The term ‘identity’ that comes from the Latin word ‘idem,’ meaning sameness, has a long tradition in both philosophy as well as modern psychology. In Plato’s usage, the word ‘tauton’ “had two basic meanings, one being sameness, and the other being distinctiveness.” The father of the modern concept of identity and humanist psychologist, Erik Eriksson, uses the word as a reply of the individual to the changes of cultural and social situations as a continuity. In spite of changes within the life cycle, personhood remains constant. It seems that in the concept of identity, sameness and continuity stand versus change and social history. Modern social sciences differentiate between personal so called I-identity, and group identities. However, the social role of a person cannot be separated from his or her personal identity. In biblical times, corporate identity prevailed over personal identity. The Ten Commandments are written in a personal form, but it is vital to note that its addressee is the covenant person because individual independence within a group was unknown.

Applying these rules to Christian identity, a clear conclusion can be reached. The individual is baptized in the church, which is the body of Christ. In regards to sameness, continuity, and change, one must state that only Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8); Christians were not the same in the past, and they are not the same today, so one may state that they will not be the same in the future. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology reflected on this problem by emphasizing apostolic succession, although they

interpreted it in various ways. The Roman Catholic answer seems to be more simplistic in that Catholic tradition calls for a continuous chain of bishops. This brings about the oneness of the Holy Catholic Church, which includes her past, present, and future. The Protestant answer is more complex in its way of dealing with the content of the apostolic faith. Yet, there is a basic conviction in the ecumenical movement that this apostolic faith could be defined to say “the church is called upon to proclaim the same faith freshly and relevantly in each generation and every place.”

But even at this point, strong criticism arose in theology concerning the proclamation of the same apostolic faith in our time. Already in the early seventies, Jürgen Moltmann spoke of the double crises of the church and theology: he called them the relevance crisis and the identity crisis. The first refers to the idea that the church cannot reach contemporary people, while the other implies that there is no common agreement on what the Christian church really is. In following this judgment, one may conclude that Christian identity would be equal to the identity of the church. Since there is a diverse understanding of what makes a community the church of Christ, we can speak of the identity crises of Christianity as a whole.

**Identity as Relatedness**

Not denying the truth of the above statement, one must add that neither individual nor social aspects of sameness and distinctiveness are static. It is rather a dynamic interaction in time and space. An individual usually becomes aware of his or her identity when it is challenged or threatened by others, or as they become a reflection through a ‘social mirror’ from the outside. This can be seen at the very beginning of Christianity. The word ‘Christian’ is mentioned first in Acts 11:26. Some think that it was a ‘nickname’ given by the populace

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