



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Prayer and Fasting

By Archbishop Stylianos of Australia

Entering once again the arena of Great Lent, it is only natural to remember again the basic feats that have always characterised the asceticism of Orthodox Christians. Among these feats, prayer and fasting hold a central position.

When an Orthodox speaks of fasting, then prayer spontaneously comes to his mind. And when he speaks of prayer, fasting also automatically comes to his mind. For these two means of communication with God are interrelated. This is why Christ, too, when His disciples tried, without success to free some unfortunate person from the evil spirits which tormented him, recommended this dual means of prayer and fasting as the most powerful weapon that man has against the devil, "This kind cannot be driven out except by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9: 29).

Since people, however, in our times want everything analysed, "demythologised" and finally in most cases undermined, this is why even among the baptised Orthodox of our times there are people who cannot see what justification prayer and fasting would have for the contemporary "enlightened" and "liberated" person.

And so they wonder what meaning there is in speaking to God in the form of prayer, exposing to Him this or that problem or request, which in any case, God of His own knows as Omniscient. By the same token, such faithful, wonder what difference it would make to God whether they eat or do not eat this or that food in this or that quantity, and on this or that day.

Of course, these objections seem at first sight persuasive and fair. He however, that judges fasting and prayer in this manner surely has not conceived their deeper meaning. For, surely, the meaning of prayer is not to tell God what He does not know but to be humbled before Him willingly, to open our heart to Him, to lay in His hands our life, to feel the warmth of dialogue with Him, to proclaim to Him that we freely recognise Him as Lord of our life and our death. Likewise fasting surely has no special moral or spiritual value in itself not even as diet for God does not have our biological well-being as His measure. It is precisely for this reason that St. Paul, who lived so little and suffered so much, did not cease to confess clearly that "we shall not lose anything if we do not eat, nor shall we gain anything if we do eat"; "food, however, will not improve our relationship with God".

Fasting, therefore, acquires its moral and spiritual significance from the moment that it becomes the means and potential of our easier communication with God. And indeed, by fasting man struggles in order to control his unreasonable biological desires and instincts, to become more liberal, to abstain from the attractions of this world and so to become more transparent and more receptive in his communication with the spiritual.

From the above, then, it becomes more obvious that neither fasting nor prayer are, or should be an end in themselves. They are means of communication with God and such communication is our quest and consummation. There is a beautiful Arabic proverb which says, "The soul wants neither coffee nor a cafe. The soul wants company and the coffee is a pretext".

We could, therefore, say that fasting and prayer are two sacred "pretexts" for man to be able to

break the monologue and the complacent enclosure inside his ego, to be humbled and to communicate with God in order to receive the blessing, the illumination and sanctification that guarantees this communication. For sure the words of Scripture will always have eternal authority, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

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What exactly is fasting in the Church?

Quite often people seem confused about the issue of fasting and its benefits to a degree where they don't take it seriously, or totally reject it. Others connect all sorts of superstitious beliefs to fasting, or practice it legalistically and out of fear. This of course, is not proper fasting..... So what is true fasting? Is it simply just keeping away from certain foods? Or keeping our stomach under control? Fasting never works autonomously. As an only daughter she is hypocritical and dangerous. When she coexists with her sister virtues, then she is of value. The sisters of fasting are five: 1) prayer, 2) charity, 3) humility, 4) abstinence, 5) love.

- Fasting without prayer is simply a medical diet, a healthy diet, a change of eating habits.
- Fasting without charity is selfishness and co-worker with.... greed.
- Fasting without humility is food for the monster of vanity.
- Fasting without abstinence is simply mockery.
- Fasting without love can become cannibalism!

Fasting and prayer

The Christians of the early Church fasted and prayed, for a certain decision in the life of the Church or in the election of pastors. "As they were liturgising to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said.... Then fasting and having prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them on their way" (Acts 13:3). The Lord, also, speaking about battling Satan, presented both prayer and fasting paired together: This kind cannot be expelled by other means, except by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

Fasting and charity

If fasting is the forfeiture of sinful passions, then it is a resounding NO to the worst passion, greed. Exercising discipline on this passion is called charity. The relative 'slogan' of the first Christians was: "We will fast so as to be merciful". This is why in the Gospel reading of Cheesefare Sunday (last Sunday before Lent), the Lord, after speaking about true fasting castigates the treasuring of material things:

"Do not store up treasures here on earth" (Matthew 6:19).

Fasting and humility

The monster of pride is only satisfied by eating mainly virtues. St. John Chrysostom calls vanity a virtue-killer. For this reason the Lord considers humility as a suitable covering for fasting: "When you fast, comb your hair and wash your face, so that others may not know you are fasting, but your Father who knows your secret. And your Father who sees your secret, will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:18). Whoever is rewarded here on earth for their actions had better not await a reward in heaven. "They have received their payment" (Matthew 6:16). Fasting without humility is abhorrent to God. Is there a greater faster than the devil? But he has no trace of humility. Humble fasting is that which is set by the Church. If we add or take away periods of fasting, we reveal egoism since we put our opinion above that of the Church, above that of God's commandment.

Fasting and abstinence

True fasting controls the passions. St. Basil the Great says: "True fasting is when we alienate ourselves from evil" (E.P.E. 6:48). What is the use if our mouth doesn't eat meat but our tongue destroys our brethren or the eyes seek satisfaction with disgraceful spectacles, or the body with seeking unlawful fleshly desires?

Fasting and love

According to the Disciple of love (St. John the Evangelist), hatred is equal to murder, to cannibalism: ".Whoever hates his-brother,-is-a-murderer"-- (1 John 3:15). No matter how severe your fasting, even if you end up a skeleton from fasting, if you don't forgive your brother, do not expect salvation. This is why the Lord considers love, mercy and forgiveness, as basic presuppositions of fasting: "If you forgive people's transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" Matthew 6:14). We pray for a good fast. Let us try our hardest. Let us control the passions with true fasting, so that we may become, again, friends with God, to be indeed close to him.

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Why fast?

by Fr. Alexander Lebedeff

Fasting was established by God Himself. In the Old Testament, preparation for a special holy occasion included fasting and prayer. In the New Testament, fasting is mentioned often.. Our Lord fasted Himself for forty days, before going out to preach.

It is clearly not "optional," since Our Lord said regarding fasting "When you fast" (Matt. 7:16), not "If you fast." Marvellously simple, when you think about it.

Our Lord, speaking of His disciples, said that after His departure, they would fast ("...when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast").

And, perhaps most importantly, our Lord said that we can overcome the devil only through prayer and fasting. When His disciples reported to Him that they had been unable to cast out a demon, Our Lord explained to them that ("this kind [the devil and his foul spirits] goeth not out but by prayer and fasting").

If we are given but two weapons in our battle against the demonic powers we should not cast one of these weapons aside and ignore it. Do you think that a soldier who is told that only two weapons work against a particular enemy would throw one away? I don't think so.

The Apostolic writings also mention fasting. St. Paul, in his first Letter to the Corinthians, speaking about marriage, counsels that husbands and wives not deny one another "except it be for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again.." Clearly, fasting and praying together are a part of a Christian marriage, according to the Apostle.

It is amazing to me, that the majority of Protestants ignore fasting, although it is very well documented in the Scriptures. So much for "sola scriptura." If something doesn't appeal to them, they will ignore it, no matter how many times it is mentioned in the scriptures.

The Church has established fasting periods that actually total up to about half of the year, averaging about 180 days, when you add them all together. Each of the seasons has its particular fasting period: Winter - the fast before Christmas; Spring - the fast for Great Lent; Summer - the Apostles Fast; Fall - the Dormition Fast. In addition, throughout the rest of the year, two days a week are assigned to fasting, and there are individual special fast days connected with Feasts, as well, such as the Eve of Theophany, the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, and the Elevation of the Holy Cross.

Apart from being a spiritual discipline, it is actually very healthy. A recommendation has been made by a major doctors' group that everyone should avoid meat and dairy products two days per week, in order to help keep animal fats and related cholesterol problems under control. Amazing to hear contemporary physicians making a great "discovery" that the Church has known for thousands of years!

A final thought on fasting. The original commandment that was given by God to our progenitors Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was a fasting commandment ("eat of the fruit

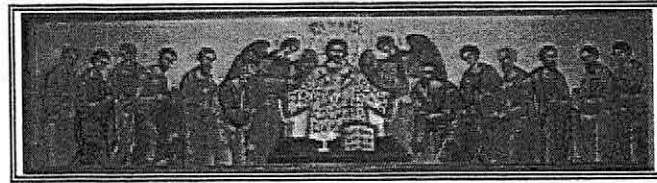
of all the trees, but this one"). If the fall of mankind and the loss of paradise was the result of breaking a fasting commandment, we should probably think twice before we ignore the fasts.

from the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist,
Washington, D.C., USA

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Introducing the Orthodox Church



The Eastern Orthodox Church is characterised by its continuity with the Apostolic Church, and follows the faith and practices defined by the first seven Ecumenical Councils. Other councils are also accepted as reflecting the same original faith. The word "Orthodox" signifies both "right believing" and "right worshipping", and so the Orthodox Church recognises itself as the bearer of an uninterrupted living tradition of true faith lived out in worship.

