

Excerpts from the Orthodox Church

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Part II: Faith and Worship

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Holy Tradition: The Source of the Orthodox Faith

“Guard the deposit” (1 Tim. 6:20).

The inner meaning of tradition

Orthodox history is marked outwardly by a series of sudden breaks: the capture of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem by Arab Mohammedans; the burning of Kiev by the Mongols; the two sacks of Constantinople; the October Revolution in Russia. Yet these events, while they have transformed the external appearance of the Orthodox world, have never broken the inward continuity of the Orthodox Church. The thing that first strikes a stranger on encountering Orthodoxy is usually its air of antiquity, its apparent changelessness. He finds that Orthodox still baptize by threefold immersion, as in the primitive Church; they still bring babies and small children to receive Holy Communion; in the Liturgy the deacon still cries out: ‘The doors! The doors!’ — recalling the early days when the church’s entrance was jealously guarded, and none but members of the Christian family could attend the family worship; the Creed is still recited without any additions.

These are but a few outward examples of something which pervades every aspect of Orthodox life. Recently when two Orthodox scholars were asked to summarize the distinctive characteristic of their Church, they both pointed to the same thing: its changelessness, its determination

to remain loyal to the past, its sense of *living continuity* with the Church of ancient times (See Panagiotis Bratsiotis and Georges Florovsky, in *Orthodoxy, A Faith and Order Dialogue*, Geneva, 1960). Two and a half centuries before, the Eastern Patriarchs said exactly the same to the Non-Jurors:

“We preserve the Doctrine of the Lord uncorrupted, and firmly adhere to the Faith he delivered to us, and keep it free from blemish and diminution, as a Royal Treasure, and a monument of great price, *neither adding any thing, nor taking any thing from it*” (Letter of 1718, in G. Williams, *The Orthodox Church of the East at the Eighteenth Century*, p. 17).

This idea of living continuity is summed up for the Orthodox in the one word Tradition. ‘We do not change the everlasting boundaries which our fathers have set,’ wrote John of Damascus, ‘but we keep the Tradition, just as we received it’ (*On Icons*, II, 12 (P. G. XCIV, 1297B).

Orthodox are always talking about Tradition. What do they mean by the word? A tradition, says the Oxford Dictionary, is an opinion, belief, or custom handed down from ancestors to posterity. Christian Tradition, in that case, is the faith which Jesus Christ imparted to the Apostles, and which since the Apostles’ time has been handed down from generation to generation in the Church (Compare Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3). But to an Orthodox Christian, Tradition means something more concrete and specific than this. It means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers; it means the Canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons — in fact, the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages. The Orthodox Christian of today sees himself as heir and guardian to a great inheritance received from the past, and he believes that it is his duty to transmit this inheritance unimpaired to the future.

Note that the Bible forms a part of Tradition. Sometimes Tradition is defined as ‘the oral teaching of Christ, not recorded in writing by his immediate disciples’ (Oxford Dictionary). Not only non-Orthodox but many Orthodox writers have adopted this way of speaking, treating Scripture and Tradition as two different things, two distinct sources of the Christian faith. But in reality there is only one source, since Scripture exists *within* Tradition. To separate and contrast the two is to impoverish the idea of both alike.

Orthodox, while reverencing this inheritance from the past, are also well aware that not everything received from the past is of equal value. Among the various elements of Tradition, a unique pre-eminence belongs to the Bible, to the Creed, to the doctrinal definitions of the Ecumenical Councils: these things the Orthodox accept as something absolute and unchanging, something which cannot be cancelled or revised. The other parts of Tradition do not have quite the same authority. The decrees of Jassy or Jerusalem do not stand on the same level as the Nicene Creed, nor do the writings of an Athanasius, or a Symeon the New Theologian, occupy the same position as the Gospel of Saint John.

Not everything received from the past is of equal value, nor is everything received from the past necessarily true. As one of the bishops remarked at the Council of Carthage in 257: ‘The Lord said, “I am truth.” He did not say, I am custom’ (*The Opinions of the Bishops On the Baptizing of Heretics*, 30). There is a difference between ‘Tradition’ and ‘traditions:’ many traditions which the past has handed down are human and accidental — pious opinions (or worse), but not a true part of the one Tradition, the essential Christian message.

It is necessary to question the past. In Byzantine and post-Byzantine times, Orthodox have not always been sufficiently critical in their attitude to the past, and the result has frequently been stagnation. Today this uncritical attitude can no longer be maintained. Higher standards, of scholarship, increasing contacts with western Christians, the inroads of secularism and atheism,

have forced Orthodox in this present century to look more closely at their inheritance and to distinguish more carefully between Tradition and traditions. The task of discrimination is not always easy. It is necessary to avoid alike the error of the Old Believers and the error of the 'Living Church:' the one party fell into an extreme conservatism which suffered no change whatever in traditions, the other into a Modernism or theological liberalism which undermined Tradition. Yet despite certain manifest handicaps, the Orthodox of today are perhaps in a better position to discriminate aright than their predecessors have been for many centuries; and often it is precisely their contact with the west which is helping them to see more and more clearly what is essential in their own inheritance.

True Orthodox fidelity to the past must always be a *creative* fidelity; for true Orthodoxy can never rest satisfied with a barren 'theology of repetition,' which, parrot-like, repeats accepted formulae without striving to understand what lies behind them. Loyalty to Tradition, properly understood, is not something mechanical, a dull process of handing down what has been received. An Orthodox thinker must see Tradition *from within*, he must enter into its inner spirit. In order to live within Tradition, it is not enough simply to give intellectual assent to a system of doctrine; for Tradition is far more than a set of abstract propositions — it is a life, a personal encounter with Christ in the Holy Spirit. Tradition is not only kept by the Church — it lives in the Church, it is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The Orthodox conception of Tradition is not static but dynamic, not a dead acceptance of the past but a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the present. Tradition, while inwardly changeless (for God does not change), is constantly assuming new forms, which supplement the old without superseding them. Orthodox often speak as if the period of doctrinal formulation were wholly at an end, yet this is not the case. Perhaps in our own day new Ecumenical Councils will meet, and Tradition will be enriched by fresh statements of the faith.

This idea of Tradition as a living thing has been well expressed by Georges Florovsky: 'Tradition is the witness of the Spirit; the Spirit's unceasing revelation and preaching of good tidings To accept and understand Tradition we must live within the Church, we must be conscious of the grace-giving presence of the Lord in it; we must feel the breath of the Holy Ghost in it . . . Tradition is not only a protective, conservative principle; it is, primarily, the principle of growth and regeneration . . . Tradition is the constant abiding of the Spirit and not only the memory of words ('Sobornost: the Catholicity of the Church,' in *The Church of God*, edited E. L. Mascall, pp. 64-65. Compare G. Florovsky, 'Saint Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers in the periodical *Sobornost*, series 4, no. 4, 1961, pp. 165-76; and V. Lossky, 'Tradition and Traditions,' in Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, pp. 13-24. To both these essays I am heavily indebted).

Tradition is the witness of the Spirit: in the words of Christ, "When the Spirit of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). It is this divine promise that forms the basis of the Orthodox devotion to Tradition.

The outward forms

Let us take in turn the different outward forms in which Tradition is expressed:

1. The Bible

a) *The Bible and the Church.* The Christian Church is a Scriptural Church: Orthodoxy believes this just as firmly, if not more firmly than Protestantism. The Bible is the supreme expression of God's revelation to man, and Christians must always be 'People of the Book.' But if Christians are People of the Book, the Bible is the Book of the People; it must not be regarded as something set up over the Church, but as something that lives and is understood within the Church (that is why one should not separate Scripture and Tradition). It is from the Church that

the Bible ultimately derives its authority, for it was the Church which originally decided which books form a part of Holy Scripture; and it is the Church alone which can interpret Holy Scripture with authority. There are many sayings in the Bible which by themselves are far from clear, and the individual reader, however sincere, is in danger of error if he trusts his own personal interpretation. “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch; and the eunuch replied: “*How can I, unless someone guides me?*” (Acts 8:30). Orthodox, when they read the Scripture, accept the guidance of the Church. When received into the Orthodox Church, a convert promises: ‘I will accept and understand Holy Scripture in accordance with the interpretation which was and is held by the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church of the East, our Mother’ (On Bible and Church, see especially Dositheus, *Confession*, Decree 2).

b) *The Text of the Bible: Biblical Criticism.* The Orthodox Church has the same New Testament as the rest of Christendom. As its authoritative text for the Old Testament, it uses the ancient Greek translation known as the Septuagint. When this differs from the original Hebrew (which happens quite often), Orthodox believe that the changes in the Septuagint were made under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are to be accepted as part of God’s continuing revelation. The best known instance is Isaiah 6:14 — where the Hebrew says ‘A *young woman* shall conceive and bear a son,’ which the Septuagint translates ‘A *virgin* shall conceive,’ etc. The New Testament follows the Septuagint text (Matthew 1:23).

The Hebrew version of the Old Testament contains thirty-nine books. The Septuagint contains in addition ten further books, not present in the Hebrew, which are known in the Orthodox Church as the ‘Deutero-Canonical Books’ (3 Esdras; Tobit; Judith; 1, 2, and 3 Maccabees; Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus; Baruch; Letter of Jeremias. In the west these books are often called the ‘Apocrypha’). These were declared by the Councils of Jassy (1642) and Jerusalem (1672) to be ‘genuine parts of Scripture;’ most Orthodox scholars at the present day, however, following the opinion of Athanasius and Jerome, consider that the Deutero-Canonical Books, although part of the Bible, stand on a lower footing than the rest of the Old Testament.

Christianity, if true, has nothing to fear from honest inquiry. Orthodoxy, while regarding the Church as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture, does not forbid the critical and historical study of the Bible, although hitherto Orthodox scholars have not been prominent in this field.

c) *The Bible in worship.* It is sometimes thought that Orthodox attach less importance than western Christians to the Bible. Yet in fact Holy Scripture is read constantly at Orthodox services: during the course of Matins and Vespers the entire Psalter is recited each week, and in Lent twice a week (Such is the rule laid down by the service books. In practice, in ordinary parish churches Matins and Vespers are not recited daily, but only at weekends and on feasts; and even then, unfortunately, the portions appointed from the Psalter are often abbreviated or (worse still) omitted entirely). Old Testament lessons (usually three in number) occur at Vespers on the eves of many feasts; the reading of the Gospel forms the climax of Matins on Sundays and feasts; at the Liturgy a special Epistle and Gospel are assigned for each day of the year, so that the whole New Testament (except the Revelation of Saint John) is read at the Eucharist. The *Nunc Dimittis* is used at Vespers; Old Testament canticles, with the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*, are sung at Matins; the Lord’s Prayer is read at every service. Besides these specific extracts from Scripture, the whole text of each service is shot through with Biblical language, and it has been calculated that the Liturgy contains 98 quotations from the Old Testament and 114 from the New (P. Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie*, p. 241, note 96).

Orthodoxy regards the Bible as a verbal icon of Christ, the Seventh Council laying down that the Holy Icons and the Book of the Gospels should be venerated in the same way. In every church the Gospel Book has a place of honour on the altar; it is carried in procession at the Lit-

urgy and at Matins on Sundays and feasts; the faithful kiss it and prostrate themselves before it. Such is the respect shown in the Orthodox Church for the Word of God.

2. The Seven Ecumenical Councils: The Creed

The doctrinal definitions of an Ecumenical Council are infallible. Thus in the eyes of the Orthodox Church, the statements of faith put out by the Seven Councils possess, along with the Bible, an abiding and irrevocable authority.

The most important of all the Ecumenical statements of faith is the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*, which is read or sung at every celebration of the Eucharist, and also daily at Nocturns and at Compline. The other two Creeds used by the west, the *Apostles' Creed* and the '*Athanasian Creed*,' do not possess the same authority as the Nicene, because they have not been proclaimed by an Ecumenical Council. Orthodox honour the Apostles' Creed as an ancient statement of faith, and accept its teaching; but it is simply a local western Baptismal Creed, never used in the services of the Eastern Patriarchates. The '*Athanasian Creed*' likewise is not used in Orthodox worship, but it is sometimes printed (without the *filioque*) in the *Horologion* (Book of Hours).

3. Later Councils

The formulation of Orthodox doctrine, as we have seen, did not cease with the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Since 787 there have been two chief ways whereby the Church has expressed its mind: a) definitions by Local Councils (that is, councils attended by members of one or more national Churches, but not claiming to represent the Orthodox Catholic Church as a whole) and b) letters or statements of faith put out by individual bishops. While the doctrinal decisions of General Councils are infallible, those of a Local Council or an individual bishop are always liable to error; but if such decisions are accepted by the rest of the Church, then they come to acquire Ecumenical authority (i.e. a universal authority similar to that possessed by the doctrinal statements of an Ecumenical Council). The doctrinal decisions of an Ecumenical Council cannot be revised or corrected, but must be accepted *in toto*; but the Church has often been selective in its treatment of the acts of Local Councils: in the case of the seventeenth century Councils, for example, their statements of faith have in part been received by the whole Orthodox Church, but in part set aside or corrected.

The following are the chief Orthodox doctrinal statements since 787:

1	The Encyclical Letter of Saint Photius (867)
2	The First Letter of Michael Cerularius to Peter of Antioch (1054)
3	The decisions of 'the Councils of Constantinople in 1341 and 1351 on the Hesychast Controversy
4	The Encyclical Letter of Saint Mark of Ephesus (1440-1441).
5	The Confession of Faith by Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople (1455-1456)
6	The Replies of Jeremias the Second to the Lutherans (1573-1581)
7	The Confession of Faith by Metrophanes Kritopoulos (1625)
8	The Orthodox Confession by Peter of Moghila, in its revised form (ratified by the Council of Jassy, 1642)
9	The Confession of Dositheus (ratified by the Council of Jerusalem, 1672)
10	The Answers of the Orthodox Patriarchs to the Non-Jurors (1718, 1723)
11	The Reply of the Orthodox Patriarchs to Pope Pius the Ninth (1848)

12	The Reply of the Synod of Constantinople to Pope Leo the Thirteenth (1895)
13	The Encyclical Letters by the Patriarchate of Constantinople on Christian unity and on the 'Ecumenical Movement' (1920, 1952)

These documents — particularly items 5-9 — are sometimes called the 'Symbolical Books' of the Orthodox Church, but many Orthodox scholars today regard this title as misleading and do not use it.

4. The Fathers

The definitions of the Councils must be studied in the wider context of the Fathers. But as with Local Councils, so with the Fathers, the judgment of the Church is selective: individual writers have at times fallen into error and at times contradict one another. Patristic wheat needs to be distinguished from Patristic chaff. An Orthodox must not simply know and quote the Fathers, he must enter into the spirit of the Fathers and acquire a 'Patristic mind.' He must treat the Fathers not merely as relics from the past, but as living witnesses and contemporaries.

The Orthodox Church has never attempted to define exactly who the Fathers are, still less to classify them in order of importance. But it has a particular reverence for the writers of the fourth century, and especially for those whom it terms 'the Three Great Hierarchs,' Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil the Great, and John Chrysostom. In the eyes of Orthodoxy the 'Age of the Fathers' did not come to an end in the fifth century, for many later writers are also 'Fathers' — Maximus, John of Damascus, Theodore of Studium, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas, Mark of Ephesus. Indeed, it is dangerous to look on 'the Fathers' as a closed cycle of writings belonging wholly to the past, for might not our own age produce a new Basil or Athanasius? To say that there can be no more Fathers is to suggest that the Holy Spirit has deserted the Church.

5. The Liturgy

The Orthodox Church is not as much given to making formal dogmatic definitions as is the Roman Catholic Church. But it would be false to conclude that because some belief has never been specifically proclaimed as a dogma by Orthodoxy, it is therefore not a part of Orthodox Tradition, but merely a matter of private opinion. Certain doctrines, never formally defined, are yet held by the Church with an unmistakable inner conviction, an unruffled unanimity, which is just as binding as an explicit formulation. 'Some things we have from written teaching,' said Saint Basil, 'others we have received from the Apostolic Tradition handed down to us in a mystery; and both these things have the same force for piety (On the Holy Spirit, 27 (66)).'

This inner Tradition 'handed down to us in a mystery' is preserved above all in the Church's worship. *Lex orandi lex credendi*: men's faith is expressed in their prayer. Orthodoxy has made few explicit definitions about the Eucharist and the other Sacraments, about the next world, the Mother of God, the saints, and the faithful departed: Orthodox belief on these points is contained mainly in the prayers and hymns used at Orthodox services. Nor is it merely the words of the services which are a part of Tradition; the various gestures and actions — immersion in the waters of Baptism, the different anointings with oil, the sign of the Cross, and so on — all have a special meaning, and all express in symbolical or dramatic form the truths of the faith.

6. Canon Law

Besides doctrinal definitions, the Ecumenical Councils drew up Canons, dealing with Church organization and discipline; other Canons were made by Local Councils and by individ-

ual bishops. Theodore Balsamon, Zonaras, and other Byzantine writers compiled collections of Canons, with explanations and commentaries. The standard modern Greek commentary, the *Pedalion* ('Rudder'), published in 1800, is the work of that indefatigable saint, Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain.

The Canon Law of the Orthodox Church has been very little studied in the west, and as a result western writers sometimes fall into the mistake of regarding Orthodoxy as an organization with virtually no outward regulations. On the contrary, the life of Orthodoxy has many rules, often of great strictness and rigour. It must be confessed, however, that at the present day many of the Canons are difficult or impossible to apply, and have fallen widely into disuse. When and if a new General Council of the Church is assembled, one of its chief tasks may well be the revision and clarification of Canon Law.

The doctrinal definitions of the Councils possess an absolute and unalterable validity which Canons as such cannot claim; for doctrinal definitions deal with eternal truths, Canons with the earthly life of the Church, where conditions are constantly changing and individual situations are infinitely various. Yet between the Canons and the dogmas of the Church there exists an essential connexion: Canon Law is simply the attempt to apply dogma to practical situations in the daily life of each Christian. Thus in a relative sense the Canons form a part of Holy Tradition.

7. Icons

The Tradition of the Church is expressed not only through words, not only through the actions and gestures used in worship, but also through art — through the line and colour of the Holy Icons. An icon is not simply a religious picture designed to arouse appropriate emotions in the beholder; it is one of the ways whereby God is revealed to man. Through icons the Orthodox Christian receives a vision of the spiritual world. Because the icon is a part of Tradition, the icon painter is not free to adapt or innovate as he pleases; for his work must reflect, not his own aesthetic sentiments, but the mind of the Church. Artistic inspiration is not excluded, but it is exercised within certain prescribed rules. It is important that an icon painter should be a good artist, but it is even more important that he should be a sincere Christian, living within the spirit of Tradition, preparing himself for his work by means of Confession and Holy Communion.

Such are the primary elements which from an outward point of view make up the Tradition of the Orthodox Church — Scripture, Councils, Fathers, Liturgy, Canons, Icons. These things are not to be separated and contrasted, for it is the same Holy Spirit which speaks through them all, and together they make up a single whole, each part being understood in the light of the rest.

It has sometimes been said that the underlying cause for the break-up of western Christendom in the sixteenth century was the separation between theology and mysticism, between liturgy and personal devotion, which existed in the later Middle Ages. Orthodoxy for its part has always tried to avoid any such division. All true Orthodox theology is mystical; just as mysticism divorced from theology becomes subjective and heretical, so theology, when it is not mystical, degenerates into an arid scholasticism, 'academic' in the bad sense of the word.

Theology, mysticism, spirituality, moral rules, worship, art: these things must not be kept in separate compartments. Doctrine cannot be understood unless it is prayed: a theologian, said Evagrius, is one who knows how to pray, and he who prays in spirit and in truth is by that very act a theologian (On Prayer, 60 (P. G. 79, 1180B)). And doctrine, if it is to be prayed, must also be lived: theology without action, as Saint Maximus put it, is the theology of demons (Letter 20 (P.G. 91, 601C)). The Creed belongs only to those who live it. Faith and love, theology and life, are inseparable. In the Byzantine Liturgy, the Creed is introduced with the words: 'Let us love one an-

other, that with one mind we may confess Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Trinity one in essence and undivided.’ This exactly expresses the Orthodox attitude to Tradition. If we do not love one another, we cannot love God; and if we do not love God, we cannot make a true confession of faith and cannot enter into the inner spirit of Tradition, for there is no other way of knowing God than to love Him.

God and man

“In His unbounded love, God became what we are that He might make us what He is” (Saint Irenaeus, died 202).

God in Trinity

Our social programme, said the Russian thinker Fedorov, is the dogma of the Trinity. Orthodoxy believes most passionately that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not a piece of ‘high theology’ reserved for the professional scholar, but something that has a living, practical importance for every Christian. Man, so the Bible teaches, is made in the image of God, and to Christians God means the Trinity: thus it is only in the light of the dogma of the Trinity that man can understand who he is and what God intends him to be. Our private lives, our personal relations, and all our plans of forming a Christian society depend upon a right theology of the Trinity. ‘Between the Trinity and Hell there lies no other choice (V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 66). As an Anglican writer has put it: ‘In this doctrine is summed up the new way of thinking about God, in the power of which the fishermen. went out to convert the Greco-Roman world. It marks a saving revolution in human thought (D. J. Chitty, ‘The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity told to the Children,’ in *Sobornost*, series 4, no. 5, 1961, p. 241).

The basic elements in the Orthodox doctrine of God have already been mentioned in the first part of this book, so that here they will only be summarized briefly:

1. *God is absolutely transcendent.* ‘No single thing of all that is created has or ever will have even the slightest communion with the supreme nature or nearness to it (Gregory Palamas, *P.G.* 150, 1176c (quoted on p. 77)). This absolute transcendence Orthodoxy safeguards by its emphatic use of the ‘way of negation,’ of ‘apophatic’ theology. Positive or ‘cataphatic’ theology — the ‘way of affirmation’ — must always be balanced and corrected by the employment of negative language. Our positive statements about God — that He is good, wise, just and so on — are true as far as they go, yet they cannot adequately describe the inner nature of the deity. These positive statements, said John of Damascus, reveal ‘not the nature, but the things around the nature.’ ‘That there is a God is clear; but what He is by essence and nature, this is altogether beyond our comprehension and knowledge (*On the Orthodox Faith*, 1, 4 (*P.G.* 94, 800B, 797B)).

2. *God, although absolutely transcendent, is not cut off from the world which He has made.* God is above and outside His creation, yet He also exists within it. As a much used Orthodox prayer puts it: ‘Thou art everywhere and finest all things.’ Orthodoxy therefore distinguishes between God’s essence and His energies, thus safeguarding both divine transcendence and divine immanence: God’s essence remains unapproachable, but His energies come down to us. God’s energies, which are God Himself, permeate all His creation, and we experience them in the form

of deifying grace and divine light. Truly our God is a God who hides Himself, yet He is also a God who acts — the God of history, intervening directly in concrete situations.

3. *God is personal, that is to say, Trinitarian.* This God who acts is not only a God of energies, but a personal God. When man participates in the divine energies, he is not overwhelmed by some vague and nameless power, but he is brought face to face with a person. Nor is this all: God is not simply a single person confined within his own being, but a Trinity of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each of whom ‘dwells’ in the other two, by virtue of a perpetual movement of love. God is not only a unity but a union.

4. *Our God is an Incarnate God.* God has come down to man, not only through His energies, but in His own person. The Second Person of the Trinity, ‘true God from true God,’ was made man: “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). A closer union than this between God and His creation there could not be. God Himself became one of His creatures (For the first and second of these four points, see pp. 72-9; for the third and fourth points, see pp. 28-37).

Those brought up in other traditions have sometimes found it difficult to accept the Orthodox emphasis on apophatic theology and the distinction between essence and energies; but apart from these two matters, Orthodox agree in their doctrine of God with the overwhelming majority of all who call themselves Christians. Monophysites and Lutherans, Nestorians and Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Anglicans, and Orthodox: all alike worship One God in Three Persons and confess Christ as Incarnate Son of God (In the past hundred years, under the influence of ‘Modernism,’ many Protestants have virtually abandoned the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Thus when I speak here of Calvinists, Lutherans, and Anglicans, I have in mind those who still respect the classical Protestant formularies of the sixteenth century).

Yet there is one point in the doctrine of God the Trinity over which east and west part company — the *filioque*. We have already seen how decisive a part this one word played in the unhappy fragmentation of Christendom. But granted that the *filioque* is important historically, does it really matter from a theological point of view? Many people today — not excluding many Orthodox — find the whole dispute so technical and obscure that they are tempted to dismiss it as utterly trivial. From the viewpoint of traditional Orthodox theology there can be but one rejoinder to this: technical and obscure it undoubtedly is, like most questions of Trinitarian theology; but it is not trivial. Since belief in the Trinity lies at the very heart of the Christian faith, a tiny difference in Trinitarian theology is bound to have repercussions upon every aspect of Christian life and thought. Let us try therefore to understand some of the issues involved in the *filioque* dispute.

One essence in three persons. God is one and God is three: the Holy Trinity is a mystery of unity in diversity, and of diversity in unity. Father, Son, and Spirit are ‘one in essence’ (*homoousios*), yet each is distinguished from the other two by personal characteristics. ‘The divine is indivisible in its divisions (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 31, 14). for the persons are ‘united yet not confused, distinct yet not divided’ (John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 1, 8 (P.G. 94, 809A)); ‘both the distinction and the union alike are paradoxical’ (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 25, 17).

But if each of the persons is distinct, what holds the Holy Trinity together? Here the Orthodox Church, following the Cappadocian Fathers, answers that there is one God because there is one Father. In the language of theology, the Father is the ‘cause’ or ‘source’ of Godhead, He is the principle (*arche*) of unity among the three; and it is in this sense that Orthodoxy talks of the ‘monarchy’ of the Father. The other two persons trace their origin to the Father and are defined in terms of their relation to Him. The Father is the source of Godhead, born of none and proceeding from none; the Son is born of the Father from all eternity (‘before all ages,’ as the Creed says); the Spirit proceeds from the Father from all eternity.

