

ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVES

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As the title of the present article indicates, this is not an exhaustive study on Orthodoxy: it is rather a brief and a preliminary study on the following questions:

1. What is Orthodoxy?
2. Holy Tradition in relation to Holy Scripture.
3. The Holy Eucharist: «The Sacrament of Sacraments».

1. WHAT IS ORTHODOXY?

I am going to give a general view as to what Orthodoxy is all about and to clarify its true meaning. A single definition will neither suffice nor answer the question¹.

The word Orthodoxy has two meanings: the meaning of «right faith», of the «correct belief», and the meaning of «right glory» or «right and correct worship»².

But *Orthodoxia* can not be fully understood, unless it is expressed itself into *orthopraxia*, unless it translates itself into a real «πραξις» (*praxis* = action), into a real «βίωμα» (*vioma* = living). One can only apprehend the Orthodox Faith, when one lives it, when one fully practises it, when one experiences that faith in his daily, personal, family and social life. Then, and only then, will he be able to fully

1. Such a definition was given by Anastasios the Sinaite, the Master and Patriarch of Antioch (559-609). He says: «Ὁρθοδοξία ἐστὶν ἀψευδῆς περὶ Θεοῦ καὶ κτίσεως ὑπόληψις ἢ ἔννοια περὶ πάντων ἀληθῆς ἢ δόξα τῶν ὄντων καθάπερ ἐστίν». «Orthodoxy is the true conception of God and creation, the true conception of everything or the right faith of beings; just as they are» (E. Π. 89, 76 D). See also Πρωτοπ. Κωνσταντίνου Μ. Φούσκα, Ἐπίκουρου Καθηγητοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν, «Ὁρθοδοξία Μαχομένη», *Κοινωνία*, Ἰούλιος - Σεπτέμβριος, 1987, τεῦχος 3, p. 283 and 297 note 1. and also: πρωτοπ. Γ. Μεταλληνού, Καθηγητοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν, *Τί εἶναι Ὁρθοδοξία*, Ἀθήνα, 1980, p. 7.

2. Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 1963, pp. 16 and 271. See also Rev. S. S. Harakas, *Contemporary Moral Issues facing the Orthodox Christian*, Minneapolis 1982, pp. 15-16.

comprehend its deep meaning, its beauty and its profound significance for his life.

Fr. Harakas correctly remarks that «another dimension of our Orthodox Christian faith is *orthopraxia*... The Orthodox Faith is not just the affirmation of the Church. It is also the living of the Faith in our lives. It applies first of all to us as individuals as we seek to cultivate the inner life: prayer, self-discipline, fasting, patience, purity, etc. Its second application is in our interpersonal relations; the chief dimension of Orthodox Christian *orthopraxia* is *agape*-love... Its final application is concern for the well-being of our society: its political, economic and social life, especially as these influence the lives of the poor, weak, unprotected and disadvantaged people of cities and towns and countryside»³.

It must be said here that there is a living historical connection and an unbroken, sacramental, doctrinal and canonical continuity of the Orthodox Church over the centuries with the ancient undivided Church of the Apostles «as it authoritatively expressed itself through the great Ecumenical Councils»⁴.

Finally it should be noted that the Orthodox Church is a happy family of «autonomous» and independent Churches. She consists of the five ancient Patriarchates: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, and is also comprised of the newer «autocephalous» and self-governing Patriarchates and Churches scattered throughout the world⁵.

Looking further into our first category (What is Orthodoxy?), let

3. S. S. Harakas, *op. cit.*, p. 16. See also Rev. Dr. J. Constantelos, *The Greek Orthodox Church*, New York 1967, pp. 22-25. The late Nikos Nissiotis provides also the following description of the term «*Orthodoxia*». He characteristically writes that *Orthodoxia* means the wholeness of the people sharing the right conviction concerning the Event of God in Christ and His Church and the right expression of this faith. The administration of the "mysteries" demands the participation of active and worthy members of the Church and the witness of their faith in all aspects of daily social life. In this sense *Orthodoxia* is the necessary *praeludium*, the necessary presupposition, the springboard to the wider concept of *Orthodoxia* as freedom of action and life. *Orthodoxia* leads to the maximum possible application in *Orthopraxia* of charismatic life in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. «Interpreting Orthodoxy», *The Ecumenical Review*, XIV, 961, p. 25.

