

THE LITURGICAL THEOLOGY OF  
NICOLAS CABASILAS\*

BY  
CONSTANTINE N. TSIRPANLIS  
Professor Ph. D.

P A R E N T H E S I S

A. THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Certainly in the West, there is a reaction against this kind of interpretation of the Liturgy. However, Nicolas Cabasilas does not take it to excess nor does he distort the theological understanding of the Eucharist, as will be shown later. He is not at all in the tradition of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who made the Prothesis symbolize the crucifixion, the Grand Entry, the bearing of our Lord's body to the sepulchre, and the Epiklesis His resurrection. Cabasilas is always anxious to provide the practical as well as the mystical reason for each ceremony. When he speaks of the Grand Entry he is particularly anxious to clear away misconceptions: «If any of those who prostrate themselves thus before the priest who is carrying the offerings, adores them as if they were the body and blood of Christ, and prays to them as such, he is led into error; he is confusing this ceremony with that of the entry of the presanctified, not recognizing the differences between them»<sup>60</sup>.

Furthermore, it would seem that symbolical interpretation is far less artificial in the Byzantine than in the Latin rite. Certain ceremonies and their accompanying texts make it practically inevitable. Cabasilas is firmly convinced of its value and psychological importance and defends it in the beginning of his DIVINAE LITURGIAE INTERPRETATIO in a very moving passage of great spiritual ardour and conviction. «It was necessary», he reminds us, «not only that we should think about, but also that to some extent we should see the utter poverty of Him who possesses all, the coming on earth of Him who dwells everywhere, the shame of the most blessed God, the sufferings of the impas-

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\* Συνέχεια ἐκ τῆς σελ. 197 τοῦ προηγουμένου τεύχους.

60. Cabasilas, *Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio*, Ch. 24, 420CDf.

sable... Indeed, in order to put ourselves in this state of mind it is not enough once to have learned of those things which are Christ's and to have retained the memory of them, but we must at this moment behold and contemplate these things with the eyes of the mind, striving to banish all alien thoughts. If at the time of the celebration we do not concentrate upon these things, if our minds are distracted, such knowledge is not of the slightest use to us; that alone cannot inspire in us the dispositions previously mentioned. For our dispositions are regulated by the thoughts which occupy us at the time and the feelings we experience are those which such thoughts are calculated to arouse in us. The aim of the entire liturgical symbolism is to influence our souls thereby not merely to offer us a simple picture but to create in us a feeling; for the very good reason that an idea is more deeply impressed upon us if we can see it depicted. This goes on throughout the liturgy, in order that it may not be forgotten and our thoughts be not distracted by anything else before it has led us to the holy table»<sup>61</sup>.

There is only one other aspect of the classical Commentary of Nicolas Cabasilas that gives it any link with the limitations of contemporary Latin devotion and theology; a concentration on the commemoration of the passion and death of our Lord without emphasizing greatly His resurrection. This is particularly noticeable in chapter 7, entitled «The Commemoration of the Lord»<sup>62</sup>.

Throughout this Commentary, however, there are constant reminders that in the Christian East, unlike in the Christian West, there was no fatal separation between Liturgy and popular devotion. This Commentary is a Commentary on the Liturgy itself; «First its preparatory prayers, blessings and sacred chants, and readings; then its most sacred actions, the sacrifice itself; finally its sanctification by which the souls of Christians, living and dead, benefit through this sacrifice»<sup>63</sup>, for it is the Liturgy itself that nourishes the devotion of Cabasilas and his readers. «Their purpose (of the liturgical ceremonies) is to set before us the divine plan (of redemption)», he will always repeat, «that by looking upon it our souls may be sanctified... Just as the work of redemption when it was first achieved, restored the world, so now when it is ever before our eyes, it makes the souls of those who behold it better and more divine»<sup>64</sup>.

61. Cabasilas, *Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio*, Ch. I, 373CD; 376AB.

62. Cabasilas, *Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio*, Ch. 7, 381Df.

63. *Ibid.*, Ch. 11, 389CD.

64. *Ibid.*, Ch. 1, 373AB.

Being our mystagogus, moralist, and preacher, he is thus also shown as a *pragmatist*, in the pure sense of the word, with a true religious conscience based on personal experience; *πραγμα* (act, reality)<sup>65</sup> and particularly *πειρα* (experience)<sup>66</sup> are the expressions frequently used by Cabasilas with all their existential value.

In this Commentary, moreover, it is taken for granted that some of the congregation will be receiving Holy Communion and that all will join in singing. «The chant is taken up by all present», he declares at one point<sup>67</sup>.

