

ECUMENICAL CONSENSUS ON THE CHURCH, THE SACRAMENTS, THE MINISTRY AND REUNION

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CHAPTER I. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The English word «Church» is used in a wide variety of ways. Some recognize the validity of only a part of these uses; others would accept all¹:

1. The Church is the people of God in all ages who have been called by Him into His fellowship; this includes those called under the Old as well as the New Covenant.

2. It is a congregation of believers in Christ in a local community. Akin to this usage is the assembling of these members for worship and the building in which they meet.

3. It is an organized communion represented in a group of local parishes, which has a common doctrine and polity; some of these groupings strictly follow national or territorial lines; others are bodies which are international in character.

4. It is the total of all such organizations of local, visible communities regarded as the Church Militant.

5. Since these bodies comprise both members who are worthy and others who give little evidence of either faith or love, many would distinguish within and beyond the entire body of organized Christianity those who are the true disciples. To these, the invisible Church known only to God, they would restrict such designations as «the body of Christ».

6. Finally, there is the Church Triumphant, the faithful in all ages who have passed to the eternal world and have entered into the communion of saints.

1. The Nature of the Church: A Report of the American Theological Committee, New York, 1945, pp. 7-8.

According to the American Protestant theologian² the problem of unity concerns the various communions and the Church Militant.

Thus, generally, some use the word «Church» inclusively so as to embrace all who believe in Christ, others exclusively, as embracing only those who belong to a particular Church. In the Official Report of Lausanne³ it is declared that the common Christian Faith «is witnessed to and safeguarded in the Ecumenical Creed, commonly called the Nicene, and in the Apostles' Creed». Yet there is no indication here that the members of the Conference agreed to recommend these Creeds for use in their respective communions. On the contrary, the Notes say that some of the Churches «make no use of Creeds», and that «it is understood that the use of these Creeds will be determined by the competent authority in each Church».

Lausanne Report III on the Nature of the Church⁴ is of real value because both its matter and its spirit indicate a shifting of the emphasis from matters of difference to matters of agreement which show definite movement towards the necessary common view of the nature of the Church. It is not so valuable in elucidating the points of disagreement.

The Report indicates general agreement on the following points:

1. The reality of the Church as a divinely-constituted Society of believers in Christ, of which Christ is the Head and the Holy Spirit, the continuing life.

2. The vocation of the Church as witness to the Gospel and as the ~~divinely-appointed instrument for the salvation and sanctification of mankind.~~

3. ~~The unity of the Church as necessary both to its being, as expressed by the words One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic: and to the manifestation of its life to the world.~~

4. The common possession by the Church of certain marks and characteristics:

a) Possession and use of Holy Scripture.

b) Faith in God as He is incarnate and revealed in Christ.

c) Missionary Vocation.

2. Report. Ibid., p. 8.

3. L. Hodgson, *Convictions*, New York, 1934, p. 228.

4. L. Hodgson, *Convictions*, p. 230.

- d) Observance and use of Sacraments.
- e) Possession of a Ministry.
- f) Fellowship in Devotion and Service.

The Report, however, makes it evident that there was deepseated disagreement at the Conference as to the degree in which these elements of unity are present in and are acceptable as a whole to the existing Churches.

The Notes reveal the differences which emerged upon such important points as the following:

1. The relative authority of tradition and individual experience as interpreting the Word of God.
2. The relation of the visible to the invisible aspect of the Church. For instance, some hold that the invisible Church is wholly in heaven; others include in it all true believers on earth, whether contained in any organization or not.
3. The authority of the visible order in the Church.
4. The necessity of any single type of order in the Church.
5. The exclusive right of any Church to claim that it conforms to the true type.
6. The witness of the Church's experience to the necessity of any particular form of ministry.
7. The origin and significance of existing divisions.

On many of the Notes of the Church the Conference was in agreement. Divergencies of view were revealed with regard to the nature of the Church visible and the Church invisible, and the relation between these two aspects of the One Church.

At the Edinburgh Conference «all agree that the Church is the Body of Christ and the blessed company of all faithful people, whether in heaven or on earth, the communion of saints»⁵.