It is at this point that Roman Catholic theology begins to disagree. According to Roman theology, the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father *and the Son*; and this means that the Father ceases to be the unique source of Godhead, since the Son also is a source. Since the principle of unity in the Godhead can no longer be the person of the Father, Rome finds its principle of unity in the substance or essence which all three persons share. In Orthodoxy the principle of God's unity is personal, in Roman Catholicism it is not.

But what is meant by the term 'proceed?' Unless this is properly understood, nothing is understood. The Church believes that Christ underwent two births, the one eternal, the other at a particular point in time: he was born of the Father 'before all ages,' and born of the Virgin Mary in the days of Herod, King of Judaea, and of Augustus, Emperor of Rome. In the same way a firm distinction must be drawn between the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, and the temporal mission, the sending of the Spirit to the world: the one concerns the relations existing from all eternity within the Godhead, the other concerns the relation of God to creation. Thus when the west says that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and when Orthodoxy says that He proceeds from the Father alone, both sides are referring not to the outward action of the Trinity towards creation, but to certain eternal relations within the Godhead — relations which existed before ever the world was. But Orthodoxy, while disagreeing with the west over the eternal procession of the Spirit, agrees with the west in saying that, so far as the mission of the Spirit to the world is concerned, He is sent by the Son, and is indeed the 'Spirit of the Son.'

The Orthodox position is based on John 15:26, where Christ says: 'When the Comforter has come, whom *I will send to you* from the Father — the Spirit of truth, who *proceeds from the Father* — he will bear witness to me.' Christ sends the Spirit, but the Spirit proceeds from the Father: so the Bible teaches, and so Orthodoxy believes. What Orthodoxy does not teach, and what the Bible never says, is that the Spirit proceeds from the Son.

An eternal procession from Father and Son: such is the western position. An eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father alone, a temporal mission from the Son: such was the position upheld by Saint Photius against the west. But Byzantine writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries — most notably Gregory of Cyprus, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1283 to 1289, and Gregory Palamas — went somewhat further than Photius, in an attempt to bridge the gulf between east and west. They were willing to allow not only a temporal mission, but an *eternal manifestation* of the Holy Spirit by the Son. While Photius had spoken only of a temporal relation between Son and Spirit, they admitted an eternal relation. Yet on the essential point the two Gregories agreed with Photius: the Spirit is manifested by the Son, but does not proceed from the Son. The Father is the unique origin, source, and cause of Godhead.

Such in outline are the positions taken up by either side; let us now consider the Orthodox objections to the western position. The *filioque* leads either to ditheism or to semi-Sabellianism (Sabellius, a heretic of the second century, regarded Father, Son, and Spirit not as three distinct persons, but simply as varying 'modes' or 'aspects' of the deity). If the Son as well as the Father is an *arche*, a principle or source of Godhead, are there then (the Orthodox asked) two independent sources, two separate principles in the Trinity? Obviously not, since this would be tantamount to belief in two Gods; and so the Reunion Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1438-1439) were most careful to state that the Spirit proceeds from Father and Son 'as from *one* principle,' *tanquam ex* (or *ab*) *uno principio*. From the Orthodox point of view, however, this is equally objectionable: ditheism is avoided, but the persons of Father and Son are merged and confused. The Cappadocians regarded the 'monarchy' as the distinctive characteristic of the Father: He alone is a principle or *arche* within the Trinity. But western theology ascribes the distinctive characteristic of the Father

to the Son as well, thus fusing the two persons into one; and what else is this but ‘Sabellius re-born, or rather some semi-Sabellian monster,’ as Saint Photius put it? (*P.G.* 102, 289B).

Let us look more carefully at this charge of semi-Sabellianism. Orthodox Trinitarian theology has a personal principle of unity, but the west finds its unitary principle in the essence of God. In Latin Scholastic theology, so it seems to Orthodox, the persons are overshadowed by the common nature, and God is thought of not so much in concrete and personal terms, but as an essence in which various relations are distinguished. This way of thinking about God comes to full development in Thomas Aquinas, who went so far as to identify the persons with the relations: *personae sunt ipsae relationes* (*Summa Theologica*, 1, question 40, article 2). Orthodox thinkers find this a very meagre idea of personality. The relations, they would say, are not the persons — they are the *personal characteristics* of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and (as Gregory Palamas put it) ‘personal characteristics do not constitute the person, but they characterize the person’ (Quoted in J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l’étude de Grégoire Palamas*, Paris, 1959, p. 294). The relations, while designating the persons, in no way exhaust the mystery of each.

Latin Scholastic theology, emphasizing as it does the essence at the expense of the persons, comes near to turning God into an abstract idea. He becomes a remote and impersonal being, whose existence has to be proved by metaphysical arguments — a God of the philosophers, not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, has been far less concerned than the Latin west to find philosophical proofs of God’s existence: what is important is not that a man should argue about the deity, but that he should have a direct and living encounter with a concrete and personal God.

Such are some of the reasons why Orthodox regard the *filioque* as dangerous and heretical. Filioquism confuses the persons, and destroys the proper balance between unity and diversity in the Godhead. The oneness of the deity is emphasized at the expense of His threeness; God is regarded too much in terms of abstract essence and too little in terms of concrete personality.

But this is not all. Many Orthodox feel that, as a result of the *filioque*, the Holy Spirit in western thought has become subordinated to the Son — if not in theory, then at any rate in practice. The west pays insufficient attention to the work of the Spirit in the world, in the Church, in the daily life of each man.

Orthodox writers also argue that these two consequences of the *filioque* — subordination of the Holy Spirit, over-emphasis on the unity of God — have helped to bring about a distortion in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Church. Because the role of the Spirit has been neglected in the west, the Church has come to be regarded too much as an institution of this world, governed in terms of earthly power and jurisdiction. And just as in the western doctrine of God unity was stressed at the expense of diversity, so in the western conception of the Church unity has triumphed over diversity, and the result has been too great a centralization and too great an emphasis on Papal authority.

Such in outline is the Orthodox attitude to the *filioque*, although not all would state the case in such an uncompromising form. In particular, many of the criticisms given above apply only to a decadent form of Scholasticism, not to Latin theology as a whole.

Man: his creation, his vocation, his failure

‘Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.’ (Augustine, *Confessions*, 1, 1) Man was made for fellowship with God: this is the first and primary affirmation in the Christian doctrine of man. But man, made for fellowship with God, everywhere repudiates that fellowship: this is the second fact which all Christian anthropology takes into account. Man

was made for fellowship with God: in the language of the Church, God created Adam according to His image and likeness, and set him in Paradise (The opening chapters of Genesis are of course concerned with certain religious truths, and are not to be taken as literal history. Fifteen centuries before modern Biblical criticism, Greek Fathers were already interpreting the Creation and Paradise stories symbolically rather than literally). Man everywhere repudiates that fellowship: in the language of the Church, Adam fell, and his fall — his ‘original sin’ — has affected all mankind.

The Creation of Man. “*And God said, let us make man according to our image and likeness*” (Genesis 1:26). God speaks in the plural: “*Let us make man.*” The creation of man, so the Greek Fathers continually emphasized, was an act of all three persons in the Trinity, and therefore the image and likeness of God must always be thought of as a Trinitarian image and likeness. We shall find that this is a point of vital importance.

Image and Likeness. According to most of the Greek Fathers, the terms *image* and *likeness* do not mean exactly the same thing. ‘The expression *according to the image*,’ wrote John of Damascus, ‘indicates rationality and freedom, while the expression *according to the likeness* indicates assimilation to God through virtue (*On the Orthodox Faith*, 2, 12 (P.G. 94, 920B)). The image, or to use the Greek term the icon, of God signifies man’s free will, his reason, his sense of moral responsibility — everything, in short, which marks man out from the animal creation and makes him a *person*. But the image means more than that. It means that we are God’s ‘offspring’ (Acts 27:28), His kin; it means that between us and Him there is a point of contact, an essential similarity. The gulf between creature and Creator is not impassable, for because we are in God’s image we can know God and have communion with Him. And if a man makes proper use of this faculty for communion with God, then he will become ‘like’ God, he will acquire the divine likeness; in the words of John Damascene, he will be ‘assimilated to God through virtue.’ To acquire the likeness is to be deified, it is to become a ‘second god,’ a ‘god by grace.’ “*I said, you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High*” (Psalm 81:6). (In quotations from the Psalms, the numbering of the Septuagint is followed. Some versions of the Bible reckon this Psalm as 82.).

The image denotes the powers with which every man is endowed by God from the first moment of his existence; the likeness is not an endowment which man possesses from the start, but a goal at which he must aim, something which he can only acquire by degrees. However sinful a man may be, he never loses the image; but the likeness depends upon our moral choice, upon our ‘virtue,’ and so it is destroyed by sin.

Man at his first creation was therefore perfect, not so much in an actual as in a potential sense. Endowed with the image from the start, he was called to acquire the likeness by his own efforts (assisted of course by the grace of God). Adam began in a state of innocence and simplicity. ‘He was a child, not yet having his understanding perfected,’ wrote Irenaeus. ‘It was necessary that he should grow and so come to his perfection (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 12). God set Adam on the right path, but Adam had in front of him a long road to traverse in order to reach his final goal.

This picture of Adam before the fall is somewhat different from that presented by Saint Augustine and generally accepted in the west since his time. According to Augustine, man in Paradise was endowed from the start with all possible wisdom and knowledge: his was a realized, and in no sense potential, perfection. The dynamic conception of Irenaeus clearly fits more easily with modern theories of evolution than does the static conception of Augustine; but both were speaking as theologians, not as scientists, so that in neither case do their views stand or fall with any particular scientific hypothesis.

The west has often associated the image of God with man's intellect. While many Orthodox have done the same, others would say that since man is a single unified whole, the image of God embraces his entire person, body as well as soul. 'When God is said to have made man according to His image,' wrote Gregory Palamas, 'the word man means neither the soul by itself nor the body by itself, but the two together (P.G. 150, 1361C). The fact that man has a body, so Gregory argued, makes him not lower but higher than the angels. True, the angels are 'pure' spirit, whereas man's nature is 'mixed' — material as well as intellectual; but this means that his nature is more complete than the angelic and endowed with richer potentialities. Man is a microcosm, a bridge and point of meeting for the whole of God's creation.

Orthodox religious thought lays the utmost emphasis on the image of God in man. Man is a 'living theology,' and because he is God's icon, he can find God by looking within his own heart, by 'returning within himself.' "*The Kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:21). 'Know yourselves,' said Saint Antony of Egypt. '...He who knows himself, knows God (*Letter 3* (in the Greek and Latin collections, 6)) 'If you are pure,' wrote Saint Isaac the Syrian (late seventh century), 'heaven is within you; within yourself you will see the angels and the Lord of the angels' (Quoted in P. Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, p. 88). And of Saint Pachomius it is recorded: 'In the purity of his heart he saw the invisible God as in a mirror (*First Greek Life*, 22).

Because he is an icon of God, each member of the human race, even the most sinful, is infinitely precious in God's sight. 'When you see your brother,' said Clement of Alexandria (died 215), 'you see God' (*Stromateis*, 1, 19 (94, 5)). And Evagrius taught: 'After God, we must count all men as God Himself (*On Prayer*, 123 (P.G. 79, 1193C)). This respect for every human being is visibly expressed in Orthodox worship, when the priest censes not only the icons but the members of the congregation, saluting the image of God in each person. 'The best icon of God is man (P. Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, p. 218).

Grace and Free Will. As we have seen, the fact that man is in God's image means among other things that he possesses free will. God wanted a son, not a slave. The Orthodox Church rejects any doctrine of grace which might seem to infringe upon man's freedom. To describe the relation between the grace of God and free will of man, Orthodoxy uses the term cooperation or synergy (*synergeia*); in Paul's words: "*We are fellow-workers (synergoi) with God*" (1 Cor. 3:9). If man is to achieve full fellowship with God, he cannot do so without God's help, yet he must also play his own part: man as well as God must make his contribution to the common work, although what God does is of immeasurably greater importance than what man does. 'The incorporation of man into Christ and his union with God require the cooperation of two unequal, but equally necessary forces: divine grace and human will (A Monk of the Eastern Church, *Orthodox Spirituality*, p. 23). The supreme example of synergy is the Mother of God (See p. 263).

The west, since the time of Augustine and the Pelagian controversy, has discussed this question of grace and free will in somewhat different terms; and many brought up in the Augustinian tradition — particularly Calvinists — have viewed the Orthodox idea of 'synergy' with some suspicion. Does it not ascribe too much to man's free will, and too little to God? Yet in reality the Orthodox teaching is very straightforward. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in*" (Revelation 3:20). God knocks, but waits for man to open the door — He does not break it down. The grace of God invites all but compels none. In the words of John Chrysostom: 'God never draws anyone to Himself by force and violence. He wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one' (*Sermon on the words 'Saul, Saul...' 6* (P.G. 51, 144)). 'It is for God to grant His grace,' said Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (died 386); 'your task is to accept that grace and to guard it (*Catechetical Orations*, 1, 4). But it must not be imagined that be-

cause a man accepts and guards God's grace, he thereby earns 'merit.' God's gifts are always free gifts, and man can never have any claims upon his Maker. But man, while he cannot 'merit' salvation, must certainly work for it, since "*faith without works is dead*" (James 2:17).

The Fall: Original Sin. God gave Adam free will — the power to choose between good and evil — and it therefore rested With Adam either to accept the vocation set before him or to refuse it. He refused it. Instead of continuing along the path marked out for him by God, he turned aside and disobeyed God. Adam's fall consisted essentially in his disobedience of the will of God; he set up his own will against the divine will, and so by his own act he separated himself from God. As a result, a new form of existence appeared on earth — that of disease and death. By turning away from God, who is immortality and life, man put himself in a state that was contrary to nature, and this unnatural condition led to an inevitable disintegration of his being and eventually to physical death. The consequences of Adam's disobedience extended to all his descendants. We are members one of another, as Saint Paul never ceased to insist, and if one member suffers the whole body suffers. In virtue of this mysterious unity of the human race, not only Adam but all mankind became subject to mortality. Nor was the disintegration which followed from the fall merely physical. Cut off from God, Adam and his descendants passed under the domination of sin and of the devil. Each new human being is born into a world where sin prevails everywhere, a world in which it is easy to do evil and hard to do good. Man's will is weakened and enfeebled by what the Greeks call 'desire' and the Latins 'concupiscence.' We are all subject to these, the spiritual effects of original sin.

Thus far there is fairly close agreement between Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and classic Protestantism; but beyond this point east and west do not entirely concur. Orthodoxy, holding as it does a less exalted idea of man's state before he fell, is also less severe than the west in its view of the consequences of the fall. Adam fell, not from a great height of knowledge and perfection, but from a state of undeveloped simplicity; hence he is not to be judged too harshly for his error. Certainly, as a result of the fall man's mind became so darkened, and his will-power was so impaired, that he could no longer hope to attain to the likeness of God. Orthodox, however, do not hold that the fall deprived man entirely of God's grace, though they would say that after the fall grace acts on man from the outside, not from within. Orthodox do not say, as Calvin said, that man after the fall was utterly depraved and incapable of good desires. They cannot agree with Augustine, when he writes that man is under 'a harsh necessity' of committing sin, and that 'man's nature was overcome by the fault into which it fell, *and so came to lack freedom*' (*On the perfection of man's righteousness*, 4 (9)). The image of God is distorted by sin, but never destroyed; in the words of a hymn sung by Orthodox at the Funeral Service for the laity: 'I am the image of Thine inexpressible glory, even though I bear the wounds of sin.' And because he still retains the image of God, man still retains free will, although sin restricts its scope. Even after the fall, God 'takes not away from man the power to will — to will to obey or not to obey Him' (Dositheus, *Confession*, Decree 3. Compare Decree 14). Faithful to the idea of synergy, Orthodoxy repudiates any interpretation of the fall which allows no room for human freedom.

Most orthodox theologians reject the idea of 'original guilt,' put forward by Augustine and still accepted (albeit in a mitigated form) by the Roman Catholic Church. Men (Orthodox usually teach) automatically inherit Adam's corruption and mortality, but not his guilt: they are only guilty in so far as by their own free choice they imitate Adam. Many western Christians believe that whatever a man does in his fallen and unredeemed state, since it is tainted by original guilt, cannot possibly be pleasing to God: 'Works before Justification,' says the thirteenth of the

Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, ‘...are not pleasant to God ... but have the nature of sin.’ Orthodox would hesitate to say this. And Orthodox have never held (as Augustine and many others in the west have done) that unbaptized babies, because tainted with original guilt, are consigned by the just God to the everlasting games of Hell (Thomas Aquinas, in his discussion of the fall, on the whole followed Augustine, and in particular retained the idea of original guilt; but as regards unbaptized babies, he maintained that they go not to Hell but to Limbo — a view now generally accepted by Roman theologians. So far as I can discover, Orthodox writers do not make use of the idea of Limbo. It should be noted that an Augustinian view of the fall is found from time to time in Orthodox theological literature; but this is usually the result of western influence. The Orthodox Confession by Peter of Moghila is, as one might expect, strongly Augustinian; on the other hand the Confession of Dositheus is free from Augustinianism). The Orthodox picture of fallen humanity is far less sombre than the Augustinian or Calvinist view.

But although Orthodox maintain that man after the fall still possessed free will and was still capable of good actions, yet they certainly agree with the west in believing that man’s sin had set up between him and God a barrier, which man by his own efforts could never break down. Sin blocked the path to union with God. Since man could not come to God, God came to man.

Jesus Christ

The Incarnation is an act of God’s *philanthropia*, of His lovingkindness towards mankind. Many eastern writers, looking at the Incarnation from this point of view, have argued that even if man had never fallen, God in His love for humanity would still have become man: the Incarnation must be seen as part of the eternal purpose of God, and not simply as an answer to the fall. Such was the view of Maximus the Confessor and of Isaac the Syrian; such has also been the view of certain western writers, most notably Duns Scotus (1265-1308).

But because man fell, the Incarnation is not only an act of love but an act of salvation. Jesus Christ, by uniting man and God in His own person, reopened for man the path to union with God. In His own person Christ showed what the true ‘likeness of God’ is, and through His redeeming and victorious sacrifice He set that likeness once again within man’s reach. Christ, the Second Adam, came to earth and reversed the effects of the first Adam’s disobedience.

The essential elements in the Orthodox doctrine of Christ have already been outlined in Chapter 2: true God and true man, one person in two natures, without separation and without confusion: a single person, but endowed with two wills and two energies.

True God and true man; as Bishop Theophan the Recluse put it: ‘Behind the veil of Christ’s flesh, Christians behold the Triune God.’ These words bring us face to face with what is perhaps the most striking feature in the Orthodox approach to the Incarnate Christ: an overwhelming sense of His *divine glory*. There are two moments in Christ’s life when this divine glory was made especially manifest: the Transfiguration, when on Mount Thabor the uncreated light of His Godhead shone visibly through the garments of His flesh; and the Resurrection, when the tomb burst open under the pressure of divine life, and Christ returned triumphant from the dead. In Orthodox worship and spirituality tremendous emphasis is placed on both these events. In the Byzantine calendar the Transfiguration is reckoned as one of the Twelve Great Feasts, and enjoys a far greater prominence in the Church’s year than it possesses in the west; and we have already seen the central place which the uncreated light of Thabor holds in the Orthodox doctrine of mystical prayer. As for the Resurrection, its spirit fills the whole life of the Orthodox Church: Through all the vicissitudes of her history the Greek Church has been enabled to preserve something of the very spirit of the first age of Christianity. Her liturgy still enshrines that element of sheer joy in the Resurrection of the Lord that we find in so many of the early Christian writings (P. Hammond, *The Waters of Marah*, p. 20).

The theme of the Resurrection of Christ binds together all theological concepts and realities in eastern Christianity and unites them in a harmonious whole (O. Rousseau, 'Incarnation et anthropologie en orient et en occident,' in *Irénikon*, vol. 26 (1953), p. 373).

Yet it would be wrong to think of Orthodoxy simply as the cult of Christ's divine glory, of His Transfiguration and Resurrection, and nothing more. However great their devotion to the divine glory of Our Lord, Orthodox do not overlook His humanity. Consider for example the Orthodox love of the Holy Land: nothing could exceed the vivid reverence of Russian peasants for the exact places where the Incarnate Christ lived as a man, where as a man He ate, taught, suffered, and died. Nor does the sense of Resurrection joy lead Orthodoxy to minimize the importance of the Cross. Representations of the Crucifixion are no less prominent in Orthodox than in non-Orthodox churches, while the veneration of the Cross is more developed in Byzantine than in Latin worship.

One must therefore reject as misleading the common assertion that the east concentrates on the Risen Christ, the west on Christ Crucified. If we are going to draw a contrast, it would be more exact to say that east and west think of the Crucifixion in slightly different ways. The Orthodox attitude to the Crucifixion is best seen in the hymns sung on Good Friday, such as the following:

He who clothes himself with light as with a garment,
Stood naked at the judgement.
On his cheek he received blows
From the hands which he had formed.
The lawless multitude nailed to the Cross
The Lord of glory.

The Orthodox Church on Good Friday thinks not simply of Christ's human pain and suffering by itself, but rather of the contrast between His outward humiliation and His inward glory. Orthodox see not just the suffering humanity of Christ, but a suffering God:

Today is hanged upon the tree
He who hanged the earth in the midst of the waters.
A crown of thorns crowns him
Who is the king of the angels.
He is wrapped about with the purple of mockery
Who wraps the heaven in clouds.

Behind the veil of Christ's bleeding and broken flesh, Orthodox still discern the Triune God. Even Golgotha is a theophany; even on Good Friday the Church sounds a note of Resurrection joy:

We worship thy Passion, O Christ:
Show us also thy glorious Resurrection!
I magnify thy sufferings,
I praise thy burial and thy Resurrection.
Shouting, Lord, glory to thee!

The Crucifixion is not separated from the Resurrection, for both are but a single action. Calvary is seen always in the light of the empty tomb; the Cross is an emblem of victory. When Orthodox think of Christ Crucified, they think not only of His suffering and desolation; they think of Him as Christ the Victor, Christ the King, reigning in triumph from the Tree: The Lord came into the world and dwelt among men, that he might destroy the tyranny of the Devil and set men free. On the Tree he triumphed over the powers which opposed him, when the sun was darkened and the earth was shaken, when the graves were opened and the bodies of the saints arose. By death he destroyed death, and brought to nought him who had the power of death (From the First Exorcism before Holy Baptism). Christ is our victorious king, not in spite of the Crucifixion, but because of it: 'I call Him king, because I see Him crucified' (John Chrysostom, *Second Sermon on the Cross and the Robber*, 3 (P.G. 49, 413).

Such is the spirit in which Orthodox Christians regard Christ's death upon the Cross. Between this approach to the Crucifixion and that of the medieval and post-medieval west, there are of course many points of contact; yet in the western approach there are also certain things which make Orthodox feel uneasy. The west, so it seems to them, tends to think of the Crucifixion in isolation, separating it too sharply from the Resurrection. As a result the vision of Christ as a suffering God is in practice replaced by the picture of Christ's suffering humanity: the western worshipper, when he meditates upon the Cross, is encouraged all too often to feel a morbid sympathy with the Man of Sorrows, rather than to adore the victorious and triumphant king. Orthodox feel thoroughly at home in the language of the great Latin hymn by Venantius Fortunatus (530-609), *Pange lingua*, which hails the Cross as an emblem of victory:

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle,
Sing the ending of the fray;
Now above the Cross, our trophy,
Sound the loud triumphal lay:
Tell how Christ, the world's redeemer,
As a victim won the day.

They feel equally at home in that other hymn by Fortunatus, *Vexilla regis*:

Fulfilled is all that David told
In true prophetic song of old:
Among the nations God, said he,
Hath reigned and triumphed from the Tree.

But Orthodox feel less happy about compositions of the later Middle Ages such as *Stabat Mater*:

For his people's sins, in anguish,
There she saw the victim languish,
Bleed in torments, bleed and die:
Saw the Lord's anointed taken;
Saw her Child in death forsaken;
Heard his last expiring cry.

It is significant that *Stabat Mater*, in the course of its sixty lines, makes not a single reference to the Resurrection.

Where Orthodoxy sees chiefly Christ the Victor, the late medieval and post-medieval west sees chiefly Christ the Victim. While Orthodoxy interprets the Crucifixion primarily as an act of triumphant victory over the powers of evil, the west particularly since the time of Anselm of Canterbury (?1033-1109) — has tended rather to think of the Cross in penal and juridical terms, as an act of satisfaction or substitution designed to propitiate the wrath of an angry Father.

Yet these contrasts must not be pressed too far. Eastern writers, as well as western, have applied juridical and penal language to the Crucifixion; western writers, as well as eastern, have never ceased to think of Good Friday as a moment of victory. In the west during recent years there has been a revival of the Patristic idea of *Christus Victor*, alike in theology, in spirituality, and in art; and Orthodox are naturally very happy that this should be so.

The Holy Spirit

In their activity among men the second and the third persons of the Trinity are complementary and reciprocal. Christ's work of redemption cannot be considered apart from the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification. The Word took flesh, said Athanasius, that we might receive the Spirit (*On the Incarnation and against the Arians*, 8 (P.G. 26, 996C)): from one point of view, the whole 'aim' of the Incarnation is the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost.

The Orthodox Church lays great stress upon the work of the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, one of the reasons why Orthodox object to the *filioque* is because they see in it a tendency to subordinate and neglect the Spirit. Saint Seraphim of Sarov briefly described the whole purpose of the Christian life as nothing else than the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, saying at the beginning of his conversation with Motovilov: 'Prayer, fasting, vigils, and all other Christian practices, however good they may be in themselves, certainly do not constitute the aim of our Christian life: they are but the indispensable means of attaining that aim. *For the true aim of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God.* As for fasts, vigils, prayer, and almsgiving, and other good works done in the name of Christ, they are only the means of acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. Note well that it is only good works done in the name of Christ that bring us the fruits of the Spirit.'