4. Fr. Th. Stylianopoulos, *Christ in Our Midst*, Department of Religious Education, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Brookline, Mass., 1968, p. 33. See also Rev. A. M. Coniaris, *Introducing the Orthodox Church*, Minneapolis, 1972, p. 2.

5. K. Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 15. See also A. M. Coniaris, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

us now see what the fundamental principles and main characteristics of the Orthodox Church are. The late Professor Panagiotis I. Bratsiotis, in an excellent and extremely interesting article, enumerates the following characteristics of the Church:

1. Adherence to the Holy Tradition.
2. Harmonious blending of authority and freedom.
3. Deification of Man (Theosis).
4. Mysticism and ascetism (Monachismos).
5. The special rights of the Laity in the whole life of the Church.
6. The Synodical System⁶.

2. HOLY TRADITION IN RELATION TO HOLY SCRIPTURE

St. John of Damascus, the great Father of the Church and the great systematic theologian, wrote the following about the Sacred Tradition: «We do not change the everlasting boundaries which our fathers have set, but we keep the Tradition, just as we received it»⁷.

But what really is the true meaning of the word Tradition? How do the Orthodox understand this word (Paradosis) Tradition, and generally speaking the Church Tradition? What finally is its relationship to the Holy Bible?

a. What is Holy Tradition?

Holy Tradition is our own Lord Jesus Christ's oral teaching and faith, which was imparted to the Apostles and which through the Apostles has been handed down from generation to generation in the Church⁸.

6. «The Fundamental Principles and Main Characteristics of the Orthodox Church», in *The Orthodox Ethos*, ed by A. J. Philippou, Oxford, England, 1964, pp. 23-31.

7. On Icons, 11,12 (*P.G. XCIV, 1297^b*). See also in K. Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 2C4, note 3.

8. K. Ware, *op. cit.* p. 204. See also Χρήστου Ἀνδρούτσου, *Δογματική τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, 1956², Ἀθήναι pp. 7-8. Παναγιώτου Ν. Τρεμπέλα, *Δογματική τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Ἀθήναι 1959, pp. 20-32. Α. Θεοδώρου, *Ἡ οὐσία τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας*, Ἀθήναι 1961, pp. 22-31. Β. Γ. Μπιλάλη, *Τί εἶναι Πιστεύω*, Ἀθήναι 1969, pp. 22-25. Β. Μουστάκη, *Τί εἶναι ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία*, Ἀθήναι 1982, pp. 7- 17. Β. Στογιάννου, *Ἡ Ἐκκλησία στήν Ἱστορία καί στό Παρόν*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1982, pp. 33-38. Α. Ι. Δεληκωστοπούλου, *Ὀρθοδοξία*, Ἀθήναι 1986, p. 251. Χρυσοστόμου Σ. Κωνσταντινίδου, *Μητροπολίτου Μύρων, Ὀρθόδοξοι Κατόψεις*, Κατερίνη 1991, pp. 41-60.

This oral and unwritten transmitted Apostolic Faith was studied, interpreted and recorded by the Fathers of the Church in their writings, and they were systematized and formulated into doctrines by the Ecumenical Councils. Consequently, Holy Tradition implies something more concrete: «It means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers; it means the Canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons - in fact, the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages»⁹.

b. Holy Tradition in relation to the Holy Scriptures.

Non-Orthodox theologians and writers make a distinction between Bible and Holy Tradition. They regard them as two different things, as two distinct sources of the Orthodox Faith. They notice a tension or an opposition between the Bible and Tradition. They set the one over against the other. But in reality there is not any tension or opposition whatsoever between them. There is only one source, since Scriptures exist within Tradition. Both Holy Scripture and Tradition are one and the same thing, they are two sides of the same coin. Both contain the same truth, for they have the same author, the Holy Spirit¹⁰. There is an absolute unity between the Bible and Tradition. The late Professor Nikos Nissiotis, that great scholar and theologian, in a well-written, stimulating, and thought-provoking article on the Unity of Scripture and Tradition expresses this unity better in his own words «... We can therefore insist on the fact that in the Early Church as well as later in the Apostolic Church there was an absolute unity between the Bible and Tradition... Clearly these conclusions help us in our search for recapturing the unity of Bible and Tradition because we are bearers of this absolute unity of the sources of revelation... We can maintain the unity of the sources of revelation as Scripture and Tradition only if we have a broad understanding of each and see that they are interdependent, that when one refers to the Bible one is

9. K. Ware, *op. cit.* Definitions, views, opinions and illustrations about the Apostolic and Church Tradition are to be found in the Great Fathers of the Church. Such definitions one may find in George S. Bebis, *The Concept of Tradition in the Fathers of the Church*. Mass. 1970.