There are two places where the Liturgical Commentary is interrupted for a fairly lengthy discussion of controversial areas. The first is what the Foreword<sup>68</sup> describes as an «anti-Latin polemic» concerning the Epiklesis<sup>69</sup>. Cabasilas, however, is less concerned to attack the West than to defend the East against the criticisms of «certain Latins»<sup>70</sup>. This he does ably and vigorously and his explanation was very insufficiently commended by the late Dom Gregory Dix<sup>71</sup> as will be shown later. Cabasilas maintains that the *Supplices te rogamus* of the Latin Canon is itself a consecratory Epiklesis<sup>72</sup>. Secondly, there is a theological parenthesis of considerable length (eleven chapters: 42-52)<sup>73</sup>, which discusses a number of relevant theological questions such as the sanctifying power of the Holy Offerings or Sacrifice and its application to the living and the dead; how the unworthiness of the priests hinders not the effect of the Sacrament and the manner of man's acceptance of the Gift<sup>74</sup>; the exact nature of the commemoration of our Lady and the Saints and their participation in the Offering<sup>75</sup>. We shall examine these questions in the chapter on the Sacraments (Eucharist) that follows, and finally, the names «reasonable worship», *λογικὴ λατρεία*, and «Eucharist», *Εὐχαριστία*, as applied to the Liturgy<sup>76</sup>.

65. Cabasilas, *Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio*, Ch. 51, 485AB.

66. Cabasilas, *De Vita in Christo*, II, 560CD.

67. *Div. Lit. Int.*, Ch. 15,401BC. *Comp. Ch.* 35, 448AB.

68. J. M. Hursey and P. A. McNulty, *op. cit.*, p. XI.

69. *Div. Lit. Int.*, Ch. 29, 428f. Ch. 30, 433f.

70. *Ibid.*, Ch. 29, 428Cf. *Comp. Ch.* 30, 437Bf.

71. D. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London, 1947), pp. 282,

293.

72. Cabasilas, *Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio*, Ch. 30, 433DCh. 29.

73. *Ibid.*, PG 150, 457-488; cc. 42-45.

74. cc. Ch. 46, 47.

75. cc. Ch. 48-50.

76. cc. Ch. 51, 52.

Many Western Christians somehow get the impression that the Orthodox reject the sharp distinction which exists in the West between the Saints whose prayers we invoke, and the faithful departed, for whom we pray, and that in the Rite of St. John Chrysostom the Holy Sacrifice is offered «for», ὑπέρ, the Mother of God and the saints. Nobody could reject this latter suggestion more vehemently than Nicolas Cabasilas. Indeed, he considers it totally blasphemous, and refutes it with considerable warmth. There is a double blasphemy for those who believe that the prayers and offering, which the Church presents to God on behalf of the Saints are supplicatory:

1. They insult not only them but God, implying that He does not keep His promises; for God promised to glorify the Saints and to give them a place in His Kingdom.

2. They deny their glory and beatitude absolutely or

3. They behave as if they have denied it. Because, since they ask for the same things for both, they put those whom they believe to be in a state of blessedness, whom they claim as having a place among the sons and heirs of the Kingdom, on a level with those who have not yet received their reward, who are without honour, and who still have an account to render.

4. They are also in the wrong, from the point of view of the liturgical texts and prayers themselves, where «no prayer to God is made on behalf», our liturgist claims, «of the Saints, but only thanksgiving»: «vouchsafe, O God, through their intercession, to look upon us, ὡν παῖς πρεσβείαις ἐπίσκοψαι ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεός<sup>77</sup>. Thus the Church invokes them as intermediate, πρέσβεις.

5. The preposition «for», ὑπέρ, does not always imply supplication. We use it not only when we are asking for something but also when we are giving thanks. This can be seen in many examples and particularly in

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77. Rite of St. Chrysostom.

the present prayer: «For all these things we give thanks to thee and to thine only begotten Son, and to the Holy Spirit. For all that we know and all that we do not know we give Thee thanks; and also for this sacrifice which Thou hast deigned to accept at our hands»<sup>78</sup>.

Cabasilas stresses throughout his Commentary the importance of thanksgiving, as being even more fundamental to the Holy Sacrifice than Supplication<sup>79</sup>.

«Our reasons for thanksgiving are more numerous than those for supplication, since the number of benefits which we have received exceeds that of which we still have need; the latter are only a part, the former are the whole... For as far as the things of God are concerned, we have been given everything; there is nothing which He has not given us... but we did not keep them, such as the remission of sins and other sacramental graces... it is clear, therefore, that it is not God who makes supplication necessary but we ourselves; he has furnished us only with cause for thanksgiving but we through our weakness have put ourselves in need, so that supplication is necessary. What is it that we ask for? The remission of sins? But we received that in abundance and without any effort or striving on our part, at Baptism. Why do we ask for it again? Because we have become guilty once more, owing it to our sins. We are the cause of this guilt, so we are also the cause of supplication. Again we ask that we may be made heirs of the Kingdom. Now this inheritance has already been given to us; for we have been made children of God, the heart of the Kingdom, and who shall inherit, if not the children? Or what shall the heir lose of his father's goods? Nothing. Why then do we ask for what has already been given? Because after being born of God and raised to such an honour, we have behaved in a manner which is totally contrary to that of an adopted son. So from

78. Div. Lit. Int., Ch. 49, 476; Comp. Ch 1, 388; Ch. 33, 441CD; Ch. 34, 445Cp.

79. Ibid., Ch. 10, 389Bf; Ch. 52, 488CD; Ch. 12, 392BC.

being sons, we have become wicked slaves... Again, we ourselves are the cause of supplication»<sup>80</sup>.