'This definition,' Vladimir Lossky has commented, 'while it may at first sight appear oversimplified, sums up the whole spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Church' (*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 196) As Saint Pachomius' disciple Theodore said: 'What is greater than to possess the Holy Spirit?' (*First Greek Life of Pachomius*, 135).

In the next chapter we shall have occasion to note the place of the Spirit in the Orthodox doctrine of the Church; and in later chapters something will be said of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox worship. In every sacramental action of the Church, and most notably at the climax of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Spirit is solemnly invoked. In his private prayers at the start of each day, an Orthodox Christian places himself under the protection of the Spirit, saying these words:

O heavenly king, O Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things, the treasury of blessings and giver of life, come and abide in us. Cleanse us from all impurity, and of thy goodness save our souls (This same prayer is used at the beginning of most liturgical services).

'Partakers of the Divine Nature'

The aim of the Christian life, which Seraphim described as the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God, can equally well be defined in terms of *deification*. Basil described man as a creature

who has received the order to become a god; and Athanasius, as we know, said that God became man that man might become god. 'In my kingdom, said Christ, I shall be God with you as gods' (Canon for Matins of Holy Thursday, Ode 4, Troparion 3). Such, according to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, is the final goal at which every Christian must aim: to become god, to attain *theosis*, 'deification' or 'divinization.' For Orthodoxy man's salvation and redemption mean his deification.

Behind the doctrine of deification there lies the idea of man made according to the image and likeness of God the Holy Trinity. 'May they all be one,' Christ prayed at the Last Supper; "*As Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, so also may they be in us*" (John 17:21). Just as the three persons of the Trinity 'dwell' in one another in an unceasing movement of love, so man, made in the image of the Trinity, is called to 'dwell' in the Trinitarian God. Christ prays that we may share in the life of the Trinity, in the movement of love which passes between the divine persons; He prays that we may be taken up into the Godhead. The saints, as Maximus the Confessor put it, are those who express the Holy Trinity in themselves. This idea of a personal and organic union between God and man — God dwelling in us, and we in Him — is a constant theme in Saint John's Gospel; it is also a constant theme in the Epistles of Saint Paul, who sees the Christian life above all else as a life 'in Christ.' The same idea recurs in the famous text: "*Through these promises you may become partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Peter 1:4). It is important to keep this New Testament background in mind. The Orthodox doctrine of deification, so far from being unscriptural (as is sometimes thought), has a solid Biblical basis, not only in 2 Peter, but in Paul and the Fourth Gospel.

The idea of deification must always be understood in the light of the distinction between God's essence and His energies. Union with God means union with the divine energies, not the divine essence: the Orthodox Church, while speaking of deification and union, rejects all forms of pantheism.

Closely related to this is another point of equal importance. The mystical union between God and man is a true union, yet in this union Creator and creature do not become fused into a single being. Unlike the eastern religions which teach that man is swallowed up in the deity, Orthodox mystical theology has always insisted that man, however closely linked to God, retains his full personal integrity. Man, when deified, remains distinct (though not separate) from God. The mystery of the 'Trinity is a mystery of unity *in diversity*, and those who express the Trinity in themselves do not sacrifice their personal characteristics. When Saint Maximus wrote 'God and those who are worthy of God have one and the same energy' (*Ambigua*, P.G. 91, 1076C), he did not mean that the saints lose their free will, but that when deified they voluntarily and in love conform their will to the will of God. Nor does man, when he 'becomes god,' cease to be human: 'We remain creatures while becoming god by grace, as Christ remained God when becoming man by the Incarnation' (V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 87). Man does not become God *by nature*, but is merely a 'created god,' a god *by grace* or *by status*.

Deification is something that involves the body. Since man is a unity of body and soul, and since the Incarnate Christ has saved and redeemed the whole man, it follows that 'man's body is deified at the same time as his soul' (Maximus, *Gnostic Centuries*, 2, 88 (P.G. 90, 1168A)). In that divine likeness which man is called to realize in himself, the body has its place. "*Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit,*" wrote Saint Paul (1 Cor. 6:19). "*Therefore, my brothers, I beseech you by God's mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice to God*" (Romans 12:1). The full deification of the body must wait, however, until the Last Day, for in this present life the glory of the saints is as a rule an inward splendour, a splendour of the soul alone; but when the righteous rise

from the dead and are clothed with a spiritual body, then their sanctity will be outwardly manifest. 'At the day of Resurrection the glory of the Holy Spirit *comes out from within*, decking and covering the bodies of the saints — the glory which they had before, but hidden within their souls. What a man has now, the same then comes forth externally *in the body*' (*Homilies of Macarius*, 5, 9. It is this transfigured 'Resurrection body' which the icon painter attempts symbolically to depict. Hence, while preserving the distinctive personal traits in a saint's physiognomy he deliberately avoids making a realistic and 'photographic' portrait. To paint men exactly as they now appear is to paint them still in their fallen state, in their 'earthy,' not their 'heavenly' body). The bodies of the saints will be outwardly transfigured by divine light, as Christ's body was transfigured on Mount Tabor. 'We must look forward also to the springtime of the body' (Minucius Felix (?late second century), *Octavius*, 34).

But even in this present life some saints have experienced the first fruits of this visible and bodily glorification. Saint Seraphim is the best known, but by no means the only instance of this. When Arsenius the Great was praying, his disciples saw him 'just like a fire' (*Apophthegmata*, P.G. 65, Arsenius 27); and of another Desert Father it is recorded: 'Just as Moses received the image of the glory of Adam, when his face was glorified, so the face of Abba Pambo shone like lightning, and he was as a king seated on his throne' (*Apophthegmata* (P.G. 65), Pambo 12. Compare *Apophthegmata*, Sisoës 14 and Silouanus 12. Epiphanius, in his *Life of Sergius of Radonezh*, states that the saint's body shone with glory after death. It is sometimes said, and with a certain truth, that bodily transfiguration by divine light corresponds, among Orthodox saints, to the receiving of the stigmata among western saints. We must not, however, draw too absolute a contrast in this matter. Instances of bodily glorification are found in the west, for example, in the case of an Englishwoman, Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941): a friend records how on one occasion her face could be seen transfigured with light (the whole account recalls Saint Seraphim: see *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, edited by Charles Williams, London, 1943, p. 37). Similarly, in the east stigmatization is not unknown: in the Coptic life of Saint Macarius of Egypt, it is said that a cherub appeared to him, 'took the measure of his chest,' and 'crucified him on the earth'). In the words of Gregory Palamas: 'If in the age to come the body will share with the soul in unspeakable blessings, it is certain that it must share in them, so far as possible, even now' (*The Tome of the Holy Mountain* (P.G. 150, 1233C).

Because Orthodox are convinced that the body is sanctified and transfigured together with the soul, they have an immense reverence for the relics of the saints. Like Roman Catholics, they believe that the grace of God present in the saints' bodies during life remains active in their relics when they have died, and that God uses these relics as a channel of divine power and an instrument of healing. In some cases the bodies of saints have been miraculously preserved from corruption, but even where this has not happened, Orthodox show just as great a veneration towards their bones. This reverence for relics is not the fruit of ignorance and superstition, but springs from a highly developed theology of the body.

Not only man's body but the whole of the material creation will eventually be transfigured: "*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away*" (Revelation 21:1). Redeemed man is not to be snatched away from the rest of creation, but creation is to be saved and glorified along with him (icons, as we have seen, are the first fruits of this redemption of matter). 'The created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed ... for the universe itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and will enter into the liberty and splendour of the children of God. We know that until now the whole created universe has been groaning in the pangs of childbirth' (Romans 8:19-22). This idea of *cosmic redemption* is based, like the Orthodox doctrine of the human body and the Orthodox doctrine of icons, upon a right understanding of the Incarnation: Christ took flesh — something from the material order — and so has made possible the redemption and metamorphosis of *all* creation — not merely the immaterial, but the physical.

This talk of deification and union, of the transfiguration of the body and of cosmic redemption, may sound very remote from the experience of ordinary Christians; but anyone who draws such a conclusion has entirely misunderstood the Orthodox conception of theosis. To prevent any such misinterpretation, six points must be made.

First, deification is not something reserved for a few select initiates, but something intended for all alike. The Orthodox Church believes that it is the normal goal for *every* Christian without exception. Certainly, we shall only be fully deified at the Last Day; but for each of us the process of divinization must begin here and now in this present life. It is true that in this present life very few indeed attain full mystical union with God. But every true Christian tries to love God and to fulfil His commandments; and so long as a man sincerely seeks to do that, then however weak his attempts may be and however often he may fall, he is already in some degree deified.

Secondly, the fact that a man is being deified does not mean that he ceases to be conscious of sin. On the contrary, deification always presupposes a continued act of repentance. A saint may be well advanced in the way of holiness, yet he does not therefore cease to employ the words of the Jesus Prayer 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, *have mercy on me a sinner.*' Father Silouan of Mount Athos used to say to himself 'Keep your mind in Hell and despair not;' other Orthodox saints have repeated the words 'All will be saved, and I alone will be condemned.' Eastern spiritual writers attach great importance to the 'gift of tears.' Orthodox mystical theology is a theology of glory and of transfiguration, but it is also a theology of penitence.

In the third place, there is nothing esoteric or extraordinary about the methods which we must follow in order to be deified. If a man asks 'How can I become god?' the answer is very simple: go to church, receive the sacraments regularly, pray to God 'in spirit and in truth,' read the Gospels, follow the commandments. The last of these items — 'follow the commandments' — must never be forgotten. Orthodoxy, no less than western Christianity, firmly rejects the kind of mysticism that seeks to dispense with moral rules.

Fourthly, deification is not a solitary but a 'social' process. We have said that deification means 'following the commandments;' and these commandments were briefly described by Christ as love of God and love of neighbour. The two forms of love are inseparable. A man can love his neighbour as himself only if he loves God above all; and a man cannot love God if he does not love his fellow men (1 John 4:20). Thus there is nothing selfish about deification; for only if he loves his neighbour can a man be deified. 'From our neighbour is life and from our neighbour is death,' said Antony of Egypt. 'If we win our neighbour we win God, but if we cause our neighbour to stumble we sin against Christ' (*Apophthegmata* (P.G. 65), Antony 9). Man, made in the image of the Trinity, can only realize the divine likeness if he lives a common life such as the Blessed Trinity lives: as the three persons of the Godhead 'dwell' in one another, so a man must 'dwell' in his fellow men, living not for himself alone, but in and for others. 'If it were possible for me to find a leper,' said one of the Desert Fathers, 'and to give him my body and to take his, I would gladly do it. For this is perfect love' (*ibid*, Agatho 26). Such is the true nature of *theosis*.

Fifthly, love of God and of other men must be practical: Orthodoxy rejects all forms of Quietism, all types of love which do not issue in action. Deification, while it includes the heights of mystical experience, has also a very prosaic and down-to-earth aspect. When we think of deification, we must think of the Hesychasts praying in silence and of Saint Seraphim with his face transfigured; but we must think also of Saint Basil caring for the sick in the hospital at Caesarea, of Saint John the Almsgiver helping the poor at Alexandria, of Saint Sergius in his filthy cloth-

ing, working as a peasant in the kitchen garden to provide the guests of the monastery with food. These are not two different ways, but one.

Finally, deification presupposes life in the Church, life in the sacraments. *Theosis* according to the likeness of the Trinity involves a common life, but only within the fellowship of the Church can this common life of coinherence be properly realized. Church and sacraments are the means appointed by God whereby man may acquire the sanctifying Spirit and be transformed into the divine likeness.

The Church of God

“Christ loved the Church, and gave himself up for it” (Eph. 5:25).

“The Church is one and the same with the Lord — His Body, of His flesh and of His bones. The Church is the living vine, nourished by Him and growing in Him. Never think of the Church apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, from the Father and the Holy Spirit” (Father John of Kronstadt).

God and His Church

An Orthodox Christian is vividly conscious of belonging to community. ‘We know that when any one of us falls,’ wrote Khomiakov, ‘he falls alone; but no one is saved alone. He is saved in the Church, as a member of it and in union with all Kitts other members (*The Church is One*, section 9).

Some of the differences between the Orthodox doctrine of the Church and those of western Christians will have become apparent in the first part of this book. Unlike Protestantism, Orthodoxy insists upon the hierarchical structure of the Church, upon the Apostolic Succession, the episcopate, and the priesthood; it prays to the saints and intercedes for the departed. Thus far Rome and Orthodoxy agree — but where Rome thinks in terms of the supremacy and the universal jurisdiction of the Pope, Orthodoxy thinks in terms of the college of bishops and of the Ecumenical Council; where Rome stresses Papal infallibility, Orthodox stress the infallibility of the Church as a whole. Doubtless neither side is entirely fair to the other, but to Orthodox it often seems that Rome envisages the Church too much in terms of earthly power and organization, while to Roman Catholics it often seems that the more spiritual and mystical doctrine of the Church held by Orthodoxy is vague, incoherent, and incomplete. Orthodox would answer that they do not neglect the earthly organization of the Church, but have many strict and minute rules, as anyone who reads the Canons can quickly discover.

Yet the Orthodox idea of the Church is certainly spiritual and mystical in this sense, that Orthodox theology never treats the earthly aspect of the Church in isolation, but thinks always of the Church in Christ and the Holy Spirit. All Orthodox thinking about the Church starts with the special relationship which exists between the Church and God. Three phrases can be used to describe this relation: the Church is 1) the Image of the Holy Trinity, 2) the Body of Christ, 3) a continued Pentecost. The Orthodox doctrine of the Church is Trinitarian, Christological, and ‘pneumatological.’

1. The Image of the Holy Trinity. Just as each man is made according to the image of the Trinitarian God, so the Church as a whole is an icon of God the Trinity, reproducing on earth the mystery of unity in diversity. In the Trinity the three are one God, yet each is fully personal; in the

Church a multitude of human persons are united in one, yet each preserves his personal diversity unimpaired. The mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity is paralleled by the coinherence of the members of the Church. In the Church there is no conflict between freedom and authority; in the Church there is unity, but no totalitarianism. When Orthodox apply the word 'Catholic' to the Church, they have in mind (among other things) this living miracle of the unity of many persons in one.

This conception of the Church as an icon of the Trinity has many further applications. 'Unity in diversity' — just as each person of the Trinity is autonomous, so the Church is made up of a number of independent Autocephalous Churches; and just as in the Trinity the three persons are equal, so in the Church no one bishop can claim to wield an absolute power over all the rest.

This idea of the Church as an icon of the Trinity also helps to understand the Orthodox emphasis upon Councils. A council is an expression of the Trinitarian nature of the Church. The mystery of unity in diversity according to the image of the Trinity can be seen in action, as the many bishops assembled council freely reach a common mind under the guidance of Spirit.

The unity of the Church is linked more particularly with the person of Christ, its diversity with the person of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Body of Christ: "*We, who are many, are one body in Christ*" (Romans 12:5). Between Christ and the Church there is the closest possible bond: in the famous phrase of Ignatius, 'where Christ is, there is the Catholic Church' (*To the Smyrnaeans*, 8:2). The Church is the extension of the Incarnation, the place where the Incarnation perpetuates itself. The Church, the Greek theologian Chrestos Androustos has written, is 'the center and organ of Christ's redeeming work; ... it is nothing else than the continuation and extension of His prophetic, priestly, and kingly power ... The Church and its Founder are inextricably bound together... The Church is Christ with us' (*Dogmatic Theology*, Athens, 1907, pp. 262-5 (in Greek)). Christ did not leave the Church when He ascended into heaven: "*Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world,*" He promised (Matt. 28:20), "*for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matthew 18:20). It is only too easy to fall into the mistake of speaking of Christ as absent:

And still the Holy Church is here

Although her Lord is gone (From a hymn by J. M. Neale).

But how can we say that Christ 'is gone,' when He has promised us His perpetual presence?

The unity between Christ and His Church is effected above all through the sacraments. At Baptism, the new Christian is buried and raised with Christ; at the Eucharist the members of Christ's Body the Church receive His Body in the sacraments. The Eucharist, by uniting the members of the Church to Christ, at the same time unites them to one another: "*We, who are many, are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread*" (1 Cor. 10:17). The Eucharist creates the unity of the Church. The Church (as Ignatius saw) is a Eucharistic society, a sacramental organism which exists — and exists in its fullness — wherever the Eucharist is celebrated. It is no coincidence that the term 'Body of Christ' should mean both the Church and the sacrament; and that the phrase *communio sanctorum* in the Apostles' Creed should mean both 'the communion of the holy people' (communion of saints) and 'the communion of the holy things' (communion in the sacraments).

The Church must be thought of primarily in sacramental terms. Its outward organization, however important, is secondary to its sacramental life.

3. A continued Pentecost. It is easy to lay such emphasis on the Church as the Body of Christ that the role of the Holy Spirit is forgotten. But, as we have said, in their work among men Son and Spirit are complementary to one another, and this is as true in the doctrine of the Church as it is elsewhere. While Ignatius said ‘where Christ is, there is the Catholic Church,’ Irenaeus wrote with equal truth ‘where the Church is, there is the Spirit, and where the Spirit is, there is the Church’ (*Against the Heresies* 3, 26, 1). The Church, precisely because it is the Body of Christ, is also the temple and dwelling place of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of freedom. While Christ unites us, the Holy Spirit ensures our infinite diversity in the Church: at Pentecost the tongues of fire were ‘cloven’ or divided, descending *separately* upon each one of those present. The gift of the Spirit is a gift to the Church, but it is at the same time a personal gift, appropriated by each in his own way. “*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:4). Life in the Church does not mean the ironing out of human variety, nor the imposition of a rigid and uniform pattern upon all alike, but the exact opposite. The saints, so far from displaying a drab monotony, have developed the most vivid and distinctive personalities. It is not holiness but evil which is dull.

Such in brief is the relation between the Church and God. This Church — the icon of the Trinity, the Body of Christ, the fullness of the Spirit — is both visible and invisible, both divine and human. It is visible, for it is composed of concrete congregations, worshipping here on earth; it is invisible, for it also includes the saints and the angels. It is human, for its earthly members are sinners; it is divine, for it is the Body of Christ. There is no separation between the visible and the invisible, between (to use western terminology) the Church militant and the Church triumphant, for the two make up a single and continuous reality. ‘The Church visible, or upon earth, lives in, complete communion and unity with the whole body of the Church, of which Christ is the Head (Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, section 9.). It stands at a point of intersection between the Present Age and the Age to Come, and it lives in both Ages at once.

Orthodoxy, therefore, while using the phrase ‘the Church visible and invisible,’ insists always that there are not two Churches, but one. As Khomiakov said: ‘It is only in relation to man that it is possible to recognize a division of the Church into visible and invisible; its unity is, in reality, true and absolute. Those who are alive on earth, those who have finished their earthly course, those who, like the angels, were not created for a life on earth, those in future generations who have not yet begun their earthly course, are all united together in one Church, in one and the same grace of God ... The Church, the Body of Christ, manifests forth and fulfils itself in time, without changing its essential unity or inward life of grace. And therefore, when we speak of ‘the Church visible and invisible,’ we so speak only in relation to man (ibid., section 1).

The Church, according to Khomiakov, is *accomplished on earth without losing its essential characteristics*; it is, in Georges Florovsky’s words, ‘the living image of eternity within time’ (‘Sobornost: the Catholicity of the Church,’ in *The Church of God*, edited by E. L. Mascall, p. 63). This is a cardinal point in Orthodox teaching. Orthodoxy does not believe merely in an ideal Church, invisible and heavenly. This ‘ideal Church’ exists visibly on earth as a concrete reality.

Yet Orthodoxy does not forget that there is a human element in the Church as well as a divine. The dogma of Chalcedon must be applied to the Church as well as to Christ. Just as Christ the God-Man has two natures, divine and human, so in the Church there is a synergy or cooperation between the divine and the human. Yet between Christ’s humanity and that of the Church

there is this obvious difference, that the one is perfect and sinless, while the other is not yet fully so. Only a part of the humanity of the Church — the saints in heaven — has attained perfection, while here on earth the Church's members often misuse their human freedom. The Church on earth exists in a state of tension: it is already the Body of Christ, and thus perfect and sinless, and yet, since its members are imperfect and sinful, it must continually become what it is ('This idea of "becoming what you are" is the key to the whole eschatological teaching of the New Testament' (Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 247)).

But the sin of man cannot affect the essential nature of the Church. We must not say that because Christians on earth sin and are imperfect, therefore the Church sins and is imperfect; for the Church, even on earth, is a thing of heaven, and cannot sin (See the *Declaration on Faith and Order* made by the Orthodox Delegates at Evanston in 1954, where this point is put very clearly). Saint Ephraim of Syria rightly spoke of 'the Church of the penitents, the Church of those who perish,' but this Church is at the same time the icon of the Trinity. How is it that the members of the Church are sinners, and yet they belong to the communion of saints? 'The mystery of the Church consists in the very fact that *together* sinners become *something different* from what they are as individuals; this "something different" is the Body of Christ' (J. Meyendorff, 'What Holds the Church Together?' in the *Ecumenical Review*, vol. 12 (1960), p. 298).

Such is the way in which Orthodoxy approaches the mystery of the Church. The Church is integrally linked with God. It is a new life according to the image of the Holy Trinity, a life in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, a life realized by participation in the sacraments. The Church is a single reality, earthly and heavenly, visible and invisible, human and divine.

The unity and infallibility of the Church

'The Church is one. Its unity follows of necessity from the unity of God' (*The Church is One*, section 1). So wrote Khomiakov in the opening words of his famous essay. If we take seriously the bond between God and His Church, then we must inevitably think of the Church as one, even as God is one: there is only one Christ, and so there can be only one Body of Christ. Nor is this unity merely ideal and invisible; Orthodox theology refuses to separate the 'invisible' and the 'visible Church,' and therefore it refuses to say that the Church is invisibly one but visibly divided. No: the Church is one, in the sense that here on earth there is a single, visible community which alone can claim to be the one true Church. The 'undivided Church' is not merely something that existed in the past, and which we hope will exist again in the future: it is something that exists here and now. Unity is one of the essential characteristics of the Church, and since the Church on earth, despite the sinfulness of its members, retains its essential characteristics, it remains and always will remain visibly one. There can be schisms *from* the Church, but no schisms *within* the Church. And while it is undeniably true that, on a purely human level, the Church's life is grievously impoverished as a result of schisms, yet such schisms cannot affect the essential nature of the Church.

In its teaching upon the visible unity of the Church, Orthodoxy stands far closer to Roman Catholicism than to the Protestant world. But if we ask how this visible unity is maintained, Rome and the east give somewhat different answers. For Rome the unifying principle in the Church is the Pope whose jurisdiction extends over the whole body, whereas Orthodox do not believe any bishop to be endowed with universal jurisdiction. What then holds the Church together? Orthodox answer, the act of communion in the sacraments. The Orthodox theology of the Church is above all else a *theology of communion*. Each local Church is constituted, as Ignatius saw, by the congregation of the faithful, gathered round their bishop and celebrating the Eucharist; the Church universal is constituted by the communion of the heads of the local Churches,

the bishops, with one another. Unity is not maintained from without by the authority of a Supreme Pontiff, but created from within by the celebration of the Eucharist. The Church is not monarchical in structure, centered round a single hierarchy; it is collegial, formed by the communion of many hierarchs with one another, and of each hierarchy with the members of his flock. The act of communion therefore forms the criterion for membership of the Church. An individual ceases to be a member of the Church if he severs communion with his bishop; a bishop ceases to be a member of the Church if he severs communion with his fellow bishops.

Orthodoxy, believing that the Church on earth has remained and must remain visibly one, naturally also believes itself to be that one visible Church. This is a bold claim, and to many it will seem an arrogant one; but this is to misunderstand the spirit in which it is made. Orthodox believe that they are the true Church, not on account of any personal merit, but by the grace of God. They say with Saint Paul: "*We are no better than pots of earthenware to contain this treasure; the sovereign power comes from God and not from us*" (2 Cor. 4:7). But while claiming no credit for themselves, Orthodox are in all humility convinced that they have received a precious and unique gift from God; and if they pretended to men that they did not possess this gift, they would be guilty of an act of betrayal in the sight of heaven.

Orthodox writers sometimes speak as if they accepted the 'Branch Theory,' once popular among High Church Anglicans. (According to this theory, the Catholic Church is divided in several 'branches;' usually three such branches are posited, the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and the Orthodox). But such a view cannot be reconciled with traditional Orthodox theology. If we are going to speak in terms of 'branches,' then from the Orthodox point of view the only branches which the Catholic Church can have are the local Autocephalous Churches of the Orthodox communion.

Claiming as it does to be the one true Church, the Orthodox Church also believes that, if it so desired, it could by itself convene and hold another Ecumenical Council, equal in authority to the first seven. Since the separation of east and west the Orthodox (unlike the west) have never in fact chosen to summon such a Council; but this does not mean that they believe themselves to lack the power to do so.

So much for the Orthodox idea of the unity of the Church. Orthodoxy also teaches that *outside the Church there is no salvation*. This belief has the same basis as the Orthodox belief in the unbreakable unity of the Church: it follows from the close relation between God and His Church. 'A man cannot have God as his Father if he does not have the Church as his Mother' (*On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, 6). So wrote Saint Cyprian; and to him this seemed an evident truth, because he could not think of God and the Church apart from one another. God is salvation, and God's saving power is mediated to man in His Body, the Church. '*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. All the categorical strength and point of this aphorism lies in its tautology. Outside the Church there is no salvation, because *salvation is the Church*' (G. Florovsky, 'Sobornost: the Catholicity of the Church,' in *The Church of God*, p. 53). Does it therefore follow that anyone who is not visibly within the Church is necessarily damned? Of course not; still less does it follow that everyone who is visibly within the Church is necessarily saved. As Augustine wisely remarked: 'How many sheep there are without, how many wolves within!' (*Homilies on John*, 45, 12) While there is no division between a 'visible' and an 'invisible Church,' yet there may be members of the Church who are not visibly such, but whose membership is known to God alone. If anyone is saved, he must in some sense be a member of the Church; in what sense, we cannot always say (On this question, see pp. 315-317).

