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SERVICE OF GOD AND SERVICE OF MAN

BY

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In the following we will describe from a phenomenological point of view the distinctive characteristics and chief elements of Orthodox spirituality. In particular we will pick out those points which show the diaconal and social character of this spirituality.

The Greek Orthodox liturgy, which is the pinnacle and the heartbeat of all that the Orthodox Church does, is the means by which the Holy Spirit works mysteriously by grace, to bring about the sanctification of men. The spiritual and sensible duality of this service corresponds not only to human nature but to the mystery of the divine and human natures of Christ.

The Greek Orthodox liturgy is nourished by the realistic Orthodox anthropology which is completely free from any utopian over-optimism and draws our gaze to the reality of human nature, wounded by the power of sin and death and in need of healing. Orthodox piety retains the mystical colour and the eschatological ideas of the early

Church. This can be clearly seen in the way in which so-called «*liturgical*» or «*compressed*» time is experienced in the Orthodox liturgy. According to this concept time in the form of past, present and future ceases to exist in the liturgy and is changed into a mystical experience, in which eternity is experienced in the present and past, future and even the «*eschata*» fruits of salvation are experienced mystically, as if happening before us; i.e. the pre-history and main events of Christ's work of salvation and all that springs from them, reaching into the last days. The festivals of the Church's year and the main parts of the liturgy allow the believer to experience the life of the Redeemer — this happens because in the liturgy we are contemporary with Christ and share in his life as it is shown to us in the festivals.

In this way the Orthodox combine «*symbolism*» with «*realism*» and «*realism*» with «*symbolism*» in their liturgy. But because for the Orthodox, as they experience individual festivals in the church year, past and future are at the same time present, the word «*today*» (σήμερον) echoes constantly in the liturgy, or in the Greek liturgical texts the present tense is used, so that those who take part share in the mystery of the liturgy in the «*Christophanies*» and «*Theophanies*»¹. It is not the remembrance of something that once happened but the carrying out the event of salvation itself. The faithful take part in the events and experience them with as much reality as did the first witnesses². Gregory the Theologian says epigrammatically «*I must be buried with Christ, rise with Christ, inherit with Christ, become a son of God, become God*»³.

The Orthodox liturgy appears as a first-fruit and first instalment of glory. It is intentionally directed towards the eschatological fulfilment in the parousia. In the reality of this a new world-perspective, a new sphere of God's activity and a new divine time are manifested. This liturgy is the bearer of the new aeon, of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is from the point of view of this world something that is coming but in God it is something eternal and living. Through

1. Theodorou, Evangelos, *Ἡ μορφωτικὴ ἀξία τοῦ Τριωδίου* (The Educational Value of the Triodion), Athens, 1959.

2. Friz, Karl, *Die Stimme der Ostkirche* (The Voice of the Eastern Church), Stuttgart, 1950, p. 71.

3. Karmiris, Johannes, «Abriss der dogmatischen Lehre der Orthodoxen Kirche» (Summary of the Dogmatic Teaching of the Orthodox Church) in Panagiotis Bratsiotis, *Die orthodoxe Kirche in griechischer Sicht* (The Orthodox Church from a Greek Point of View), Teil I, Stuttgart, 1957, p. 15-120.

Orthodoxy we enter into the eschatological reality of the transfigured and renewed world, the proclamation and presence of the aeon to come within the old aeon. The eucharist, which in a peculiar way is the realisation of the new aeon within space and time, signifies the living presence of Christ, who is «*the same yesterday and today and for ever*» (Heb. xiii. 8). The goal towards which the Orthodox liturgy leads man is participation in the mystical life of Christ⁴.

The Christocentric and mystical life of those who take part consciously in the liturgy is not static but has a dynamic character. As a result, Orthodoxy is not a passive and negative attitude, not indifference towards the things of this world, towards science, social activity, culture; not a sickly mysticism which keeps its distance from cultural values and good things. In the liturgy we experience God not only as *ens perfectissimum*, as the highest ontological reality, but as *summum bonum*; as the highest value, as goodness and beauty itself, as living love, as flowing shining goodness and grace, giving and making happy, the source of all values and all good. This explains why the Orthodox liturgy affirms all the products of culture. For example it blesses speculative values, higher knowledge and wisdom, it also recognises and sanctifies aesthetic values. The Greek hymn writers not only link what is beautiful with the other higher spiritual values, but they praise it constantly and unceasingly. This led Professor Ernst Benz of Marburg to write: «*Part of the greatness of Orthodoxy is that it alone has preserved the idea of the beauty of God, and never ceases to praise it in its hymns and prayers*»⁵. On the other hand the Orthodox liturgical texts show the moral ideal, which demands a response corresponding to the objective hierarchical order of values.

