already mentioned here anonymous monastic rule and, to some extent, ascetic treatise which was created by an unknown superior of a small monastic community near Rome in the early VI century and which is also known as “Regula Magistri” (“Rule of the Master”). This Rule, which is primarily known as one of the most important Western sources for the Rule of St. Benedict, contains among its practical recommendations of hospitality such one: the guest is to be overseen and locked overnight, so that nothing is stolen.

Although in early Middle Ages church hospitality was developing in the West, as it has already been emphasized, mainly in the Benedictine tradition,
it is already in the Carolingian era that it gradually became differentiated and selective with time, and in the middle of the XII century Abbot of Cluny Peter the Venerable (Petrus Venerabilis) formulated the thesis of *congruus honor* (“due honor”). And soon, since the middle of the XIII century one can talk about gradual closure of the institutions of the church (especially monastic) hospitality: infirmaries acquired narrow specialization, turning into hospitals and almshouses, gradually moving under control of civil authorities, and during the late Middle Ages they were primarily acting as communal shelters for beggars, sick and abandoned children” [Dubrovsky, 2003]. In fact, there began a process that A. Montandon surprisingly accurately characterized as “separation of hospitality and charity” [Montandon, 2004, p. 65].

**The conflict of hospitality and identity**

So what contributed to these transformations (actually – to decline) of the church hospitality in Europe. First of all, one should not forget that socio-cultural context of life of Western monasticism, in which St.Benedict so successfully “inscribed” the monastery rule was not permanent – and the nature of these changes was brilliantly illustrated by a French medievalist Georges Duby: “The whole space is speckled by weaved tracks of the movement of people. Everybody travels: pilgrims and retail merchants, adventurers, itinerant workers, vagrants” [Duby, 1994, p. 11]. As far back as the first quarter of the IV century, actually since the time monasteries spread in the West, the first evidences of wandering monks’ existence appear,– claims L. Karsavin, referring to St.Augustine: “under monk clothes a lot of hypocrites are wandering about provinces, they have not been sent anywhere, they do not stay anywhere, they do not settle anywhere” and deceive people demanding “payment of imaginary holiness” [Karsavin, 1992, p. 51]. And in VIII–XI centuries, long before the mendicant orders, “strange monks” widely began to travel the roads of Western Europe, they did not have permanent parishes or willfully left the monasteries and lived in the transitions from one cell to another. Having immunity from secular court, avoiding taxes, having an opportunity anytime, without any work, to live in a number of monasteries, providing hospitality to “brothers”– all these things caused excessive multiplication of such “monks”. And since the existence of a wandering monk was contradictio in adjecto, and his status, until the
recognition of the Franciscans, was quite uncertain, then the real clerics naturally mixed with imaginary ones—simply tramps who had a benefit of pretending clergymen to avoid court, duties and taxes [Dorofeev, 1997].

Extremely wide was the range of motives that took clerics from their habitual places (in fact, the application of the notion of habitual to the medieval man is quite conventional) and out to the endless roads— from protest grounds of Circumcellions (Lat. circumcelliones—those that roam around cells) in IV–V centuries till the spread of courtly lyrical worldview and lifestyle by goliards (vaganles—wandering clerics), trouveurs, minnesingers in the era of the High Middle Ages (XI–XII centuries). Let us add to all of these “fashion” for entertainment, heroic deeds, everything new and weird among the secular elite, mass pilgrimage among the poor who could expect shelter, refuge and a piece of bread only in monasteries, the wretched, the sick, the unemployed and idlers pushed off to the highway, formation of the merchant class—the craft that is “unwanted by God” (John Chrysostom), and multiplying the number of itinerant musicians, mimes, actors and jugglers, who, according to the opinion of the Franciscan preacher Berthold of Regensburg ought to be attributed to the “devil’s family” and whose souls are doomed to death and removed from the family of Christ— together with the Jews. So, one should not be surprised at an unknown abbot’s words that are mentioned in one of the IX century comments: “If St. Benedict were here now, by God, he would give orders to close the gates!” [Dubrovsky, 2003].

However, attempts to explain transformations of the Institute of Church Hospitality only by the scale of movement and facts of hospitality misuse would look naive, as far as in the mind of a Christian monk it does not negate his sacred duties—the duty of hospitality and that of converting to God those who lost their way, since the true disciple of Christ is to be “an apostle of the gospel of the kingdom of God”. First, Western Church early enough—before it happened in the East— took vigorous measures to eliminate suspicious types of monasticism and its isolation from the world. In particular, the Council of Arles in 443 and 452 and the Council of Tours in 461 forbade return monks to the world; The Council of Vannes in 465 forbade monks to move without the Episcopal permission [Karsavin, 1992, p. 51] and so on. Western Church responded to the “quantitative” wandering challenges by increasing the number of infirmaries and reducing the limits of provided hospitality to required (possible) minimum. As far back as X–XI centuries, Europe was literally covered with a network of
infirmaries – beginning with the basic ways of pilgrims in Italy and Spain and gradually extending northward to become reality of almost all towns and numerous villages of the West in XIII–XIV centuries. Still, concern about the traveller was determined by the laws of Christian hospitality: guides and people who were intentionally appointed to seek out the poor on the outskirts of the monasteries helped them to find an infirmary; in case the flow of pilgrims was not excessive, the monks, according to ancient Christian tradition and the prescription of the Rule of St. Benedict, wash hands and feet of their guests. Desire to show hospitality to as many travellers as possible and at the same time to guard themselves against abuses determined the reduction, if necessary, of time spent in the Guest status for one night and the food supply for pilgrims was just enough so they would not die of hunger. At the same time one could always find spiritual help and make a will in the infirmary [Dubrovsky, 2003].