Since World War I, millions of eastern Europeans were dispersed in various countries where Orthodoxy had previously not existed. The Russian revolution of 1917 AD, for instance, provoked a massive emigration, which included intellectuals, theologians and clergy. After World War II, a huge Greek emigration occurred in western Europe, South Africa, America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

St Andrew's Theological College in Sydney, New South Wales, is the most significant educational institution of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia. Founded in 1986, the College enjoys full accreditation as a tertiary establishment and is a full member of the Sydney College of Divinity.

Biography - The Orthodox Church by T. Ware, The Greek Orthodox Church by P., Orthodoxy in Australia by H. Simmons Bratsiotis, Persons and Events by M. & J. Chrysavgis.

Teachings

For the Orthodox Christians, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity underlies all theology and spirituality. Salvation is personal and underlines particularity. Yet salvation is also communal and implies sharing; there is a uniqueness and wholeness in the human person, in humanity and in creation. It is also on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity that the conciliar and hierarchical structure of the Orthodox Church rests.

The mystery of the Trinity is revealed in the supreme act of love, the Incarnation of the divine "Word that became flesh", assuming and healing humanity and creation entirely.

Participation in the deified humanity of Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal of the Christian life, accomplished through the Holy Spirit. In the Sacraments and in the life of the Church, each person is called to theosis or deification. For "God became human in order that humanity might be divinised".

When expressing these beliefs, the Orthodox look for consistency with Scripture and Tradition, as manifested in the life of the Church and the early Church Fathers, but will search also for new formulations of this tradition. External criteria of truth are lacking; for Orthodox Christians seek the living experience of truth accessible in the communion of Saints. Thus they are reluctant to

define matters of faith with too much precision, in the firm conviction that truth is never exhausted. The **apophatic** or negative approach safeguards the transcendence of God even while designating His immanence; it also affirms the uniqueness of each person - divine and human - that they may never be reduced to anything less than a mystery.

Biography - The Faith We Hold by Archbishop Paul of Finland, Deification of Man by G. Mantzaridis.

Worship

The Orthodox Church experiences and expresses its theology in its Liturgy, which has in fact often accounted for the survival of the Church in times of turmoil. It was the liturgical dimension of the Church, for example, that encouraged and educated Orthodox faithful during the 400 years of Ottoman occupation of Byzantium (1453 - 1821), as well as, more recently, during persecutions in post-revolutionary Russia.

The Church is most authentically itself when it prays as a worshipping community. Hymns and music, incense and candles, gestures and prostrations, symbols and architecture, bread and wine and oil - all convey the content of the Christian faith in a variety of ways, appealing to each person in a tangible manner.

The chief characteristic of the Orthodox liturgical cycle is its emphasis on celebration and joy. There is a desire to capture the heavenly beauty and to reveal this in the services, which are generally much longer in duration than those to which Western Christians are accustomed.

Biography - For the Life of the World by A. Schmemmann, Hymn of Entry by Fr Vasileios.

Icons

Integral to the long history and tradition of the Orthodox Christian faith are the Icons, which further reflect the divine glory and beauty. The Incarnation of Christ implies that God became fully human and therefore accessible and describable. God is not only understood but, at the Incarnation, is looked upon and seen. An Orthodox Church is, therefore, filled with icons invariably depicting Christ or the Saints of the Church, and an Orthodox Christian kisses and assigns veneration to those depicted by them. Icons are never worshipped, and they are the Christian faith and history depicted in images and constitute part of the transfigured cosmos.

Biography - The Meaning of Icons by L. Ouspensky, The Essence of Orthodox Iconography by K. Kalokyris.

Unity in diversity

The Orthodox Church today numbers around 250 million throughout the world. Geographically, its primary area of distribution lies in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Russia and along the coasts of the Mediterranean. It is composed of several Patriarchal, self-governing or "autocephalous" and autonomous Churches - a form of international federation, within which each Church retains its independence. However, all Orthodox Churches are united in the same faith and liturgy.

Today people tend to think of the Church as a vast, world-wide institution. Yet the concept of universality as expressed in the local community is a fundamental principle of Orthodox doctrine.

Each local Eucharist gathering is related on the principle of identity.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia lies within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch at Constantinople (Istanbul) who is regarded throughout the Orthodox Church as "first among equals".

For the closer coordination and cooperation of the Orthodox in Australia, the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Churches in Australia (SCCOCA) was established under the chairmanship of Archbishop Stylianos in 1979.

The Great Schism of the eleventh century between Eastern and Western Christians - in fact the result of a gradual estrangement from earlier centuries - was the cause of strained relations, which have only in this century been relaxed with bilateral dialogues. For example, between Orthodox and Roman Catholics, and between Orthodox and Anglicans.

Orthodox greatly value their relationships with other Christian Churches and appreciate the need for fuller reconciliation and dialogue among Christians, so that the Gospel may be more effective in this world. Thus the Greek, Antiochian, Serbian and Romanian Orthodox Churches have long been members of the Australian Council of Churches, while some of their representatives have served as presidents of the Australia or other state Councils. Informal discussions and seminars have been held with other church bodies either occasionally or more regularly.

Biography - The Orthodox Church and Catholicism by Archbishop Stylianos of Australia,
Anglican - Orthodox Dialogue by K. T. Ware and C. Davey (Ed).

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

The perception of Jesus Christ in the Orthodox Church

by Fr Miltiades Chryssavgis

The perception of Jesus Christ in the Orthodox Church constitutes at the same time a thematic study of great significance for our salvation and a great challenge for all to seek truth and deeper meaning of life in the very person of Jesus Christ the God-Man. For us Orthodox Christians this study and challenge is not merely a matter of selecting certain facts and ideas from the Bible in order to invent "our own Christ," just as many Protestant groups have invented "their own Christs" it is rather a matter of testing our Biblical knowledge of Jesus Christ against the life of the Orthodox Church within the Tradition of Christ's Body, the Saints. For in the words of the great contemporary Serbian Orthodox theologian Archimandrite Justin Popovic, even if the Orthodox Church did not have the Bible as God's written word, the life of one Saint alone would suffice as the living and eternal evidence about Jesus Christ Himself. "The Saints", he said, "bear the character of the Divine Logos (Logosnost), and life in Christ our God (Bogozivot), thus witnessing to the living presence of Jesus Christ from generation to generation until the end of the world." (Prologue to the Lives of Saints, by Justin Popovic).

In seeking the true perception of Jesus Christ in the Orthodox Church we are dealing not with an intellectual exercise, but with a matter of life and death - our salvation or our damnation. In order to simplify our approach to the subject, let us ask the very same question which Jesus Christ put to His disciples in the land of Caesarea of Philippi, a question that was asked twice, each time with greater emphasis. In the first instance, Christ asked the disciples, "Whom do people say that I the Son of Man, am?" (Mat 16:13) The disciples answer in the following manner, "Some say that you are John the Baptist, some Elias, some Jeremiah or one of the prophets." (Mat 16:14) From the words of the answer it clearly appears that those people who had seen Christ and who had witnessed His miracles, had perceived in Jesus Christ a unique person who displayed an unusual power and a potent force greater than any other human person could display. Yet they saw in Him merely the Son of Man, not the Son of God. Christ, however, desiring that the disciples, who were closer to Him than the other people, had repeatedly heard His teaching, had witnessed His life and miracles, and had tasted proofs of His divine origin, should have a true perception of Him both as the Son of Man in the mystery of the incarnation, as well as the Son of God in the full glory of His divinity, asked them the same question in a more personal and direct manner, "But whom do you say that I am?" - that is, St John Chrysostom adds, "you that are with me always, and see me working miracles, and have yourselves done many mighty works by me." (Homily 34, on Matthew 16:15). Then Simon Peter, acting as the leader and spokesman of the Apostles, boldly and openly declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mat 16:1,6).

This is indeed a great confession, the bold confession of the Truth concerning Jesus Christ, especially declaring His Godhead and His divine Economy in the mystery of His incarnation. While looking at the humanity of Jesus Christ and accepting Him as the Son of Man, Simon Peter also perceives in Him simultaneously His divinity and confesses Him to be the Son of the living God. Furthermore, he expresses his perception of Christ with a steadfast and unwavering conviction, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God", thus correctly confessing Christ as the Only-Begotten One from the Father". (cf. Creed, "true God from true God...").

The great significance of Peter's confession is further emphasised by Jesus Christ in the next verse, "You are Peter, and upon this rock (namely, on the faith of your confession) I will build my Church." (Mat 16:18). In other words the perception of Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God constitutes the very foundation of the Church of Christ. Such perception allows no reservations and no doubts concerning either the divinity or the humanity of Jesus Christ. We shall return to this point again, but for the time being let us enrich our perception of Christ beginning with the experience of the New Testament witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ and the Advent of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is our Saviour (Mat 1:21), and Christ means the "Anointed one" by God's spirit. Christ is perceived as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and is the true image and likeness of God the Father. (Col 1: 15) Jesus Christ has revealed to us the true nature of God (John 1:18), as well as the true character of the human person, since he became the perfect man (John 1: 14). He is of one essence with the Father, and is both accessible to the world, but also transcendent above the heavens. (Heb 7:25).