They all agree that «Christ is present in His Church through the Holy Spirit as Prophet, Priest and King. As Prophet He reveals the divine will and purpose to the Church; as Priest He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and through the eternal sacrifice once offered for us on Calvary, He continually draws His people to the Most High; and as King He rules His Church and is ever establishing and extending His Kingdom»⁶.

5. Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937, p. 226.

6. Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937, pp. 230-31.

«To the Church as the visible body refers the word in the New Testament: «Ecclesia», and to it the calling of God belongs. It is the sphere of redemption. Apart from the Church man cannot normally attain full knowledge of God nor worship Him in truth. Different Churches differ in their use of the term «church»... The invisible Church is no ideal Platonic community distinct from the visible Church on earth. The invisible Church and the visible Church are inseparably connected though their limits are not exactly coterminous»⁷.

At the Edinburgh Conference different Churches also hold different views as to the basis of Church membership. «Some would hold that all who have been baptized and have not by deed or word repudiated their heritage belong to the Church and are to be regarded as members. Others would confine membership to those who have made an open profession of faith in Christ and in whose lives some measure of the spirit of Christ may be discerned»⁸.

There are, among the different representatives at Edinburgh, other important differences in this connection as the contrast between «authoritarian» and «personal» types of Church; an insistence upon a divine givenness in the Scriptures, in orders, in creeds, in worship, and, on the other hand, an equally strong insistence upon the individual experience of divine grace, as the ruling principle of the «gathered» Church, in which freedom is both enjoyed as a religious right and enjoined as a religious duty⁹.

With some, at Edinburgh, the phrase «communion of saints» (κοινωνία ἁγίων) is regarded as synonymous with the Holy Catholic Church. For others, it expresses a quality of the Church which is realized only insofar as its members mutually share all the blessings which God bestows. For others, it is the description of a quality of life in those who are in grace. The communion of saints is not always regarded as co-extensive with the Church. For the Orthodox and certain other Churches and individual believers it means fellowship not only with living and departed Christians but also with the holy angels, and in a very special sense, with the Blessed Virgin Mary. No agreement was reached¹⁰.

7. Ibid., pp. 231-32.

8. Report, ch. IV, Ibid., p. 232.

9. Edinburgh Report, Ch. VI (IV) in Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937, pp. 257-58.

10. Report, Ch. IV in Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937, p. 236.

All the participants of the Amsterdam World Conference (1948) agreed on the point that «the Church is God's gift to men for the salvation of the world; that the saving acts of God in Jesus Christ brought the Church into being; that the Church persists in continuity throughout history through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit»¹¹.

Their differences arose in the following points: 1) The relation between the old and new Israel and the relation of the visible Church to «the new creation» in Christ. 2) The relation, in the saving acts of God in Christ, between objective redemption and personal salvation, between scripture and tradition, between the Church as once founded and the Church as Christ's contemporary act. 3) The place of the ministry in the Church and the nature of its authority and continuity, the number and interpretation of the sacraments, the relation of baptism to faith and confirmation, the relation of the universal to the local church; the nature of visible unity and the meaning of schism. 4) The degree to which the Kingdom of God can be said to be already realized within the Church¹².

The general conviction about the nature of the Church through the Conferences of the World Council of Churches is that the Church is basically a community (i. e. a structured life or a body with an immanent spirit) rather than simply an organization. That in proportion as the community or Church grows in cohesiveness and in awareness of its mission, it will put forth the organization and the activities proper to its developing common life; formulae for expressing the common faith, forms of worship, constitutional and governmental structure, boards of missions, education, social service, finance, and so forth.

This conviction is clearly expressed in the Toronto Statement on The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches (1950)¹³.

In the Report of the Lund Conference, (1952), submitted to the Churches for consideration, it is repeated: «Membership in the World Council of Churches implies a measure of recognition in that the Churches recognize one another as serving one Lord. But differences of faith and order still exist and membership in the Council does not imply that

11. Official Report in The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, London, 1949, p. 53.

12. Official Report. Ibid., pp. 53-54.

13. In Evanston to New Delhi, Geneva, 1961, pp. 245-250.

one Church must regard all other members as Churches in the full sense»¹⁴.

These two documents underline the Ecclesiological Significance of the World Council of Churches.

It is very difficult, however, to present a systematic Ecumenical agreement or statement on the Nature of the Church here, because such an agreement could not be reached and formed in the Conferences of the World Council of Churches, up to date.