10. For the above views see also: N. Zernov, *Eastern Christendom*, New York, 1961, p. 232. K. Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-5. H. Waddams, *Meeting the Orthodox Churches*, 1964, pp. 33-35.

referring at the same time to the life of the Church recorded in the Bible, and when one speaks of Tradition one is speaking of the interpretation and the actualization of the biblical message in the world throughout history.

Giving priority to one does not merely limit and minimize the other, but fails to appreciate truly the one which is accorded absolute importance»¹¹.

Before I close this chapter, I wish to emphasize that the Orthodox understanding of Tradition is not static but dynamic, not a dead acceptance of the past but a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the present. This view, as a living experience, has been well expressed by the late great Russian theologian of our time, Fr. Georges Florovsky, who states: «Tradition is the witness of the Spirit; the Spirit's unceasing revelation and preaching of good tidings... To accept and understand Tradition we must live the Church; we must be conscious of the grace-giving presence of the Lord in it; we must feel the breath of the Holy Ghost in it... Tradition is not only a protective, conservative principle; it is primarily the principle of growth and regeneration... Tradition is the constant abiding of the Spirit and not only the memory of words. Tradition is a charismatic, not an historical principle»¹².

I am closing this rather rapid exposition on Holy Tradition in relation to the Holy Bible by referring both to St. Paul's words: «Brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle»¹³, and St. John Chrysostom's admonition: «Therefore we must consider the Tradition(s) of the Church trustworthy. It is Tradition, seek no more»¹⁴.

3. HOLY EUCHARIST: «THE SACRAMENT OF SACRAMENTS»

The Mystery or Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the very

11. «An Eastern Orthodox contribution to the prolegomena of Hermeneutics» *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, (Winter 1965-66) Vol. XI, NO 2, pp. 183-208 and esp. 189 and 200.

12. «Sobornost: The Catholicity of the Church», in *The Church of God*, edited by E. L. Mascall, pp. 64-65. See also in K. Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-7. See also N. A. Nissiotis: «Some Thoughts on Orthodoxy», *Preparatory Essays for the Lambeth Conference 1968*, S.P.C.K., 1968, p. 379 and G. S. Bebis *op. cit.*, p. 55.

13. Thessal. 2:15.

14. Homily on 2nd Thessal. Migne *P.G.* 62, 488 cf. also *ibid.* 494. See also G. S. Bebis *op. cit.*, p. 30 note and p. 45, note 102.

center of worship, it is the source and very heart of the spiritual life of the Orthodox Church. It is «the ultimate criterion and seal of all other Sacraments»¹⁵. Pseudo-Dionysius spoke of the Holy Eucharist as the «Sacrament of Sacraments»¹⁶, as the «focal point» of each specific sacrament¹⁷. Nikolaos Cavaasilas, the great mystical theologian, writes that the Eucharist «alone of the Mysteries perfects the other sacraments..., since they cannot fulfil the initiation without it»¹⁸. Christians participate in it continually for «it is the perfect sacrament of all purposes, and there is nothing of which those who partake thereof stand in need which it does not supply in any eminent way»¹⁹.

All the sacraments, all the services and all the prayers, all the spiritual life and all the manifold and diverse activities of the Orthodox Church move and evolve around the Holy Liturgy and derive their strength from it.

Since, then, the Holy Eucharist is the heart and soul, the heart of hearts - the very essence and the life force - (élan vital) of all worship and the spiritual life, I propose to deal with the subject matter and discuss its meaning and deeper significance as follows:

1. A definition of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.
2. The Origin and the development of the Divine Liturgy.
3. Comments on and insights into the Holy Eucharist:
 - a. Holy Trinity and Eucharist.
 - b. The Holy Spirit and Eucharist.
 - d. The real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.
 - e. The Bible in the Holy Eucharist.
 - f. The Theotokos and the Eucharist.
 - g. «Heaven on Earth».

a. Definition of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The late Professor P. Trembelas provides us with the following

15. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, New York, 1976, p. 208.

16. Eccl Hier., 111, 1; PG 3:424c

17. *Ibid.* Col. 444D.

18. De Vita in Christo, IV, 4, 585a. See also Gregory Palamas, Confession of Faith: PG 151;765, trans. by A. Papadakis, «Gregory Palamas at the Council of Blachernai, 1351», *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 10 (1969), 340.