The Church is infallible. This again follows from the indissoluble unity between God and His Church. Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot err, and since the Church is Christ's body, since it is a continued Pentecost, it is therefore infallible. It is "*the pillar and the ground of truth*" (1 Tim. 3:15). "*When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth*" (John 16:13). So Christ promised at the Last Supper; and Orthodoxy believes that Christ's promise cannot fail. In the words of Dositheus: 'We believe the Catholic Church to be taught by the Holy Spirit ... and therefore we both believe and profess as true and undoubtedly certain, that it is impossible for the Catholic Church to err, or to be at all deceived, or ever to choose falsehood instead of truth' (*Confession*, Decree 12).

The Church's infallibility is expressed chiefly through Ecumenical Councils. But before we can understand what makes a Council Ecumenical, we must consider the place of bishops and of the laity in the Orthodox communion.

Bishops, Laity, Councils

The Orthodox Church is a hierarchical Church. An essential element in its structure is the Apostolic Succession of bishops. 'The dignity of the bishop is so necessary in the Church,' wrote Dositheus, 'that without him neither the Church nor the name Christian could exist or be spoken of at all ... He is a living image of God upon earth ... and a fountain of all the sacraments of the Catholic Church, through which we obtain salvation' (*Confession*, Decree 10). 'If any are not with the bishop,' said Cyprian, 'they are not in the Church' (*Letter* 66, 8).

At his election and consecration an Orthodox bishop is endowed with the threefold power of 1) ruling, 2) teaching, and 3) celebrating the sacraments.

1. A bishop is appointed by God to guide and to rule the flock committed to his charge; he is a 'monarch' in his own diocese.

2. At his consecration a bishop receives a special gift or charisma from the Holy Spirit, in virtue of which he acts as a teacher of the faith. This ministry of teaching the bishop performs above all at the Eucharist, when he preaches the sermon to the people; when other members of the Church — priests or laymen — preach sermons, strictly speaking they act as the bishop's delegates. But although the bishop has a special *charisma*, it is always possible that he may fall into error and give false teaching: here as elsewhere the principle of synergy applies, and the divine element does not expel the human. The bishop remains a man, and as such he may make mistakes. The Church is infallible, but there is no such thing as personal infallibility.

3. The bishop, as Dositheus put it, is 'the fountain of all the sacraments.' In the primitive Church the celebrant at the Eucharist was normally the bishop, and even today a priest, when he celebrates Mass, is really acting as the bishop's deputy.

But the Church is not only hierarchical, it is charismatic and Pentecostal. "*Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings*" (1 Thes. 5:19-20). The Holy Spirit is poured out upon all God's people. There is a special ordained ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons; yet at the same time the whole people of God are prophets and priests. In the Apostolic Church, besides the institutional ministry conferred by the laying on of hands, there were other *charismata* or gifts conferred directly by the Spirit: Paul mentions 'gifts of healing,' the working of miracles, "*speaking with tongues*," and the like (1 Cor. 12:28-30). In the Church of later days, these charismatic ministries have been less in evidence, but they have never been wholly extinguished. One

thinks, for example, of the ministry of 'eldership,' so prominent in nineteenth-century Russia; this is not imparted by a special act of ordination, but can be exercised by the layman as well as by priest or bishop. Seraphim of Sarov and the *starsi* of Optino exercised an influence far greater than any hierarchy.

This 'spiritual,' non-institutional aspect of the Church's life has been particularly emphasized by certain recent theologians in the Russian emigration; but it is also stressed by Byzantine writers, most notably Symeon the New Theologian. More than once in Orthodox history the 'charismatics' have come into conflict with the hierarchy, but in the end there is no contradiction between the two elements in the Church's life: it is the same Spirit who is active in both.

We have called the bishop a ruler and monarch, but these terms are not to be understood in a harsh and impersonal sense; for in exercising his powers the bishop is guided by the Christian law of love. He is not a tyrant but a father to his flock. The Orthodox attitude to the episcopal office is well expressed in the prayer used at a consecration: 'Grant, O Christ, that this man, who has been appointed a steward of the Episcopal grace, may become an imitator of thee, the True Shepherd, by laying down his life for thy sheep. Make him a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, a teacher to the unreasonable, an instructor to the foolish, a flaming torch in the world; so that having brought to perfection the souls entrusted to him in this present life, he may stand without confusion before thy judgment seat, and receive the great reward which thou hast prepared for those who have suffered for the preaching of thy Gospel.'

The authority of the bishop is fundamentally the authority of the Church. However great the prerogatives of the bishop may be, he is not someone set up *over* the Church, but the holder of an office *in* the Church. Bishop and people are joined in an organic unity, and neither can properly be thought of apart from the other. Without bishops there can be no Orthodox people, but without Orthodox people there can be no true bishop. 'The Church,' said Cyprian, 'is the people united to the bishop, the flock clinging to its shepherd. The bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop' (*Letter* 66, 8).

The relation between the bishop and his flock is a mutual one. The bishop is the divinely appointed *teacher* of the faith, but the *guardian* of the faith is not the episcopate alone, but the whole people of God, bishops, clergy, and laity together. The proclamation of the truth is not the same as the possession of the truth: all the people possess the truth, but it is the bishop's particular office to proclaim it. Infallibility belongs to the whole Church, not just to the episcopate in isolation. As the Orthodox Patriarchs said in their Letter of 1848 to Pope Pius the Ninth: 'Among us, neither Patriarchs nor Councils could ever introduce new teaching, for the guardian of religion is the very body of the Church, that is, the people (*laos*) itself.'

Commenting on this statement, Khomiakov wrote: 'The Pope is greatly mistaken in supposing that we consider the ecclesiastical hierarchy to be the guardian of dogma. The case is quite different. The unvarying constancy and the unerring truth of Christian dogma does not depend upon any hierarchical order; it is guarded by the totality, by the whole people of the Church, which is the Body of Christ' (*Letter* in W. J. Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church*, p. 94).

This conception of the laity and their place in the Church must be kept in mind when considering the nature of an Ecumenical Council. The laity are guardians and not teachers; therefore, although they may attend a council and take an active part in the proceedings (as Constantine and other Byzantine Emperors did), yet when the moment comes for the council to make a formal proclamation of the faith, it is the bishops alone who, in virtue of their teaching *charisma*, take the final decision.

But councils of bishops can err and be deceived. How then can one be certain that a particular gathering is truly an Ecumenical Council and therefore that its decrees are infallible? Many councils have considered themselves ecumenical and have claimed to speak in the name of the whole Church, and yet the Church has rejected them as heretical: Ephesus in 449, for example, or the Iconoclast Council of Hieria in 754, or Florence in 1438-9. Yet these councils seem in no way different in outward appearance from the Ecumenical Councils. What, then, is the criterion for determining whether a council is ecumenical?

This is a more difficult question to answer than might at first appear, and though it has been much discussed by Orthodox during the past hundred years, it cannot be said that the solutions suggested are entirely satisfactory. All Orthodox know which are the seven Councils that their Church accepts as ecumenical, but precisely what it is that makes a council ecumenical is not so clear. There are, so it must be admitted, certain points in the Orthodox theology of Councils which remain obscure and which call for further thinking on the part of theologians. With this caution in mind, let us briefly consider the present trend of Orthodox thought on this subject.

To the question how one can know whether a council is ecumenical, Khomiakov and his school gave an answer which at first sight appears clear and straightforward: a council cannot be considered ecumenical unless its decrees are accepted by the whole Church. Florence, Hieria, and the rest, while ecumenical in outward appearance, are not truly so, precisely because they failed to secure this acceptance by the Church at large. (One might object: What about Chalcedon? It was rejected by Syria and Egypt — can we say, then, that it was ‘accepted by the Church at large’?) The bishops, so Khomiakov argued, because they are the teachers of the faith, define and proclaim the truth in council; but these definitions must then be acclaimed by the whole people of God, including the laity, because it is the whole people of God that constitutes the guardian of Tradition. This emphasis on the need for councils to be received by the Church at large has been viewed with suspicion by some Orthodox theologians, both Greek and Russian, who fear that Khomiakov and his followers have endangered the prerogatives of the episcopate and ‘democratized’ the idea of the Church. But in a qualified and carefully guarded form, Khomiakov’s view is now fairly widely accepted in contemporary Orthodox thought.

This act of acceptance, this reception of councils by the Church as a whole, must not be understood in a juridical sense: ‘It does not mean that the decisions of the councils should be confirmed by a general plebiscite and that without such a plebiscite they have no force. There is no such plebiscite. But from historical experience it clearly appears that the voice of a given council has truly been the voice of the Church or that it has not: that is all’ (S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 89).

At a true Ecumenical Council the bishops recognize what the truth is and proclaim it; this proclamation is then verified by the assent of the whole Christian people, an assent which is not, a rule, expressed formally and explicitly, but *lived*.

It is not merely the numbers or the distribution of its members which determines the ecumenicity of a council: ‘An ‘Ecumenical’ Council is such, not because accredited representatives of all the Autocephalous Churches have taken part in it, but because it has borne witness to the faith of the Ecumenical Church’ (Metropolitan Seraphim, *L’Église orthodoxe*, p. 51).

The ecumenicity of a council cannot be decided by outward criteria alone: ‘Truth can have no external criterion, for it is manifest of itself and made inwardly plain’ (V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 188). The infallibility of the Church must not be ‘exteriorized,’ nor understood in too ‘material’ a sense: ‘It is not the ‘ecumenicity’ but the truth of the councils which makes their decisions obligatory for us. We touch here upon the fundamental mystery of the Orthodox doctrine of the Church: the Church is the miracle of the presence of God among

men, beyond all formal ‘criteria,’ all formal ‘infallibility.’ It is not enough to summon an ‘Ecumenical Council’ ... it is also necessary that in the midst of those so assembled there should be present He who said: “*I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.*” Without this presence, however numerous and representative the assembly may be, it will not be in the truth. Protestants and Catholics usually fail to understand this fundamental truth of Orthodoxy: both materialize the presence of God in the Church — the one party in the *letter* of Scripture, the other in the *person* of the Pope — though they do not thereby avoid the miracle, but clothe it in a concrete form. For Orthodoxy, the sole ‘criterion of truth’ remains God Himself, living mysteriously in the Church, leading it in the way of the Truth’ (J. Meyendorff, quoted by M. J. le Guillou, *Missio et Unité*, Paris, 1960, vol. 2, p. 313).

The living and the dead:

The Mother of God

In God and in His Church there is no division between the living and the departed, but all are one in the love of the Father. Whether we are alive or whether we are dead, as members of the Church we still belong to the same family, and still have a duty to bear one another’s burdens. Therefore just as Orthodox Christians here on earth pray for one another and ask for one another’s prayers, so they pray also for the faithful departed and ask the faithful departed to pray for them. Death cannot sever the bond of mutual love which links the members of the Church together.

Prayers for the Departed. ‘With the saints give rest, O Christ, to the souls of thy servants, where there is neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor sighing, but life everlasting.’ So the Orthodox Church prays for the faithful departed; and again: ‘O God of spirits and of all flesh, who hast trampled down death and overthrown the Devil, and given life unto Thy world: Do thou, the same Lord, give rest to the souls of Thy departed servants, in a place of light, refreshment, and repose, whence all pain, sorrow, and sighing have fled away. Pardon every transgression which they have committed, whether by word or deed or thought.’

Orthodox are convinced that Christians here on earth have a duty to pray for the departed, and they are confident that the dead are helped by such prayers. But precisely in what way do our prayers help the dead? What exactly is the condition of souls in the period between death and the Resurrection of the Body at the Last Day? Here Orthodox teaching is not entirely clear, and has varied somewhat at different times. In the seventeenth century a number of Orthodox writers — most notably Peter of Moghila and Dositheus in his *Confession* — upheld the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, or something very close to it (According to the normal Roman teaching, souls in Purgatory undergo expiatory suffering, and so render ‘satisfaction’ or ‘atonement’ for their sins. It should be remarked, however, that even in the seventeenth century there were many Orthodox who rejected the Roman teaching on Purgatory. The statements on the departed in Moghila’s *Orthodox Confession* were carefully changed by Meletius Syrigos, while in later life Dositheus specifically retracted what he had written on the subject in his *Confession*). Today most if not all Orthodox theologians reject the idea of Purgatory, at any rate in this form. The majority would be inclined to say that the faithful departed do not suffer at all. Another school holds that perhaps they suffer, but, if so, their suffering is of a purificatory but not an expiatory character; for when a man dies in the grace of God, then God freely forgives him all his sins and demands no expiatory penalties: Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, is our *only* atonement and satisfaction. Yet a third group would prefer to leave the whole question entirely open: let us avoid detailed formulation about the life after death, they say, and preserve instead a reverent and agnostic reticence. When Saint Antony of Egypt was

once worrying about divine providence, a voice came to him, saying: ‘Antony, attend to yourself; for these are the judgments of God, and it is not for you to know them’ (*Apophthegmata* (P.G. 65), Antony, 2).

The Saints. Symeon the New Theologian describes the saints as forming a golden chain: ‘The Holy Trinity, pervading all men from first to last, from head to foot, binds them all together ... The saints in each generation, joined to those who have gone before, and filled like them with light, become a golden chain, in which each saint is a separate link, united to the next by faith, works, and love. So in the One God they form a single chain which cannot quickly be broken’ (*Centuries*, 3, 2-4). Such is the Orthodox idea of the communion of saints. This chain is a chain of mutual love and prayer; and in this loving prayer the members of the Church on earth, ‘called to be saints,’ have their place.

In private an Orthodox Christian is free to ask for the prayers of any member of the Church, whether canonized or not. It would be perfectly normal for an Orthodox child, if orphaned, to end his evening prayers by asking for the intercessions not only of the Mother of God and the saints, but of his own mother and father. In its public worship, however, the Church usually prays only to those whom it has officially proclaimed as saints; but in exceptional circumstances a public cult may become established without any formal act of canonization. The Greek Church under the Ottoman Empire soon began to commemorate the New Martyrs in its worship, but to avoid the notice of the Turks there was usually no official act of proclamation: the cult of the New Martyrs was in most cases something that arose spontaneously under popular initiative. The same thing has happened in recent years with the New Martyrs of Russia: in certain places, both within and outside the Soviet Union, they have begun to be honoured as saints in the Church’s worship, but present conditions in the Russian Church make a formal canonization impossible.

Reverence for the saints is closely bound up with the veneration of icons. These are placed by Orthodox not only in their churches, but in each room of their homes, and even in cars and buses. These ever-present icons act as a point of meeting between the living members of the Church and those who have gone before. Icons help Orthodox to look on the saints not as remote and legendary figures from the past, but as contemporaries and personal friends.

At Baptism an Orthodox is given the name of a saint, ‘as a symbol of his entry into the unity of the Church which is not only the earthly Church, but also the Church in heaven’ (P. Kovalevsky, *Exposé de la foi catholique orthodoxe*, Paris, 1957, p. 16). An Orthodox has a special devotion to the saint whose name he bears; he usually keeps an icon of his patron saint in his room, and prays daily to him. The festival of his patron saint he keeps as his *Name Day*, and to most Orthodox (as to most Roman Catholics in continental Europe) this is a date far more important than one’s actual birthday.

An Orthodox Christian prays not only to the saints but to the angels, and in particular to his guardian angel. The angels ‘fence us around with their intercessions and shelter us under their protecting wings of immaterial glory’ (From the Dismissal Hymn for the Feast of the Archangels (8 November)).

The Mother of God. Among the saints a special position belongs to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom Orthodox reverence as the most exalted among God’s creatures, ‘more honourable than the cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the seraphim’ (From the hymn *Meet it is*, sung at the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom). Note that we have termed her ‘most exalted among God’s creatures.’ Orthodox, like Roman Catholics, venerate or honour the Mother of God, but in no sense do the members of either Church regard her as a fourth person of the Trinity, nor do they assign

to her the *worship* due to God alone. In Greek theology the distinction is very clearly marked: there is a special word, *latreia*, reserved for the worship of God, while for the veneration of the Virgin entirely different terms are employed (*duleia*, *hyperduleia*, *proskynesis*).

In Orthodox services Mary is often mentioned, and on each occasion she is usually given her full title: 'Our All-Holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.' Here are included the three chief epithets applied to Our Lady by the Orthodox Church: *Theotokos* (Mother of God), *Aeiparthenos* (Ever-Virgin), and *Panagia* (All-Holy). The first of these titles was assigned to her by the third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431), the second by the fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 553). (Belief in the Perpetual Virginity of Mary may seem at first sight contrary to Scripture, since Mark 3:31 mentions the 'brothers' of Christ. But the word used here in Greek can mean half-brother, cousin, or near relative, as well as brother in the strict sense). The title *Panagia*, although never a subject of dogmatic definition, is accepted and used by all Orthodox.

The appellation *Theotokos* is of particular importance, for it provides the key to the Orthodox cult of the Virgin. We honour Mary because she is the Mother of our God. We do not venerate her in isolation, but because of her relation to Christ. Thus the reverence shown to Mary, so far from eclipsing the worship of God, has exactly the opposite effect: the more we esteem Mary, the more vivid is our awareness of the majesty of her Son, for it is precisely on account of the Son that we venerate the Mother.

We honour the Mother on account of the Son: Mariology is simply an extension of Christology. The Fathers of the Council of Ephesus insisted on calling Mary *Theotokos*, not because they desired to glorify her as an end in herself, apart from her Son, but because only by honouring Mary could they safeguard a right doctrine of Christ's person. Anyone who thinks out the implications of that great phrase, *The Word was made flesh*, cannot but feel a certain awe for her who was chosen as the instrument of so surpassing a mystery. When men refuse to honour Mary, only too often it is because they do not really believe in the Incarnation.

But Orthodox honour Mary, not only because she is *Theotokos*, but because she is *Panagia*, All-Holy. Among all God's Creatures, she is the supreme example of synergy or cooperation between the purpose of the deity and the free will of man. God, who always respects human liberty, did not wish to become incarnate without the free consent of His Mother. He Waited for her voluntary response: "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38). Mary could have refused; she was not merely passive, but an active participant in the mystery. As Nicholas Cabasilas said: 'The Incarnation was not only the work of the Father, of His Power and His Spirit ... but it was also the work of the will and faith of the Virgin ... Just as God became incarnate voluntarily, so He wished that His Mother should bear Him freely and with her full consent' (*On the Annunciation*, 4-5 (*Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 19, Paris, 1926, p. 488)).

If Christ is the New Adam, Mary is the New Eve, whose willing submission to the will of God counterbalanced Eve's disobedience in Paradise. 'So the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed through the obedience of Mary; for what Eve, a Virgin, bound by her unbelief, that Mary, a virgin, unloosed by her faith' (Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3, 22, 4). 'Death by Eve, life by Mary' (Jerome, *Letter* 22, 21).

The Orthodox Church calls Mary 'All-Holy'; it calls her 'immaculate' or 'spotless' (in Greek, *achrantos*); and all Orthodox are agreed in believing that Our Lady was free from actual sin. But was she also free from original sin? In other words, does Orthodoxy agree with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed as a dogma by Pope Pius the Ninth in 1854, according to which Mary, from the moment she was conceived by her mother Saint Anne, was by God's special decree delivered from 'all stain of original sin?' The Orthodox Church has never in fact made any formal and definitive pronouncement on the matter. In the

past individual Orthodox have made statements which, if not definitely affirming the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, at any rate approach close to it; but since 1854 the great majority of Orthodox have rejected the doctrine, for several reasons. They feel it to be unnecessary; they feel that, at any rate as defined by the Roman Catholic Church, it implies a false understanding of original sin; they suspect the doctrine because it seems to separate Mary from the rest of the descendants of Adam, putting her in a completely different class from all the other righteous men and women of the Old Testament. From the Orthodox point of view, however, the whole question belongs to the realm of theological opinion; and if an individual Orthodox today felt impelled to believe in the Immaculate Conception, he could not be termed a heretic for so doing.

But Orthodoxy, while for the most part denying the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, firmly believes in her Bodily Assumption (Immediately after the Pope proclaimed the Assumption as a dogma in 1950, a few Orthodox (by way of reaction against the Roman Catholic Church) began to express doubts about the Bodily Assumption and even explicitly to deny it; but they are certainly not representative of the Orthodox Church as a whole). Like the rest of mankind, Our Lady underwent physical death, but in her case the Resurrection of the Body has been anticipated: after death her body was taken up or ‘assumed’ into heaven and her tomb was found to be empty. She has passed beyond death and judgement, and lives already in the Age to Come. Yet she is not thereby utterly separated from the rest of humanity, for that same bodily glory which Mary enjoys now, all of us hope one day to share.

Belief in the Assumption of the Mother of God is clearly and unambiguously affirmed in the hymns sung by the Church on 15 August, the Feast of the ‘Dormition’ or ‘Falling Asleep.’ But Orthodoxy, unlike Rome, has never proclaimed the Assumption as a dogma, nor would it ever wish to do so. The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation have been proclaimed as dogmas, for they belong to the public preaching of the Church; but the glorification of Our Lady belongs to the Church’s inner Tradition: ‘It is hard to speak and not less hard to think about the mysteries which the Church keeps in the hidden depths of her inner consciousness ... The Mother of God was never a theme of the public preaching of the Apostles; while Christ was preached on the housetops, and proclaimed for all to know in an initiatory teaching addressed to the whole world, the mystery of his Mother was revealed only to those who were within the Church ... It is not so much an object of faith as a foundation of our hope, a fruit of faith, ripened in Tradition. Let us therefore keep silence, and let us not try to dogmatize about the supreme glory of the Mother of God’ (V. Lossky, ‘Panagia,’ in *The Mother of God*, edited by E. L. Mascall, p. 35).

The last things

For the Christian there exist but two ultimate alternatives, Heaven and Hell. The Church awaits the final consummation of the end, which in Greek theology is termed the *apocatastasis* or ‘restoration,’ when Christ will return in great glory to judge both the living and the dead. This final *apocatastasis* involves, as we have seen, the redemption and the glorification of matter: at the Last Day the righteous will rise from the grave and be united once more to a body — not such a body as we now possess, but one that is transfigured and ‘spiritual,’ in which inward sanctity is made outwardly manifest. And not only man’s body but the whole material order will be transformed: God will create a New Heaven and a New Earth.

But Hell exists as well as Heaven. In recent years many Christians — not only in the west, but at times also in the Orthodox Church — have come to feel that the idea of Hell is inconsistent with belief in a loving God. But to argue thus is to display a sad and perilous confusion of thought. While it is true that God loves us with an infinite love, it is also true that He has given us free will; and since we have free will, it is possible for us to reject God. Since free will exists,

Hell exists; for Hell is nothing else than the rejection of God. If we deny Hell, we deny free will. ‘No one is so good and full of pity as God,’ wrote Mark the Monk or Hermit (early fifth century); ‘but even He does not forgive those who do not repent’ (*On those who think to be justified from works*, 71 (P.G. 65, 940D). God will not force us to love Him, for love is no longer love if it is not free; how then can God reconcile to Himself those who refuse all reconciliation?

The Orthodox attitude towards the Last Judgment and Hell is clearly expressed in the choice of Gospel readings at the Liturgy on three successive Sundays shortly before Lent. On the first Sunday is read the parable of the Publican and Pharisee, on the second the parable of the Prodigal Son, stories which illustrate the immense forgiveness and mercy of God towards all sinners who repent. But in the Gospel for the third Sunday — the parable of the Sheep and the Goats — we are reminded of the other truth: that it is possible to reject God and to turn away from Him to Hell. “*Then shall He say to those on the left hand, The curse of God is upon you, go from my sight into everlasting fire*” (Matt. 25:41).

There is no terrorism in the Orthodox doctrine of God. Orthodox Christians do not cringe before Him in abject fear, but think of Him as *philanthropos*, the ‘lover of men.’ Yet they keep in mind that Christ at His Second Coming will come as judge.

Hell is not so much a place where God imprisons man, as a place where man, by misusing his free will, chooses to imprison himself. And even in Hell the wicked are not deprived of the love of God, but by their own choice they experience as suffering what the saints experience as joy. ‘The love of God will be an intolerable torment for those who have not acquired it within themselves’ (V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 234).

Hell exists as a final possibility, but several of the Fathers have none the less believed that in the end all will be reconciled to God. It is heretical to say that all *must* be saved, for this is to deny free will; but it is legitimate to hope that all *may* be saved. Until the Last Day comes, we must not despair of anyone’s salvation, but must long and pray for the reconciliation of all without exception. No one must be excluded from our loving intercession. ‘What is a merciful heart?’ asked Isaac the Syrian. ‘It is a heart that burns with love for the whole of creation, for men, for the birds, for the beasts, *for the demons*, for all creatures’ (*Mystic Treatises*, edited by A. J. Wensinck, Amsterdam, 1923, p. 341). Gregory of Nyssa said that Christians may legitimately hope even for the redemption of the Devil.

The Bible ends upon a note of keen expectation: “*Surely I am coming quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Rev. 22:20). In the same spirit of eager hope the primitive Christians used to pray: ‘Let grace come and let this world pass away’ (*Didache*, 10, 6). From one point of view the first Christians were wrong: they imagined that the end of the world would occur almost immediately, whereas in fact two millennia have passed and still the end has not yet come. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, and perhaps this present order will last for many millennia more. Yet from another point of view the primitive Church was right. For whether the end comes early or late, it is always imminent, always spiritually close at hand, even though it may not be temporally close. The Day of the Lord will come “*as a thief in the night*” (1 Thess. 5:2) at an hour when men expect it not. Christians, therefore, as in Apostolic times, so today must always be prepared, waiting in constant expectation. One of the most encouraging signs of revival in contemporary Orthodoxy is the renewed awareness among many Orthodox of the Second Coming and its relevance. ‘When a pastor on a visit to Russia asked what is the burning problem of the Russian Church, a priest replied without hesitation: the *Parousia* (P. Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie*, p. 9 (*Parousia*: the Greek term for the Second Coming)).