However, let us remember again the spiritual basis of the Benedictine monastic rule – “ora et labora”. So where – the question arises – under such conditions can one find the time and opportunity for “ora”? “Who is blessed?” – once Origen asked and replied: “The one who avoids the world to give all oneself to the Lord”, – that is the purpose a man comes first with to the monastic community. Let us once again refer to the clarification of already mentioned here Peter the Venerable, the Abbot of Cluny. Note, that we are talking about an extraordinary personality in the history of Western monasticism: it was at the times of the superiors Peter the Venerable and his predecessor Hugh of Cluny that the abbey flourished, the congregation moved beyond modern France, and the total number of Cluny’s monasteries reached two thousand. At this, the monastery enjoyed enormous prestige in society as the one where rigor and obedience reigned in inner life, while charity and hospitality – in the outer. So, Abbot of Cluny, responding to the Cistercian head Bernard of Clairvaux, who blamed Cluny’s monkhood for diverging the original Benedictine model of hospitality (recall the thesis of congruus honor – due honor), gives reasons for introducing a less formal model of hospitality by a desire to accept and accommodate all or many without destroying the inner life of the monastery [italicized by the author – MB] [Dubrovsky, 2003]. This formulation seems extremely important to us as for understanding the worldview grounds for further transformations of the Institute of Church Hospitality: in fact, very acute contradictions became ripe between the practice of broad monastic hospitality and understanding of life in the monastery as a rejection of the world and serving God. To
support the further balance between “ora” and “labora” was already impossible; a frank and, as further experience proved, irreversible bias towards “socialization” of the monastery became obvious – and therefore, there was a threat of identity. Due to this, quite natural seems to be both the monastic reform that was leading to the collapse of the church hospitality, and – since the XIII century – abandoning even limited forms of hospitality by a number of monasteries in an effort to preserve identity.

**Conclusion**

It has long been clear that even culturally (not only socially and politically!) conscious part of the population in European countries is prepared to put up with wide presence and even considerable influence of numerous groups of “foreigners” on its territory – however, only on condition that they will integrate into the cultural environment of the native people, share their customs, values and tastes. If until recently the conflict was centred mainly around the closed cultural communities that carefully avoided integration (even at the primary level – learning the language), then now they openly claim to form a new European identity. It seems that European culture finally began to realize that it destroys itself as a Christian culture (and despite all secularization trends European culture still remains Christian), erasing boundaries of hospitality, uncontrollably and undoubtedly inviting to its own home those ones who are not inclined to either follow the Guest code and consider the traditions of European cultures and their carriers, or even acknowledge the Guest status, by all means claiming to be the new Master and – let us add – having quite good reasons and prospects for that, taking into account real indicators of ethno-cultural and religious dynamics of the population.

“Europe should not be afraid of refugees who need assistance and protection, because this year just 0.11% of the total population of the European Union has arrived”, tried to reassure the European President of the EC J.-C. Juncker, making a keynote speech on the state of the EU in the European Parliament on 9 September last year. However, J.-C. Juncker did not mention what percentage of the European population comprises immigrants of the first and second generations who permanently reside in Europe, have citizenship of European countries or are preparing to get it, and what is the ratio and dynamics of legal and illegal migrants. He said nothing about
the self-identity of these segments of the population, difficulty of their integration in European cultures, establishment of some national migrant neighborhoods, villages or even towns in different European countries, getting to which a person finds himself in a completely different world, which is European only geographically.

It seems that now, as almost a millennium ago, the outburst of migration processes and caused by it massive violations both of the Master Code and Guest Code again actualize the alternative – *hospitality in a set social form or identity*. Only the scale is different, and with it is the “price tag”: if previously the identity of Western Christian Church was meant, then today it is the identity of Western Christian culture. Thousands of years ago, separating hospitality and charity, the Church declined only hospitality as a social stereotype that threatened its identity, but it did not decline (and the Pope again reminded of it) hospitality as a way to exercise charity – for those who are really in need of charity, and not for those who claim to it violently and demand it. Which way does modern Europe do? Out of doubt, it gets to choose.

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