It is because of this thanksgiving—the more important element—that the whole Liturgy is called Eucharist, *Εὐχαριστία*<sup>81</sup>. This is also one reason why the commemoration of the Saints is in the entire Liturgy so prominent<sup>82</sup>. «For, though we make mention of many other benefits, yet the Saints are the end of all, and it is because of them that we ask for all the other things; so that when the Church gives thanks for anything, it is always for the perfection of the Saints that she is giving thanks. All that the Lord has made was made that the choir of Saints might be established; and the Church, whenever she gives thanks, has the choir of Saints in mind»<sup>83</sup>.

The Divine Liturgy is, moreover, called «reasonable worship», *λογικὴ λατρεία*, because the priest himself does nothing except makes the offering by the use of the words of consecration, «ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔργον εἰσάγει, μόνοις δὲ τοῖς τελεστικοῖς ῥήμασι χρώμενος τὴν προσφορὰν ταύτην προσφέρει...»<sup>84</sup>. «The sacrifice», our mystagogos concludes, «is truly an act and a reality, but since the priest performs no action but simply pronounces the words, he describes it not as an active but as a reasonable worship, «ὅθεν εἰ καὶ ἔργον ἐστὶ καὶ πράγμα ἀληθῶς ἡ θυσία, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς οὐδὲν εἰς αὐτὴν ἐργαζόμενος, ἀλλὰ λέγων μόνον, εἰκότως οὐ πραγματικῶς, ἀλλὰ λογικὴν λατρείαν προσάγειν φησί»<sup>85</sup>.

Similar theological insight is shown in the discussion of the nature of the Sacrifice. It is, indeed, the Body and Blood of Christ, no repetition of Calvary and no bloody immolation. «Though that which is transformed from being one and the same thing always a single Body and the unique sacrifice of that Body»<sup>86</sup>. Cabasilas has also a very firm grasp on the doctrine of the Mystical Body — *Corpus Mysticum*<sup>87</sup> — as we will see later in the chapter: «Christocentric Mysticism»<sup>88</sup>.

80. Cabasilas, Div. Lit. Int., Ch. 52, 488CD; Comp. Ch. 10, 388BC.

81. Ibid.

82. Div. Lit. Int., Ch. 50, 484BCf.

83. Ibid., Ch. 49, 481AB; Comp. Ch. 10, 388CDf; Ch. 33, 441CDf.; 444A-C.

84. Cabasilas, Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio, Ch. 51, 485AB.

85. Ibid. Other names of the Divine Liturgy used by Cabasilas are: τῆ συντάξει τῆς ἱεράς τελετῆς - editing of the sacred celebration (Ch. 1, 369BC); ἱερούργια - sacred action. (Ibid., 369CEf.; Ch. 27, 425CD.; Ch. 49, 477BC); μυσταγωγία - mystagogy (Ibid., 369D. 372B.).

86. Ibid., Ch. 32, 440-41A.

87. Ibid., Ch. 38, 452-53AB; Comp. Ch. 37, 452Cf.

88. p. Cf. relative chapter in following issue.

## B. LITURGICAL OBSERVATIONS

Strangely enough, Cabasilas does not refer to the beautiful anthem: «We have seen the true Light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit, we have found the true Faith by worshipping the Undivided Trinity; this hath been our salvation, «which is sung in modern times by the choir near the end of the Liturgy and after the priest has said: «O God, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance»<sup>89</sup>. Possibly our liturgist did not know it<sup>90</sup>. Instead he comments upon another passage, which has disappeared from the modern Greek rite but is still heard in the Russian Liturgy. It follows the priest's exclamation, «Blessed be God always now and for ever and throughout all Ages» and is as follows: «Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise, O Lord, that we may extol Thy glory, for that Thou hast deigned to make us partakers of Thy holy, divine, immortal, and life-giving mysteries. Establish us in Thy sanctification that all the day long we may meditate upon Thy righteousness. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia»<sup>91</sup>.

Cabasilas's comments upon the text of the Liturgy cease with chapter 42, until they are taken up again in chapter 53 which continues the subject found in chapters 40 and 41 and expounds on the final prayers of the Liturgy.

The *antidoron* is distributed to the faithful immediately after the *Opisthamonos* prayer and not after the *Apolysis* as in the modern Greek rite<sup>92</sup>. The *antidoron* is taken from what is left of the bread after the portion for the consecration has been cut out. *Antidoron* means literally «instead of the gift» and is received by the people with much reverence. They feel that, although they may not have taken Communion, yet the *antidoron* expresses their fellowship with the rest of the worshipping body of the Church. Like the *pain benit* of the West, the *antidoron* is generally accepted as a relic of the primitive *agape*, and according to the very words of Cabasilas, «as something which has been hallowed by being dedicated and offered to God»<sup>93</sup>.