The Orthodox liturgy refers to all circumstances of human life, but also to the whole of creation. There are many different prayers and services for biological and material values, for different illnesses, for those who travel by land and sea, for blessings, for sowing, for the laying of foundations, for the building of ships, at times of natural disaster, famine and drought, earthquakes, epidemics, etc⁶.

The attitude of neo-platonic dualistic Greek philosophy towards

4. Cf. Theodorou, *op. cit.*

5. Benz, Ernst, *Geist und Leben der Ostkirche* (Spirit and Life of the Eastern Church), 2. Aufl., München, 1971, p. 183.

6. Trempelas, Panagiotis, «Der orthodoxe Gottesdienst» (The Orthodox Liturgy) in Bratsiotis, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

the material world is quite foreign to the Greek Church. For the Church looks for a «new earth» and a «*new heaven*», and she expects the salvation flowing from the redemptive work of Christ to affect not only men but the whole cosmos.

Not only does the Orthodox Church reveal the great variety of values and the cultural ideals and products which correspond to them, offering in this way a fuller cultural and educational ideal, but she also helps the faithful by means of spiritual catharsis and cleansing to remove from the world all the obstacles which stem from man's fallen nature. On the one hand there is spiritual short-sightedness or blindness which prevents people from seeing the divine order of values, on the other hand there is the sickness and weakness of the human will.

All of this shows that the Greek Orthodox service of God is in the deepest sense a real service of man.

We can give a concrete example of this. Recent tendencies in the West in the care of the sick by both Protestant and Roman Catholic diaconal agencies⁷ remind one of the meaning of the Orthodox sacrament of anointing the sick, which is to be understood as a continuation of the healing work of Christ and on the basis of the unity of body and soul, has a reference to corporal reality. In this sacrament the body is anointed with oil and the grace of God, who heals both body and soul, is invoked upon the sick person. The sacramental strengthening of the soul influences the state of the body, and, if it is God's will, the sickness of the body is alleviated and even healed.

One could say that the liturgical texts of the Byzantine rite of anointing are a hermeneutical commentary on the text from the letter of James (*James* v, 14-15). The deep impression which this sacrament makes on those who undergo it is expressed by Nicholas Arseniev thus: «*The whole celebration has about it an air of the events of the New Testament, like an atmosphere of the presence of Christ as he went about the roads of Judea, through the towns and villages, healing and dispensing succour and comfort and forgiveness of sins*»⁸.

7. Ulrich, Heinrich - Hermann (Hrsg.): *Diakonie in den Spannungsfeldern der Gegenwart-Herausforderung und Antwort* (Diaconia in Current Areas of Concern - Challenge and Response), Stuttgart, 1978, p. 211- 219.

8. Arseniev, Nikolaus v., «Die Kirchen des Morgenlandes (The Churches of the East)» in Konrad Algermissen, *Konfessionskunde* (Denominations), 8 Aufl., Paderborn, 1966, p. 270.

Into the present-day conflict between one-sided cult of the body and pessimism about the body we introduce the physical life of Orthodox anthropology, which does not represent a spiritualist monism or Manichaeism. The neo-platonic dualism which makes the body the prison of the soul is finally overcome in the Orthodox rite of anointing. It is overcome by recognising both components of the body-soul unity which is man, the alternate influence of the body on the soul and of the soul on the body, the fact that they belong together. The Orthodox rite of anointing emphasises the fact that sickness and health affect the whole human being⁹.

Something similar could be said about the sacrament of matrimony, through which the biological sphere is also sanctified. One could speak also of the whole Orthodox theology of the incarnation and the resurrection, the pledge of the incorruptibility of our flesh, the transfiguration of «*our lowly body to be like his glorious body*» (*Phil. iii.21*).