Such is, very briefly, a picture of the perception of Jesus Christ from the Scriptures - we have entirely omitted the Old Testament types "of Him who has to come" (Rom 5:14), whilst we have only lightly touched on some of the New Testament references.

What I would like to do next is to transfer the centre of our attention to the present life of our Church in Australia. Indeed, it would be beneficial for us to pose the question which Jesus asked the Apostles, to the members of our Church:

Who do we say that Jesus Christ is?

Who is this Jesus Christ in whom we believe as baptised members of the Orthodox Church?

Is Jesus Christ a mere man? Is He only God? or is He rather, as the Orthodox Church teaches, both truly God and truly man, united in one Person hypostatically in an unconfused and undivided manner? (Definition of Chalcedon 451 AD)

At any rate, how are we to understand Simon Peter's answer that Jesus Christ is "the Son of the living God?" (Mat 16:16).

Such questions were undoubtedly in the minds of the Apostles, and they are also in our minds, as we endeavour to fathom the mystery of the incarnation, and as we struggle to grow in our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. Our endeavour and struggle becomes all the more imperative since we are confronted with hundreds of churches and sects in our neighbourhood. Among them there are some who believe and teach that Jesus Christ is only man, a great social reformer, at the most a great prophet, teacher or archangel (Arianism). Others emphasise the divine at the expense of the human nature of Christ (Monophysitism).

Any excessive emphasis on either Christ's divinity or His humanity does not simply create confusion on the theoretical level of faith; it also has immense repercussions and consequences on the practical level, since truth and doctrine have their corresponding application in life itself. Accordingly, if Jesus Christ is less than God, He cannot bring salvation to man. For "neither a messenger, nor a man, but the Lord Himself saved us." (Isaiah 63:9). Again, if Jesus Christ is only God and not man, then He is transcendent but not personally accessible to man. For "What is not assumed, cannot be healed", St Gregory the Theologian says emphatically.

The Orthodox perception of Jesus Christ preserves a balance between such extremes. Firstly, as declared by the third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 331 AD the unity of one Person of Jesus

Christ the Son of God is safe-guarded by the adoption of the title Theotokos for the Virgin Mary, "Who gave birth to the Logos of God made flesh." (Cyril of Alexandria) Secondly, as decided by the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, Jesus Christ is one Person in two natures and in one hypostasis. The Fathers stated their belief in "one and the same Son, perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man ... acknowledged in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably: the difference between the natures is in no way removed because of the union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature is preserved, and both combine in one person and in one hypostasis." (Definition of Chalcedon, in T. Ware, The Orthodox Church).

The hymnography of the Orthodox Church palpably brings out the contrast of the two natures of Jesus Christ, a contrast which becomes a stumbling block for non-believers, but which naturally constitutes the centre and the basis of our Orthodox Christian faith about Jesus Christ. Take, for instance, the Kontakion of the Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, the Feast of the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. This hymn by St Romanos the Melodist ends with the words, "A new-born Child, God before the ages." Here we confess our steadfast faith in the One Person of Jesus Christ in His two natures.

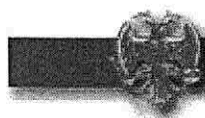
The Orthodox Church has never lost sight of the real personality of Jesus Christ. He is in truth the Messiah, the central figure and the fulfillment of the entire creation. He marks a radical demarcation line between things "old" and "new", and divides history into BC and AD. He is at the same time the "Jesus of History" and the "Jesus of our faith", having become one of us without losing His divinity, but also transforming history from its fallen state. The Orthodox Church offers us the proper guarantee for our correct perception of the Person of Jesus Christ. The Church as the Body of Christ incorporates us in the "temple not made by hands" and by the Holy Spirit leads to the Truth, that is to Jesus Christ. With the 'great cloud of witnesses' the Church directs us to "look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith". (Heb 12:1-2).

Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes unto the Father but by me". (John 14:6). In Jesus Christ we can hope for eternity, salvation and the transfiguration of all creation.

Brothers and Sisters, far from claiming to have exhausted the subject which I was asked to develop in this paper, I wish to conclude by repeating the words of St John the Theologian with which he finishes his Gospel, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written". (John 28:25).

from a paper presented to a National Serbian Youth Conference in Australia

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The Church

The Orthodox Church simply calls herself "the Church," just as the Greeks in the past used the word "Christians" to refer to the Orthodox. This follows naturally from the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church is organically the same congregation or *ecclesia* which was born at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem on Pentecost. In many places already mentioned in the New Testament this congregation has remained the same throughout history. The Orthodox Church does not need to give proof of her historical authenticity; she is simply the direct continuation of the Church of the Apostolic Age.

Does the Orthodox Church of today in fact correspond to the picture we get of the congregation of the Apostolic Age when we read the New Testament and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers? It does -as much as a grown-up person corresponds to a picture taken of him as a child. Although the Church has developed, it is the same in essence and spirit in the twentieth century as it has been from the beginning.

The coming of Christ when the time was "fulfilled" (Mk 1: 15) was an appointed event; indeed, our calendar begins there. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfilment of the "promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4) was also an appointed, unique historical event. For the Church it meant power from on high" and "the Spirit of truth" (Lk 24:49, Jn 16:13). On the strength of this we believe that although the grace of the Holy Spirit is at work in the later churches and communities according to their faith, the plenitude Of grace once given to the Church in the historical outpouring of the Holy Spirit will not be given again. In a hymn for Pentecost the Church sings:

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit; through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of man, glory to Thee!

"When the Spirit of truth comes He will guide you into all the truth," Christ promised (Jn 16:13). After this promise had been fulfilled, the Apostle indeed gave to the "Church of the living God" the name "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15).

The promised gift of "all the truth" came to the Church in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but it took centuries, the whole Patristic Age, to define it using man's limited concepts. And although the Fathers were learned men, profound thinkers, and pure in their lives, this alone is not enough to guarantee the absolute character of the truth inherited from the time of the Fathers. Therefore we need the power of the Holy Spirit, which was given to the Church, to guide it to the truth and to protect it. The verbal formulations of the faith which was in the consciousness of the Church from the very beginning have developed over a long period. Similarly, the whole ecclesiastical life has found richer and richer expressions in the various parts of Christ's Church which differ from one another in form but not in spirit. Thus every attempt to create an apostolic congregation, disregarding the work of the Holy Spirit which has gone on in the Church for two thousand years, seems artificial from the Church's point of view.

Just as Christ has both a divine and a human nature, so has the Church. On its human side the Church is susceptible to errors, weaknesses and failings, but it has consolation in the promise: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). This means that though the storms of time may ravage the human substance of the Church, they will not

destroy the Church. The Church will endure until the next period of God's rule over the world is ushered in, until the *parousia* or Second Coming of Christ. Until then the church which was established at the first Christian Pentecost will endure as the protector of the truth, maintaining its characteristic features of apostolic priesthood, the Eucharist and other sacraments, and the common experience of the Church, its Tradition.

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The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church

by Fr Elias Kentrotis

One of the most common words we hear today in reference to the thousands of Christian groups, which exist, is the name "church". This of course may lead one to believe that because they all believe in one God and all call themselves Christians, they all make up the Church, that is, each group is a "part" of the Church.

What, however, are the characteristics of the Church? Do all of these groups, in fact, comprise the Church? If so, why are there so many differences, even contradictions between them? What is ultimately the relationship between Orthodoxy and the other religious groups? Let's consider the Orthodox Church's teaching concerning the Church as found in the Creed, namely, that the Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

The Church is One

In Matt 16:18 we read,

"You are Petros, and upon this rock (see 16:16) I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

From this passage we note two things:

- that our Lord Himself has established His Church and
- that this Church, established by our Lord, will always exist, that is, the gates of hell (satan) will never defeat it.

Thus we see that our Lord Jesus Christ has established the Church. Which Church? Is it possible to discern this Church within the plethora of groups calling themselves the Church? The Orthodox Church claims herself to be the one Church established by Christ continuing to this present day, and which is the pillar and bulwark of the truth. (1 Tim 3:15).

The history of the Orthodox Church can be traced right back, to the days of our Lord and His Apostles. This is the Church, which our Lord promised would always exist and against which the gates of hell would never prevail. For the Orthodox Church all other groups calling themselves "churches" have either formed by themselves at a later date or have separated from the one Church founded by Christ. The Church is one because her head, Christ is one,

"the same yesterday, today and forever," (Heb 13:18),

and He has but one body which has but one Spirit giving it life.

The Church is Holy

The Church is holy firstly because she is Christ's Body, with Him as the head and the Holy Spirit as the soul. However, the Church is also holy because, as we read in Ephesians 5:25-27,

"Christ also loved the Church, and gave, Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish..."

The Church is Catholic

(Not to be confused with the name Roman Catholic). The Church is Catholic because she is open to all people, in all places and in all times, offering them the fullness of the revealed Truth and Salvation. St Cyril of Jerusalem states:

"...it is called Catholic, then, because it extends all over the world, from one end of the earth to the other; and because it teaches universally and completely one and all the doctrines which ought to come to man's knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly.... for the union of the spread churches which are scattered throughout the world, and which are all under the control of the Holy Spirit.... and for the treating and healing of the whole class of sins, performed by the body and the soul..."