19. *Ibid.*, 11596c. For notes 1,2,3,4 see also in John Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6, notes 21 and 22, p. 208, notes 31,32.

accurate, concise and clear definition: «The Eucharist is that Sacrament in which Christ is truly and essentially present under the forms of bread and wine, offered as a bloodless sacrifice and a re-enactment of that sacrifice which was once and for all eternity offered on the Cross and given as life-giving food and communion for the faithful. Thus the Eucharist has two aspects; it is on the one hand a sacrament and on the other, a sacrifice. These two equally important aspects are expressed by the many and varied names assigned by Scripture and Church's tradition to the Eucharist by which it is characterized either as a Mystery feeding the souls of the faithful and uniting them with Christ and to one another in one bread and one body; or as a sacrifice representing, bloodlessly and mystically, but also in reality, the sacrifice of blood on the Cross offered by the Great High Priest. Since in this Sacrament the very Body and Blood of the Lord is granted to the faithful, its superiority and special importance is evident, making it the central point to which all the other sacraments and the whole Christian life move and about which they revolve»²⁰.

b. The Origin and Development of the Divine Liturgy.

The beginning, the origin of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist goes back to that dramatic, blessed and unique act of our Lord, the Last Supper, which He shared with His disciples in the Upper Room, before His betrayal, His passion and Crucifixion. The very essence of the Holy Sacrament is found, as is well known, in the Synoptic Gospels: St. Mathew (26:26-8), St. Mark (14:22-24), and St. Luke (22:17-20), in the Gospel of St. John (6:32-58), and in St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (11, 23-23). Early records of the institution of the Eucharist are found in the *Didache* (9.1), in St. Ignatius (*Philad.* 4 and elsewhere), and in St. Justin (*Apol.* 1.66).

In the first Christian Church after Pentecost, the Apostles and

20. *Δογματική της Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Ἐκδόσεις «Ὁ Σωτήρ», Ἀθήναι 1961, τόμος 3^{ος}, π. 142. See also S. S. Harakas, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26. Also H. Waddams, *op. cit.*, p. 49. Ἀρχιμ. Γεώργ. Καψάνη, «Ἡ Θεία Εὐχαριστία Κέντρον τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Λατρείας», *Κοινωνία*, ἔτος 18, Μάρτιος - Ἀπρίλιος 1975, τεύχος 2, π. 104, 109, III; Nikos A. Nissiotis, *Worship, Eucharist and intercommunion, An Orthodox Reflection, Worship and the Acts of God*, Nieuwendam Studia Liturgica Press, 1963, pp. 197, 203-204. Fr. Alkiviadis Calivas, *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Mass. 1985 p. XXII.

believers, following Christ's exhortation, celebrated the Holy Eucharist regularly²¹ together with the common meals of the Christians, called agape (ἀγάπη). The two were separated from each other during the first century, owing to their inherent incongruity... «Thus, the Eucharist soon occupied the central and unique point of focus of primitive Christian worship and continues to this day to be the only ceremony in the Christian Church to which all the rest converge and are related and, from which alone, they derive their ceremonial legitimacy»²².

Good accounts of the earliest observance and celebration of the Holy Eucharist are given to us by the *Didache* 9.1 B, 2, 218, St. Ignatius (35-107) and St. Justin (100-165 B3, 197-8)²³. Justin presents us a brief but very interesting and fairly accurate diagram of the liturgy. Here is how he describes it: «Everybody from cities and villages, assembled together for the purpose of living the experience of their faith. The accounts of the Apostles about Christ were read together with the writings of the prophets relating to Christ as the Messiah. Then, the superior consoled the people and called on them to imitate the good deeds narrated just before. Then, all stood and offered prayers. After that, bread, wine, and water, were offered. The superior offered prayer and thanksgiving with all his might. And the people cried Amen. Then everybody was given from the elements that were offered in thanksgiving. Finally those who were able made offerings in money which the superior would distribute to the needy»²⁴.

The Bishop of Dioklia, Kallistos Ware, in his excellent and instructive book on the Orthodox Church, as far as the types and parts of the Holy Liturgy are concerned, says the following:

THE EUCHARIST

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

21. Acts 2:46-47; 20,7ff. See also Ἱερομονάχου Γρηγορίου, *Ἡ θεία Λειτουργία: σχόλια*, Ἀθήνα, 1987, p. 13-15.

22. 1st. Cor. 11 : 17ff. See also Rev. Dr. Nicon D. Patrinos, *The Orthodox Liturgy*, New Jersey, 1974, p. 219.