Ernest Troeltsch, in an article entitled «The Church» (Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart) has this to say on the clash between Roman Catholic and Reformation doctrinal views: «The Reformation concept of the Church did not arise out of opposition to Catholic doctrine but out of opposition to Catholic practice. Even after Trent, or even after the Vatican Council, no systematic doctrine of the Church exists in Roman Catholic theology. What does exist is a cult which places the Church in the center of all Catholic piety»¹⁵.

Father G. Florovsky voices a similar judgment regarding the doctrine of the Church in the history of theology: «It is impossible to start with a formal definition of the Church. For, strictly speaking, there is none which could claim any doctrinal authority. None can be found in the Fathers nor in the Schoolmen, nor even in St. Thomas Aquinas»¹⁶.

«The absence of such a definition in the Fathers may not have been accidental, but rather a revealing experience of the Church which we have not yet fully grasped. In the patristic perspective, the Church is primarily the gift of new life, but this life is not that of the Church, but the life of Christ in us, our life in Him. For the Church is not a «being» in the sense in which God or man may be called «beings» («hypostasized natures» to use the ancient terminology), she is not yet a new «nature» added to the existing natures of God and man, she is not a «substance». The term new applied to her - new life, new creation - does not mean an ontological newness, the appearance of a «being» which did not exist before, it means the redeemed, renewed and transfigured relationship between the only «substantial» beings: God and His creation... The concepts of «organism» or «body» can be utterly misleading if, in a definition of the Church, they precede and give foundation to, that of

14. The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, 1952, ed. Oliver S. Tomkins, London, 1953, p. 33.

15. Approaches Toward Unity, U.S.A. 1952, p. 33.

16. In The Universal Church in God's Design, p. 43.

«life». It is not because she is an «organism» that the Church gives us the «new life», but the new life given in her, or rather, the Church as new life, makes us an organism, transforms us into the Body of Christ, reveals us as «new being»¹⁷.

«The true theology of the Church is still in Werden¹⁸, in the process of formation»¹⁹.

According to Fr. Florovsky «the Church is a Divine Society and Community, the ekklesia, is a sacramental community: *communio in sacris*, a «fellowship in holy things», i.e. in the Holy Spirit, or even *communio sanctorum*. The unity of the Church is effected through the sacraments: Baptism and the Eucharist are the two «social sacraments» of the Church, and in them the true meaning of Christian «togetherness» is continually revealed and sealed. Or even more emphatically, the sacraments constitute the Church. Only in the sacrament, does the Christian Community pass beyond the purely human measure and become the Church. Therefore «the right administration of the sacraments» belongs to the essence of the Church (to her *esse*)²⁰.

«Sacraments are not merely signs of a professed faith, but rather effective signs of the saving Grace»²¹. «The sacramental life of the Church is the continuation of Pentecost. The descent of the Spirit was a supreme revelation... The Kingdom comes, for the Holy Spirit is the Kingdom»²². Pentecost was the mystical consecration, the baptism of the whole Church (Acts 1,5)... The Church of Christ is one in the Eucharist, for the Eucharist is Christ Himself, and He sacramentally abides in the Church, which is His Body. The Church is a body indeed, an organism, much more than a society or a corporation. And perhaps an «organism» is the best modern rendering of the term *to soma*, as used by St. Paul²³.

The Church is the unity of charismatic life. «The idea of the or-

17. Fr. A. Schmemmann in: *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, Winter 1961, pp. 14-15.

18. M. D. Koster, *Ecclesiology im Werden*, Paderborn, 1940.

19. G. Florov., *Man's Disorder in God's Design*, p. 44. *Sergius Bulgakov, The Orth. Church*, 1935.

20. G. Florov., *Man's Disorder in God's Design*, p. 47.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

22. Cf. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De oratione Dominica*, 3, MG, XLIV, 115f.-1160.

23. *Man's Disorder in God's Design*, p. 49.

g a n i s m must be supplemented by the idea of a symphony of personalities, in which the mystery of Holy Trinity is reflected (cf. John 17,21 and 23), and this is the core of the conception of 'catholicity'²⁴. This is the chief reason why we should prefer a christological orientation in the theology of the Church rather than a pneumatological. For, on the other hand, the Church, as a whole, has her personal centre only in Christ, she is not an incarnation of the Holy Ghost, nor is she merely a Spirit-bearing community, but precisely the Body of Christ, the Incarnate Lord. This saves us from impersonalism without committing us to any humanistic personification²⁵. «One last distinction is to be made. The Church is still *in statu viae* and yet it is already *in statu patriae*. The Church is a visible historical society, and the same is the Body of Christ. It is both the Church of the redeemed, and the Church of the miserable sinners - both at once... This constitutes the mystery of the Church: a visible «society» of frail men is an organism of the Divine Grace»²⁶.