During the distribution of *antidoron* «all people glorify Him who is the Origin and Dispenser of these blessings which they re-

89. Cabasilas, *Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio*, Ch. 40, 453-56.

90. So think J. M. Hursey and P. A. McNulty, *Nicolas Cabasilas, A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* (London, 1960), p. 19.

91. Cabasilas, *Div. Lit. Int.*, Ch. 41, 456Df.

92. Cabasilas, *Divinae Liturgiae Interpretatio*, Ch. 53, 489CD.

93. *Ibid.*, 489BC.

ceive» by a doxology taken from the Scriptures: «Blessed be the name of the Lord» (Job 1,21). This is proclaimed several times (only three times in modern Greek rite) and then they say Psalm 34: «I will bless the Lord at all times...» This disappeared from the regular Liturgy of modern Greek rite and is retained only in the Liturgy of the «Pre-Sanctified», which particularly stresses doxology and thanksgiving. After the distribution of the *antidoron* and after the psalm, the priest says the last prayer over the people (the *Apolysis*). The prelude of this prayer is: «Christ, our true God...»<sup>94</sup>.

### Chapter III

## THE SACRAMENTS

The Sacraments are the heart of the whole mystical and liturgical theology of Nicolas Cabasilas. This idea is apparent in the course of his principal writings: *DIVINAE LITURGIAE INTERPRETATIO* and *DE VITA IN CHRISTO*, which form an identical «catechetical mystagogy». The personal union of the soul with her bridegroom, with Christ Himself, the divinization — *θέωσις* — the classical scheme of the Greek salvation — *σωτηρία* — is possible only by the charismatic and supernatural effects of the Sacraments. The unique aim of the Divine Liturgy, on the other hand, is the reception and preservation of the holy mysteries in us. The prayers and psalms as well as the sacred actions and forms which the Liturgy contains<sup>95</sup> are but helping tools.

If the Liturgy permits us to contemplate by the eyes of flesh the mystical reality of Christ, to stand by His Passion, His Resurrection and Ascension, the life-giving Sacraments cause many more advantages. Not only do they regenerate human nature and induce these noble sentiments, but they configurate and ineffably unite us with Christ Himself and His divinized humanity, making us «children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven»<sup>96</sup>. «δι' αὐτῶν γεννώμεθα καὶ πλαττόμεθα καὶ ὑπερφωδῶς συναπτόμεθα τῷ Σωτῆρι».

Each Sacrament in its proper character, rite, and particular purpose assumes a celestial dimension and is closely connected with all others.

94. Ibid.

95. Div. Lit. Int., Ch. 1, 369ABf.

96. Ibid., Ch. 10. Ch. I, 372; ch. 44, 464. DE V. in Chr., I, 501D.

Thus, Baptism forms the *primus movens*. It is the beginning and the nativity *par excellence* of the life according to Christ, «τὸ ἔλωσ ὑποστῆ-  
ναι κατὰ Χριστόν»<sup>97</sup>. Chrismation grants the proper movements, energy,  
and the *charismata* of the Holy Spirit<sup>98</sup> toward this life's perfection; and  
the Holy Eucharist, the mystical nourishment and health of this life,  
«συντηρεῖ καὶ συνέχει»<sup>99</sup>.

It should be noted that only three Sacraments are fully developed  
in Nicolas Cabasilas's Sacramental Theology: Baptism, Confirmation  
or *Myron*, and the Eucharist. Their close ontological, as well as mys-  
tical, relationship is always emphasized by our liturgist<sup>100</sup>.

He does not disregard, however, the other Sacraments, to which  
he makes frequent allusions throughout his writings: Priesthood<sup>101</sup>, Re-  
pentance<sup>102</sup>, Confession<sup>103</sup>, Marriage<sup>104</sup>, and Holy Unction<sup>105</sup>.

There is a beautiful passage by Nicolas Cabasilas concerning the  
celestial-purificative dimension of the Sacraments of the Church: «It  
is here (in Church) the House of God and the gate of heaven, where the  
patriarch Jacob could repeat... (Gen. 28, 12); a gate through which not  
only angels descend on earth... but even the Lord of angels. That is why  
when Christ was baptized, heaven was opened. It means that through  
the Sacrament of Baptism we see the heavenly place symbolising our  
own gate or entrance and initiation into the Christian life and God's  
love...»<sup>106</sup>.

Cabasilas never considered the Sacraments as mere instruments.  
He is rooted in the Greek-oriental *paradosis*, according to which, the  
reality of salvation springs primarily from the Sacramental Initiation.  
On the other hand, Cabasilas professes a very distinctive *synergism* in  
emphasizing always the human will, θέλησις, and cooperation<sup>107</sup>.