23. Ἱερομονάχου Γρηγορίου, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-18. See also Rev. Dr. N. D. Patrinos, *op. cit.*, pp. 219- 20. S. S. Harakas, *op. cit.*, 33. Ἀρχιμ. Γεωργίου Ι. Δημοπούλου, *Ἀπὸ τὸν Λειτουργικὸν μας πλοῦτον*, Ἐκδόσεις Ἀδελφότητος Θεολόγων «Ὁ Σωτήρ», Ἀθήναι, 1980 pp. 14-15.

24. I. Apology to Antoninus, 65-67. See also Rev. Dr. N. D. Patrinos, *op. cit.* p. 220.

(1) The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom (the normal Liturgy on Sundays and weekdays).

(2) The Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great (used ten times a year; outwardly it is very little different from the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, but the prayers said privately by the priest are far longer).

(3) The Liturgy of Saint James, the Brother of the Lord, (used once a year, on Saint James's Day, 23 October, in certain places only).

(4) The Liturgy of the Presanctified (used on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, and on the first three days of Holy Week. There is no consecration in this Liturgy, but communion is given from elements consecrated on the previous Sunday.)

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

I. THE OFFICE OF PREPARATION- the Prothesis or Proskomidia:
the preparation of the bread and wine to be used at the Eucharist.

II. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD - the Synaxis.

A. The Opening of the Service - the Enarxis

The Litany of Peace

Psalm 102 (103)

The Little Litany

Psalm 145 (146), followed by the hymn: Only-begotten Son and Word of God

The Little Litany

The Beatitudes (with special hymns or Troparia appointed for the day)

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

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

C. Readings from Scripture

The Prokimenon - verses, usually from the Psalms

The Epistle

Alleluia - sung nine or sometimes three times, with verses from Scripture intercalated

The Gospel

The Sermon (often transferred to the end of the service)

D. Intercession for the Church

The Litany of Fervent Supplication

The Litany of the Departed

The Litany of the Catechumens, and the dismissal of the Catechumens

Two short Litanies of the Faithful

III. THE EUCHARIST

A. The Great Entrance - followed by the Litany of Supplication

B. The Kiss of Peace and the Creed

C. The Eucharistic Prayer

Opening Dialogue

Thanksgiving - culminating in the narrative of the Last Supper, and the words of Christ: "This is my Body... This is my Blood..."

Anamnesis - the act of "calling to mind" and offering. The priest "calls to mind" Christ's death, burial, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming, and he "offers" the Holy Gifts to God

Epiclesis - the Invocation or "calling down" of the Spirit on the Holy Gifts.

A great Commemoration of all the members of the Church: the Mother of God, the saints, the departed, the living

The Litany of Supplication, followed by the Lord's Prayer

D. The Elevation and Fraction ("breaking") of the Consecrated Gifts

E. Communion of the clergy and people

F. Conclusion of the service: Thanksgiving and final Blessing; distribution of the Antidoron»²⁵.

COMMENTS ON AND INSIGHTS INTO THE HOLY EUCHARIST

a. Holy Trinity and Eucharist.

The Biblical, Patristic and the Ecumenical Synods' doctrine of the Triune God is the very basis, the very foundation of the Orthodox Church and consequently of the Holy Eucharist. Further, the doctrine

25. *Op. cit.*, pp. 286-88.

of the blessed Trinity remains a fundamental doctrine and is inextricably related to Christology and Soteriology²⁶. The whole tone, tenor and atmosphere of the Liturgy is Trinitarian. From the very beginning to the end of the Liturgy the Holy Trinity is mentioned throughout.

The Eucharist opens with the Words «Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to ages of ages».

Here the Celebrant Priest along with the congregation are invited to bless the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, to bless in other words, His very own bride, the Church.

We glorify the Triune God, because He is Spirit, Love and Light. We praise the Trinitarian God, because He is eternal, omniscient and an omnipotent God, the Almighty (Pantocrator). We worship the blessed Trinity, because He is the Source and giver of Life, our Creator. «He giveth to all life and breath and things» (Acts 17,25.) We give thanks to Him for He is Holy and righteous, as this is clearly stated in the Holy Scriptures: «For there is none Holy as the Lord, and there is none righteous as our God: there is none Holy besides Thee» (1 Kings 2,2). We bless and praise the all-wise Trinitarian God «in Whom are hid all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge» (Coloss. 2,3).

b. Christ and Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is Christ Himself for the blessed Eucharist is nothing but the reenactment of our Lord Jesus Christ's Incarnation, His preaching and healing ministry.