«The Church is a sacramental society. Sacramental means no less than 'eschatological'. To *eschaton* does not mean primarily final, in the temporal series of events; it means rather ultimate (decisive); and the ultimate is being realized within the stress of historical happenings and events. What is 'not of this world' is here 'in this world' not abolishing this world, but giving to it a new meaning and a new value, 'transvaluating' the world, as it were. Surely this is still only an anticipation, a 'token' of the final consummation. Yet the Spirit abides in the Church»²⁷.

«Orthodox theology would hesitate to make the distinction between the visible and invisible Church; a separation between two qualitatively different situations. The Church is one as a body, whose head is Christ»²⁸.

Orthodox tradition is unanimous in its affirmation of the Church as an organism. The Church is organic unity. In a series of

24. «sobornost», *Man's Disorder in God's Design*, p. 53. Cf. G. Florovsky, «Sobornost, The Catholicity of the Church», in *The Church of God*, ed. by E. L. Mascall, London, 1935.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 54. Cf. Khomiakov's essay *On the Church*; Engl. transl. by W. J. Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church* (first published 1895), ch. XXIII, pp. 193-222.

27. G. Florovsky in *Man's Disorder in God's Design*, p. 54.

28. N. Nissiotis in *The Ecumenical Review*, Oct. 1961, p. 12.

articles the contemporary Russian theologian and canonist Fr. N. Afanassieff²⁹ shows that there existed (and still exist) two ecclesiological «elaborations» or interpretations of this organic unity: the universal and the eucharistic.

The universal ecclesiology finds its fullest expression in Roman Catholic theology, crowned by the Vatican dogma of 1870.

The essence of the Orthodox ecclesiology is, above all, that it applies the categories of organism and organic unity to «the Church of God abiding...» in every place: to the local church, to the community led by a bishop and having, in communion with him, the fullness of the Church. Fr. Afanassieff terms it «eucharistic ecclesiology». And, indeed, it is rooted in the Eucharist as the Sacrament of the Church, an Act, which ever actualizes the Church as the Body of Christ. A similar view is expressed by Fr. George Florovsky³⁰.

Concerning now the approach of eucharistic ecclesiology towards the Church universal it must be stated emphatically that this type of ecclesiology does not transform the local Church into a self sufficient monad, without any «organic» link with other similar monads. There is no «congregationalism» here. The organic unity of the Church universal is not less real than the organic unity of the local Church. But if universal ecclesiology interprets it in terms of «parts» and «whole», for eucharistic ecclesiology the adequate term is that of identity: «the Church of God abiding in...». The Church of God is the one and indivisible Body of Christ, wholly and indivisibly present in each Church, i.e. in the visible unity of the people of God, the Bishop and the Eucharist. And if universal unity is indeed unity of the Church and not merely unity of Churches, its essence is not that all churches together constitute one vast, unique organism, but that each Church - in the identity of order, faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit - is the same Church, the same Body of Christ, indivisibly present wherever the «ecclesia» is. It is thus the same organic unity of the church herself, the «Churches» being not complementary to each other, as parts or members; but each one and all of them together being nothing else, but the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

29. Cf. *Primacy and Primacies in the Orthodox Church*, ed. by St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1960, p. 53.

30. *In Man's Disorder in God's Design*, p. 49.

The Norm of Authority for the Church :

The membership of the American Theological Committee³¹ and the Churches which they represent fall into two very distinct groups. Each group is very diverse in its complexion, but on the issue of norm or authority the watershed between them is definite.

a) The representatives of this group agree at one crucial point: Somewhere in the historic tradition is something normative for the constitution and practice of the Church. To enter into any union which did not make this particular requirement would be a denial of the authority of God in the channel through which it is recognized.

b) The second group is also united by a common conviction. They recognize the authority of God in church organization and practice, but do not believe that this is expressed in norms that have been communicated in specific and unchanging patterns. From their study of history, these find no divinely authorized pattern of the Church.