97. De Vita in Christo; I, 501Df. Comp. Div. Lit. Int., Ch. 14.

98. Ibid., IV, 581AB; II, 521Cf; I, 501Df.

99. Ibid., II, 521Cf.

100. Ibid., I, 505BC, 516-17A-CDf; II, 521Cf; IV, 581ABf.

101. Div. Lit. Int., Ch. 29, 432C.

102. Ibid., Ch. 34, 429Cf; 432CD; 445AB.

103. Ibid., Ch. 12, 393AB; Ch. 29, 429Cf.

104. Ibid., Ch. 29, 429BC.

105. Ibid., Ch. 29, 432CD.

106. De Vita in Christo; I, 504-505ACf; Ps. 17,19.

107. Ibid., I, 517CDf; II, 544-545Af; 545CD,

## I. Baptism.

Of all the traditional names of Baptism: «χάρισμα», «φώτισμα» (illumination), «λουτρόν» (loutro), «σφραγίς» (seal), etc.<sup>108</sup> «ἔνδυμα» (dress), «χρῖσμα» (chrism)<sup>109</sup> Nicolas Cabasilas emphasizes most: «Καινὴ γέννησις-ἀνάπλασις» (new birth and reformation), especially «ἀναγέννησις»<sup>110</sup> (regeneration, new birth), since Baptism is the beginning of life according to Christ, «ὡς ἄρα γέννησις καὶ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ζωῆς ἡμῖν ἐστὶν ἀρχή<sup>4</sup>... αὐτὸ τὸ κατὰ Χριστὸν γεννηθῆναι καὶ λαβεῖν αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι καὶ ὑποστῆναι μηδὲν ὄντας»<sup>111</sup>; A second nativity, δευτέρα γέννησις, leading to the restoration of the original image of our soul and to the true and conscious knowledge of God. This is the source of immortality, since the misleading knowledge of the divine mercy or ignorance of Adam caused death<sup>112</sup>. Baptism, therefore, constitutes the primary Christian Initiation, μύησις, the primary and basic Sacrament, which is the origin of our appellation, «Christians», as followers and athletes of Christ<sup>113</sup>. «ὀνομαστήριός ἐστιν ἡ σωτήριος τοῦ Βαπτίσματος ἡμέρα Χριστιανοῖς, ὅτι τηρικαῦτα πλαττόμεθα καὶ τυπούμεθα, καὶ εἶδος καὶ ὄρου ἢ ἀνείδεος καὶ ἀόριστος ἡμῶν λαμβάνει ζωή»<sup>114</sup>.

Through Baptism we participate in Christ's death (three immersions into the Baptismal water) as well as in His Resurrection (ascension). His death overcomes and destroys, ἀποπνίγει, the sinful man, whereas His Resurrection rises the new man granting him new life. «There we exchange life for life; we give one (the sinful life) and receive another in its place (the eternal life of the resurrected Christ)», since «our resurrection is truly life. For the Saviour who died rose again, in desire that we should share in his new life...»<sup>115</sup>.

Cabasilas emphasizes more the Baptismal Resurrection of Christ, since it was His Resurrection that confirmed and recreated the primary privilege of man: immortality and divinization. He obviously follows St. Paul (I Cor. 15, 14) and the early Church Fathers and especially

108. De Vita in Christo, II, 524CD, 525CD.

109. Ibid., 524CD.

110. Ibid., 532CD, 533AB, 544-45Af; 528AB; 557CD.

111. Ibid., 524BC, 524CD, 528AB.

112. Ibid., 529AB; Comp. II, 560CD, 524CD.

113. Ibid., 524BC, 532AB; I, 517CDf.

114. Ibid., 524CD, 525AB.

115. De Vita in Christo, (D. L. I.4, 380ABf); comp. II, 532AB, 533Df, 537AB, 544-545A, 557CD; I, 517CD.

Irenaeus' thought that the redemptive Passion culminated in the Resurrection of Christ<sup>116</sup>. It is for this reason that particularly in the course of his DE VITA IN CHRISTO, our spiritual author considers *catharsis* as an absolutely necessary presupposition for the divinization of man and his glorification and entrance into the Kingdom of God as co-inheritor with the Saviour-Christ. Within this framework, Cabasilas examines the three Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, which are equalled with spiritual nativity, strengthening and perfect union with Christ.

The Baptismal Initiation, however, causes all these effects from the beginning: First, death and the *triduum* with Christ, (the grave darkness symbolized by the three immersions); and then the Resurrection, i.e. the return of the neophyte by the last immersion to the splendour of «the day without end»<sup>117</sup>.

Through the Trinitarian invocation, *epiclesis*<sup>118</sup>, the Holy Spirit consecrates the Baptismal water and gives to the celebration an invisible mark and an indelible character. It is because of this connotation that our liturgist calls Baptism also «σφραγίς» (seal), *signaculum* or *sigillum*<sup>119</sup>.