Yet the Second Coming is not simply an event in the future, for in the life of the Church, the Age to Come has already begun to break through into this present age. For members of God’s

Church, the ‘Last Times’ are already inaugurated, since here and now Christians enjoy the first fruits of God’s Kingdom. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* He comes already — in the Holy Liturgy and the worship of the Church.

Orthodox Worship: The Earthly Heaven

“The church is the earthly heaven in which the heavenly God dwells and moves” (Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, died 733).

Doctrine and worship

There is a story in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* of how Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, while still a pagan, desired to know which was the true religion, and therefore sent his followers to visit the various countries of the world in turn. They went first to the Moslem Bulgars of the Volga, but observing that these when they prayed gazed around them like men possessed, the Russians continued on their way dissatisfied. ‘There is no joy among them,’ they reported to Vladimir, ‘but mournfulness and a great smell; and there is nothing good about their system.’ Traveling next to Germany and Rome, they found the worship more satisfactory, but complained that here too it was without beauty. Finally they journeyed to Constantinople, and here at last, as they attended the Divine Liturgy in the great Church of the Holy Wisdom, they discovered what they desired. ‘We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty.’

In this story can be seen several features characteristic of Orthodox Christianity. There is first the emphasis upon divine beauty: *we cannot forget that beauty*. It has seemed to many that the peculiar gift of Orthodox peoples — and especially of Byzantium and Russia — is this power of perceiving the beauty of the spiritual world, and expressing this celestial beauty in their worship.

In the second place it is characteristic that the Russians should have said, *we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth*. Worship, for the Orthodox Church, is nothing else than ‘heaven on earth.’ The Holy Liturgy is something that embraces two worlds at once, for both in heaven and on earth the Liturgy is one and the same — one altar, one sacrifice, one presence. In every place of worship, however humble its outward appearance, as the faithful gather to perform the Eucharist, they are taken up into the ‘heavenly places;’ in every place of worship when the Holy Sacrifice is offered, not merely the local congregation are present, but the Church universal — the saints, the angels, the Mother of God, and Christ himself. ‘Now the celestial powers are present with us, and worship invisibly’ (Words sung at the Great Entrance in the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified). *This we know, that God dwells there among men.*

Orthodox, inspired by this vision of ‘heaven on earth,’ have striven to make their worship in outward splendour and beauty an icon of the great Liturgy in heaven. In the year 612, on the staff

of the Church of the Holy Wisdom, there were 80 priests, 150 deacons, 40 deaconesses, 70 subdeacons, 160 readers, 25 cantors, and 100 doorkeepers: this gives some faint idea of the magnificence of the service which Vladimir's envoys attended. But many who have experienced Orthodox worship under very different outward surroundings have felt, no less than those Russians from Kiev, a sense of God's presence among men. Turn, for example, from the Russian Primary Chronicle to the letter of an Englishwoman, written in 1935: 'This morning was so queer. A very grimy and sordid Presbyterian mission hall in a mews over a garage, where the Russians are allowed once a fortnight to have the Liturgy. A very stage property iconostasis and a few modern icons. A dirty floor to kneel on and a form along the wall ... And in this two superb old priests and a deacon, clouds of incense and, at the Anaphora, overwhelming supernatural impression' (*The Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, p. 2.18).

There is yet a third characteristic of Orthodoxy which the story of Vladimir's envoys illustrates. When they wanted to discover the true faith, the Russians did not ask about moral rules nor demand a reasoned statement of doctrine, but watched the different nations at prayer. The Orthodox approach to religion is fundamentally a liturgical approach, which understands doctrine in the context of divine worship: it is no coincidence that the word 'Orthodoxy' should signify alike right belief and right worship, for the two things are inseparable. It has been truly said of the Byzantines: 'Dogma with them is not only an intellectual system apprehended by the clergy and expounded to the laity, but a field of vision wherein all things on earth are seen in their relation to things in heaven, first and foremost through liturgical celebration' (G. Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate*, first edition, p. 9). In the words of Georges Florovsky: 'Christianity is a liturgical religion. The Church is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second' ('The Elements of Liturgy in the Orthodox Catholic Church,' in the periodical *One Church*, vol. 13 (New York, 1959), nos. 1-2, p. 24). Those who wish to know about Orthodoxy should not so much read books as follow the sample of Vladimir's retinue and attend the Liturgy. As Philip said to Nathanael: "Come and see" (John 1:46).

Because they approach religion in this liturgical way, Orthodox often attribute to minute points of ritual an importance which astonishes western Christians. But once we have understood the central place of worship in the life of Orthodoxy, an incident such as the schism of the Old Believers will no longer appear entirely unintelligible: if worship is the faith in action, then liturgical changes cannot be lightly regarded. It is typical that a Russian writer of the fifteenth century, when attacking the Council of Florence, should find fault with the Latins, not for any errors in doctrine, but for their behaviour in worship: 'What have you seen of worth among the Latins? They do not even know how to venerate the church of God. They raise their voices as the fools, and their singing is a discordant wail. They have no idea of beauty and reverence in worship, for they strike trombones, blow horns, use organs, wave their hands, trample with their feet, and do many other irreverent and disorderly things which bring joy to the devil' (Quoted in N. Zernov, *Moscow the Third Rome*, p. 37; I cite this passage simply as an example of the liturgical approach of Orthodoxy, without necessarily endorsing the strictures on western worship which it contains!).

Orthodoxy sees man above all else as a liturgical creature who is most truly himself when he glorifies God, and who finds his perfection and self-fulfilment in worship. Into the Holy Liturgy which expresses their faith, the Orthodox peoples have poured their whole religious experience. It is the Liturgy which has inspired their best poetry, art, and music. Among Orthodox, the Liturgy has never become the preserve of the learned and the clergy, as it tended to be in the medieval west, but it has remained *popular* — the common possession of the whole Christian people: 'The normal Orthodox lay worshipper, through familiarity from earliest childhood, is entirely at home in church, thoroughly conversant with the audible parts of the Holy Liturgy, and

takes part with unconscious and unstudied ease in the action of the rite, to an extent only shared in by the hyper-devout and ecclesiastically minded in the west' (Austin Oakley, *The Orthodox Liturgy*, London, 1958, p. 12).

In the dark days of their history — under the Mongols, the Turks, or the communists — it is to the Holy Liturgy that the Orthodox peoples have always turned for inspiration and new hope; nor have they turned in vain.

The outward setting of the services:

Priest and people

The basic pattern of services is the same in the Orthodox as in the Roman Catholic Church: there is, first, the Holy *Liturgy* (the Eucharist or Mass); secondly, the *Divine Office* (i.e. the two chief offices of Matins and Vespers, together with the six 'Lesser Hours' of Nocturns, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, and Compline) (In the Roman rite Nocturns is a part of Matins, but in the Byzantine rite Nocturns is a separate service. Byzantine Matins is equivalent to Matins and Lauds in the Roman rite); and thirdly, the *Occasional Offices* — i.e. services intended for special occasions, such as Baptism, Marriage, Monastic Profession, Royal Coronation, Consecration of a Church, Burial of the Dead. (In addition to these, the Orthodox Church makes use of a great variety of lesser blessings).

While in many Anglican and almost all Roman Catholic parish churches, the Eucharist is celebrated daily, in the Orthodox Church today a daily Liturgy is not usual except in cathedrals and large monasteries; in a normal parish church it is celebrated only on Sundays and feasts. But in contemporary Russia, where places of worship are few and many Christians are obliged to work on Sundays, a daily Liturgy has become the practice in many town parishes.

The Divine Office is recited daily in monasteries, large and small, and in some cathedrals; also in a number of town parishes in Russia. But in an ordinary Orthodox parish church it is sung only at week-ends and on feasts. Greek churches hold Vespers on Saturday night, and Matins on Sunday morning before the Liturgy; in Russian parishes Matins is usually 'anticipated' and sung immediately after Vespers on Saturday night, so that Vespers and Matins, followed by Prime, together constitute what is termed the 'Vigil Service' or the 'All-Night Vigil.' Thus while western Christians, if they worship in the evening, tend to do so on Sundays, Orthodox Christians worship on the evening of Saturdays.

In its services the Orthodox Church uses the language of the people: Arabic at Antioch, Finnish at Helsinki, Japanese at Tokyo, English (when required) at New York. One of the first tasks of Orthodox missionaries — from Cyril and Methodius in the ninth century, to Innocent Veniaminov and Nicholas Kassatkin in the nineteenth — has always been to translate the service books into native tongues. In practice, however, there are partial exceptions to this general principle of using the vernacular: the Greek-speaking Churches employ, not modern Greek, but the Greek of New Testament and Byzantine times, while the Russian Church still uses the ninth-century translations in Church Slavonic. Yet in both cases the difference between the liturgical language and the contemporary vernacular is not so great as to make the service unintelligible to the congregation. In 1906 many Russian bishops in fact recommended that Church Slavonic be replaced more or less generally by modern Russian, but the Bolshevik Revolution occurred before this scheme could be carried into effect.

In the Orthodox Church today, as in the early Church, all services are sung or chanted. There is no Orthodox equivalent to the Roman 'Low Mass' or to the Anglican 'Said Celebration.' At every Liturgy, as at every Matins and Vespers, incense is used and the service is sung, even though there may be no choir or congregation, but the priest and a single reader alone. In

their Church music the Greek-speaking Orthodox continue to use the ancient Byzantine plain-chant, with its eight 'tones.' This plain-chant the Byzantine missionaries took with them into the Slavonic lands, but over the centuries it has become extensively modified, and the various Slavonic Churches have each developed their own style and tradition of ecclesiastical music. Of these traditions the Russian is the best known and the most immediately attractive to western ears; many consider Russian Church music the finest in all Christendom, and alike in the Soviet Union and in the emigration there are justly celebrated Russian choirs. Until very recent times all singing in Orthodox churches was usually done by the choir; today, a small but increasing number of parishes in Greece, Russia, Romania, and the Diaspora are beginning to revive congregational singing — if not throughout the service, then at any rate at special moments such as the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

In the Orthodox Church today, as in the early Church, singing is unaccompanied and instrumental music is not found, except among certain Orthodox in America — particularly the Greeks — who are now showing a *penchant* for the organ or the harmonium. Most Orthodox do not use hand or sanctuary bells inside the church; but they have outside belfries, and take great delight in ringing the bells not only before but at various moments during the service itself. Russian bell-ringing used to be particularly famous. 'Nothing,' wrote Paul of Aleppo during his visit to Moscow in 1655, 'nothing affected me so much as the united clang of all the bells on the eves of Sundays and great festivals, and at midnight before the festivals. The earth shook with their vibrations, and like thunder the drone of their voices went up to the skies.' 'They rang the brazen bells after their custom. May God not be startled at the noisy pleasantness of their sounds' (*The Travels of Macarius*, edited Ridding, p. 27 and p. 6).

An Orthodox Church is usually more or less square in plan, with a wide central space covered by a dome. (In Russia the Church dome has assumed that striking onion shape which forms so characteristic a feature of every Russian landscape). The elongated naves and chancels, common in cathedrals and larger parish churches of the Gothic style, are not found in eastern church architecture. There are as a rule no chairs or pews in the central part of the church, although there may be benches or stalls along the walls. An Orthodox normally stands during Church services (non-Orthodox visitors are often astonished to see old women remaining on their feet for several hours without apparent signs of fatigue); but there are moments when the congregation can sit or kneel. Canon 20 of the first ecumenical Council forbids all kneeling on Sundays or on any of the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost; but today this rule is unfortunately not always strictly observed.

It is a remarkable thing how great a difference the presence or absence of pews can make to the whole spirit of Christian worship. There is in Orthodox worship a flexibility, an unselfconscious informality, not found among western congregations, at any rate north of the Alps. Western worshippers, ranged in their neat rows, each in his proper place, cannot move about during the service without causing a disturbance; a western congregation is generally expected to arrive at the beginning and to stay to the end. But in Orthodox worship people can come and go far more freely, and nobody is greatly surprised if one moves about during the service. The same informality and freedom also characterizes the behavior of the clergy: ceremonial movements are not so minutely prescribed as in the west, priestly gestures are less stylized and more natural. This informality, while it can lead at times to irreverence, is in the end a precious quality which Orthodox would be most sorry to lose. They are at home in their church — not troops on a parade ground, but children in their Father's house. Orthodox worship is often termed 'other-worldly,' but could more truly be described as 'homely:' it is a *family* affair. Yet behind this homeliness and informality there lies a deep sense of mystery.

In every Orthodox Church the sanctuary is divided from the rest of the interior by the *iconostasis*, a solid screen, usually of wood, covered with panel icons. In early days the chancel was separated merely by a low screen three or four feet high. Sometimes this screen was surmounted by an open series of columns supporting a horizontal beam or architrave: a screen of this kind can still be seen at Saint Mark's, Venice. Only in comparatively recent times — in many places not until the fifteenth or sixteenth century — was the space between these columns filled up, and the iconostasis given its present solid form. Many Orthodox liturgists today would be glad to follow Father John of Kronstadt's example, and revert to a more open type of iconostasis; in a few places this has actually been done.

The iconostasis is pierced by three doors. The large door in the center — the *Holy Door* — when opened affords a view through to the altar. This doorway is closed by double gates, behind which hangs a curtain. Outside service time, except during Easter week, the gates are kept closed and the curtain drawn. During services, at particular moments the gates are sometimes open, sometimes closed, while occasionally when the gates are closed the curtain is drawn across as well. Many Greek parishes, however, now no longer close the gates or draw the curtain at any point in the Liturgy; in a number of churches the gates have been removed altogether, while other churches have followed a course which is liturgically far more correct keeping the gates, but removing the curtain. Of the two other doors, that on the left leads into the 'chapel' of the *Prothesis* or Preparation (here the sacred vessels are kept, and here the priest prepares the bread and the wine at the beginning of the Liturgy); that on the right leads into the *Diakonikon* (now generally used as a vestry, but originally the place where the sacred books, particularly the Book of the Gospels, were kept together with the relics). Laymen are not allowed to go behind the iconostasis, except for a special reason such as serving at the Liturgy. The altar in an Orthodox Church — the Holy Table or Throne, as it is called — stands free of the east wall, in the center of the sanctuary; behind the altar and against the wall is set the bishop's throne.

Orthodox Churches are full of icons — on the screen, on the walls, in special shrines, or on a kind of desk where they can be venerated by the faithful. When an Orthodox enters church, his first action will be to buy a candle, go up to an icon, cross himself, kiss the icon, and light the candle in front of it. 'They be great offerers of candles,' commented the English merchant Richard Chancellor, visiting Russia in the reign of Elizabeth I. In the decoration of the church, the various iconographical scenes and figures are not arranged fortuitously, but according to a definite theological scheme, so that the whole edifice forms one great icon or image of the Kingdom of God. In Orthodox religious art, as in the religious art of the medieval west, there is an elaborate system of symbols, involving every part of the church building and its decoration. Icons, frescoes, and mosaics are not mere ornaments, designed to make the church 'look nice,' but have a theological and liturgical function to fulfill.

The icons which fill the church serve as a point of meeting between heaven and earth. As each local congregation prays Sunday by Sunday, surrounded by the figures of Christ, the angels, and the saints, these visible images remind the faithful unceasingly of the invisible presence of the whole company of heaven at the Liturgy. The faithful can feel that the walls of the church open out upon eternity, and they are helped to realize that their Liturgy on earth is one and the same with the great Liturgy of heaven. The multitudinous icons express visibly the sense of 'heaven on earth.'

The worship of the Orthodox Church is communal and popular. Any non-Orthodox who attends Orthodox services with some frequency will quickly realize how closely the whole worshipping community, priest and people alike, are bound together into one; among other things,

the absence of pews helps to create a sense of unity. Although most Orthodox congregations do not join in the singing, it should not therefore be imagined that they are taking no real part in the service; nor does the iconostasis — even in its present solid form — make the people feel cut off from the priest in the sanctuary. In any case, many of the ceremonies take place in front of the screen, in full view of the congregation.

Orthodox laity do not use the phrase ‘to *hear* Mass,’ for in the Orthodox Church the Mass has never become something done by the clergy for the laity, but is something which clergy and laity perform *together*. In the medieval west, where the Eucharist was performed in a learned language not understood by the people, men came to church to adore the Host at the Elevation, but otherwise treated the Mass mainly as a convenient occasion for saying their private prayers (All this, of course, has now been changed in the west by the Liturgical Movement). In the Orthodox Church, where the Liturgy has never ceased to be a common action performed by priest and people together, the congregation do not come to church to say their private prayers, but to pray the public prayers of the Liturgy and to take part in the action of the rite itself. Orthodoxy has never undergone that separation between liturgy and personal devotion from which the medieval and post-medieval west has suffered so much.

Certainly the Orthodox Church, as well as the west, stands in need of a Liturgical Movement; indeed, some such movement has already begun in a small way in several parts of the Orthodox world (revival of congregational singing; gates of the Holy Door left open in the Liturgy; more open form of iconostasis, and so on). Yet in Orthodoxy the scope of this Liturgical Movement will be far more restricted, since the changes required are very much less drastic. That sense of corporate worship which it is the primary aim of liturgical reform in the west to restore has never ceased to be a living reality in the Orthodox Church.

There is in most Orthodox worship an unhurried and timeless quality, an effect produced in part by the constant repetition of *Litanies*. Either in a longer or a shorter form, the Litany recurs several times in every service of the Byzantine rite. In these Litanies, the deacon (if there is no deacon, the priest) calls the people to pray for the various needs of the Church and the world, and to each petition the choir or the people replies *Lord, have mercy* — *Kyrie eleison* in Greek, *Gospodi pomilui* in Russian — probably the first words in an Orthodox service which the visitor grasps. (In some Litanies the response is changed to *Grant this, O Lord*). The congregation associate themselves with the different intercessions by making the sign of the Cross and bowing. In general the sign of the Cross is employed far more frequently by Orthodox than by western worshippers, and there is a far greater freedom about the times when it is used: different worshippers cross themselves at different moments, each as he wishes, although there are of course occasions in the service when almost all sign themselves at the same time.

We have described Orthodox worship as timeless and unhurried. Most western people have the idea that Byzantine services, even if not literally timeless, are at any rate of an extreme and intolerable length. Certainly Orthodox functions tend to be more prolonged than their western counterparts, but we must not exaggerate. It is perfectly possible to celebrate the Byzantine Liturgy, and to preach a short sermon, in an hour and a quarter; and in 1943 the Patriarch of Constantinople laid down that in parishes under his jurisdiction the Sunday Liturgy should not last over an hour and a half. Russians on the whole take longer than Greeks over services, but in a normal Russian parish of the emigration, the Vigil Service on Saturday nights lasts no more than two hours, and often less. Monastic offices of course are more extended, and on Mount Athos at great festivals the service sometimes goes on for twelve or even fifteen hours without a break, but this is altogether exceptional.

Non-Orthodox may take heart from the fact that Orthodox are often as alarmed as they by the length of services. ‘And now we are entered on our travail and anguish,’ writes Paul of Aleppo in his diary as he enters Russia. ‘For all their churches are empty of seats. There is not one, even for the bishop; you see the people all through the service standing like rocks, motionless or incessantly bending with their devotions. God help us for the length of their prayers and chants and Masses, for we suffered great pain, so that our very souls were tortured with fatigue and anguish.’ And in the middle of Holy Week he exclaims: ‘God grant us His special aid to get through the whole of this present week! As for the Muscovites, their feet must surely be of iron’ (*The Travels of Macarius*, edited Ridding, p. 14 and p. 46).

Orthodox Worship: The Sacraments

“He who was visible as our Redeemer has now passed into the sacraments” (Saint Leo the Great).

The chief place in Christian worship belongs to the sacraments or, as they are called in Greek, the *mysteries*. ‘It is called a mystery,’ writes Saint John Chrysostom of the Eucharist, ‘because what we believe is not the same as what we see, but we see one thing and believe another ... When I hear the Body of Christ mentioned, I understand what is said in one sense, the unbeliever in another’ (*Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 7:1 (P.G. 61, 55)). This double character, at once outward and inward, is the distinctive feature of a sacrament: the sacraments, like the Church, are both visible and invisible; in every sacrament there is the combination of an outward visible sign with an inward spiritual grace. At Baptism the Christian undergoes an outward washing in water, and he is at the same time cleansed inwardly from his sins; at the Eucharist he receives what appears from the visible point of view to be bread and wine, but in reality he eats the Body and Blood of Christ.

In most of the sacraments the Church takes material things — water, bread, wine, oil — and makes them a vehicle of the Spirit. In this way the sacraments look back to the Incarnation, when Christ took material flesh and made it a vehicle of the Spirit; and they look forward to, or rather they anticipate, the *apocatastasis* and the final redemption of matter at the Last Day.

The Orthodox Church speaks customarily of seven sacraments, basically the same seven as in Roman Catholic theology:

- 1 Baptism
- 2 Chrismation (equivalent to Confirmation in the west)
- 3 The Eucharist
- 4 Repentance or Confession
- 5 Holy Orders
- 6 Marriage or Holy Matrimony
- 7 The Anointing of the Sick (corresponding to Extreme Unction in the Roman Catholic Church)

Only in the seventeenth century, when Latin influence was at its height, did this list become fixed and definite. Before that date Orthodox writers vary considerably as to the number of sacraments: John of Damascus speaks of two; Dionysius the Areopagite of six; Joasaph, Metropolitan of Ephesus (fifteenth century), of ten; and those Byzantine theologians who in fact speak of seven sacraments differ as to the items which they include in their list. Even today the number seven has no absolute dogmatic significance for Orthodox theology, but is used primarily as a convenience in teaching.

Those who think in terms of ‘seven sacraments’ must be careful to guard against two misconceptions. In the first place, while all seven are true sacraments, they are not all of equal importance, but there is a certain ‘hierarchy’ among them. The Eucharist, for example, stands at the heart of all Christian life and experience in a way that the Anointing of the Sick does not. Among the seven, Baptism and the Eucharist occupy a special position: to use a phrase adopted by the joint Committee of Romanian and Anglican theologians at Bucharest in 1935, these two sacraments are ‘pre-eminent among the divine mysteries.’

In the second place, when we talk of ‘seven sacraments,’ we must never isolate these seven from the many other actions in the Church which also possess a sacramental character, and which are conveniently termed *sacramentals*. Included among these sacramentals are the rites for a monastic profession, the great blessing of waters at Epiphany, the service for the burial of the dead, and the anointing of a monarch. In all these there is a combination of outward visible sign and inward spiritual grace. The Orthodox Church also employs a great number of minor blessings, and these, too, are of a sacramental nature: blessings of corn, wine, and oil; of fruits, fields, and homes; of any object or element. These lesser blessings and services are often very practical and prosaic: there are prayers for blessing a car or a railway engine, or for clearing a place of vermin (‘The popular religion of Eastern Europe is liturgical and ritualistic, but not wholly otherworldly. A religion that continues to propagate new forms for cursing caterpillars and for removing dead rats from the bottoms of wells can hardly be dismissed as pure mysticism’ (G. Every, *The Byzantine Patriarchate*, first edition, p. 198)) Between the wider and the narrower sense of the term ‘sacrament’ there is no rigid division: the whole Christian life must be seen as a unity, as a single mystery or one great sacrament, whose different aspects are expressed in a great variety of acts, some performed but once in a man’s life, others perhaps daily.

The sacraments are personal: they are the means whereby God’s grace is appropriated to every Christian individually. For this reason, in most of the sacraments of the Orthodox Church, the priest mentions the Christian name of each person as he administers the sacrament. When giving Holy Communion, for example, he says: ‘The servant of God ... [name] partakes of the holy, precious Body and Blood of Our Lord;’ at the Anointing of the Sick he says: ‘O Father, heal Thy servant [name] from his sickness both of body and soul.’

Baptism

In the Orthodox Church today, as in the Church of the early centuries, the three sacraments of Christian initiation — Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion — are linked closely together. An Orthodox who becomes a member of Christ is admitted at once to the full privileges of such membership.

Orthodox children are not only baptized in infancy, but confirmed in infancy, and given communion in infancy. “*Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*” (Matthew 19:14).

There are two essential elements in the act of Baptism: the invocation of the Name of the Trinity, and the threefold immersion in water. The priest says: 'The servant of God [name] is baptized into the Name of the Father, Amen. And of the Son, Amen. And of the Holy Spirit, Amen.' As the name of each person in the Trinity is mentioned, the priest immerses the child in the font, either plunging it entirely under the water, or at any rate pouring water over the whole of its body. If the person to be baptized is so ill that immersion would endanger his life, then it is sufficient to pour water over his forehead; but otherwise immersion must not be omitted.

Orthodox are greatly distressed by the fact that western Christendom, abandoning the primitive practice of Baptism by immersion, is now content merely to pour a little water over the candidate's forehead. Orthodoxy regards immersion as essential (except in emergencies), for if there is no immersion the correspondence between outward sign and inward meaning is lost, and the symbolism of the sacrament is overthrown. Baptism signifies a mystical burial and resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:4-5 and Colossians 2:12); and the outward sign of this is the plunging of the candidate into the font, followed by his emergence from the water. Sacramental symbolism therefore requires that he shall be immersed or 'buried' in the waters of Baptism, and then 'rise' out of them once more.

Through Baptism we receive a full forgiveness of all sin, whether original or actual; we 'put on Christ,' becoming members of His Body the Church. To remind them of their Baptism, Orthodox Christians usually wear throughout life a small Cross, hung round the neck on a chain.

Baptism must normally be performed by a bishop or a priest. In cases of emergency, it can be performed by a deacon, or by any man or woman, provided they are Christian. But whereas Roman Catholic theologians hold that if necessary even a non-Christian can administer Baptism. Orthodoxy holds that this is not possible. The person who baptizes must himself have been baptized.