«The present differences concerning the norm or standard of the Church reflect the fact that there has been much lack of uniformity throughout Christian history. The pioneering spirit, which has been an American characteristic since Colonial days, has created a tendency toward nonconformity rather than conformity. Yet it must be insisted that American dissent does not deny the fact of continuity in Christian history nor the existence of deep-lying unities amid all the diversities of the Christian movement»³².

In Orthodoxy the synod of bishops is usually given an exceptional importance. The Church is often described as the Church of the Councils and her government as «conciliary». But very little has been done to define the nature and function of synods in theological terms. Canonically the synod is interpreted as the «supreme authority» in the Church.

However, this idea does not correspond to the original function of the synod in the Church. The Synod is not «power» in the juridical sense of this word, for there can exist no power over the Church Body of Christ. The Synod is, rather, a witness to the identity of all Churches as the Church of God in faith, life and «agape». If in his own Church the Bishop is priest, teacher, and pastor, the divinely appointed witness and keeper of the catholic faith, it is through the agreement of all

31. The Nature of the Church: A Report of the American Theological Committee, New York, 1945, pp. 16-17.

32. Report. Ibid., p. 19.

Bishops, as revealed in the Synod, that all Churches both manifest and maintain the ontological unity of Tradition, «for languages differ in the world, but the force of Tradition is the same»³³. The Synod of Bishops is not an organ of power over the Church, nor is it «greater» or «fuller» than the fullness of any local Church, but in and through it all Churches acknowledge and realize their ontological unity as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Ecclesiological Conclusions :

From the Orthodox point of view «the Church is an organism rather than an organization, a mystical unity rather than a juridical institution...»³⁴.

«The Church is a divinely-instituted Society or foundation... The Church founded by Jesus Christ is both visible and invisible... It is God's instrument through which the faithful are to attain salvation... The Church of Christ is One, Holy, Catholic (catholicity and the right and true faith of the Church were one and the same thing; in this sense of the word, at the time of the first and second ecumenical Councils the Bishops of the several cities and places were called Catholic Bishops of those cities as, for instance, Meletios, Bishop of the Catholic Church in Antioch), and Apostolic. The apostolic doctrine and tradition, with the apostolic succession, are the elements in which the apostolicity of the Church consists... Through the divinely-constituted Hierarchy, and so alone, this Church is connected by unbroken succession with the Apostles and keeps the deposit committed unto it by them...»³⁵.

Being the visible «Body» of the Eternal Lord, and the «Body» animated by the Holy Spirit, the Church is in principle no more separable from Christ than Christ is separable from God. In the whole of the New Testament the Immortal Christ and His Church are one, just as the Son and the Father remain indissolubly united to one another.

In the same way, for Christians of the Apostolic and post-Apostolic age, the diversity of «charismata» resolves itself in perfect harmony into the spiritual unity of the society of the faithful of Jesus; in the same

33. St. Irenaeus.

34. Prof. S. Bulgakov in *Faith and Order*, Lausanne, 1927, p. 258.

35. From the Statement of Archbishop of Athens Chrysostom on *The Nature of the Church: Faith and Order*, Lausanne, 1927, pp. 106-

way, in their eyes, the «Church's» witness is indistinguishable from the witness of the «living Christ» and the witness of God Himself³⁶.

But how strange was the fate of the idea of the Church in history! It can be summarized in this simple proposition: by the greatest of all misfortunes the Church was overestimated in Roman Catholicism and underestimated by the Protestants; and that without anyone on either side having succeeded up to the present in restoring that fine balance of forces which, in the earliest Christian society, had made of the Church the body of the Spirit of Christ, at once one and multiple.

In the Roman Catholic conception the Church in fact ceases to be a means, and becomes an end in itself. Protestants, in opposition to this exaggeration, concentrated their attention more and more on individual personal certainty of salvation, acquired by free pardon, in the experience of a direct contact with Christ. Now, ceasing to be the «Body of Christ» in the form of a spiritual and concrete community, the Church was only either the ideal and «invisible» Society of true believers, spread every-where throughout the world, and which nowhere localized itself in time or space, or the «visible», but entirely human, entirely profane, and entirely bureaucratic organization of a religious life, which, according to the needs of the moment, gave itself an administrative form which was always variable.