The Church is Apostolic

Firstly, because she has been founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, the first and Supreme Apostle (Gal 4:4, Heb 3:1), and also because she is

"built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." (Eph 2:20).

The Orthodox Church can trace her beginnings back to our Lord and His Apostles and preserves their teaching unchanged and unadulterated. Thus the Church is Apostolic because of her origin and derivation and her uninterrupted Apostolic Succession. The Apostolic Succession is the continual and uninterrupted transfer to the Bishops, who are the successors of the Apostles, of the gifts of Divine Grace and Truth, which the Apostles themselves received from the Lord. The Priesthood of the Church, passed on by the laying-on of hands of the Bishop and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is guaranteed by Apostolic Succession. This Priesthood is central to the Church for without it we cannot have the celebration of any of the Mysteries (Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Eucharist, Marriage, Holy Unction, Confession and Priesthood).

God created man for life. By life, I don't simply mean biological life, but life in its fullness as communion and union with God Himself who is the source of all life.

Man, as we know, in the person of Adam and Eve having believed the lie of the Devil, chose to try to find this life without God, far away from him, in the fruit of the Tree of knowledge of good and evil, in other words in material things. They thus abandoned God and consequently life with the result that they came face to face with death, destruction and sin.

It's still this way with man today. He's still chasing after life but in the same way as Adam and Eve, in material things, in the creation instead of the Creator, in things which seek to increase his pleasure, in so-called good times, parties, mansions, luxury cars, sex, drugs, glory, power etc.

The Church is not simply a place of worship and prayer, nor just a place where we go to hear the Bible or listen to the priest. The aim of the Church is to restore man to his original position as King of Creation, as a person created for life as communion and union with God, as a person destined for eternal life. Through membership in the Church, by living its life and participating in its Mysteries man ultimately attains to his destiny, he is united with God, he lives in the glory of God, he is deified. Only the Church saves. The Church is salvation.

From what has been said concerning the Church, it is quite evident that the Church established by Christ is the Orthodox Church which is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, "the pillar and bulwark of the Truth." All other groups outside this Church, Christian or non-Christian, regardless of how active they are, or how sincere they seem, are not the Church, the Body of Christ, and have altered the unchangeable revealed Truths taught by our Lord, given by the Holy Apostles and handed down through the ages by the generations of our Holy Fathers. Let's therefore remain faithful to this "holy depository" being careful not to be fooled by anyone, "even an angel of light", preaching a different gospel which will lead us away from the Body of Christ, the Orthodox Church.

from a paper presented
to a National Serbian Youth Conference in Australia

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

The difference between Orthodox spirituality and other traditions

by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos

Orthodox spirituality differs distinctly from any other "spirituality" of an eastern or western type. There can be no confusion among the various spiritualities, because Orthodox spirituality is God-centered, whereas all others are man-centered.

The difference appears primarily in the doctrinal teaching. For this reason we put "Orthodox" before the word "Church" so as to distinguish it from any other religion. Certainly "Orthodox" must be linked with the term "Ecclesiastic," since Orthodoxy cannot exist outside of the Church; neither, of course, can the Church exist outside Orthodoxy.

The dogmas are the results of decisions made at the Ecumenical Councils on various matters of faith. Dogmas are referred to as such, because they draw the boundaries between truth and error, between sickness and health. Dogmas express the revealed truth. They formulate the life of the Church. Thus they are, on the one hand, the expression of Revelation and on the other act as "remedies" in order to lead us to communion with God; to our reason for being.

Dogmatic differences reflect corresponding differences in therapy. If a person does not follow the "right way" he cannot ever reach his destination. If he does not take the proper "remedies," he cannot ever acquire health; in other words, he will experience no therapeutic benefits. Again, if we compare Orthodox spirituality with other Christian traditions, the difference in approach and method of therapy is more evident.

A fundamental teaching of the Holy Fathers is that the Church is a "Hospital" which cures the wounded man. In many passages of Holy Scripture such language is used. One such passage is that of the parable of the Good Samaritan: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, and gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you' (Luke 10:33-35).

In this parable, the Samaritan represents Christ who cured the wounded man and led him to the Inn, that is to the "Hospital" which is the Church. It is evident here that Christ is presented as the Healer, the physician who cures man's maladies; and the Church as the true Hospital. It is very characteristic that Saint John Chrysostom, analysing this parable, presents these truths emphasised above.

Man's life "in Paradise" was reduced to a life governed by the devil and his wiles. "And fell among thieves," that is in the hands of the devil and of all the hostile powers. The wounds man suffered are the various sins, as the prophet David says: "my wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness" (Psalm 37). For "every sin causes a bruise and a wound." The Samaritan is Christ Himself who descended to earth from Heaven in order to cure the wounded man. He used oil and wine to "treat" the wounds; in other words, by "mingling His blood with the

Holy Spirit, he brought man to life." According to another interpretation, oil corresponds to the comforting word and wine to the harsh word. Mingled together they have the power to unify the scattered mind. "He set him in His own beast," that is He assumed human flesh on "the shoulders" of His divinity and ascended incarnate to His Father in Heaven.

Then the Good Samaritan, i.e. Christ, took man to the grand, wondrous and spacious inn - to the Church. And He handed man over to the innkeeper, who is the Apostle Paul, and through the Apostle Paul to all bishops and priests, saying: "Take care of the Gentile people, whom I have handed over to you in the Church. They suffer illness wounded by sin, so cure them, using as remedies the words of the Prophets and the teaching of the Gospel; make them healthy through the admonitions and comforting word of the Old and New Testaments." Thus, according to Saint Chrysostom, Paul is he who maintains the Churches of God, "curing all people by his spiritual admonitions and offering to each one of them what they really need."

In the interpretation of this parable by Saint John Chrysostom, it is clearly shown that the Church is a Hospital which cures people wounded by sin; and the bishops and priests are the therapists of the people of God.

And this precisely is the work of Orthodox theology. When referring to Orthodox theology, we do not simply mean a history of theology. The latter is, of course, a part of this but not absolutely or exclusively. In Patristic tradition, theologians are the **God-seers**. Saint Gregory Palamas calls Barlaam [who attempted to bring Western scholastic theology into the Orthodox Church] a "theologian," but he clearly emphasises that intellectual theology differs greatly from the experience of the vision of God. According to Saint Gregory Palamas theologians are the God-seers; those who have followed the "method" of the Church and have attained to perfect faith, to the illumination of the *nous* and to divinisation (*theosis*). Theology is the fruit of man's cure and the path which leads to cure and the acquisition of the knowledge of God.

Western theology, however, has differentiated itself from Eastern Orthodox theology. Instead of being therapeutic, it is more intellectual and emotional in character. In the West [after the Carolingian "Renaissance"], scholastic theology evolved, which is antithetical to the Orthodox Tradition. Western theology is based on rational thought whereas Orthodoxy is hesychastic. Scholastic theology tried to understand logically the Revelation of God and conform to philosophical methodology. Characteristic of such an approach is the saying of Anselm [Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093-1109, one of the first after the Norman Conquest and destruction of the Old English Orthodox Church]: "I believe so as to understand." The Scholastics acknowledged God at the outset and then endeavoured to prove His existence by logical arguments and rational categories. In the Orthodox Church, as expressed by the Holy Fathers, faith is God revealing Himself to man. We accept faith by hearing it not so that we can understand it rationally, but so that we can cleanse our hearts, attain to faith by **theoria** and experience the Revelation of God.

Scholastic theology reached its culminating point in the person of Thomas Aquinas, a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. He claimed that Christian truths are divided into natural and supernatural. Natural truths can be proven philosophically, like the truth of the Existence of God. Supernatural truths - such as the Triune God, the incarnation of the Logos, the resurrection of the bodies - cannot be proven philosophically, yet they cannot be disproven. Scholasticism linked theology very closely with philosophy, even more so with metaphysics. As a result, faith was altered and scholastic theology itself fell into complete disrepute when the "idol" of the West - metaphysics - collapsed. Scholasticism is held accountable for much of the tragic situation created in the West with respect to faith and faith issues.

The Holy Fathers teach that natural and metaphysical categories do not exist but speak rather of

the created and uncreated. Never did the Holy Fathers accept Aristotle's metaphysics. However, it is not my intent to expound further on this. Theologians of the West during the Middle Ages considered scholastic theology to be a further development of the teaching of the Holy Fathers, and from this point on, there begins the teaching of the Franks that scholastic theology is superior to that of the Holy Fathers. Consequently, Scholastics, who are occupied with reason, consider themselves superior to the Holy Fathers of the Church. They also believe that human knowledge, an offspring of reason, is loftier than Revelation and experience.

It is within this context that the conflict between Saint Gregory Palamas and Barlaam should be viewed. Barlaam was essentially a scholastic theologian who attempted to pass on scholastic theology to the Orthodox East.