Further, the Holy Liturgy is the reenactment of Christ's commandment of Salvation, Cross, Grave, Resurrection on the third day, Ascension into heaven, Enthronement at the right hand of Father, and Christ's second, glorious coming. (prayer of the Anaphora, Saint John Chrysostom's Liturgy).

Furthermore the Holy Eucharist is not a mere Sacrament, but a sacrifice as well. But what is really the Sacrifice of the Eucharist? By whom is it offered? And to whom is it offered? The answer(s) to these questions is found in the following words of the Liturgy: «Τὰ Σὰ ἐκ τῶν Σῶν Σοὶ προσφέρομεν κατὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ πάντα: Thine of Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all» and «Σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὁ

26. Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Issues and Dialogues*, Holy Cross, Orthodox Press, Brookline, Mass. 1986, p. 12.

προσφέρων καὶ προσφερόμενος καὶ προσδεχόμενος καὶ διαδιδόμενος Χριστὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν... For you, Christ our God, are the Offerer and the Offered, the Acceptor and the Distributed». Christ, Himself is both the Θύτης and the Θύμα: The Sacrificer and the Victim, the (High) Priest and the Lamb, Christ is the one who offers and in turn is offered, who receives and in turn is shared. The Eucharist then is a bloodless and conciliatory offering to God, to the Blessed Trinity²⁷.

In addition, it should be noted, that Nicholas Cabasilas admirably summarizes the Orthodox view about the true meaning of the Eucharist as a sacrifice as follows: «First, the sacrifice is not a mere figure or symbol but a true sacrifice; secondly, it is not bread that is sacrificed, but the very Body of Christ; thirdly, the Lamb of God was sacrificed once only, for all time... The sacrifice at the Eucharist consists, not in the real and bloody immolation of the Lamb, but in the transformation of the bread into the sacrificed Lamb»²⁸.

c. The Holy Spirit and Eucharist.

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Paraclete, the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, is mentioned and used throughout the Holy Liturgy. However, the Holy Spirit is especially present at the moment of the consecration, when the celebrant Bishop or priest asks God the Father to send down His Holy Spirit upon the bread and the wine to change and consecrate them into the precious Body and the precious Blood of Christ.

Thus the consecration act, this supreme act of Love, is the most

27. See also «Αὐτὸς ἱερεῖον, αὐτὸς θύμα, αὐτὸς ἱερεὺς, αὐτὸς θυσιαστήριον, αὐτὸς Θεός, αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος, αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς, αὐτὸς ἀρχιερεὺς, αὐτὸς πρόβατον, αὐτὸς ἀρνίον, τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν γενόμενος, ἵνα ἡμῖν ζωὴ κατὰ πάντα γένηται». Ἐπιφάνιος, Μ. 41, 980c. and K. Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-294. See also Very Rev. Dr. N. D. Patrinos, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-99. Rev. S. S. Harakas, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-108. J. Karmiris, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-7. Δ. Γ. Παναγιωτοπούλου, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν Θεῖαν Λειτουργίαν*, Ἀδελφότης Θεολόγων «ὁ Σωτήρ», Ἀθήναι, 1979, pp. 140-144 and 193-96. Ἀρχιμ. Γ. Ι. Δημοπούλου, *Ἀπὸ τὸν Λειτουργικὸν μας Πλοῦτον*, Ἀδελφότης Θεολόγων «ὁ Σωτήρ», Ἀθήναι, 1980 pp. 105-6 and 137-142. Ἱερομονάχου Γρηγορίου, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-222. Ἐπισκόπου, Διονυσίου Λ. Ψαριανοῦ, *Ἡ Θεῖα Λειτουργία*, Ἐκδόσεις Ἀποστολικῆς Διακονίας, Ἀθήναι, 1986, pp. 262-63. Ἰ. Β. Κογκούλη, Χ. Οἰκονόμου Π. Σκαλτσῆ, *Ἡ Θεῖα Λειτουργία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου*, Ἐκδόσεις Ο.Χ.Α. Λυδίας, Θεσσαλονίκη 1989, pp. 158 and 171-72.