Chrismation

Immediately after Baptism, an Orthodox child is 'chrismated' or 'confirmed.' The priest takes a special ointment, the Chrism (in Greek, *myron*), and with this he anoints various parts of the child's body, marking them with the sign of the Cross: first the forehead, then the eyes, nostrils, mouth, and ears, the breast, the hands, and the feet. As he marks each he says: 'The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.' The child, who has been incorporated into Christ at Baptism, now receives in Chrismation the gift of the Spirit, thereby becoming a *laikos* (layman), a full member of the people (*laos*) of God. Chrismation is an extension of Pentecost: the same Spirit who descended visibly on the Apostles in tongues of fire now descends invisibly on the newly baptized. Through Chrismation every member of the Church becomes a prophet, and receives a share in the royal priesthood of Christ; all Christians alike, because they are chrismated, are called to act as conscious witnesses to the Truth. "*You have an anointing (chrisma) from the Holy One, and know all things*" (1 John 2:20).

In the west, it is normally the bishop in person who confers Confirmation; in the east, Chrismation is administered by a priest, but the Chrism which he uses must first have been blessed by a bishop. (In modern Orthodox practice, only a bishop who is head of an autocephalous Church enjoys the right to bless the Chrism). Thus both in east and west the bishop is involved in the second sacrament of Christian initiation: in the west directly, in the east indirectly. Chrismation is also used as a sacrament of reconciliation. If an Orthodox apostatizes to Islam and then returns to the Church, when he is accepted back he is chrismated. Similarly if Roman Catholics become Orthodox, the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Church of Greece usu-

ally receive them by Chrismation; but the Russian Church commonly receives them after a simple profession of faith, without chrismating them. Anglicans and other Protestants are always received by Chrismation. Sometimes converts are received by Baptism.

As soon as possible after Chrismation an Orthodox child is brought to communion. His earliest memories of the Church will centre on the act of receiving the Holy Gifts of Christ's Body and Blood. Communion is not something to which he comes at the age of six or seven (as in the Roman Catholic Church) or in adolescence (as in Anglicanism), but something from which he has never been excluded.

The Eucharist

Today the Eucharist is celebrated in the eastern Church according to one of four different services:

- 1) *The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* (the normal Liturgy on Sundays and weekdays).
- 2) *The Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great* (used ten times a year; outwardly it is very little different from the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, but the prayers said privately by the priest are far longer).
- 3) *The Liturgy of Saint James, the Brother of the Lord* (used once a year, on Saint James's Day, 23 October, in certain places only. (Until recently, used only at Jerusalem and on the Greek Island of Zante; now revived elsewhere (e.g. the Patriarch's church at Constantinople; the Greek Cathedral in London; the Russian monastery at Jordanville, U.S.A)).
- 4) *The Liturgy of the Presanctified* (used on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, and on the first three days of Holy Week. There is no consecration in this Liturgy, but communion is given from elements consecrated on the previous Sunday.).

In general structure the Liturgies of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil are as follows:

1. **The office of preparation** — the *Prothesis* or *Proskomidia*: the preparation of the bread and wine to be used at the Eucharist.

2. The liturgy of the word — the *Synaxis*

A. *The Opening of the Service* — the *Enarxis* (Strictly speaking the *Synaxis* only begins with the Little Entrance; the *Enarxis* is now added at the start, but was originally a separate service).

- The Litany of Peace
- Psalm 102 (103).
- The Little Litany
- Psalm 145 (146), followed by the hymn *Only-begotten Son and Word of God*
- The Little Litany
- The Beatitudes (with special hymns or *Troparia* appointed for the day).

B. *The Little Entrance*, followed by the Entrance Hymn or Introit for the day

- The Trisagion — 'Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us' — sung three or more times

C. *Readings from Scripture*

- The *Prokimenon* — verses, usually from the Psalms
- The Epistle
- *Alleluia* — sung nine or sometimes three times, with verses from Scripture intercalated

- The Gospel
 - The Sermon (often transferred to the end of the service).
- D. *Intercession for the Church*
- The Litany of Fervent Supplication
 - The Litany of the Departed
 - The Litany of the Catechumens, and the dismissal of the Catechumens

3. The eucharist

- A. Two short Litanies of the Faithful lead up to the *Great Entrance*, which is then followed by the Litany of Supplication
- B. *The Kiss of Peace and the Creed*
- C. *The Eucharistic Prayer*
- Opening Dialogue
 - Thanksgiving — culminating in the narrative of the Last Supper, and the words of Christ: ‘This is my Body ... This is my Blood...’
 - *Anamnesis* — the act of ‘calling to mind’ and offering. The priest ‘calls to mind’ Christ’s death, burial, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming, and he ‘offers’ the Holy Gifts to God
 - *Epiclesis* — the Invocation or ‘calling down’ of the Spirit on the Holy Gifts
 - A great Commemoration of all the members of the Church: the Mother of God, the saints, the departed, the living
 - The Litany of Supplication, followed by the Lord’s Prayer
- D. The *Elevation and Fraction* (‘breaking’) of the Consecrated Gifts
- E. *Communion* of the clergy and people
- F. *Conclusion* of the service: Thanksgiving and final Blessing; distribution of the *Antidoron*

The first part of the Liturgy, the Office of Preparation, is performed privately by the priest and deacon in the chapel of the *Prothesis*. Thus the public portion of the service falls into two sections, the Synaxis (a service of hymns, prayers, and readings from Scripture) and the Eucharist proper: originally the Synaxis and the Eucharist were often held separately, but since the fourth century the two have virtually become fused into one service. Both Synaxis and Eucharist contain a procession, known respectively as the Little and the Great Entrance. At the Little Entrance the Book of the Gospels is carried in procession round the church, at the Great Entrance the bread and wine (prepared before the beginning of the Synaxis) are brought processsionally from the *Prothesis* chapel to the altar. The Little Entrance corresponds to the Introit in the western rite (originally the Little Entrance marked the beginning of the public part of the service, but at present it is preceded by various Litanies and Psalms); the Great Entrance is in essence an Offertory Procession. Synaxis and Eucharist alike have a clearly marked climax: in the Synaxis, the reading of the Gospel; in the Eucharist, the *Epiclesis* of the Holy Spirit.

The belief of the Orthodox Church concerning the Eucharist is made quite clear during the course of the Eucharistic Prayer. The priest reads the opening part of the Thanksgiving in a low voice, until he comes to the words of Christ at the Last Supper: “*Take, eat, This is my Body...*” “*Drink of it, all of you, This is my Blood...*” these words are always read in a loud voice, in the full hearing of the congregation. In a low voice once more, the priest recites the *Anamnesis*:

‘Commemorating the Cross, the Grave, the Resurrection after three days, the Ascension into Heaven, the Enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second and glorious Coming again.’

He continues aloud: ‘Thine of Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all.’

After the consecration of the Gifts, the priest and deacon immediately prostrate themselves before the Holy Gifts, which have now been consecrated.

It will be evident that the ‘moment of consecration’ is understood somewhat differently by the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches. According to Latin theology, the consecration is effected by the Words of Institution: “*This is my Body...*” “*This is my Blood...*” According to Orthodox theology, the act of consecration is not complete until the end of the *Epiclesis*, and worship of the Holy Gifts before this point is condemned by the Orthodox Church as ‘artolatry’ (bread worship). Orthodox, however, do not teach that consecration is effected *solely* by the *Epiclesis*, nor do they regard the Words of Institution as incidental and unimportant. On the contrary, they look upon the entire Eucharistic Prayer as forming a single and indivisible whole, so that the three main sections of the prayer — Thanksgiving, *Anamnesis*, *Epiclesis* — all form an integral part of the one act of consecration (Some Orthodox writers go even further than this, and maintain that the consecration is brought about by the whole process of the Liturgy, starting with the *Prothesis* and including the *Synaxis*! Such a view, however, presents many difficulties, and has little or no support in Patristic tradition). But this of course means that if we are to single out a ‘moment of consecration,’ such a moment cannot come until the *Amen* of the *Epiclesis* (Before Vatican 2 the Roman Canon to all appearances had no *Epiclesis*; but many Orthodox liturgists, most notably Nicholas Cabasilas, regard the paragraph *Supplices te* as constituting in effect an *Epiclesis*, although Roman Catholics today, with a few notable exceptions, do not understand it as such).

The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. As the words of the *Epiclesis* make abundantly plain, the Orthodox Church believes that after consecration the bread and wine become in very truth the Body and Blood of Christ: they are not mere symbols, but the reality. But while Orthodoxy has always insisted on the reality of the change, it has never attempted to explain the *manner* of the change: the Eucharistic Prayer in the Liturgy simply uses the neutral term *metaballo*, to ‘turn about,’ ‘change,’ or ‘alter.’ It is true that in the seventeenth century not only individual Orthodox writers, but Orthodox Councils such as that of Jerusalem in 1672, made use of the Latin term ‘transubstantiation’ (in Greek, *metousiosis*), together with the Scholastic distinction between Substance and Accidents (In medieval philosophy a distinction is drawn between the substance or essence (i.e. that which constitutes a thing, which makes it what it is), and the accidents or qualities that belong to a substance (i.e. everything that can be perceived by the senses — size, weight, shape, color, taste, smell, and so on). A substance is something existing by itself (*ens per se*), an accident can only exist by inhering in something else (*ens in alio*). Applying this distinction to the Eucharist, we arrive at the doctrine of Transubstantiation. According to this doctrine, at the moment of consecration in the Mass there is a change of substance, but the accidents continue to exist as before: the substances of bread and wine are changed into those of the Body and Blood of Christ, but the accidents of bread and wine — i.e. the qualities of color, taste, smell, and so forth — continue miraculously to exist and to be perceptible to the senses). But at the same time the Fathers of Jerusalem were careful to add that the use of these terms does not constitute an explanation of the manner of the change, since this is a mystery and must always remain incomprehensible (Doubtless many Roman Catholics would say the same). Yet despite this disclaimer, many Orthodox felt that Jerusalem had committed itself too unreservedly to the terminology of Latin Scholasticism, and it is significant that when in 1838 the Russian Church issued a translation of the Acts of Jerusalem, while retaining the word transubstantiation, it carefully paraphrased the rest of the passage in such a way that the technical terms Substance and Accidents were not employed (This is an interesting example of the way in which the Church is ‘selective’ in its acceptance of the decrees of Local Councils (see above, p. 211)).

Today Orthodox writers still use the word transubstantiation, but they insist on two points: first, there are many other words which can with equal legitimacy be used to describe the consecration, and, among them all, the term transubstantiation enjoys no unique or decisive authority; secondly, its use does not commit theologians to the acceptance of Aristotelian philosophical concepts. The general position of Orthodoxy in the whole matter is clearly summed up in the *Longer Catechism*, written by Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow (1782-1867), and authorized by the Russian Church in 1839:

Question: How are we to understand the word transubstantiation?

Answer: ...The word transubstantiation is not to be taken to define the manner in which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord; for this none can understand but God; but only thus much is signified, that the bread truly, really, and substantially becomes the very true Body of the Lord, and the wine the very Blood of the Lord (English translation in R. W. Blackmore, *The Doctrine of the Russian Church*, London, 1845, p. 92).

And the Catechism continues with a quotation from John of Damascus: 'If you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it is through the Holy Spirit ... we know nothing more than this, that the word of God is true, active, and omnipotent, but in its manner of operation unsearchable (On the Orthodox Faith, 4, 13 (*P.G.* 94, 1145A)).

In every Orthodox parish church, the Blessed Sacrament is normally reserved, most often in a tabernacle on the altar, although there is no strict rule as to the place of reservation. Orthodox, however, do not hold services of public devotion before the reserved sacrament, nor do they have any equivalent to the Roman Catholic functions of Exposition and Benediction, although there seems to be no theological (as distinct from liturgical) reason why they should not do so. The priest blesses the people with the sacrament during the course of the Liturgy, but never outside it.

The Eucharist as a sacrifice. The Orthodox Church believes the Eucharist to be a sacrifice; and here again the basic Orthodox teaching is set forth clearly in the text of the Liturgy itself. 'Thine of Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all.' 1) We offer *Thine of Thine own*. At the Eucharist, the sacrifice offered is Christ himself, and it is Christ himself who in the Church performs the act of offering: he is both priest and victim. 'Thou thyself art He who offers and He who is offered' (From the Priest's prayer before the Great Entrance). 2) We offer *to Thee*. The Eucharist is offered to God the Trinity — not just to the Father but also to the Holy Spirit and to Christ himself (This was stated with great emphasis by a Council of Constantinople in 1156 (see *P.G.* 140, 176-7)). Thus if we ask, *what* is the sacrifice of the Eucharist? By *whom* is it offered? To *whom* is it offered? — in each case the answer is *Christ*. 3) We offer *for all*: according to Orthodox theology, the Eucharist is a propitiatory sacrifice (in Greek, *thusia hilastirios*), offered on behalf of both the living and the dead.

In the Eucharist, then, the sacrifice which we offer is the sacrifice of Christ. But what does this mean? Theologians have held and continue to hold many different theories on this subject. Some of these theories the Church has rejected as inadequate, but it has never formally committed itself to any particular explanation of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Nicholas Cabasilas sums up the standard Orthodox position as follows:

'First, the sacrifice is not a mere figure or symbol but a true sacrifice; secondly, it is not the bread that is sacrificed, but the very Body of Christ; thirdly, the Lamb of God was sacrificed once only, for all time ... The sacrifice at the Eucharist consists, not in the real and bloody immo-

lation of the Lamb, but in the transformation of the bread into the sacrificed Lamb' (*Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 32).

The Eucharist is not a bare commemoration nor an imaginary representation of Christ's — sacrifice, but the true sacrifice itself; yet on the other hand it is not a new sacrifice, nor a repetition of the sacrifice on Calvary, since the Lamb was sacrificed 'once only, for all time.' The events of Christ's sacrifice — the Incarnation, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension (Note that Christ's sacrifice includes many things besides His death: this is a most important point in Patristic and Orthodox teaching) — are not repeated in the Eucharist, but they are *made present*. 'During the Liturgy, through its divine power, we are projected to the point where eternity cuts across time, and at this point we become true *contemporaries* with the events which we commemorate' (P. Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, p. 241). 'All the holy suppers of the Church are nothing else than one eternal and unique Supper, that of Christ in the Upper Room. The same divine act both takes place at a specific moment in history, and is offered always in the sacrament' (*ibid.*, p. 208).

Holy Communion. In the Orthodox Church the laity as well as the clergy always receive communion 'under both kinds.' Communion is given to the laity in a spoon, containing a small piece of the Holy Bread together with a portion of the Wine; it is received standing. Orthodoxy insists on a strict fast before communion, and nothing can be eaten or drunk after waking in the morning ('You know that those' who invite the Emperor to their house, first clean their home. So you, if you want to bring God into your bodily home for the illumination of your life, must first sanctify your body by fasting' (from the Hundred Chapters of Gennadius). In cases of sickness or genuine necessity, a confessor can grant dispensations from this communion fast). Many Orthodox at the present day receive communion infrequently — perhaps only five or six times a year — not from any disrespect towards the sacrament, but because that is the way in which they have been brought up. But during recent years a few parishes in Greece and in the Russian diaspora have restored the primitive practice of weekly communion, and it appears that communion is also becoming more frequent in Orthodox Churches behind the Iron Curtain. There seems every hope that this movement towards frequent communion will continue to gain ground slowly but surely in the years to come.

After the final blessing with which the Liturgy ends, the people come up to kiss a Cross which the priest holds in his hand, and to receive a little piece of bread, called the *Antidoron*, which is blessed but not consecrated, although taken from the same loaf as the bread used in the consecration. In most Orthodox parishes non-Orthodox present at the Liturgy are permitted (and indeed, encouraged) to receive the *Antidoron*, as an expression of Christian fellowship and love.

Repentance

An Orthodox child receives communion from infancy. Once he is old enough to know the difference between right and wrong and to understand what sin is — probably when he is six or seven — he may be taken to receive another sacrament: Repentance, Penitence, or Confession (in Greek, *metanoia* or *exomologisis*). Through this sacrament sins committed after Baptism are forgiven and the sinner is reconciled to the Church: hence it is often called a 'Second Baptism.' The sacrament acts at the same time as a cure for the healing of the soul, since the priest gives not only absolution but spiritual advice. Since all sin is sin not only against God but against our neighbor, against the community, confession and penitential discipline in the early Church were a public affair; but for many centuries alike in eastern and western Christendom confession has taken the form of a private 'conference' between priest and penitent alone. The priest is strictly forbidden to reveal to any third party what he has learnt in confession.

In Orthodoxy confessions are heard, not in a closed confessional with a grille separating confessor and penitent, but in any convenient part of the church, usually in the open immediately

in front of the iconostasis; sometimes priest and penitent stand behind a screen, or there may be a special room in the church set apart for confessions. Whereas in the west the priest sits and the penitent kneels, in the Orthodox Church they both stand (or sometimes they both sit). The penitent faces a desk on which are placed the Cross and an icon of the Saviour or the Book of the Gospels; the priest stands slightly to one side. This outward arrangement emphasizes, more clearly than does the western system, that in confession it is not the priest but God who is the judge, while the priest is only a witness and God's minister. This point is also stressed in words which the priest says immediately before the confession proper: 'Behold, my child, *Christ stands here invisibly and receives your confession*. Therefore be not ashamed nor afraid; conceal nothing from me, but tell me without hesitation everything that you have done, and so you shall have pardon from Our Lord Jesus Christ. See, His holy icon is before us; and I am but a witness, bearing testimony before Him of all the things which you have to say to me. But if you conceal anything from me, you shall have the greater sin. Take heed, therefore, lest having come to a physician you depart unhealed (This exhortation is found in the Slavonic but not in the Greek books).

After this the priest questions the penitent about his sins and gives him advice. When the penitent has confessed everything, he kneels or bows his head, and the priest, placing his stole (*epitrachilion*) on the penitent's head and then laying his hand upon the stole, says the prayer of absolution. In the Greek books the formula of absolution is deprecatory (i.e. in the third person, 'May God forgive...'), in the Slavonic books it is indicative (i.e. in the first person, 'I forgive...').

The Greek formula runs: 'Whatever you have said to my humble person, and whatever you have failed to say, whether through ignorance or forgetfulness, whatever it may be, may God forgive you in this world and the next ... Have no further anxiety; go in peace.'

In Slavonic there is this formula: 'May Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, through the grace and bounties of His love towards mankind, forgive you, my child [name], all your transgressions. And I, an unworthy priest, through the power given me by Him, forgive and absolve you from all your sins.'

This form, using the first person 'I,' was originally introduced into Orthodox service books under Latin influence by Peter of Moghila in the Ukraine, and was adopted by the Russian Church in the eighteenth century.

The priest may, if he thinks it advisable, impose a penance (*epitimion*), but this is not an essential part of the sacrament and is very often omitted. Many Orthodox have a special 'spiritual father,' not necessarily their parish priest, to whom they go regularly for confession and spiritual advice (In the Orthodox Church it is not entirely unknown for a layman to act as a spiritual father; but in that case, while he hears the confession, gives advice, and assures the penitent of God's forgiveness, he does not pronounce the prayer of sacramental absolution, but sends the penitent to a priest). There is in Orthodoxy no strict rule laying down how often one should go to confession; the Russians tend to go more often than the Greeks do. Where infrequent communion prevails — for example, four or five times a year — the faithful may be expected to go to confession before each communion; but in circles where frequent communion has been re-established, the priest does not necessarily expect a confession to be made before every communion.

Holy Orders

There are three 'Major Orders' in the Orthodox Church, Bishop, Priest, and Deacon; and two 'Minor Orders,' Subdeacon and Reader (once there were other Minor Orders, but at present all except these two have fallen largely into disuse). Ordinations to the Major Orders always oc-

cur during the course of the Liturgy, and must always be done individually (the Byzantine rite, unlike the Roman, lays down that no more than one deacon, one priest, and one bishop can be ordained at any single Liturgy). Only a bishop has power to ordain (In cases of necessity an Archimandrite or Archpriest, acting as the bishop's delegate, can ordain a Reader), and the consecration of a new bishop must be performed by three or at least two bishops, never by one alone: since the episcopate is 'collegial' in character, an episcopal consecration is carried out by a 'college' of bishops. An ordination, while performed by the bishop, also requires the consent of the *whole* people of God; and so at a particular point in the service the assembled congregation acclaim the ordination by shouting '*Axios!*' ('He is worthy!') (What happens if they shout '*Anaxios!*' ('He is unworthy!'))? This is not very clear. On several occasions in Constantinople or Greece during the present century the congregation has in fact expressed its disapproval in this way, although without effect. But some would claim that, at any rate in theory, if the laity expresses its dissent, the ordination or consecration cannot take place).

Orthodox priests are divided into two distinct groups, the 'white' or married clergy, and the 'black' or monastic. Ordinands must make up their mind before ordination to which group they wish to belong, for it is a strict rule that no one can marry after he has been ordained to a Major Order. Those who wish to marry must therefore do so before they are made deacon. Those who do not wish to marry are normally expected to become monks prior to their ordination; but in the Orthodox Church today there are now a number of celibate clergy who have not taken formal monastic vows. These celibate priests, however, cannot afterwards change their minds and decide to get married. If a priest's wife dies, he cannot marry again.

As a rule the parochial clergy of the Orthodox Church are married, and a monk is only appointed to have charge of a parish for exceptional reasons (In fact at the present day, particularly in the diaspora, monks are frequently put in charge of parishes. Many Orthodox regret this departure from the traditional practice). Bishops are drawn exclusively from the monastic clergy (This has been the rule since at least the sixth century; but in primitive times there are many instances of married bishops — for example, Saint Peter himself), although a widower can be made a bishop if he takes monastic vows. Such is the state of monasticism in many parts of the Orthodox Church today that it is not always easy to find suitable candidates for the episcopate, and a few Orthodox have even begun to argue that the limitation of bishops to the monastic clergy is no longer desirable under modern conditions. Yet surely the true solution is not to change the present rule that bishops must be monks, but to reinvigorate the monastic life itself

In the early Church the bishop was elected by the people of the diocese, clergy and laity together. In Orthodoxy today it is usually the Governing Synod in each autocephalous Church which appoints bishops to vacant sees; but in some Churches — Antioch, for example, and Cyprus — a modified system of election still exists. The Moscow Council of 1917-18 laid down that henceforward bishops in the Russian Church should be elected by the clergy and laity; this ruling is followed by the Paris group of Russians and the OCA, but conditions have made its application impossible within the Soviet Union itself.

The order of deacons is far more prominent in the Orthodox Church than in western communions. In Roman Catholicism prior to Vatican 2 the diaconate had become simply a preliminary stage on the way to the priesthood, but in Orthodoxy it has remained a permanent office, and many deacons have no intention of ever becoming priests. In the west today the deacon's part at High Mass is usually carried out by a priest, but in the Orthodox Liturgy none but a real deacon can perform the diaconal functions.

Canon Law lays down that no one may become a priest before the age of thirty nor a deacon before the age of twenty-five, but in practice this ruling is relaxed.

A Note on Ecclesiastical Titles

Patriarch. The title borne by the heads of certain autocephalous Churches. The heads of other Churches are called Archbishop or Metropolitan.

Metropolitan, Archbishop. Originally a Metropolitan was the bishop of the capital of a province, while Archbishop was a more general title of honour, given to bishops of special eminence. The Russians still use the titles more or less in the original way; but the Greeks (except at Jerusalem) now give the name Metropolitan to *every* diocesan bishop, and call by the title Archbishop those who in ancient times would have been styled Metropolitan. Thus among the Greeks an Archbishop now ranks above a Metropolitan, but among the Russians the Metropolitan is the higher position.

Archimandrite. Originally a monk charged with the spiritual supervision of several monasteries, or the superior of a monastery of special importance. Now used simply as a title of honour for priest-monks of distinction.

Higumenos. Among the Greeks, the Abbot of a monastery. Among the Russians, a title of honour for priest-monks (not necessarily Abbots). A Russian Higumenos ranks below an Archimandrite.

Archpriest or Protopope. A title of honour given to non-monastic priests; equivalent to Archimandrite.

Hieromonk. A priest-monk.

Hierodeacon. A monk who is a deacon.

Archdeacon. A title of honour given to monastic deacons. (In the west the Archdeacon is now a priest, but in the Orthodox Church he is still, as in primitive times, a deacon).

Protodeacon. A title of honour given to deacons who are not monks.

Marriage

The Trinitarian mystery of unity in diversity applies not only to the doctrine of the Church but to the doctrine of marriage. Man is made in the image of the Trinity, and except in special cases he is not intended by God to live alone, but in a family. And just as God blessed the first family, commanding Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, so the Church today gives its blessing to the union of man and woman. Marriage is not only a state of nature but a state of grace. Married life, no less than the life of a monk, is a special vocation, requiring a particular gift or charisma from the Holy Spirit; and this gift is conferred in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

The Marriage Service is divided into two parts, formerly held separately but now celebrated in immediate succession: the preliminary *Office of Betrothal*, and the *Office of Crowning*, which constitutes the sacrament proper. At the Betrothal service the chief ceremony is the blessing and exchange of rings; this is an outward token that the two partners join in marriage of their own free will and consent, for without free consent on both sides there can be no sacrament of Christian marriage. The second part of the service culminates in the ceremony of coronation: on the heads of the bridegroom and bride the priest places crowns, made among the Greeks of leaves and flowers, but among the Russians of silver or gold. This, the outward and visible sign of the sacrament, signifies the special grace which the couple receive from the Holy Spirit, before they set out to found a new family or domestic Church. The crowns are crowns of joy, but they are also crowns of martyrdom, since every true marriage involves an immeasurable self-sacrifice on both sides. At the end of the service the newly married couple drink from the same cup of wine,

which recalls the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee: this common cup is a symbol of the fact that henceforward they will share a common life with one another.