Barlaam's views - that we cannot really know Who the Holy Spirit is exactly (an outgrowth of which is agnosticism), that the ancient Greek philosophers are superior to the Prophets and the Apostles (since reason is above the vision of the Apostles), that the light of the Transfiguration is something which is created and can be undone, that the hesychastic way of life (i.e. the purification of the heart and the unceasing noetic prayer) is not essential - are views which express a scholastic and, subsequently, a secularised point of view of theology. Saint Gregory Palamas foresaw the danger that these views held for Orthodoxy and through the power and energy of the Most Holy Spirit and the experience which he himself had acquired as a successor to the Holy Fathers, he confronted this great danger and preserved unadulterated the Orthodox Faith and Tradition.

Having given a framework to the topic at hand, if Orthodox spirituality is examined in relationship to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, the differences are immediately discovered.

Protestants do not have a "therapeutic treatment" tradition. They suppose that believing in God, intellectually, constitutes salvation. Yet salvation is not a matter of intellectual acceptance of truth; rather it is a person's transformation and divinisation by grace. This transformation is effected by the analogous "treatment" of one's personality, as shall be seen in the following chapters. In the Holy Scripture it appears that faith comes by hearing the Word and by experiencing "theoria" (the vision of God). We accept faith at first by hearing in order to be healed, and then we attain to faith by theoria, which saves man. Protestants, because they believe that the acceptance of the truths of faith, the theoretical acceptance of God's Revelation, i.e. faith by hearing saves man, do not have a "therapeutic tradition." It could be said that such a conception of salvation is very naive.

The Roman Catholics as well do not have the perfection of the therapeutic tradition which the Orthodox Church has. Their doctrine of the Filioque is a manifestation of the weakness in their theology to grasp the relationship existing between the person and society. They confuse the personal properties: the "unbegotten" of the Father, the "begotten" of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause of the "generation" of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit.

The Latins' weakness to comprehend and failure to express the dogma of the Trinity shows the non-existence of empirical theology. The three disciples of Christ (Peter, James and John) beheld the glory of Christ on Mount Tabor; they heard at once the voice of the Father, "This is My beloved Son," and saw the coming of the Holy Spirit in a cloud, for, the cloud is the presence of the Holy Spirit, as Saint Gregory Palamas says. Thus the disciples of Christ acquired the knowledge of the Triune God in theoria (vision of God) and by revelation. It was revealed to them that God is one essence in three hypostases.

This is what Saint Symeon the New Theologian teaches. In his poems he proclaims over and over that, while beholding the uncreated Light, the deified man acquires the Revelation of God the Trinity. Being in "theoria" (vision of God), the saints do not confuse the hypostatic attributes. The fact that the Latin tradition came to the point of confusing these hypostatic attributes and teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son also, shows the non-existence of empirical theology for them. Latin tradition speaks also of created grace, a fact which suggests that there is no experience of the grace of God. For, when man obtains the experience of God, then he comes to understand well that this grace is uncreated. Without this experience there can be no genuine "therapeutic tradition."

And indeed we cannot find in all of Latin tradition, the equivalent to Orthodoxy's therapeutic method. The *nous* is not spoken of; neither is it distinguished from reason. The darkened *nous* is not treated as a malady, nor the illumination of the *nous* as therapy. Many greatly publicised Latin texts are sentimental and exhaust themselves in a barren ethicology. In the Orthodox Church, on the contrary, there is a great tradition concerning these issues, which shows that within it there exists the true therapeutic method.

A faith is a true faith inasmuch as it has therapeutic benefits. If it is able to cure, then it is a true faith. If it does not cure, it is not a true faith. The same thing can be said about medicine: a true scientist is the doctor who knows how to cure and his method has therapeutic benefits, whereas a charlatan is unable to cure. The same holds true where matters of the soul are concerned. The difference between Orthodoxy and the Latin tradition, as well as the Protestant confessions, is apparent primarily in the method of therapy. This difference is made manifest in the doctrines of each denomination. Dogmas are not philosophy, neither is theology the same as philosophy.

Since Orthodox spirituality differs distinctly from the "spiritualities" of other confessions, so much the more does it differ from the "spirituality" of eastern religions, which do not believe in the Theanthropic nature of Christ and the Holy Spirit. They are influenced by the philosophical dialectic, which has been surpassed by the Revelation of God. These traditions are unaware of the notion of personhood and thus the hypostatic principle. And love, as a fundamental teaching, is totally absent. One may find, of course, in these eastern religions an effort on the part of their followers to divest themselves of images and rational thoughts, but this is in fact a movement towards nothingness, to non-existence. There is no path leading their "disciples" to **theosis-divinisation** (see the note below) of the whole man.

This is why a vast and chaotic gap exists between Orthodox spirituality and the eastern religions, in spite of certain external similarities in terminology. For example, eastern religions may employ terms like ecstasy, dispassion, illumination, noetic energy, etc. but they are impregnated with a content different from corresponding terms in Orthodox spirituality.

Notes

Theoria is the vision of the glory of God. Theoria is identified with the vision of the uncreated Light, the uncreated energy of God, with the union of man with God, with man's *theosis* (see note below). Thus, theoria, vision and theosis are closely connected. Theoria has various degrees. There is illumination, vision of God, and constant vision (for hours, days, weeks, even months). Noetic prayer is the first stage of theoria. Theoretical man is one who is at this stage. In Patristic theology, the theoretical man is characterised as the shepherd of the sheep. Return to text.

Theosis-Divinisation is the participation in the Uncreated grace of God. Theosis is identified and connected with the theoria (vision) of the Uncreated Light (see note above). It is called theosis in grace because it is attained through the energy, of the divine grace. It is a co-operation of God

with man, since God is He Who operates and man is he who co-operates.

From Chapter 2 of
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Other writings of Bishop Hierotheos [here](#).

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed, which was formulated at the Councils of Nicaea in 325 AD and of Constantinople in 381 AD (1st and 2nd Ecumenical Councils), has been recognised since then as the authoritative expression of the fundamental beliefs of the Orthodox Church. The Creed is often referred to as the "Symbol of Faith". This description indicates that the Creed is not an analytical statement, but that it points to a reality greater than itself and to which it bears witness. For generations the Creed has been the criterion of authentic Faith and the basis of Christian education. The Creed is recited at the time of Baptism, during every Divine Liturgy, and as part of the daily prayers of the Orthodox Christian.

The Nicene Creed is comprised of 12 articles of Faith that summarise the essentials of the Christian Faith :

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages,

Light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father, through him all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man,

And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried,

And rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father,

And He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified, and Who spoke through the Prophets.

In one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I expect the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

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The sources of doctrine in the Orthodox Christian Church

The sources of doctrine as defined in the Orthodox Catechism are the Holy Bible and the Holy Tradition transmitted by the Church.

The Church came into being first, and only afterwards, little by little, did the books of the New Testament, the Gospels and Epistles appear. Moreover, when we take into account how few "books," or manuscripts, there were in those days, and the fact that besides the genuine writings there were other gospels and texts written under the names of the Apostles, it is easy to understand how important the living Tradition of the Church was in safeguarding the true Christian faith. The prime importance of Tradition is plainly shown by the fact that it was not until the fifth century that the Church established conclusively which books in circulation should be regarded as genuinely inspired by God's revelation. Thus the Church itself determined the composition of the Bible.

It is to the Church, which defined what the contents of the Bible would be, that the Orthodox Christian turns for his/her interpretation of the Bible. It is not merely a question of the authority of the Church; the promise was given only to the pure in heart that "they shall see God." (Mt 5:8) In other words, the truths contained in God's word are revealed to a person in the right light only insofar as their heart is purified. No individual person has possessed complete purity of heart and hence complete infallibility in interpreting the word of God. However, this gift has been granted to the Church as a whole through the Spirit of truth acting within it. In practice this means that when all or most of the Church Fathers known for their holy lives have been consistent with one another in their explanation of some point of Scripture, it has become truth to the members of the Church. Without such a criterion the authority of the Bible would rest upon the subjective opinion of each individual trying to interpret it. It is our belief that the Bible by itself, without the Tradition as its living interpreter, is insufficient as a source of truth.

The fifteenth chapter of Acts tells of a meeting held by the Apostles, who announced their decision by saying: "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." Similar gatherings of the Apostles' successors, all the Bishops of the Church, were held from time to time during the first millennium. At these meetings articles of faith were formulated and decisions made on contemporary problems arising in the life of the Church. Seven such ecclesiastical councils have been recognized by the Church as general or ecumenical and their decisions thus recognized as binding upon the whole Church. The first of these synods or councils was held at Nicaea in the year 325 and the seventh in Constantinople in 787.

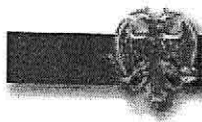
In addition to the councils recognized as ecumenical, there have been a number of local councils which were important for the whole Church, in both the first and second millennia. For example, a church council was held in Constantinople in 1351 which confirmed the practice of hesychasm, or unceasing prayer of the heart, together with the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas on the uncreated light of the Holy Spirit.