28. *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, p. 32. See also K. Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 293, note 3.

dramatic, the most awesome, the most sacred and the most holy of all.

The descent of the Holy Spirit at that heavenly and divine moment, in which the Triune God is participating, is a continuous Eucharistic Pentecost. Each Divine liturgy is a continuation of the mystery of Pentecost. It is the renewal and the confirmation of the coming of the Holy Spirit, who is ever present in the Church²⁹.

Chrysostom emphatically stresses this fact³⁰, and Cabasilas remarks that the moment of the consecration signifies the moment of Pentecost³¹.

d. The real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

With reference to the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, the Orthodox Church accepts, firmly believes and teaches that after the consecration the bread and wine are not mere symbols and figures, but truly and in reality the very Body and very Blood of our Lord. Jesus Christ the Redeemer and Saviour is hypostatically and essentially present in the Sacrament³².

The general position of the Orthodox Catholic Church in the whole matter is first that of the 7th Ecumenical Council: «Neither the Lord nor His Apostles anywhere stated that the Bloodless Sacrifice offered by the priest is an icon or picture ...after consecration the very Body and Blood of Christ are truly present.»³³, and secondly that of Saint John Damascene «that the bread itself and the wine are changed into God's Body and Blood. But if you inquire as to how this takes place, it is enough for you to know it is effected by the Holy Spirit... the manner of the change can in no way be researched. Also

29. Rev. Prof. Fr. Alkiviadis Calivas, «An introduction to the Divine Liturgy», *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1985, pp.X. XIV-XXV.

30. *ΕΠΕ* 36.298. See also Ἱερομονάχου Γρηγορίου, *op. cit.*, pp. 289 and 394, note 411.

31. M. 150, 452B, see also Ἱερομονάχου Γρηγορίου, *op. cit.*, pp. 289 and 394, note 411.

32. J. Karmiris, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

33. J. Haruin, *Acta Concillorum* IV, 309, 372. Also Theodore of Mopsuestia on Matthew 26:26, «He did not say, "This is the symbol of my body and blood;" but "This is my body, and this is my blood", teaching us not to see the nature of the object, for, in becoming Eucharist, the objects are changed into the body and blood of Christ» (Minge *P.G.* 66.713). See also S. Karmiris, *op. cit.*, pp. 105 and 111, note 31.

... changed by the invocation and presence of the Holy Spirit into the Body and Blood of Christ, and are not two, but one and same ... Participation is spoken of for through it we partake of the Divinity of Jesus. Communion, too, is spoken of, and it is an actual communion, because through it we have communion with Christ and share in His flesh and Divinity; yea, we have communion and are united with one another through it. For since we partake of the one bread we all become one body of Christ and one blood, and members one of another, being of one body with Christ»³⁴.

Here I do not discuss either the views of the Roman Catholics, or of the Protestants on this matter. Suffice it to say in summary form that «the Orthodox Church accepts the permanent presence of the Whole Lord in every part of the elements and in every place in which the Eucharist is offered»³⁵.

e. The Bible in the Holy Liturgy.

It has been said in some quarters, and it has also been written that the Orthodox Church is not biblical or scriptural enough, that is, she does not make use of the Holy Bible in her various services, as she should do. This is an unfounded and groundless criticism, because quite the contrary is true. The Holy Bible has been used quite extensively in all the Orthodox Church's services and offices every day.

As a matter of fact, It has been estimated that the Holy Liturgy contains 98 quotations from the Old Testament and 114 from the New Testament³⁶.

f. The Theotokos and the Eucharist.

Next to the Blessed Trinity, the Mother of God (Θεοτόκος - Third Ecumenical Council), the Ever Virgin Mary (Ἄειπαρθένος - Fifth Ecumenical Council), has a most prominent, privileged and unique position. We venerate her as the «most exalted among God's creatures», we venerate her as the «more honourable than the cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the seraphim». (Hymn,

34. Exposition of the Faith, IV, 13, Mingé, *P.G.* 94, 114ff. See also J. Karmiris, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106 and 111, note 32 and also K. Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 290 and especially 292, note 2.

35. J. Karmiris, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

36. P. Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, Paris, 1959, p. 241, note 96. See also K. Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 209, note 2.

Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom). We reverence the Theotokos, because «the name Mother of God», as Saint John of Damascus remarks, «contains the whole history of the Divine economy in this world»³⁷.

«We honour Mary, then, because she is the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not venerate her in isolation, but because of her relation to Christ».