The Orthodox Church permits divorce and remarriage, quoting as its authority the text of Matthew 19:9, where Our Lord says: “*If a man divorces his wife, for any cause other than unchastity, and marries another, he commits adultery.*” Since Christ allowed an exception to His general ruling about the indissolubility of marriage, the Orthodox Church also is willing to allow an exception. Certainly Orthodoxy regards the marriage bond as in principle lifelong and indissoluble, and it condemns the breakdown of marriage as a sin and an evil. But while condemning the sin, the Church still desires to help the sinners and to allow them a second chance. When, therefore, a marriage has entirely ceased to be a reality, the Orthodox Church does not insist on the preservation of a legal fiction. Divorce is seen as an exceptional but necessary concession to human sin; it is an act of *oikonomia* (‘economy’ or dispensation) and of *philanthropia* (loving kindness). Yet although assisting men and women to rise again after a fall, the Orthodox Church knows that a second alliance can never be the same as the first; and so in the service for a second marriage several of the joyful ceremonies are omitted, and replaced by penitential prayers.

Orthodox Canon Law, while permitting a second or even a third marriage, absolutely forbids a fourth. In theory the Canons only permit divorce in cases of adultery, but in practice it is sometimes granted for other reasons as well.

One point must be clearly understood: from the point of view of Orthodox theology a divorce granted by the State in the civil courts is not sufficient. Remarriage in church is only possible if the Church authorities have themselves granted a divorce.

The use of contraceptives and other devices for birth control is on the whole strongly discouraged in the Orthodox Church. Some bishops and theologians altogether condemn the employment of such methods. Others, however, have recently begun to adopt a less strict position, and urge that the question is best left to the discretion of each individual couple, in consultation with the spiritual father.

The anointing of the sick

This sacrament — known in Greek as *evchelaion*, ‘the oil of prayer’ — is described by Saint James: “*Is any sick among you? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him. The prayer offered in faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him from his bed; and he will be forgiven any sins he has committed*” (James 5:14-15). The sacrament, as this passage indicates, has a double purpose: not only bodily healing but the forgiveness of sins. The two things go together, for man is a unity of body and soul and there can therefore be no sharp and rigid distinction between bodily and spiritual ills. Orthodoxy does not of course believe that the Anointing is invariably followed by a recovery of health. Sometimes, indeed, the sacrament serves as an instrument of healing, and the patient recovers; but at other times he does not recover, in which case the sacrament helps him in a different way, by giving him the spiritual strength to prepare for death (‘This sacrament has two faces: one turns towards healing, the other towards the liberation from illness by death’ (S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 135)). In the Roman Catholic Church the sacrament has become ‘Extreme’ Unction, intended only for the dying (A change has now been made here by the second Vatican Council); thus the first aspect of the sacrament — healing — has become forgotten. But in the Orthodox Church Unction can be conferred on any who are sick, whether in danger of death or not.

Orthodox worship:

Feasts, fasts, and private prayer

“The true aim of prayer is to enter into conversation with God. It is not restricted to certain hours of the day. A Christian has to feel himself personally in the presence of God. The goal of prayer is precisely to be with God always” (Georges Florovsky).

The Christian year

If anyone wishes to recite or to follow the public services of the Church of England, then (in theory, at any rate) two volumes will be sufficient — the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer; similarly in the Roman Catholic Church he requires only two books — the Missal and the Breviary; but in the Orthodox Church, such is the complexity of the services that he will need a small library of some nineteen or twenty substantial tomes. ‘On a moderate computation,’ remarked J. M. Neale of the Orthodox Service Books, ‘these volumes together comprise 5,000 closely printed quarto pages, in double columns (*Hymns of the Eastern Church*, third edition, London, 1866, p. 52). Yet these books, at first sight so unwieldy, are one of the greatest treasures of the Orthodox Church.

In these twenty volumes are contained the services for the Christian year — that annual sequence of feasts and fasts which commemorates the Incarnation and its fulfillment in the Church. The ecclesiastical calendar begins on 1 September. Pre-eminent among all festivals is Easter, the Feast of Feasts, which stands in a class by itself. Next in importance come the Twelve Great Feasts:

1. The Nativity of the Mother of God (8 September).
2. The Exaltation (or Raising Up) of the Honourable and Life-giving Cross (14 September).
3. The Presentation of the Mother of God in the Temple (21 November).
4. The Nativity of Christ (Christmas) (25 December).
5. The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan (Epiphany) (6 January).
6. The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple (western ‘Candlemas’) (2 February).
7. The Annunciation of the Mother of God (western ‘Lady Day’) (25 March).
8. The Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) (one week before Easter).
9. The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ (40 days after Easter).
10. Pentecost (known in the west as Whit Sunday, but in the east as Trinity Sunday) (50 days after Easter).
11. The Transfiguration of Our Saviour Jesus Christ (6 August).
12. The Falling Asleep of the Mother of God (the Assumption) (15 August).

Thus three of the Twelve Great Feasts depend on the date of Easter and are ‘movable;’ the rest are ‘fixed.’ Eight are feasts of the Saviour, and four are feasts of the Mother of God. There are also a large number of other festivals, of varying importance. Among the more prominent are:

- The Circumcision of Christ (1 January).
- The Three Great Hierarchs (30 January).
- The Nativity of Saint John the Baptist (24 June).
- Saint Peter and Saint Paul (29 June).
- The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist (29 August).
- The Protecting Veil of the Mother of God (1 October).
- Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker (6 December).
- All Saints (First Sunday after Pentecost).

But besides feasts there are fasts. The Orthodox Church, regarding man as a unity of soul and body, has always insisted that the body must be trained and disciplined as well as the soul. 'Fasting and self-control are the first virtue, the mother, root, source, and foundation of all good (Callistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, in the *Philokalia*, Athens, 1961, vol. 4, p. 232). There are four main periods of fasting during the year:

- 1) The Great Fast (Lent) — begins seven weeks before Easter.
- 2) The Fast of the Apostles — starts on the Monday eight days after Pentecost, and ends on 28 June, the eve of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul; in length varies between one and six weeks.
- 3) The Assumption Fast — lasts two weeks, from 1 to 14 August.
- 4) The Christmas Fast — lasts forty days, from 15 November to 24 December.

In addition to these four chief periods, all Wednesdays and Fridays — and in some monasteries Mondays as well — are fast days (except between Christmas and Epiphany, during Easter week, and during the week after Pentecost). The Exaltation of the Cross, the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, and the eve of Epiphany are also fasts.

The rules of fasting in the Orthodox Church are of a rigour which will astonish and appal many western Christians. On most days in Great Lent and Holy Week, for example, not only is meat forbidden, but also fish and all animal products (lard, eggs, butter, milk, cheese), together with wine and oil. In practice, however, many Orthodox — particularly in the diaspora — find that under the conditions of modern life it is no longer practicable to follow exactly the traditional rules, devised with a very different outward situation in mind; and so certain dispensations are granted. Yet even so the Great Lent — especially the first week and Holy Week itself — is still, for devout Orthodox, a period of genuine austerity and serious physical hardship. When all relaxations and dispensations are taken into account, it remains true that Orthodox Christians in the twentieth century — laymen as well as monks — fast with a severity for which there is no parallel in western Christendom, except perhaps in the strictest Religious Orders.

The Church's year, with its sequence of feasts and fasts, is something of overwhelming importance in the religious experience of the Orthodox Christian: 'Nobody who has lived and worshipped amongst Greek Christians for any length of time but has sensed in some measure the extraordinary hold which the recurring cycle of the Church's liturgy has upon the piety of the common people. Nobody who has kept the Great Lent with the Greek Church, who has shared in the fast which lies heavy upon the whole nation for forty days; who has stood for long hours, one of an innumerable multitude who crowd the tiny Byzantine churches of Athens and overflow into the streets, while the familiar pattern of God's saving economy towards man is re-presented in

psalm and prophecy, in lections from the Gospel, and the matchless poetry of the canons; who has known the desolation of the holy and great Friday, when every bell in Greece tolls its lament and the body of the Saviour lies shrouded in flowers in all the village churches throughout the land; who has been present at the kindling of the new fire and tasted of the joy of a world released from the bondage of sin and death — none can have lived through all this and not have realized that for the Greek Christian the Gospel is inseparably linked with the liturgy that is unfolded week by week in his parish church. Not among the Greeks only but throughout Orthodox Christendom the liturgy has remained at the very heart of the Church's life' (P. Hammond, *The Waters of Marah*, pp. 51—52).

Different moments in the year are marked by special ceremonies: the great blessing of waters at Epiphany (often performed out of doors, beside a river or on the sea shore); the blessing of fruits at the Transfiguration; the solemn exaltation and adoration of the Cross on 14 September; the service of forgiveness on the Sunday immediately before Lent, when clergy and people kneel one by one before each other, and ask one another's forgiveness. But naturally it is during Holy Week that the most moving and impressive moments in Orthodox worship occur, as day by day and hour by hour the Church enters into the Passion of the Lord. Holy Week reaches its climax, first in the procession of the *Epitaphion* (the figure of the Dead Christ laid out for burial) on the evening of Good Friday; and then in the exultant Matins of the Resurrection at Easter midnight.

None can be present at this midnight service without being caught up in the sense of universal joy. Christ has released the world from its ancient bondage and its former terrors, and the whole Church rejoices triumphantly in His victory over darkness and death: 'The roaring of the bells overhead, answered by the 1,600 bells from the illuminated belfries of all the churches of Moscow, the guns bellowing from the slopes of the Kremlin over the river, and the processions in their gorgeous cloth of gold vestments and with crosses, icons, and banners, pouring forth amidst clouds of incense from all the other churches in the Kremlin, and slowly wending their way through the crowd, all combined to produce an effect which none who have witnessed it can ever forget' (A. Riley, *Birkbeck and the Russian Church*, p. 142). So W. J. Birkbeck wrote of Easter in pre-Revolutionary Russia. Today the churches of the Kremlin are museums, no more guns are fired in honour of the Resurrection, and though bells are rung, their number has sadly dwindled from the 1,600 of former days; but the vast and silent crowds which still gather at Easter midnight in thousands and tens of thousands around the churches of Moscow are in their way a more impressive testimony to the victory of Christ over the powers of evil.

Before we leave the subject of the Church's year, something must be said about the vexed question of the calendar — always, for some reason, an explosive topic among eastern Christians. Up to the end of the First World War, all Orthodox still used the Old Style or Julian Calendar, which is at present thirteen days behind the New or Gregorian Calendar, followed in the west. In 1923 the Ecumenical Patriarch convened an 'Inter-Orthodox Congress' at Constantinople, attended by delegates from Serbia, Romania, Greece, and Cyprus (the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem refused to send delegates; the Patriarch of Alexandria did not even reply to the invitation; the Church of Bulgaria was not invited). Various proposals were put forward — married bishops; permission for a priest to remarry after his wife's death; the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar. The first two proposals have so far remained a dead letter, but the third was carried into effect by certain autocephalous Churches. In March 1924 Constantinople introduced the New Calendar; and in the same year, or shortly after, it was also adopted by Alexandria, Antioch, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and Poland (The Church of Bulgaria adopted the New Calendar in 1968). But the Churches of Jerusalem, Russia, and Serbia, together with the monasteries on the Holy Mountain of Athos, continue to this day to follow the Julian reckoning. This results in a difficult and

confusing situation which one hopes will shortly be brought to an end. At present the Greeks (outside Athos and Jerusalem) keep Christmas at the same time as the west, on 25 December (New Style), while the Russians keep it thirteen days later, on 7 January (New Style); the Greeks keep Epiphany on 6 January, the Russians on 19 January; and so on. But practically the whole Orthodox Church observes Easter at the same time, reckoning it by the Julian (Old Style) Calendar: this means that the Orthodox date of Easter sometimes coincides with the western, but at other times it is one, four, or five weeks later (The discrepancy between Orthodox and western Easter is caused also by two different systems of calculating the ‘epacts’ which determine the lunar months). The Church of Finland and a very few parishes in the diaspora always keep Easter on the western date.

The reform in the calendar aroused lively opposition, particularly in Greece, where groups of ‘Old Calendarists’ or *Palaioimerologitai* (including, more than one bishop) continued to follow the old reckoning: they claimed that as the calendar and the date of Easter depended on Canons of ecumenical authority, they could only be altered by a joint decision of the *whole* Orthodox Church — not by separate autocephalous Churches acting independently. While rejecting the New Calendar, the monasteries of Mount Athos have (all except one) maintained communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Church of Greece, but the *Palaioimerologitai* on the Greek mainland were excommunicated by the official Church. They are usually treated by the Greek civil authorities as an illegal organization and have undergone persecution (many of their leaders suffered imprisonment); but they continue to exist in many areas and have their own bishops, monasteries, and parishes.

Private prayer

When an Orthodox thinks of prayer, he thinks primarily of public liturgical prayer. The corporate worship of the Church plays a far larger part in his religious experience than in that of the average western Christian. Of course this does not mean that Orthodox never pray except when in church: on the contrary, there exist special Manuals with daily prayers to be said by all Orthodox, morning and evening, before the icons in their own homes. But the prayers in these Manuals are taken for the most part directly from the Service Books used in public worship, so that even in his own home an Orthodox is still praying *with the Church*; even in his own home he is still joined in fellowship with all the other Orthodox Christians who are praying in the same words as he. ‘Personal prayer is possible only in the context of the community. Nobody is a Christian by himself, but only as a member of the body. Even in solitude, “in the chamber,” a Christian prays as a member of the redeemed community, of the Church. And it is in the Church that he learns his devotional practice’ (G. Florovsky, *Prayer Private and Corporate* (‘Ologos’ publications, Saint Louis), p. 3). And just as there is in Orthodox spirituality no separation between liturgy and private devotion, so there is no separation between monks and those living in the world; the prayers in the Manuals used by the laity are the very prayers which the monastic communities recite daily in church as part of the Divine Office. Husbands and wives are following the same Christian way as monks and nuns, and so all alike use the same prayers. Naturally the Manuals are only intended as a guide and a framework of prayer; and each Christian is also free to pray spontaneously and in his own words.

The directions at the start and conclusion of the morning prayers emphasize the need for recollection, for a *living* prayer to the Living God. At the beginning it is said: ‘When you wake up, before you begin the day, stand with reverence before the All-Seeing God. Make the sign of the Cross and say: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Having invoked the Holy Trinity, keep silence for a little, so that your thoughts and feelings may be

freed from worldly cares. Then recite the following prayers without haste, and with your whole heart.'

And at the conclusion of the morning prayers a note states: 'If the time at disposal is short, and the need to begin work is pressing, it is better to say only a few of the prayers suggested, with attention and devotion, rather than to recite them all in haste and without due concentration.'

There is also a note in the morning prayers, encouraging everyone to read the Epistle and Gospel appointed daily for the Liturgy.

By way of example let us take two prayers from the Manual, the first a prayer for the beginning of the day, written by Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow:

O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Thy holy will. In every hour of the day reveal Thy will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with firm conviction that Thy will governs all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events let me not forget that all are sent by Thee. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all that it shall bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray Thou Thyself in me. Amen.

And these are a few clauses from the general intercession with which the night prayers close:

Forgive, O Lord, lover of men, those who hate and wrong us. Reward our benefactors. Grant to our brethren and friends all that they ask for their salvation and eternal life. Visit and heal the sick. Free the prisoners. Guide those at sea. Travel with those who travel On those who charge us in our unworthiness to pray for them, have mercy according to Thy great mercy. Remember, O Lord, our departed parents and brethren and give them rest where shines the light of Thy face...

There is one type of private prayer, widely used in the west since the time of the Counter-Reformation, which has never been a feature of Orthodox spirituality — the formal 'Meditation,' made according to a 'Method' — the Ignatian, the Sulpician, the Salesian, or some other. Orthodox are encouraged to read the Bible or the Fathers slowly and thoughtfully; but such an exercise, while regarded as altogether excellent, is not considered to constitute prayer, nor has it been systematized and reduced to a 'Method.' Each is urged to read in the way that he finds most helpful.

But while Orthodox do not practise discursive Meditation, there is another type of personal prayer which has for many centuries played an extraordinarily important part in the life of Orthodoxy — the Jesus Prayer: "**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.**" Since it is sometimes said that Orthodox do not pay sufficient attention to the person of the Incarnate Christ, it is worth pointing out that this — surely the most classic of all Orthodox prayers — is essentially a Christo-centric prayer, a prayer addressed to and concentrated upon the Lord Jesus. Those brought up in the tradition of the Jesus Prayer are never allowed for one moment to forget the Incarnate Christ.

As a help in reciting this prayer many Orthodox use a rosary, differing somewhat in structure from the western rosary; an Orthodox rosary is often made of wool, so that unlike a string of beads it makes no noise.

The Jesus Prayer is a prayer of marvelous versatility. It is a prayer for beginners, but equally a prayer that leads to the deepest mysteries of the contemplative life. It can be used by anyone, at any time, in any place: standing in queues, walking, traveling on buses or trains; when at work; when unable to sleep at night; at times of special anxiety when it is impossible to concentrate upon other kinds of prayer. But while of course every Christian can use the Prayer at odd moments in this way, it is a different matter to recite it more or less continually and to use the physical exercises which have become associated with it. Orthodox spiritual writers insist that those who use the Jesus Prayer systematically should, if possible, place themselves under the guidance of an experienced director and do nothing on their own initiative.

For some there comes a time when the Jesus Prayer ‘enters into the heart,’ so that it is no longer recited by a deliberate effort, but recites itself spontaneously, continuing even when a man talks or writes, present in his dreams, waking him up in the morning. In the words of Saint Isaac the Syrian: ‘When the Spirit takes its dwelling-place in a man he does not cease to pray, because the Spirit will constantly pray in him. Then, neither when he sleeps, nor when he is awake, will prayer be cut off from his soul; but when he eats and when he drinks, when he lies down or when he does any work, even when he is immersed in sleep, the perfumes of prayer will breathe in his heart spontaneously’ (*Mystic Treatises*, edited by Wensinck, p. 174).

Orthodox believe that the power of God is present in the Name of Jesus, so that the invocation of this Divine Name acts ‘as an effective sign of God’s action, as a sort of sacrament’ (Un Moine de l’Église d’Orient, *La Prière de Jésus*, Chevetogne, 1952, p. 87). ‘The Name of Jesus, present in the human heart, communicates to it the power of deification ... Shining through the heart, the light of the Name of Jesus illuminates all the universe’ (S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 170-171).

Alike to those who recite it continually and to those who only employ it occasionally, the Jesus Prayer proves a great source of reassurance and joy. To quote the Pilgrim: ‘And that is how I go about now, and ceaselessly repeat the Prayer of Jesus, which is more precious and sweet to me than anything in the world. At times I do as much as 43 or 44 miles a day, and do not feel that I am walking at all. I am aware only of the fact that I am saying my Prayer. When the bitter cold pierces me, I begin to say my Prayer more earnestly, and I quickly become warm all over. When hunger begins to overcome me, I call more often on the Name of Jesus, and I forget my wish for food. When I fall ill and get rheumatism in my back and legs, I fix my thoughts on the Prayer, and do not notice the pain. If anyone harms me I have only to think, ‘How sweet is the Prayer of Jesus!’ and the injury and the anger alike pass away and I forget it all ... I thank God that I now understand the meaning of those words I heard in the Epistle — “*Pray without ceasing*” (1 Thes. 5:17)’ (*The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 17-18).

The Orthodox Church and The reunion of Christians

“The greatest misfortune that befell mankind was, without doubt, the schism between Rome and the Ecumenical

Church. The greatest blessing for which mankind can hope would be the reunion of east and west, the reconstitution of the great Christian unity” (General Alexander Kireev. 1832-1910).

‘One Holy Catholic Church’: What do we mean?

The Orthodox Church in all humility believes itself to be the ‘one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church,’ of which the Creed speaks: such is the fundamental conviction which guides Orthodox in their relations with other Christians. There are divisions among Christians, but the Church itself is not divided nor can it ever be.

Christians of the Reformation traditions will perhaps protest, ‘This is a hard saying; who can hear it?’ It may seem to them that this exclusive claim on the Orthodox side precludes any serious ‘ecumenical dialogue’ with the Orthodox, and any constructive work for reunion. And yet they would be utterly wrong to draw such a conclusion: for, paradoxically enough, over the past half century there have been a large number of encouraging and fruitful contacts between Orthodox and other Christians. Although enormous obstacles still remain, there has also been great progress towards a reconciliation.

If Orthodox claim to be the one true Church, what then do they consider to be the status of those Christians who do not belong to their communion? Different Orthodox would answer in slightly different ways, for although all loyal Orthodox are agreed in their fundamental teaching concerning the Church, they do not entirely agree concerning the practical consequences which follow from this teaching. There is first a more moderate group, which includes most of those Orthodox who have had close personal contact with other Christians. This group holds that, while it is true to say that Orthodoxy is the Church, it is false to conclude from this that those who are not Orthodox cannot possibly belong to the Church. Many people may be members of the Church who are not visibly so; invisible bonds may exist despite an outward separation. The Spirit of God blows where it will, and, as Irenaeus said, where the Spirit is, there is the Church. We know where the Church is but we cannot be sure where it is not; and so we must refrain from passing judgment on non-Orthodox Christians. In the eloquent words of Khomiakov: ‘Inasmuch as the earthly and visible Church is not the fullness and completeness of the whole Church which the Lord has appointed to appear at the final judgment of all creation, she acts and knows only within her own limits; and ... does not judge the rest of mankind, and only looks upon those as excluded, that is to say, not belonging to her, who exclude themselves. The rest of mankind, whether alien from the Church, *or united to her by ties which God has not willed to reveal to her*, she leaves to the judgment of the great day’ (*The Church is One*, section 2 (italics not in the original)).

There is only one Church, but there are many different ways of being related to this one Church, and many different ways of being separated from it. Some non-Orthodox are very close indeed to Orthodoxy, others less so; some are friendly to the Orthodox Church, others indifferent or hostile. By God’s grace the Orthodox Church possesses the fullness of truth (so its members are bound to believe), but there are other Christian communions which possess to a greater or lesser degree a genuine measure of Orthodoxy. All these facts must be taken into account: one cannot simply say that all non-Orthodox are outside the Church, and leave it at that; one cannot treat other Christians as if they stood on the same level as unbelievers.

Such is the view of the more moderate party. But there also exists in the Orthodox Church a more rigorous group, who hold that since Orthodoxy is the Church, anyone who is not Orthodox

cannot be a member of the Church. Thus Metropolitan Antony, head of the Russian Church in Exile and one of the most distinguished of modern Russian theologians, wrote in his *Catechism*:

Question: Is it possible to admit that a split within the Church or among the Churches could ever take place?

Answer: Never. Heretics and schismatics have from time to time fallen away from the one indivisible Church, and, by so doing, *they ceased to be members of the Church*, but the Church itself can never lose its unity according to Christ's promise' (Italics not in the original).

Of course (so this stricter group add) divine grace is certainly active among many non-Orthodox, and if they are sincere in their love of God, then we may be sure that God will have mercy upon them; but they cannot, in their present state, be termed members of the Church. Workers for Christian unity who do not often encounter this rigorist school should not forget that such opinions are held by many Orthodox of great learning and holiness.

Because they believe their Church to be the true Church, Orthodox can have but one ultimate desire: the conversion or reconciliation of all Christians to Orthodoxy. Yet it must not be thought that Orthodox demand the submission of other Christians to a particular center of power and jurisdiction ('Orthodoxy does not desire the submission of any person or group; it wishes to make each one understand' (S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 214)). The Orthodox Church is a family of sister Churches, decentralized in structure, which means that separated communities can be integrated into Orthodoxy without forfeiting their autonomy: Orthodoxy desires their reconciliation, not their absorption (Compare the title of a famous paper written by Dom Lambert Beauduin and read by Cardinal Mercier at the Malines Conversations, 'The Anglican Church united, not absorbed'). In all reunion discussions Orthodox are guided (or at any rate ought to be guided) by the principle of unity in diversity. They do not seek to turn western Christians into Byzantines or 'Orientals,' nor do they desire to impose a rigid uniformity on all alike: for there is room in Orthodoxy for many different cultural patterns, for many different ways of worship, and even for many different systems of outward organization.

Yet there is one field in which diversity cannot be permitted. Orthodoxy insists upon unity in matters of the faith. *Before there can be reunion among Christians, there must first be full agreement in faith*: this is a basic principle for Orthodox in all their ecumenical relations. It is unity in the faith that matters, not organizational unity; and to secure unity of organization at the price of a compromise in dogma is like throwing away the kernel of a nut and keeping the shell. Orthodox are not willing to take part in a 'minimal' reunion scheme, which secures agreement on a few points and leaves everything else to private opinion. There can be only one basis for union — the fullness of the faith; for Orthodoxy looks on the faith as a united and organic whole. Speaking of the Anglo-Russian Theological Conference at Moscow in 1956, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, expressed the Orthodox viewpoint exactly: 'The Orthodox said in effect: '...The Tradition is a concrete fact. Here it is, in its totality. Do you Anglicans accept it, or do you reject it?' The Tradition is for the Orthodox one indivisible whole: the entire, life of the Church in its fullness of belief and custom down the ages, including Mariology and the veneration of icons. Faced with this challenge, the typically Anglican reply is: 'We would not regard veneration of icons or Mariology as inadmissible, provided that in determining what is necessary to salvation, we confine ourselves to Holy Scripture.' But this reply only throws into relief the contrast between the Anglican appeal to what is deemed necessary to salvation and the Orthodox appeal to the one indivisible organism of Tradition, to tamper with any

part of which is to spoil the whole, in the sort of way that a single splodge on a picture can mar its beauty ('The Moscow Conference in Retrospect,' in *Sobornost*, series 3, no. 23, 1958, pp. 562-563).