History shows that in the past, meetings which had the authority of Ecumenical Councils have always been called together in the face of a threat to the unity and truth of the Church. Among such threats, for instance, were the Christological heresies concerning the nature of Christ. In our own time the acute problem awaiting a common solution is the so-called diaspora problem, which

is weakening the Orthodox witness in the world. In our century the Church has outgrown its own historical garment, so to speak; it has spread over new continents so that it is no longer only the Eastern Church but is Western just as well. This situation calls for recognition of the independence of the new local Churches which have sprung up, especially in America, so that they may participate fully in the common affairs of the Orthodox Churches. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church has no common administrative center; each of the local Churches whose independence has been recognized has its own independent voice in the common affairs of the Church. For historical reasons the Patriarch of Constantinople holds a position of honour among his peers, but he has no authority over the other independent, or autocephalous, Churches.

In Orthodoxy it is emphasized that doctrine and life are two sides of the same thing. Future general councils of the Church will not be concerned with any new doctrines beyond what "the Fathers have decided," but rather with adapting accepted principles of the Church to changing circumstances. This task presupposes a unity of love and peace among the representatives of the Orthodox Churches, who at the Ecumenical Councils included all the bishops of all the Churches, in order that unanimous decisions may be confirmed with the apostolic seal: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

Orthodox Christian Doctrine

When we approach Orthodox Christian Doctrine we should be fully aware that we are speaking about the true Christian Doctrine before the tragic split in 1054 A. D. All later amendments, modifications or direct changes to original Christian Doctrine the Orthodox cannot accept as Doctrine for the full Church did not participate in its formulation.

The word Doctrine is originally a Latin word and is to be understood as "teaching, mastering or convincing". In our case we understand it as Divine Teaching. Doctrine in itself is not a theological subject but a concentration of various Christian subjects including: Revelation, Tradition, the Bible, Liturgy, Ecumenical Councils, Holy Fathers, Saints, Canons and finally Church Art.

Divine Revelation

At any Orthodox Thanksgiving Service and at Matins we proclaim "God is the Lord and has revealed Himself unto us; blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord." (Ps 118:26-27). The principal foundation of Christian Doctrine is knowledge that "God has revealed Himself to us." He has revealed Himself to His creation. But it is evident that He has revealed only what man could see and understand of His Divine Nature and Will. The full perfection of God's revelation could be found in His Son Jesus Christ in accordance with the Old Testament; yet in the New Testament. Jesus Christ, is one fully "blessed ... who comes in the Name of the Lord." According to Old Testament sources Jesus came exclusively as a Teacher sent from God. Therefore He was often addressed as " Rabbi-Teacher" or in English "Master". Jesus' followers were called disciples, that is students or pupils. Jesus is called Christ as well; it is a Greek word translated from the Hebrew "Messiah" which means "anointed by God" relating to "taught by God" as foretold by the prophets Isaiah (54:13) and John (6:45). Christ emphasises often that His words are those of God, that is "One having authority", not as an ordinary Jewish teacher. He said clearly; "He who believes in me, believes not in me but in Him who sent me."

Apart from words He taught by action as well, not only speaking or acting by Himself, for He was the Living Word of God in human flesh, the "Logos" who is eternal, uncreated, but who has become man as Jesus. Being God in flesh He was inspired by God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15:26), to "Make disciples of all nations."

The Doctrine of Jesus became the apostle's Doctrine and thus became the Doctrine of the Church. If we desire to hear God's voice and to see His actions, we must purify our minds and hearts from everything wicked and false.

Holy Tradition

Tradition is in fact the on-going life of God's People. The Old Testament and its tradition are fulfilled, completed and transcended in the person of the Messiah and in the Christian Church. New Testament Tradition is also called Apostolic Tradition. Therefore this Tradition is called Holy Tradition which is passed on within the Church from the time of Christ and His Apostles right down to present days. Some Traditions are written but many are not. It must be noted that not everything in the Church belongs to Holy Tradition because many "traditional" things were not done by the Holy Spirit. Some things in the Church are of temporal nature and have no

everlasting value. They are not sinful or wrong, they might be helpful to the life of the Church as long as they are not taken to be what they are not.

The Church in its human form as an earthly institution is not immune to the sins of its unholy members. Such so-called 'traditions' are sinful and stand under condemnation of authentic Holy Tradition.

First place in Holy tradition is taken by the Bible followed by liturgical life, prayers, dogmatic decisions and acts approved by Church Councils, lives of Saints, Canon law and iconography. They are all integrally linked with Holy Tradition in our life.

The Bible

The word "Bible" comes from Greek and means "book." This name shows that holy books, as coming from God Himself, surpass all other books.

The books of the Holy Scripture, written by various people at different times, are divided into two parts, the books of the Old Testament, and those of the New Testament.

The books of the Old Testament were written prior to the birth of Christ. The books of the New Testament were written after the birth of Christ. All of these holy books are known by the Biblical word "testament," further suggests the agreement or a covenant of God with people.

The contents of the Old Testament deal mainly with God's promise to give mankind a Saviour and to prepare them to accept Him. This was accomplished by gradual revelation through holy commandments, prophecies, prefigurations, prayers and divine services,

The main theme of the New Testament is the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Saviour, His Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave mankind the New Testament, the new covenant.

The Old Testament books, if each one is counted separately, number thirty-eight. Sometimes several books are combined into one, and in this form, they number twenty-two books, according to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

The **Old Testament books** are divided into four sections, the law, history, wisdom literature, and the prophets.

1) The **books of the law**, which constitute the main foundation of the Old Testament, are as follows:

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

These five books were written by the Prophet Moses. They describe the creation of the world and man, the fall into sin, God's promise of a Saviour of the world, and the life of people in the first times. The majority of their contents is an account of the law given by God through Moses. Jesus Christ Himself calls them the laws of Moses (cf. Luke 24:44).

2) The **books of history**, which primarily contain the history of the religion and life of the Hebrew people, preserving faith in the true God, are the following:

6. Joshua
7. Judges, and as a supplement, the book of Ruth
8. First and Second Kings, as two parts of the same book
9. Third and Fourth Kings
10. First and Second Chronicles (additional)
11. First and Second Books of Ezra and Nehemiah
12. Esther

3) The **books of wisdom**, which are composed mainly of teachings about faith and spiritual life, are the following:

13. Job
14. The Psalter, composed of 150 Psalms or sacred songs, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. A majority of the Psalms were written by King David. The Psalter is used for almost every Orthodox service of worship.
15. Proverbs of Solomon
16. Ecclesiastes (Church teachings)
17. Song of Solomon

4) The **books of the prophets**, which contain prophecies or predictions about the future, and their visions of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, are the following:

18. Isaiah
19. Jeremiah
20. Ezekiel
21. Daniel
22. Books of the Twelve Prophets, also known as the lesser Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

These are the **Canonical** books of the Old Testament, meaning that they are undoubtedly true, judging by their origin and by their content. The word "canonica" comes from Greek and means "model, true, correct."

Besides the canonical books, a part of the Old Testament is composed of **non-canonical** books, sometimes called the **Apocrypha** among non-Orthodox. These are the books which the Jews lost and which are not, in the contemporary Hebrew text of the Old Testament, made by the 70 translators of the Septuagint three centuries before the birth of Christ (271 BC). These books have been included in the Bible from ancient times and are considered by the Church to be sacred Scripture. The translation of the Septuagint is accorded special respect in the Orthodox Church. The Slavonic translation of the Bible was made from it.

To the **non-canonical** books of the Old Testament belong:

1. Tobit
2. Judith
3. The Wisdom of Solomon
4. Ecclesiastes, or the Wisdom of Sirach
5. Baruch

6. Three books of Maccabees
7. The Second and Third book of Esdras
8. The additions to the Books of Esther, 11 Chronicles (The Prayer of Manasseh), and Daniel (The Song of the Three Youths, Susanna and Bel and the Dragon).

There are twenty-seven sacred books of the **New Testament**, and all of them are **canonical**. In content, they, like the Old Testament, may be subdivided into four groups, the law, history, the epistles, and prophesy,

1) **Books of the Law** which serve as the foundation of the New Testament are:

1. The Gospel of Matthew
2. The Gospel of Mark
3. The Gospel of Luke
4. The Gospel of John

The word "gospel," or in Greek, Evangelion, means "good news." It is the good news about the arrival in the world of the Saviour of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, promised by God. The Gospels relate the account of His life on earth, death on the Cross, resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven. They also set forth His Divine teachings and miracles. The Gospels were written by holy apostles, disciples of Jesus Christ.

2) **Books of History**

5. The Acts of the Apostles, written by the Evangelist Luke, tells of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and about the spread of the Christian Church through them.

3) **The Epistles**

6-12. Seven general epistles to the churches, or, letters to all Christians: one of the Apostle James, two of the Apostle Peter, three of the Apostle and Evangelist John, and one of the Apostle Jude.

13-26. Fourteen epistles of the Apostle Paul: one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Philippians, one to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, the bishop of Ephesus, one to Titus, the bishop of Crete, one to Philemon, and one to the Hebrews.

4) **Books of Prophecy**

27. The Apocalypse, or Revelation to John, written by the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John, contains a vision of the future destiny of the Church of Christ and of the whole world.

The sacred books of the New Testament were first written in Greek, which at that time was in common usage. Only the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle of St Paul to the Hebrews were first written in Hebrew. The Gospel of Matthew, however, was translated into Greek in the first century, most likely by the Apostle Matthew himself.