According to Rev. Hodgson³⁷ «the fact is that in Protestant society in general the idea of the «Church» no longer enjoys great favour. In any case, in Protestantism the «Church» remains a problem, and a problem which neither the Augsburg Confession nor the Calvinistic theocracy has solved...».

The preliminary Conference on Faith and Order which met at Geneva in 1920 was dominated by a great difficulty and two types of religious thought: the «institutionalist» Christians of Roman Catholic mentality, and the «spiritualist» Christians, that is to say, Christians of Protestant mentality.

It was just the conversations on the Sacraments which might be called the «temptation» of Lausanne World Conference in 1927. Fortunately, just at the hour of «temptation», it became conscious of its real «duty». And this duty was the abandonment of every idea of compromise, and the recourse to a new and better method, that of building,

36. Ignatius of Antioch. Ad Smyrnaeans VIII, 2. Irenaeus. Adv. Haer. III, 28,1.

37. Convictions, New York, 1934, p. 14.

humbly and soberly, on prosaic reality. No one at Lausanne thought that the hoped-for union would be equivalent to a lapse into a «relativism», which would present the different Christian communities as equally near or equally distant from the one and immortal divine Truth. The very fact that the Conference of Lausanne dissociated the examination of the Message of the Church to the World from the study of the Church's Common Confession of Faith deserves attention.

CHAPTER II THE SACRAMENTS

All schools of thought represented at Lausanne saw in the Sacraments real and effective means of Grace, recognizing them to be much more than mere appeals to human thought and imagination. The efficacy of the Sacrament was acknowledged to be a fact, apprehended and appropriated by faith³⁸. Though views as to the mode of the Presence differed widely there was general agreement that «in the Holy Communion our Lord is present, that we have fellowship with God our Father in Jesus Christ His Son, our Living Lord, who is our one Bread, given for the life of the world». The emphasis placed on the distinction between the fact of the Presence, and its mode, may help to smooth away some of the acute differences between denominations, as it already happened in various schools of thought in the Church in Wales.

The Orthodox Church and others hold that there are seven Sacraments and that for their valid administration there must be a proper form, a proper matter and a proper ministry.

In the Lausanne Conference there is stress in the two Sacraments of Baptism and Lord's Supper, because they were the Sacraments which were acknowledged by the members of this Conference.

There are, among the participants of the Lausanne Conference, divergent views concerning the Sacrament of Holy Communion, as to 1) the mode and manner of the presence of our Lord; 2) the conception of the commemoration and the sacrifice; 3) the relation of the elements to the grace conveyed; and 4) the relation between the minister of this Sacrament and the validity and efficacy of the rite.

38. L. Hodgson *Convictions*, New York, 1934, p. 235f.

They recognize, however, that «the Sacraments have special reference to the corporate life and fellowship of the Church and that the grace is conveyed by the Holy Spirit, taking of the things of Christ and applying them to the soul through faith».

They agree that «Sacraments are of divine appointment and that the Church ought thankfully to observe them as divine gifts; that in the Sacraments there is an outward sign and an inward grace, and that the Sacraments are means of grace through which God works invisibly in us. They recognize also that in the gifts of His grace God is not limited by His own Sacraments»³⁹.

The general understanding of the nature and effects of the Sacraments at the Edinburgh Conference was expressed as follows: «The Sacraments are not to be considered merely in themselves, but always as sacraments of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. They have their significance in the continual working of the Holy Spirit, which is the life of the Church. Through the sacraments God develops in all its members a life of perpetual communion lived within its fellowship, and thus enables them to embody His will in the life of the world; but the loving-kindness of God is not to be conceived as limited by His sacraments»⁴⁰.

Orthodox delegates and some others desire to exclude from the reference of this proposition cases in which failure to receive the sacraments is due to contempt or culpable negligence, since sacraments are divinely instituted means of grace generally necessary for salvation⁴¹.

Almost all at Edinburgh agreed that in all sacramental doctrine and practice the supreme authority is Jesus Christ Himself, and that Sacramental teaching and practice are rightly founded upon the record of the New Testament⁴².