In addition, he distinguishes, in agreement with the early Church, the character of Baptism and the proper Baptismal grace, since the latter can be lost by sin, although the sign, εἶδος, or seal, σφραγίς remains indelible<sup>120</sup>. For this reason, the second Baptism in the case of the apostate returning to Christianity, is not permissible. They are only anointed by the priest, χρίσμα, in order to help recreate and revive in them the previous mental respect, the fear of God, love, etc. «...χρίων δὲ πνευματικὴν ἐνίησι χάριν εὐσεβείας, οἰμαί, καὶ φόβου Θεοῦ καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ τῶν τοιούτων, ἃ τὴν προτέραν αὐτοῖς ἀνακαλεῖσθαι δύναται γνώμην»<sup>121</sup>.

Certainly, Nicolas Cabasilas in his Baptismal theology is faithful to the traditional forms and concepts. He renovates them without any innovations. He meditates and investigates them without being lost in details. Nevertheless, he is a great doctor and particularly a great liturgist of a very distinctive religious genius with a profound theological understanding.

116. Ibid., I, 504CD.

117. De Vita in Christo, II, 533, 532AB, 548BCf.

118. Ibid., 532AB, 533A-C.

119. Ibid., 528AB.

120. Ibid., 545CD, 548A.

121. De Vita in Christo, II, 548A, 524CD.

Throughout the DE VITA IN CHRISTO our liturgist, never ceases to declare his anthropological maximalism-being shown also a great moralist and anthropologist. His anthropological optimism is sensible in his distinction of the real and formal effects of Baptism; its essential character, σφραγίς, and its «active» grace, conditioned by the spiritual perfection or imperfection of man.

Thus, speaking of infant-Baptism, νηπιοβαπτισμός, Cabasilas stresses the importance of human will, βούλησις. He considers the Eucharistic grace more effective than the Baptismal one, since the participant in the Holy Eucharist is conscious, ἐπίγνωσις, of his own sinful situation and of the necessity for a proper preparation. The Sacramental grace is conditioned by this precise consciousness<sup>122</sup>. «ὁσὼ μείζονος δεῖ τοῖς προσελθεῖν βουλομένοις Παρασκευῆς...»<sup>123</sup> «... τῷ λαβεῖν παρασκευασθῆναι πρὸς τὸ δυναθῆναι συνεῖναι...»<sup>124</sup>. «Καὶ γὰρ τινα εἰκόνα ἐγγράφει καὶ μορφήν ἐντίθησιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς συμμόρφους ἀποφαῖνον τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Σωτῆρος, ὑπὲρ οὗ καὶ σφραγίς καλεῖται πρὸς τὴν βασιλείον πλάττον εἰκόνα καὶ τὸ μακάριον εἶδος. Ὅτι δὲ τὸ εἶδος τὴν ὕλην περιβάλλει καὶ ἀφανίζει τὴν ἀμορφίαν καὶ ἔνδυμα καλοῦμεν καὶ βάπτισμα τὸ μυστήριον»<sup>125</sup>.

The importance, therefore, of these factors, divine and human, in the effectiveness of the Sacraments could be impressively summarized in the form *sine qua non*. Cabasilas is pleased to underline this paradox, which cannot, however, be in Christianity a defective circle: in order to possess the faith that saves, we should be baptized, and to receive worthily the Baptism already possessed in our infancy, we must be inspired by desire<sup>126</sup>. However, the virtue of faith is given through the primary Sacrament, whereas the faith as action is given through the Holy Chrism, as a deposit. Such a desire, which is the natural *embryon* of the characteristic faith in Christ spouts from the illuminated intellect, made possible, once again by the continual Incarnation of our Redeemer in the Holy Communion<sup>127</sup>.

The catechumenal discipline identical in the Orient, as well as in the West, had as a basic purpose to extend the time of the spiritual trial and to prepare the Christian future in its supernatural destiny, al-

122. Ibid., IV, 604BCf; IV, 608AB, 609AB.

123. De Vita in Christo, IV, 608AB.

124. Ibid., 609AB.

125. Ibid., II, 524CD., 548A.

126. Ibid., IV, 604BCf.

127. De vita in Christo, IV, 605AB; comp. 608ABf,

ready anticipated. The pro-Baptismal rite of catechesis and the exorcisms describe in full the importance of these two factors and the two different types of the life of the catechumen. The officiating priest blows onto the face of the candidate, thrice, symbolizing the new life that he receives from above. Of course, prior to catechesis, man is entirely dead, *παντάπασι*, since he is apart from God, and subject to the tyrant of slavery<sup>128</sup>. These exorcisms contain a theology of *status naturae corruptae*<sup>129</sup> which on the other hand was a generality in the Church of the time when Baptism was celebrated by immersion: the denudation, ἀπογύμνωσις.

There is a rich patristic documentation of penetrating views in E. Peterson, THEOLOGIE DES KLEIDES (Benediktinische Monatschrift)<sup>130</sup> concerning the Baptismal denudation, and the symbolism of the Baptismal dress. It symbolizes the corruption of human nature and its condemnation as a result of «Adam's barter of his dress of innocence for the miserable livery». According to Cabasilas, this sort of stripping signifies also «the procession towards the true light, absolutely without any possession or property»<sup>131</sup>.