The books of both the New Testament and the Old Testament appeared by God's revelation, were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore called divinely inspired. Apostle Paul says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof,

for correction, and for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16).

It may be interesting to know that an Orthodox Altar has permanently placed upon it the Gospels (four books of the New Testament bound in one book) but not a full Bible. It is so because everything in the Bible is fulfilled in Christ, that is the Gospel.

The Liturgy

Liturgy means common work or action by a group of people, or alternately, a "public feast". In the Old Testament according to Mosaic Law the Liturgy was solemnised in the Jerusalem Temple only - the synagogues were only places of public gatherings for prayer and religious instruction or teaching. So according to Judaism only one Temple existed. They concentrated on God only during their services.

New Testament Liturgy is Christ-centred (that is, in God). The sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ replaced Old Testament sacrifices. So Sunday replaces Saturday as Sabbath in memory of Christ's Resurrection day.

There are many Old Testament liturgical symbols and prayers in the New Testament Liturgy, which certifies the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

The Councils

Throughout its history, the Church was faced with many difficult decisions. To preserve the full holiness of the Christian Church, condemning earthly reflections and decisions of various heretical personalities was found essential. For this task, among others, the Church through its bishops formed Ecumenical or universal Councils. The bishops with the guidance of the Holy Spirit condemned wrong teachings entering the Church. There were seven such Councils and their decisions were called 'dogmas' or undisputable, unchangeable truths. In fact, dogma means official teaching. Besides the general Ecumenical Councils there were local councils whose decisions were approved by the Church.

Holy Fathers

The writings of the Holy Fathers, who often became Church saints, are called patristic teachings. Some Holy Fathers were apologists because they defended pure Christian teachings from various heretical teachings. Their contribution to the Church had enormous value. Particularly in the early Church. Other Holy Fathers were engaged in writing about their individual spiritual life which contributed clear understanding of Christian life. One such collection of Christian Writings is called the "Philokalia".

The Saints

The Saints in the Christian Church are considered those men and women who in one way or another incarnate Church Doctrine. Proclaimed saints include evangelists, prophets, confessors, martyrs, "holy Ones" and "righteous".

Canons

Canon means rule, measure or judgement. These are canons of the Ecumenical Councils, and of provincial councils and individual church Fathers. The Church firstly distinguished between those of dogmatic and doctrinal nature (dogmatic canons are in fact defini of Christian Faith such as the

nature and person of Christ) and those of a moral-ethical character. The canons of Church dogma, doctrine and Morality cannot be changed. But there are canons of practical nature which could be changed in the course of the life of the Church. The canons are 'of the Church' and cannot be understood as "positive laws" in the judicial sense.

Church Art

The rich tradition, Of iconography and the other Church arts such as music, architecture, Poetry, needlework etc, contributed enormously to the life of the Church. All these reveal God's love for man and earthly creation. Of all forms iconography and music (vocal in the Orthodox Church) comprise the highest artistic achievement in Orthodoxy. Particularly in iconography we can see an expression of a deeper 'realism, than "that which would be shown in simple reproduction Of the physical attributes of an historical person."

from a paper presented by V. Rev Father George Djonlic
to a National Serbian Youth Conference in Australia

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The Ecumenical Councils of the Orthodox Church

Adapted from an essay by the Late Very Rev N Patrinos

Introduction	First Ecumenical Council	Second Ecumenical Council
Third Ecumenical Council	Fourth Ecumenical Council	Fifth Ecumenical Council
The Quinisext or Trullan Council	Sixth Ecumenical Council	Seventh Ecumenical Council

Introduction

The Church held councils to resolve issues when less formal dialogue failed to produce a consensus. Most councils were local, although in some cases their decrees gained wide acceptance (such as the Seven **Ecumenical Councils**). The first council of the Church was held by the Apostles in Jerusalem during the first century (refer to Acts 6:1-7).

The seven General Councils of the entire Christian Church are known as the Ecumenical Councils. They cover the period between 325-757 AD and their decisions are at the foundation of Christian doctrine accepted by both the Eastern and Western segments of the Christian Church. The decisions of these Ecumenical Councils were made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus Christ to His Apostles.

At these Ecumenical Councils many **Canons**, or laws governing the administration of the Church, were composed. A detailed listing of all of these Canons is available at the [Wheaton University](http://www.wheaton.edu/~libr/ancient/councils/) website.

The Western Church accepts subsequent Councils as Ecumenical, that were convened and attended only by the authorities and delegates of the Roman Church. These Councils, the last of which is the second Vatican Council (1962-1965), are not accepted by the Orthodox Church as bearing either the validity or the authority that the seven truly Ecumenical Councils possessed; and for that matter; no decisions of these Roman Catholic Councils have any bearing on the Orthodox Church. For better appreciating the reasons for being convened and the decisions reached, all seven Ecumenical Councils are presented in sequence rather than in alphabetical order.

First Ecumenical Council

The First Ecumenical Council was summoned by Emperor Constantine the Great in 325, May 20th. The Council assembled at Nicaea in the province of Bithynia of Asia Minor and was formally opened by Constantine himself. The Council passed 20 canons including the Nicene Creed (described below), the Canon of Holy Scripture (Holy Bible), and established the

celebration of Pascha (Easter).

The main reason for its being called was the Arian controversy. Arius, a presbyter (priest) from Alexandria, held that Jesus Christ was created by God and denying Christ's divinity. Arius argued that if Jesus was born, then there was time when He did not exist; and if He became God, then there was time when He was not. Arius' original intent was to attack another heretical teaching by which the three persons of the Godhead were confused (Sabellianism).

A number of bishops followed Arius, and the Church went into her first and perhaps deepest division of faith. Up to then, statements of faith were incorporated into Creeds recited by a candidate to Baptism. A baptismal Creed representing Arianism was submitted to the Council by Eusebios of Nicomedia but was at once rejected. Another Creed, representing the baptismal Creed of Jerusalem, was finally accepted with the addition of the very important term 'homoousios', meaning of the 'same substance'. Thus, the view that Christ was of the 'same substance' with the Father was received as orthodox. This Creed is known as the Nicene Creed, which read:

We (I) believe in one God. The Father Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.

And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures.

And ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end.

Another important decision of this Council was the establishing of a calendar formula by which Pascha (Easter) ought to be celebrated. Pascha occurs on the first full moon following the spring equinox and following the Hebrew Passover feast.

The Council also regulated matters of ecclesiastical importance regarding territorial and moral questions pertaining to both clergy and laity. One particular delegate, deacon Athanasios from Alexandria, proved the champion of Orthodoxy by his statements of faith and the draft of the Creed that bears his name.

Another delegate, who by his eloquent argument against imposing compulsory celibacy on all ranks of Clergy prevented outright celibacy in the Orthodox Church, was Paphnutios, an Egyptian who had been a disciple of St. Anthony. He had suffered such hardships and cruelty during the persecution of Maximin that his mutilated body proved an object of veneration to the assembled bishops, and his recommendations were highly respected.

The number of bishops who attended the Council was 318. Hence, this Council is also known as the Synod of the 318 Fathers. It closed on July 25, 325. Their memory is commemorated by the Orthodox Church on the Seventh Sunday after Pascha (Easter).

Second Ecumenical Council

The Second Ecumenical Council was convened by Emperor Theodosius I at Constantinople in 381, which was attended by 150 bishops. Theodosius proved to be a champion of the orthodox faith, and his intent in calling this Council was to completely eradicate Arianism, and condemn Macedonios and Apollinarianism by establishing the teaching on the unity of the Holy Trinity and

the complete manhood in Christ.

Macedonius, He taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person ('hypostasis'), but simply a power ('dynamic') of God. Therefore concluding that the Holy Spirit was inferior to the Father and the Son. The Council condemned Macedonius' teaching and defined the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This doctrine decrees that there is 'one God in three hypostases'; proclaiming that the Holy Spirit is fully God, equal to the Father and the Son, and of one essence with them. This became the base of the Christian faith.

The Nicene Creed, received by the First Ecumenical Council, was then supplemented with five canons setting forth doctrines on the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Sacraments, resurrection of the dead and life of the age to come: which read:

And (We believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the Prophets.

In One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

I acknowledge One Baptism for the remission of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Creed was thereafter known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed or Symbol of Faith.

In matters of hierarchical privileges, the Council decided that the Bishop of Constantinople should have honorary precedence over all Churches, save that of Rome. Two of the more important bishops who played a great role in the development of Christian doctrine were St. Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus who presided over the council) and St. Gregory of Nyssa.

Third Ecumenical Council

The third Council was convened at Ephesus in 431 by Emperor Theodosius. The Council condemned the doctrines of Nestorios, Archbishop of Constantinople, who taught that there were two separate persons in the Incarnate Christ, the one Divine and the other Human.

Nestorios over-emphasising the human nature of Christ at the expense of the divine, teaching that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a man (Jesus Christ), and not God (the 'Logos' and Son of God). The Logos (or 'Word') only dwelled in Christ, as in a Temple. Christ, therefore, was only the Theophoros or the 'Bearer of God'. This was directly opposite to the orthodox doctrine by which the Incarnate Christ was a single Person, at once God and Man.