Concerning the nature of the Sacraments, particularly, there is a general agreement on the following points:

1. The sacraments are given by Christ to the Church as outward and visible signs of His invisible grace. They are not bare symbols, but pledges and seals of grace, and means whereby it is received.

2. Grace is bestowed in the sacraments within the fellowship of

39. L. Hodgson, *Convictions*, New York, 1934, p. 236.

40. *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh, 1937, p. 226.

41. *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh, 1937, p. 240.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 239. Report, Ch. V.

the Church by the personal action of Christ upon the believer. Faith is therefore a necessary condition for the effectual reception of grace.

3. It is our Lord Christ who through the Holy Spirit accomplishes every sacrament, and the action of the minister of the Church is only instrumental.

4. The sacraments are celebrated by the minister, not in virtue of any personal right of his own, but as minister of the Church.

5. Regarding the obligation of the sacraments and the questions whether and in what way they are to be deemed necessary to salvation there is divergence of doctrine among the different Churches at Edinburgh⁴³.

Regarding the question of the number of the Sacraments, there is general agreement that this question should not be regarded as an insurmountable dividing line when all strive to attain to a united Church. In most of the Protestant Churches there are such solemn religious acts as correspond more or less closely with some or all of the five other (since all recognize Baptism and the Lord's Supper as «sacraments») sacraments which are taught by the Roman, Orthodox, Old Catholic, and other Churches. And even though the name «sacrament» be refused they are nevertheless *instituta Dei utilia*, as 'the second Helvetic Confession puts it⁴⁴.

As to the validity of the Sacraments, confusion has sometimes been introduced by the use of the term «valid» in the two following senses: a) It is sometimes used synonymously with «efficacious», so that the term «invalid» would imply that a sacrament has no spiritual value and is not a means of grace. b) It is sometimes used to imply that the sacrament has been correctly performed.

Many of the participants of the Edinburgh Conference are of the opinion that, «although it is the duty of a Church to secure that sacraments should be performed regularly and canonically, yet no judgment should be pronounced by any Church denying the 'validity' of the sacraments performed by any Christian Church which believes itself to be observing what Christ appointed for His Church»⁴⁵.

To those Churches which adhere to the doctrine of the Church from the age of the Great Councils to the Reformation and to the Orthodox, particularly, the validity of Holy Order and the right performance

43. Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937, p. 240.

44. Ibid., p. 241.

45. Report, Ch. V (IV). Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937, Cp. 242

according to the sacramental order of the Church are the indispensable conditions of the validity of other sacraments.

The Orthodox Point of View on the Sacraments:

1. Number: «It is true that no enumeration whatever (two or seven) is mentioned in the New Testament, and on this ground the justification of the two Sacraments (as accepted by the Protestant Churches) would be as unsound as the justification of the seven. It is not, therefore, the number mentioned which justifies their recognition, but their use and existence in the Apostolic Church and the references and records we find in the New Testament as to their existence and meaning.

The number of the Sacraments was fixed at seven in the Orthodox Church in comparatively later times (the fourteenth century and onwards) by theologians who were influenced by the processes of systematization and fixation which had taken place in the Roman Church. But the Orthodox Church maintains that all these Sacraments were already spoken of as Sacraments even in patristic times, although the actual number was not fixed (the Fathers speak of two, three, four, seven or even more Sacraments), and that they all have roots and foundation in the New Testament - in the teaching and practice of the Lord Himself or of His apostles»⁴⁶.

«Of course the lack of mention of the technical details of the administering of the Sacraments in the time of the Apostles and of the Primitive Church has no significance whatever, because the Sacraments, as liturgical actions, as well as all the rites of the Church, from their simplest form in the beginning to the most complicated form they have reached to-day, were subject to an easily understood evolution, in which it is sufficient that the essential parts of their performance are preserved»⁴⁷.

46. From the Orthodox Statement at Edinburgh, 1937, by Prof. Hamilcar Alivisatos, in *The Ministry and the Sacraments*, 1937, pp. 16-17, 68.

47. From the Orthodox Statement at Edinburgh, 1937, by Prof. Hamilcar Alivisatos, in *The Ministry and the Sacraments*, 1937, p. 70.