The Byzantine theologian of the 14th century reminds us of the ancient image of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa saying that «we take off the coat of skin, in order to wear the royal mantel». And he repeats: «We go up again to that point of our departure in the person of Adam...»<sup>132</sup>.

Regarding the Baptismal rite, we have to note that Cabasilas does not explain it extensively, probably because it was well known by his contemporaries. He comments upon its principal moments, being more interested in the effective participation of man in the Sacrament. There follows after the *benedictio fontis* the anointing of all the parts of the human body with oil. This is a pre-figure of the great consecration and dedication to God, fully described by the post-Baptismal *Myron*. Interpreted as a symbol of spiritual strengthening, this *unctio ante fontem* does not have any sacramental character. It makes us already participants, «symbolically», in the divine kingdom announced by David, exalting and fortifying us—the future athletes of Christ<sup>133</sup>.

The basic element in the Baptismal rite is the Trinitarian *Epi-*

128. Ibid., II, 528Cf.

129. Ibid., 528ff.

130. Theologie des Kleides, XVI, 1934, pp. 347-356.

131. Theologie des Kleides, XVI, 1934, pp. 347-356. De V. in Chr. II, 525CD.

132. Ibid.

133. De Vita in Christo, II, 529D, 532A.

*klesis*. It is the three immersions that form the *actio corporalis*, the proper action in Baptism; since we are totally transformed to the blessed «archetype», ἀρχέτυπον, τὸ μακάριον εἶδος of God-Trinity, and a spiritual *metamorphosis* is accomplished: «We descend in the water as an amorphous and unshaped matter and we receive a form full of beauty»<sup>134</sup>. This *metamorphosis*, Cabasilas insists, is inseparably connected with the invocation of the three persons of the Trinity. It cannot be accomplished without this invocation, since their common Name (God) is not sufficiently «explicit nor formal». As in the first creation each hypostasis of the Trinity, who «by a common philanthropy saved mankind», took part in it by common action, so in the economy-salvation of fallen man, each hypostasis willed commonly our salvation, ἐβουλήθη μὲν ἡ Τριάς κοινῇ, but the action of each one was different, ἐνεργεῖ δὲ οὐκέτι κοινῇ: «The Father accepted the reconciliation, the Son offered the reconciliation, the Holy Spirit was given as a gift to the reconciliated souls...»<sup>135</sup>. On the contrary, concerning the economy itself, only the Son, by His Incarnation and Passion, delivered and saved us<sup>136</sup>. Because of this, the invisible presence of Christ with which we are intimately associated in Baptism, predominates throughout the rite as a faithful *anamnesis* and imitation of the *acta et gesta Christi*.

On the one hand, we should confess aloud our belief in the Holy Trinity; on the other hand, we should imitate and reproduce upon our body, by the threefold *immersion*, the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord, who by His proper action realized, in His Person the providential plan for salvation: «...Διὰ ταῦτα τοίνυν ἡ μὲν Τριάς ἐπὶ τῆς φωνῆς, τὸ δὲ πάθος καὶ τὸν θάνατον διὰ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν τῷ σώματι γράφομεν, τυποῦντες ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ μακάριον εἶδος ἐκεῖνο καὶ τὴν μορφήν»<sup>137</sup>.

In other words, the *formula* of the Sacrament of Christian Initiation—the Trinitarian Epiklesis—seems to be distinguished, but never separated, from the Sacramental matter—the lustration in the Holy Water. Both, however, are closely connected, without confusion, since the Baptism of Jesus is the Baptism of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (There are somehow two Baptisms which in reality appear as only one: 1) Baptism is the Name of God-Trinity is proclaimed aloud, 2) Secret Baptism in Jesus applied to the former and manifesting the Son as Redeemer).

134. De vita in Christo, II, 537CDf, 524CD.

135. Ibid, 532Df, 533AB.

136. Ibid.

137. De Vita in Christo, II, 533CD.

Our author goes further. He tries to establish a theological justification and reason for the Trinitarian Epiklesis, «we proclaim in a loud voice the theology (of Trinity) and we express in silence, by actions, the economy of our salvation». A remarkable explanation because of its originality. «The (Trinitarian) dogma», says Cabasilas, «was from the beginning known by men through the voice of preachers; the act (reality), *πραγμα*, of Redemption had been seen by their eyes and, so to say, had been touched by their hands»<sup>138</sup>. This «act or reality» is revealed through Baptism by which it becomes sensible in our heart. Because this Sacrament of mystical death and resurrection is also a true inner experience, *πειρα*, Cabasilas remarks: «the teaching of others» presents to us the simple object without touching it; experience, reversally, awakens in us the desire «to imprint, *τυποῦντες*, the form itself of the object—reflected and devinized by its Beauty—in our soul»<sup>139</sup>. The whole Cabasilian *Pragmatism* with its full flash is expressed in the above passage. It is because of this *pragmatism* that Cabasilas himself in another passage expresses the great triumphal acclamation: «The Baptism abolishes the punishment, the ransom due to evil, the sickness and the death (of the original sin)... In the place of the abolished perversion it establishes an opposite disposition, an «habitual» pre-disposition towards good, that springs from the charismatic science of God, infused in us by the sacrament...»<sup>140</sup>. This is a new life flourishing in the soul, with new powers, with a truly fertile virtuality (dynamicity) — and only virtuality.