One of the high points of Nestorios' teaching was the rejection of the name 'Theotokos' (bearer of God) for the Virgin Mary. Nestorios called the Virgin Mary Christotokos (bearer of Christ) rather than Theotokos. Hence, giving the name to the 'Christological controversies'.

The Council reiterated the Church's teaching that Our Lord Jesus Christ is one person, not two separate 'people'. The Council decreed that Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Logos), is perfect God and perfect Man with a rational soul and body. The union of the two natures of Christ took place in such a fashion that one did not disturb the other. The Council established the name 'Theotokos' in the liturgical and theological usage of the Church, and affirmed the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed forbidding any addition or deletion to it.

Two hundred bishops attended this Council among whom St. Cyril of Alexandria who proved to be the orthodox champion and the force behind the condemnation and anathematising of Nestorios.

Fourth Ecumenical Council

This Council was convened at Chalcedon, on the Asian side of Constantinople, by Emperor Marcian and his wife Poulcheria in 451. It had to deal with another controversy about the Person of Christ. Eutyches, an Archimandrite in Constantinople, held that the human (less perfect) nature of Christ had been completely absorbed by His divine nature and thus the two had been confounded into one. Thus, after this union, Eutyches held, there was only one nature in Christ. Hence his heresy was called 'monophysitism' (of one nature). The Council condemned this teaching and affirmed that there were two perfect natures in the one Person of Christ unified 'unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably'.

The Council was attended by 650 bishops. The dogmatic decisions of this Council were expressed by a statement of faith since then called the Chalcedonian Definition. Among other important enactments there was one that the Western Church did not accept: canon 28 by which the Archbishop of Constantinople was given the title of Patriarch thus reiterating the decision of the Second Ecumenical Council by which the Bishop of Constantinople was given honorary precedence over all other Churches, save that of Rome. Canon 28 of this Council further recognised to the Archbishop of Constantinople extensive administrative rights over a number of provinces around Constantinople and thus made him a Patriarch. This was rejected in the West on the excuse 'that the interests of the older Eastern Patriarchates should be protected'.

Fifth Ecumenical Council

The Fifth Ecumenical Council met in Constantinople in 553 and was convoked by Emperor Justinian I. The Monophysite controversy continued unabated even after the condemnation of Eutyches and the issuing of the Chalcedonian Statement of Faith.

Personal quarrels among bishops and the interference of the palace in theological and ecclesiastical matters helped to create an unfortunate situation in the Church that even Justinian's great authority and influence failed to correct.

Justinian favoured at first the Monophysites but later sided with the formal Orthodox view against it. However, empress Theodora encouraged the Monophysites to create new problems by stirring up a new controversy regarding the theological positions of three distinguished theologians already dead for a century, these were the three Antiochian bishops and renowned teachers, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa. The accusation was that the writings of all three, tainted with Nestorianism, had been condemned by the Third Ecumenical Council.

The Monophysite-accusers wished all three to be condemned even though they were dead. Justinian was compelled by the fury of the controversy to call this Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople which opened on May 5, 553 and was presided over by the Patriarch of Constantinople Eutychios.

One hundred sixty five bishops attended, and the writings of the three famous teachers were condemned and they themselves were anathematised. This decision was not easily accepted in the West. During the Council a quarrel erupted between Eastern and Western bishops as to anathematising the dead, and for a time the name of the Pope was erased from the diptychs. But as a result of Justinian's efforts, a permanent rupture between East and West was prevented.

The Council confirmed the Church's teaching on the dual nature of Christ, and reaffirmed that He is both Truly God and Truly Man. Emperor Justinian himself confessed his Orthodox faith in a form of the famous Church hymn "Only begotten Son and Word of God" which is sung during

the Divine Liturgy.

Sixth Ecumenical Council

The Sixth Ecumenical Council met in Constantinople in 680 AD and was convened by Emperor Constantine IV (Pogonatos) and was attended by 170 bishops.

Monothelitism (one will), in spite of the decisions of the Fifth Ecumenical Council and in spite of the strict laws and other repressive measures against it by subsequent emperors, continued to be a serious disturbance to both Church and State. It actually was used as the foundation for the creation of new and independent Churches such as the Armenian, Abyssinian, and others.

As a result of the reconciliatory endeavours of Emperor Herakleios for the purpose of bringing back the Armenians to the Orthodox Church, a new teaching in regard to the Person of Christ began to spread. By it, there is only one will in the God-man Christ. Hence this teaching was called 'monothelitism' and was originally proposed as a midpoint between Monothelitism and Orthodoxy designed to bring back the Monophysites at a time the Byzantine empire was threatened by the Persians and later by the Mohammedans.

Both the Patriarch of Constantinople Sergios and Pope Honorius accepted the Emperor's formula by which there were two natures in Christ but only one mode of 'activity'. But in a statement of doctrine, the Pope used the unfortunate expression 'of one will' in Christ which from that point on replaced the expedient 'one energy' agreed upon by both parties.

After some tumultuous developments, the monotheletic controversy was finally resolved by the Sixth Ecumenical Council. Monothelitism was condemned together with its adherents.

The Council proclaimed that "Christ had two natures with two activities: as God working miracles, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven; as Man, performing the ordinary acts of daily life. Each nature exercises its own free will". Christ's divine nature had a specific task to perform and so did His human, without being confused nor subjected to any change or working against each other. "The two distinct natures and related to them activities were mystically united in the one Divine Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ".

The Quinisext or Trullan Council

This is not the Seventh Ecumenical Council but rather a supplement to the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils. It met in Constantinople in the hall under the great dome (Trullos) of the Imperial Palace. Hence it is known as the Trullan Synod while in Greek it is known as the 5th-6th where from the Latin Quinisext came.

The Council was called by Justinian II in 692. Both the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils fully occupied their time with the Christological problem and issued no canons pertaining to ecclesiastical government and order. Actually, the Quinisext may be considered to be the continuation of all the preceding Ecumenical Councils inasmuch as by its 2nd canon it received and ratified all of their canons and decisions. It also ratified the so-called "Eighty-five Apostolic Canons", the canons of local synods, and the most important of the canons of the principal Fathers of the Church, thus empowering all of them with Ecumenical authority.

The disciplinary canons of the Quinisext, however, were not accepted by the Pope, and even though most of them were not completely observed in the East, they contributed appreciably to the widening of differences between East and West. For example, canons 13, 30, and 48 relating

to the marital status of the clergy, others regulating the age of ordination, and still others relating to canonical impediments to matrimony, were contrary to already established different practices in the West that the Roman See did not wish to change on directives from the Quinisext Council. However, the same Council tabulated by its 6th canon a shaky practice in the East by which marriage could not be contracted after one had been ordained in any one of the three ranks of priesthood. Thus, and for the first time, priesthood as a sacrament was accorded precedence and superiority over the sacrament of matrimony. And though there is no dogmatical justification for this doctrinal demoting of the sacrament of matrimony, the prohibition of marriage after ordination continues in the Orthodox Church to this day.

Seventh Ecumenical Council

This Council dealt predominantly with the controversy regarding icons and their place in Orthodox worship. It was convened in Nicaea in 787 by Empress Irene at the request of Thrasios, Patriarch of Constantinople. The Council was attended by 367 bishops.

Almost a century before this, the iconoclastic controversy had once more shaken the foundations of both Church and State in the Byzantine empire. Excessive religious respect and the ascribed miracles to icons by some members of society, approached the point of worship (due only to God) and idolatry. This instigated excesses at the other extreme by which icons were completely taken out of the liturgical life of the Church by the Iconoclasts. The Iconophiles, on the other-hand, believed that icons served to preserve the doctrinal teachings of the Church; they considered icons to be man's dynamic way of expressing the divine through art and beauty.

The Council decided on a doctrine by which icons should be venerated but not worshipped. In answering the Empress' invitation to the Council, Pope Hadrian replied with a letter in which he also held the position of extending veneration to icons but not worship, the last befitting only God.

The decree of the Council for restoring icons to churches added an important clause which still stands at the foundation of the rationale for using and venerating icons in the Orthodox Church to this very day: "We define that the holy icons, whether in colour, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honour (timetiki proskynisis), but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature. The veneration accorded to an icon is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerates in it the reality for which it stands".

The Council issued also 22 canons relating to administrative and disciplinary matters, condemning Simony (ordination for payment), the election of bishops by secular authority, and the erecting of mixed monasteries. However, and in spite of the recognition of this Council by the Pope, Charlemagne refused to recognise it not only as Ecumenical but altogether. He disapproved of its decision for venerating the icons, and as a result of his hostility, a synod at Frankfurt in 794 condemned the veneration of icons and rejected the entire Council. And it was only by the end of the 9th century that the Council was recognised in the West but without its rules that were contrary to the established practices of the Roman Church.

An Endemousa (Regional) Synod was called in Constantinople in 843. Under Empress Theodora. The veneration of icons was solemnly proclaimed at the St. Sophia's Cathedral. Monks and clergy

came in procession and restored the icons in their rightful place. The day was called "Triumph of Orthodoxy." Since that time, this event is commemorated yearly with a special service on the first Sunday of Lent, the "Sunday of Orthodoxy".

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