Orthodox people throughout the world esteem and reverence the Panagia (All - holy), as the most pure, most holy, most immaculate, most glorious and most saintly person, who has no impurity, and was chosen by God to be His Mother.

Two special hymns express the Orthodox devotion to the Theotokos as follows:

1. «Hail Mary, Mother of God,
Precious treasure of the whole world,
Light unquenchable,
Crown of virginity,
Sceptre of orthodoxy,
Temple which shall never be destroyed,
Place which contained Him whom nothing can contain,
Mother and Virgin»³⁸.
2. «Thou are the joy of all who sorrow,
The champion of all who suffer wrong,
Food to the hungry,
Comfort to strangers,
A staff for the blind,
Visitor of the sick,
Protection and aid to all in trouble,
And helper of orphans:
Immaculate Mother of the Most High God,
We pray thee, make hast to deliver thy servants»³⁹.

37. De Fide Orthodoxa, III.12 (P.G. XCIV 1029^d-1032^e). See also K. Ware «The Communion of Saints» in A. J. Philippou, *The Orthodox Ethos*, Oxford 1964, p. 145, note 12.

38. St. Cyril of Alexandria, P.G. IXXVII. 992, b.

39. Shorter «Paraklitiki» Canon to the Mother of God. See also in K. Ware, «The Communion of Saints» in *The Orthodox Ethos*, Studies in Orthodoxy, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145 for notes 38 and 39. See also his book K. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-265; to both these (article) and (book), I am heavily indebted.

g. «Heaven on Earth».

The Holy Liturgy is something that embraces two worlds: the visible and invisible Church, the Triumphant and Militant Church. The Holy Eucharist encompasses the Clergy (Bishops, Priests, Deacons), and the laity, the faithful, the human aspect of the Church on the one hand, on the other hand the Mother of God, John the Baptist, the Apostles, the Prophets, the Patriarchs, the Angels, Martyrs, the Saints of the Church, the Divine aspect of the Church and finally the Founder and the Head of the Church, Christ Himself, all gathered together to participate in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, all as one body, the Mystical Body of Christ, His Holy Church.

Further, we must mention that the Holy Church, as a compassionate and loving Mother, shows an affectionate feeling, a feeling of loving care, a deep and great concern about her children and earnestly and warmly prays in every Liturgy for the peace of the whole world, for the Holy Churches and for the unity of every city and land, for civic and national leaders, for the army, for sick people, for the elderly and young people, for the family, for the needy, for the poor, for all, and everyone.

Furthermore, «in the Divine Liturgy, the divine and the human, time and eternity, the now and the remote, spiritual longing and earthly desires, cries of distress and exclamations of joy, and several other contrasts and antinomies are united into an organism of harmony and real life»⁴⁰.

It will have taken me longer, if I had expanded on the significance and profound impact of the Holy Eucharist on our personal, psychological, emotional, professional, family and social life. However, I simply enumerate here the fruits and benefits of the Holy Eucharist:

1. Unity of the believers with Christ, and with one to another.
2. Forgiveness of sins.
3. Resurrection, immortality and eternal life.
4. Theosis, «deification» (or divinization).
5. Love, understanding, joy, hope, courage, creativity.
6. The inner peace and the feeling of belonging and security.
7. The Community Spirit and the corporate character of the

Orthodox Liturgy.

40. Rev. Prof. Demetrios J. Constantelos, *The Greek Orthodox Church : Faith, History, Practice*, New York, 1967, p. 82.

I conclude my comments on and insights into the Holy Eucharist with the words of the eminent scholar, Professor Ernst Benz, who with enthusiasm, admiration and love speaks of the value, of the significance and of the good influence and effectiveness of the Holy Eucharist in the life of contemporary Man: «In the eastern Liturgy the earthly congregation experiences the presence of angels, patriarchs, prophets, martyrs and saints, and all the redeemed; in the sacrament of the Eucharist it experiences the presence of the Lord. Within the Mystical Body there takes place a unique communication and correlation; within that communion the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to forgive sins, to transmit salvation, to suffer by proxy for one another and the power of intercession becomes effective; and these powers extend down to the domain of the dead, for God is "a Lord of the living, not the dead"»⁴¹.

41. *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, Chicago, 1963, p. 207. See also N. Zernov, «The Worship of the Orthodox Church and its Message» in *The Orthodox Ethos*, *op. cit.*, p. 120, note 1.