The «celestial crowns» that our athlete, Nicolas Cabasilas, braids with so much enthusiasm belong only to those who «unite themselves with Christ, their Bridegroom, and who always uphold themselves like the victors of the Olympic games (Olympionices)..., and who keep their dress clean because of the marriage of the Bridegroom»<sup>141</sup>. They will acquire this kingdom, not only by Sacramental grace, but also by their own personal cooperation, which performs the *gratia autem Dei* — defended by theological and psychological arguments<sup>142</sup>, and especially, by the splendid example of the Apostles: their intimate union with the

138. De Vita in Christo, II, 533BCf; cf. John I, 1.

139. Ibid., 560CD; comp., 568AB; Panygeric on St. Demetrius in Th. Ioannou, ΜΝΗΜΕΙΑ ΑΓΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ, P. 84.

140. De vita in Christo, II, 537A-C; comp., 568AB.

141. De vita in Christo, II, 544-545Af; comp. col. 537 A-C; 568Cf; I, c. 577CDf; IV, c. 605AB, 609AG.

142. Ibid., II, 560CD, 537B-D.

Lord, and their illumination by the *Paraclete*. It is for this exact illumination and union, for this *pneumatization* of the whole human being — a predominant Byzantine belief — that the Sacraments are called *theia, iera, agia mysteria*.

In the same charismatic experience, our author insists on the Baptism of fire considering it as the most perfect and sacred Baptism<sup>143</sup>. Cabasilas is inspired here by the core of the patristic spirituality, reinforced by the Dionysian mysticism which made him an authority of sacred inspiration. Thus, for the Fathers as well as for Areopagite, who follows their ideal line, Baptism is also Light, *Photismos* (illumination). It is the illumination of the souls by the Holy Spirit, the «principal illuminator throughout all the extent of revelation» (St. Irenaeus). Since the manifested nature of God is Light according to the *theognosia* of the entire Christian and pre-Christian antiquity, the Baptismal *photismos* should be understood, above all, as contemplation or *theoria*. For the Hellenes, particularly, it is a vision of the uncreated glory, by which the illuminated soul is elevated and participates by grace in the divine «Beatitude». This metaphysical understanding of the Light, a capital problem of Byzantine spirituality, is accepted by our mystagogue insofar as he is concerned with the mystical reality inherent in Baptismal revelation. Thus, he writes: «The divine ray touches invisibly our soul and abolishes the wall of darkness in order to communicate directly with God, the Light of the world». «Διὰ τοῦτο τὸ βάπτισμα φώτισμα, ὅτι ... παρέχει τῷ φωτὶ καθαρῶς ὁμιλῆσαι πάντα μολυσμὸν, ὃς τὴν θεϊαν ἀκτῖνα τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν ἡμετέρων διεύργει, καθάπερ τι μεσότοιχον ἐξελόν»<sup>144</sup>.

Here also a divine transformation takes place, a *metamorphosis*. The two great currents of the Greek spirituality meet at this supreme point of the *Paterna Lux*, shining in our divine acquaintance with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Here the sacramental theology of which the primary initiation is the Baptismal *Palingenesia*, is reunited with the proper stages of mystical theology and opens the view of *theosis*, θέωσις, to the Christian souls.

Commenting on St. Paul's words: «We all reflect, as in a mirror, the splendour of the Lord; thus we are transfigured into His likeness, from splendour to splendour» (2 Cor. 3,18), Cabasilas recalls the beautiful passage of St. John Chrysostom that is as follows:

143. Panygeric on St. Dem. in Th. Ioannou, *op. cit.*, p. 110; De V. in Christo, II, 552AB.

144. De vita in Christo, II, 525 CD; comp. Vol. I, 504CDf, II, 560CD.

«From the moment that we are Baptized, our soul is purified by the Spirit and becomes more resplendent than the sun itself. We do not only contemplate on the glory of God but we receive also from Him additional splendour... our soul purified by Baptism... receiving the rays of the glory of the Spirit becomes in herself a proper glory that only the Spirit of the Lord can communicate»<sup>145</sup>.

After Cabasilas' affirmation that «the so favorite souls are detached from earth and elevated to heaven» we notice a deep grief of a painful man saying: «Alas!... This ineffable and inviolable glory remains in us only one or two days, then we extinguish it bringing back the storm of secular affairs»<sup>146</sup>.

(To be continued)

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145. St. John Chrysostom, in Ep. 2 Cor., Hom. VII; PG. 10, 448; D Vita in Christo, II, 564 A-C.

146. Ibid., 564-565A.