In the words of another Anglican writer: 'It has been said that the Faith is like a network rather than an assemblage of discrete dogmas; cut one strand and the whole pattern loses its meaning' (T. M. Parker, 'Devotion to the Mother of God,' in *The Mother of God*, edited by E. L. Mascall, p. 74). Orthodox, then, ask of other Christians that they accept Tradition as a *whole*; but it must be remembered that there is a difference between Tradition and traditions. Many beliefs held by Orthodox are not a part of the one Tradition, but are simply *theologoumena*, theological opinions; and there can be no question of imposing mere matters of opinion on other Christians. Men can possess full unity in the faith, and yet hold divergent theological opinions in certain fields.

This basic principle — no reunion without unity in the faith — has an important corollary: *until unity in the faith has been achieved, there can be no communion in the sacraments*. Communion at the Lord's Table (most Orthodox believe) cannot be used to secure unity in the faith, but must come as the consequence and crown of a unity already attained. Orthodoxy rejects the whole concept of 'intercommunion' between separated Christian bodies, and admits no form of sacramental fellowship short of full communion. Either Churches are in communion with one another, or they are not: there can be no half-way house (Such is the standard Orthodox position. But there are individual Orthodox theologians who believe that some degree of intercommunion is possible, even before the attainment of full dogmatic agreement. One slight qualification must be added. Occasionally non-Orthodox Christians, if entirely cut off from the ministrations of their own Church, are allowed *with special permission* to receive communion from an Orthodox priest. But the reverse does not hold true, for Orthodox are forbidden to receive communion from any but a priest of their own Church). It is sometimes said that the Anglican or the Old Catholic Church is 'in communion' with the Orthodox, but this is not in fact the case. The two are not in communion, nor can they be, until Anglicans and Orthodox are agreed in matters of faith.

Orthodox relations with other communions: Opportunities and problems

The 'Separated' Eastern Churches. When they think of reunion, the Orthodox look not only to the west, but to their neighbours in the east, the Nestorians and Monophysites. In many ways Orthodoxy stands closer to the 'Separated' Eastern Churches than to any western confession.

The Nestorians are today very few in number — perhaps 50,000 — and almost entirely lacking in theologians, so that it is difficult to enter into official negotiations with them. But a partial union between Orthodox and Nestorian Christians has already occurred. In 1898 an Assyrian Nestorian, Mar Ivanios, bishop of Urumia in Persia, together with his flock, was received into communion by the Russian Church. The initiative came primarily from the Nestorian side, and there was no pressure — political or otherwise — on the part of the Russians. In 1905 this ex-Nestorian diocese was said to number 80 parishes and some 70,000 faithful; but between 1915 and 1918 the Assyrian Orthodox were slaughtered by the Turks in a series of unprovoked massacres, from which a few thousand alone escaped. Even though its life was so tragically cut short, the reconciliation of this ancient Christian community forms an encouraging precedent: why should not the Orthodox Church today come to a similar understanding with the rest of the Nestorian communion? (When visiting a Russian convent near New York in 1960, I had the pleasure of meeting an Assyrian Orthodox bishop, originally from the Urumia diocese, likewise called Mar Ivanios (successor to the original Mar Ivanios). A married priest, he had become a bishop after the death of his wife. When I asked the nuns how old he was, I was told: 'He says he's 102, but his children say he must be *much* older than that').

The Monophysites, from the practical point of view, stand in a very different position from the Nestorians, for they are still comparatively numerous — more than ten million — and possess theologians capable of presenting and interpreting their traditional doctrinal position. A number of western and Orthodox scholars now believe that the Monophysite teaching about the person of Christ has in the past been seriously misunderstood, and that the difference between those who accept and those who reject the decrees of Chalcedon is largely if not entirely verbal. When visiting the Coptic Monophysite Church of Egypt in 1959, the Patriarch of Constantinople spoke with great optimism: ‘In truth we are all one, we are all Orthodox Christians ... We have the same sacraments, the same history, the same traditions. The divergence is on the level of phraseology’ (Speech before the Institute of Higher Coptic Studies, Cairo, 10 December 1959). Of all the ‘ecumenical’ contacts of Orthodoxy, the friendship with the Monophysites seems the most hopeful and the most likely to lead to concrete results in the near future. The question of reunion with the Monophysites was much in the air at the Pan-Orthodox Conferences of Rhodes, and it will certainly figure prominently on the agenda of future Pan-Orthodox Councils. During August 1964 an extremely friendly ‘Unofficial Consultation’ took place at Aarhus in Denmark between Orthodox and Monophysite theologians. ‘All of us have learned from each other,’ the delegates from the two sides declared in the ‘agreed statement’ issued at the end of the meeting. ‘Our inherited misunderstandings have begun to clear up. We recognize in each other the one orthodox faith of the Church. Fifteen centuries of alienation have not led us astray from the faith of our Fathers.’ Further consultations met at Bristol (1967), Geneva (1970), and Addis Ababa (1971).

The Roman Catholic Church. Among western Christians, it is the Anglicans with whom Orthodoxy has at present the most cordial relations, but it is the Roman Catholics with whom Orthodoxy has by far the most in common. Certainly between Orthodoxy and Rome there are many difficulties. The usual psychological barriers exist. Among Orthodox — and doubtless among Roman Catholics as well — there are a multitude of inherited prejudices which cannot quickly be overcome; and Orthodox do not find it easy to forget the unhappy experiences of the past — such things as the Crusades, the ‘Union’ of Brest-Litovsk, the schism at Antioch in the eighteenth century, or the persecution of the Orthodox Church in Poland by a Roman Catholic government between the two World Wars. Roman Catholics do not usually realize how deep a sense of misgiving and apprehension many devout Orthodox — educated as well as simple — still feel when they think of the Church of Rome. More serious than these psychological barriers are the differences in doctrine between the two sides — above all the *filioque* and the Papal claims. Once again many Roman Catholics fail to appreciate how serious the theological difficulties are, and how great an importance Orthodox attach to these two issues. Yet when all has been said about dogmatic divergences, about differences in spirituality and in general approach, it still remains true that there are many things which the two sides share: in their experience of the sacraments, for example, and in their devotion to the Mother of God and the saints — to mention but two instances out of many — Orthodox and Roman Catholics are for the most part very close indeed.

Since the two sides have so much in common, is there perhaps some hope of a reconciliation? At first sight one is tempted to despair, particularly when one considers the question of the Papal claims. Orthodox find themselves unable to accept the definitions of the Vatican Council of 1870 concerning the supreme ordinary jurisdiction and the infallibility of the Pope; but the Roman Catholic Church reckons the Vatican Council as ecumenical and so is bound to regard its definitions as irrevocable. Yet matters are not completely at an impasse. How far, we may ask, have Orthodox controversialists understood the Vatican decrees aright? Perhaps the meaning at-

tached to the definitions by most western theologians in the past ninety years is not in fact the only possible interpretation. Furthermore it is now widely admitted by Roman Catholics that the Vatican decrees are incomplete and one-sided: they speak only of the Pope and his prerogatives, but say nothing about the bishops. But now that the second Vatican Council has issued a dogmatic statement on the powers of the episcopate, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Papal claims has begun to appear to the Orthodox world in a somewhat different light.

And if Rome in the past has perhaps said too little about the position of bishops in the Church, Orthodox in their turn need to take the idea of Primacy more seriously. Orthodox agree that the Pope is first among bishops: have they asked themselves carefully and searchingly what this really means? If the primatial see of Rome were restored once more to the Orthodox communion, what precisely would its status be? Orthodox are not willing to ascribe to the Pope a universal supremacy of 'ordinary' jurisdiction; but may it not be possible for them to ascribe to him, as President and Primate in the college of bishops, a universal responsibility, an all-embracing pastoral care extending over the whole Church? Recently the Orthodox Youth Movement in the Patriarchate of Antioch suggested two formulae. 'The Pope, among the bishops, is the elder brother, the father being absent.' 'The Pope is the mouth of the Church and of the episcopate.' Obviously these formulae fall far short of the Vatican statements on Papal jurisdiction and infallibility, but they can serve at any rate as a basis for constructive discussion. Hitherto Orthodox theologians, in the heat of controversy, have too often been content simply to attack the Roman doctrine of the Papacy (as they understand it), without attempting to go deeper and to state in *positive* language what the true nature of Papal primacy is from the Orthodox viewpoint. If Orthodox were to think and speak more in constructive and less in negative and polemical terms, then the divergence between the two sides might no longer appear so absolute.

After long postponement the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches set up a mixed international commission for theological discussions in 1980. Much is also being done informally through personal contacts. Invaluable work has been done by the Roman Catholic 'Monastery of Union' at Chevetogne in Belgium, originally founded at Amay-sur-Meuse in 1926. This is a 'double rite' monastery in which the monks worship according to both the Roman and the Byzantine rites. The Chevetogne periodical, *Irénikon*, contains an accurate and most sympathetic chronicle of current affairs in the Orthodox Church, as well as numerous scholarly articles, often contributed by Orthodox.

Certainly one must be sober and realistic: reunion between Orthodoxy and Rome, if it ever comes to pass, will prove a task of extraordinary difficulty. But signs of a rapprochement are increasing year by year. Pope Paul the Sixth and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople met three times (Jerusalem, 1964; Constantinople and Rome, 1967); on 7 December 1965 the anathemas of 1054 were simultaneously withdrawn by the Vatican Council in Rome and the Holy Synod in Constantinople; in 1979 Pope John Paul the Second visited Patriarch Dimitrios. Through such symbolic gestures mutual trust is being created.

The Old Catholics. It was only natural that the Old Catholics who separated from Rome after the Vatican Council of 1870 should have entered into negotiations with the Orthodox. The Old Catholics desired to recover the true faith of the ancient 'undivided Church' using as their basis the Fathers and the seven Ecumenical Councils: the Orthodox claimed that this faith was not merely a thing of the past, to be reconstructed by antiquarian research, but a present reality, which by God's grace they themselves had never ceased to possess. The two sides have met in a number of conferences, in particular at Bonn in 1874 and 1875, at Rotterdam in 1894, at Bonn again in 1931, and at Rheinfelden in 1957. A large measure of doctrinal agreement was reached

at these gatherings, but they have not led to any practical results; although relations between Old Catholics and Orthodox continue to be very friendly, no union has been effected. In 1975 a full-scale theological dialogue was resumed between the two Churches, and an important series of doctrinal statements has been issued, showing once more how much the two sides share in common.

The Anglican Communion. As in the past, so today there are many Anglicans who regard the Reformation Settlement in sixteenth-century England as no more than an interim arrangement, and who appeal, like the Old Catholics, to the General Councils, the Fathers, and the Tradition of the 'undivided Church.' One thinks of Bishop Pearson in the seventeenth century, with his plea: 'Search how it was in the beginning; go to the fountain head; look to antiquity.' Or of Bishop Ken, the Non-Juror, who said: 'I die in the faith of the Catholic Church, before the disunion of east and west.' This appeal to antiquity has led many Anglicans to look with sympathy and interest at the Orthodox Church, and equally it has led many Orthodox to look with interest and sympathy at Anglicanism. As a result of pioneer work by Anglicans such as William Palmer (1811-1879) (Received into the Roman Catholic church in 1855), J. M. Neale (1818-1866), and W. J. Birkbeck (1859-1916), Anglo-Orthodox relations during the past hundred years have developed and flourished in a most animated way.

There have been several official conferences between Anglican and Orthodox theologians. In 1930 an Orthodox delegation representing ten autocephalous Churches (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Greece, Cyprus, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland) was sent to England at the time of the Lambeth Conference, and held discussions with a committee of Anglicans; and in the following year a Joint Anglican-Orthodox Commission met in London, with representatives from the same Churches as in 1930 (except the Bulgarian).

Both in 1930 and in 1931 an honest attempt was made to face points of doctrinal disagreement. Questions raised included the relation of Scripture and Tradition, the Procession of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the sacraments, and the Anglican idea of authority in the Church. A similar joint Conference was held in 1935 at Bucharest, with Anglican and Romanian delegates. This gathering concluded its deliberations by stating: 'A solid basis has been prepared whereby full dogmatic agreement may be affirmed between the Orthodox and the Anglican communions.' In retrospect these words appear over-optimistic. During the thirties the two sides seemed to be making great progress towards full doctrinal agreement, and many — particularly on the Anglican side — began to think that the time would soon come when the Anglican and Orthodox Churches could enter into communion. Since 1945, however, it has become apparent that such hopes were premature: full dogmatic agreement and communion in the sacraments are still a long way off. The one major theological conference between Anglicans and Orthodox held since the war, at Moscow in 1956, was much more cautious than its predecessors in the thirties. At first sight its findings seem comparatively meager and disappointing, but actually they constitute an important advance, for they are marked by far greater realism. In the conferences between the wars there was a tendency to select specific points of disagreement and to consider them in isolation. In 1956 a genuine effort was made to carry the whole question to a deeper level: not just particular issues but the whole faith of the two Churches was discussed, so that specific points could be seen in context against a wider background.

An official theological dialogue, involving all the Orthodox Churches and the whole Anglican communion, was started in 1973. A crisis in the talks occurred in 1977-1978, because of the ordination of women priests in several Anglican Churches. The conversations continue, but progress is slow.

In the past forty years a number of Orthodox Churches have produced statements concerning the validity of Anglican Orders. At a first glance these statements seem to contradict one another in a curious and extraordinary way:

1) Six Churches have made declarations which seem to recognize Anglican ordinations as valid: Constantinople (1922), Jerusalem and Sinai (1923), Cyprus (1923), Alexandria (1930), Romania (1936).

2) The Russian Church in Exile, at the Karlovtsy Synod of 1935, declared that Anglican clergy who become Orthodox must be reordained. In 1948, at a large conference held in Moscow, the Moscow Patriarchate promulgated a decree to the same effect, which was also signed by official delegates (present at the conference) from the Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, and Albania.

To interpret these statements aright, it would be necessary to discuss in detail the Orthodox view of the validity of sacraments, which is not the same as that usually held by western theologians, and also the Orthodox concept of 'ecclesiastical economy;' and these matters are so intricate and obscure that they cannot here be pursued at length. But certain points must be made. First, the Churches which declared in favour of Anglican Orders have not apparently carried this decision into effect. In recent years, when Anglican clergy have approached the Patriarchate of Constantinople with a view to entering the Orthodox Church, it has been made clear to them that they would be received as laymen, not as priests. Secondly, the favourable statements put out by group (1) are in most cases carefully qualified and must be regarded as provisional in character. The Ecumenical Patriarch, for example, when communicating the 1922 decision to the Archbishop of Canterbury, said in his covering note: 'It is plain that there is as yet no matter here of a decree by the whole Orthodox Church. For it is necessary that the rest of the Orthodox Churches should be found to be of the same opinion as the most holy Church of Constantinople.' In the third place, Orthodoxy is extremely reluctant to pass judgment upon the status of sacraments performed by non-Orthodox. Most Anglicans understood the statements made by group (1) to constitute a 'recognition' of Anglican Orders *at the present moment*. But in reality the Orthodox were not trying to answer the question 'Are Anglican Orders valid in themselves, here and now?' They had in mind the rather different question 'Supposing the Anglican communion were to reach full agreement in faith with the Orthodox, would it *then* be necessary to reordain Anglican clergy?'

This helps to explain why Constantinople in 1922 could declare favorably upon Anglican Orders, and yet in practice treat them as invalid: this favorable declaration could not come properly into effect so long as the Anglican Church was not fully Orthodox in the faith. When matters are seen in this light, the Moscow decree of 1948 no longer appears entirely inconsistent with the declarations of the pre-war period. Moscow based its decision on the present discrepancy between Anglican and Orthodox belief: 'The Orthodox Church cannot agree to recognize the rightness of Anglican teaching on the sacraments in general, and on the sacrament of Holy Order in particular; and so it cannot recognize Anglican ordinations as valid.' (Note that Orthodox theology declines to treat the question of valid orders in isolation, but considers at the same time the faith of the Church concerned). But, so the Moscow decree continues, if in the future the Anglican Church were to become fully Orthodox in faith, then it might be possible to reconsider the question. While returning a negative answer at the present moment, Moscow extended a hope for the future.

Such is the situation so far as official pronouncements are concerned. Anglican clergy who join the Orthodox Church are reordained; but if Anglicanism and Orthodoxy were to reach full

unity in the faith, perhaps such reordination *might* not be found necessary. It should be added, however, that a number of individual Orthodox theologians hold that under no circumstances would it be possible to recognize the validity of Anglican Orders.

Besides official negotiations between Anglican and Orthodox leaders, there have been many constructive encounters on the more personal and informal level. Two societies in England are specially devoted to the cause of Anglo-Orthodox reunion: the *Anglican and Eastern Churches Association* (whose parent organization, the *Eastern Church Association*, was started in 1863, mainly on the initiative of Neale) and the *Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius* (founded in 1928), which arranges an annual conference and has a permanent center in London, Saint Basil's House (52 Ladbroke Grove, W11). The Fellowship issues a valuable periodical entitled *Sobornost*, which appears twice a year; in the past the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association also published a magazine, *The Christian East*, now replaced by a Newsletter.

What is the chief obstacle to reunion between Anglicans and Orthodox? From the Orthodox point of view there is one great difficulty: the comprehensiveness of Anglicanism, the extreme ambiguity of Anglican doctrinal formularies, the wide variety of interpretations which these formularies permit. There are individual Anglicans who stand very close to Orthodoxy, as can be seen by anyone who reads two remarkable pamphlets: *Orthodoxy and the Conversion of England*, by Derwas Chitty; and *Anglicanism and Orthodoxy*, by H. A. Hodges. 'The ecumenical problem,' Professor Hodges concludes, is to be seen 'as the problem of bringing back the West ... to a sound mind and a healthy life, and that means to Orthodoxy ... The Orthodox Faith, that Faith to which the Orthodox Fathers bear witness and of which the Orthodox Church is the abiding custodian, is the Christian Faith in its true and essential form' (*Anglicanism and Orthodoxy*, PP-46-7). Yet there are many other Anglicans who dissent sharply from this judgment, and who regard Orthodoxy as corrupt in doctrine and heretical. The Orthodox Church, however deep its longing for reunion, cannot enter into closer relations with the Anglican communion until Anglicans themselves are clearer about their own beliefs. The words of General Kireev are as true today as they were fifty years ago: 'We Orientals sincerely desire to come to an understanding with the great Anglican Church; but this happy result cannot be attained ... unless the Anglican Church itself becomes homogeneous and the doctrines of its different constitutive parts become identical' (*Le Général Alexandre Kiréeff et l'ancien-catholicisme*, edited by Olga Novikoff, Berne, 1911, p. 224).

Other Protestants. Orthodox have many contacts with Protestants on the Continent, above all in Germany and (to a lesser degree) in Sweden. The Tübingen discussions of the sixteenth century have been reopened in the twentieth, with more positive results.

The World Council of Churches. In the Orthodox Church today there exist two different attitudes towards the World Council of Churches and the 'Ecumenical Movement.' One party holds that Orthodox should take no part in the World Council (or at the most send observers to the meetings, but not full delegates); full participation in the Ecumenical Movement compromises the claim of the Orthodox Church to be the one true Church of Christ, and suggests that all 'churches' are alike. Typical of this viewpoint is the statement made in 1938 by the Synod of the Russian Church in Exile:

Orthodox Christians must regard the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church as the true Church of Christ, one and unique. For this reason, the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile has forbidden its children to take part in the Ecumenical Movement, which rests on the principle of the equality of all religions and Christian confessions.

But — so the second party would object — this is completely to misunderstand the nature of the World Council of Churches. Orthodox, by participating, do not thereby imply that they regard all Christian confessions as equal, nor do they compromise the Orthodox claim to be the true Church. As the *Toronto Declaration* of 1950 (adopted by the Central Committee of the World Council) carefully pointed out: ‘Membership in the World Council does not imply the acceptance of a specific doctrine concerning the nature of Church unity ... Membership does not imply that each Church must regard the other member Churches as Churches in the true and full sense of the word.’ In view of this explicit statement (so the second party argues), Orthodox can take part in the Ecumenical Movement without endangering their Orthodoxy. And if Orthodox can take part, then they must do so: for since they believe the Orthodox faith to be true, it is their duty to bear witness to that faith as widely as possible.

The existence of these two conflicting viewpoints accounts for the somewhat confused and inconsistent policy which the Orthodox Church has followed in the past. Some Churches have regularly sent delegations to the major conferences of the Ecumenical Movement, others have done so spasmodically or scarcely at all. Here is a brief analysis of Orthodox representation during 1927-68:

Lausanne, 1927 (Faith and Order): Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Greece, Cyprus, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland.

Edinburgh, 1937 (Faith and Order): Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Poland, Albania.

Amsterdam, 1948 (World Council of Churches): Constantinople, Greece, Romanian Church in America.

Lund, 1952 (Faith and Order): Constantinople, Antioch, Cyprus, North American Jurisdiction of Russians.

Evanston, 1954 (World Council of Churches): Constantinople, Antioch, Greece, Cyprus, North American Jurisdiction of Russians, Romanian Church in America.

New Delhi, 1961 (World Council of Churches): Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, North American Jurisdiction of Russians, Romanian Church in America.

Uppsala, 1968 (World Council of Churches): Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Georgia, Poland, North American Jurisdiction of Russians, Romanian Church in America.

As can be seen from this summary, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has always been represented at the conferences. From the start it has firmly supported a policy of full participation in the Ecumenical Movement. In January 1920 the Patriarchate issued a famous letter addressed ‘To all the Churches of Christ, wheresoever they be,’ urging closer cooperation between separated Christian bodies, and suggesting an alliance of Churches, parallel to the newly founded League of Nations; many of the ideas in this letter anticipate later developments in the Ecumenical Movement. But while Constantinople has adhered unwaveringly to the principles of 1920, other Churches have been more reserved. The Church of Greece, for example, at one point declared that it would only send laymen as delegates to the World Council, though this decision was revoked in 1961. Some Orthodox Churches have gone even further than this: at the Moscow Conference in 1948, a resolution was passed condemning all participation in the World Council. This resolution stated bluntly: ‘The aims of the Ecumenical Movement ... in its present state cor-

respond neither to the ideals of Christianity nor to the task of the Church of Christ, as understood by the Orthodox Church.' This explains why at Amsterdam, Lund, and Evanston the Orthodox Churches behind the Iron Curtain were not represented at all. In 1961, however, the Moscow Patriarchate applied for membership of the World Council and was accepted; and this has opened the way for other Orthodox Churches in the communist world to become members as well. Henceforward, so far as one can judge, Orthodox will play a far fuller and more effective part in the Ecumenical Movement than they have done hitherto. But it must not be forgotten that there are still many Orthodox — including a number of eminent bishops and theologians — who are anxious to see their Church withdraw from the Movement.

Orthodox participation is a factor of cardinal importance for the Ecumenical Movement: it is mainly the presence of Orthodox which prevents the World Council of Churches from appearing to be simply a Pan-Protestant alliance and nothing more. But the Ecumenical Movement in turn is important for Orthodoxy: it has helped to force the various Orthodox Churches out of their comparative isolation, making them meet one another and enter into a living contact with non-Orthodox Christians.

Learning from one another

Khomiakov, seeking to describe the Orthodox attitude to other Christians, in one of his letters makes use of a parable. A master departed, leaving his teaching to his three disciples. The eldest faithfully repeated what his master had taught him, changing nothing. Of the two younger, one added to the teaching, the other took away from it. At his return the master, without being angry with anyone, said to the younger: 'Thank your elder brother; without him you would not have preserved the truth which I handed over to you.' Then he said to the elder: 'Thank your younger brothers; without them you would not have understood the truth which I entrusted to you.'

Orthodox in all humility see themselves as in the position of the elder brother. They believe that by God's grace they have been enabled to preserve the true faith unimpaired, 'neither adding any thing, nor taking any thing away.' They claim a living continuity with the ancient Church, with the Tradition of the Apostles and the Fathers, and they believe that in a divided and bewildered Christendom it is their duty to bear witness to this primitive and unchanging Tradition. Today in the west there are many, both on the Catholic and on the Protestant side, who are trying to shake themselves free of the 'crystallizations and fossilizations of the sixteenth century,' and who desire to 'get behind the Reformation and the Middle Ages.' It is precisely here that the Orthodox can help. Orthodoxy stands outside the circle of ideas in which western Christians have moved for the past eight centuries; it has undergone no Scholastic revolution, no Reformation and Counter-Reformation, but lives still in that older Tradition of the Fathers which so many in the west now desire to recover. This, then, is the ecumenical role of Orthodoxy: to question the accepted formulae of the Latin west, of the Middle Ages and the Reformation.

And yet, if Orthodox are to fulfil this role properly, they must understand their own Tradition better than they have done in the past; and it is the west in its turn which can help them to do this. Orthodox must thank their younger brothers, for through contact with Christians of the west — Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Calvinist, Quaker — they are being enabled to acquire a new vision of Orthodoxy.

The two sides are only just beginning to discover one another, and each has much that it can learn. Just as in the past the separation of east and west has proved a great tragedy for both parties and a cause of grievous mutual impoverishment, so today the renewal of contact between

east and west is already proving for both a source of mutual enrichment. The west, with its critical standards, with its Biblical and Patristic scholarship, can enable Orthodox to understand the historical background of Scripture in new ways and to read the Fathers with increased accuracy and discrimination. The Orthodox in turn can bring western Christians to a renewed awareness of the inner meaning of Tradition, assisting them to look on the Fathers as a living reality. (The Romanian edition of the *Philokalia* shows how profitably western critical standards and traditional Orthodox spirituality can be combined). As Orthodox strive to recover frequent communion, the example of western Christians acts as an encouragement to them; many western Christians in turn have found their own prayer and worship incomparably deepened by an acquaintance with such things as the art of the Orthodox icon, the Jesus Prayer, and the Byzantine Liturgy. When the Orthodox Church behind the Iron Curtain is able to function more freely, perhaps western experience and experiments will help it as it tackles the problems of Christian witness within a secularized and industrial society. Meanwhile the persecuted Orthodox Church serves as a reminder to the west of the importance of martyrdom, and constitutes a living testimony to the value of suffering in the Christian life.

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