This dimension of wholeness is visible in the whole Orthodox liturgy. Within the divine and human structure the course of time is the way into eternity, and eternity lives in time. Heteronomy and autonomy, the vertical and the horizontal, heaven and earth, what is present and what is to come at the end, *ens finitum* and *ens personale* and *infinitem*, immanence and transcendence, *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinosum*, repulsion and attraction, humility and arrogance, symbol and reality, fasting and joy, mourning and resurrection joy, the spirit of Mary and the spirit of Martha, orthodoxy and orthopraxis - all these differences or dialectical antitheses (*coincidentiae oppositorum*), which sometimes lead to polarisation, are bridged over and drawn into an organic unity. The Orthodox liturgy is «*heaven on earth*».

From what has been said so far it is clear why the diaconal dimension belongs to the very nature of the Orthodox Church. It is a matter of course that diaconal service has a place in the whole field of activity of the Church, in which a motivation is all the more effective if it considers wholeness, if it is directed towards the whole of human

9. Cf. *Sacramentum mundi*, Theologisches Lexikon für die Praxis (Practical Theological Lexicon), Bd. III, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1969, S. 75-79 (Krankensalbung [Anointing]); S. 80-83 (Krankheit [Sickness]) und S. 213-219 (Leib, Leib-Seele-Verhältnis [Body, Body-Soul Relationship]).

life and if it offers a synthesis which is not chance but deliberately created.

The Orthodox liturgy, in which diaconal service is rooted, grounded and integrated, can give us important indications of the motives, the goals, the structures and the forms of the diaconal activity of the Church.

According to Orthodox spirituality the entelechy of diaconia is neither the humanist nor the sociological but the Christocentric dimension. Diaconia is a sign of the completion of salvation history. It appears as something decisively new, as a sign of Christ's work of salvation which leads to the blind seeing, the lame walking, lepers being cleansed and the deaf hearing, the dead rising and the poor having the gospel preached to them. The diaconia of Jesus is the model for our service to our neighbour, for our being there and being ready to help¹⁰.

In many Orthodox liturgical readings and hymns the interconnection of liturgy, community of love and works of love is emphasised. The Orthodox liturgy often emphasizes that man's eternal destiny depends on his attitude and deeds of love, that at the last judgement we will be asked whether we fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, visited the sick and those in prison (*Matt. xxv. 31-40*).

Thus the Christology of the liturgy is the basis of the diaconal structure of the Church. The diaconia of Christ must be reflected in the life of the Church. It is not a matter of an individualistic understanding of diaconia, or of passing "first aid" or of secular social work subject to passing fashions or mere pragmatism. The Orthodox liturgy has the correct understanding of man and is far from the mentality of a sect, and it concerns itself not merely with symptoms of need but endeavours to maintain the balance between this world and the next: it helps the whole man, forgives sin, sees life *sub specie aeternitatis* and goes to the root of physical and spiritual suffering. «*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*». (2 Cor. v. 17)

Of course this is no obstacle to the partnership between the social work of the state and the diaconal service of the Church. The

10. Philippi, Paul: *Christozentrische Diakonie (Christocentric Diaconia)*, Stuttgart, 1963. Hans-Christoph v. Hase / Ansgar Heuer / Paul Philippi: *Solidarität + Spiritualität = Diakonie (Solidarity + Spirituality = Diaconia)*, Stuttgart, 1971.

Orthodox liturgy leads us out of isolation into community and evolves our sense of belonging with our brothers.

The liturgy of St. Basil contains the classical formula: «*Unite us all, who share in the one cup and one bread, into the communion of the one Holy Spirit who inspires one and all*». The Sacrament of the Eucharist is the great meeting of all in one Spirit and one Body. In the Liturgy we pray for the whole mystical body of the Church: for the endurance and prosperity of the holy Churches of God in all the world, for the uniting of all, for the sick, prisoners of war, travellers, for all who are in mountains and in mines, in hard labour or in any other need.

The mystical character of the Orthodox liturgy reaches its highest point in the element of sacrifice contained in it. Through union with Christ – and through him with one another – the sacrifice of Golgotha becomes also a sacrifice of the whole body of the Church. The bread which is offered (Prosphora), which is already on the altar and in the chalice, symbolises the offering of each individual's own life and own existence. This means that in the eucharistic liturgy not only the sacrifice of Christ is presented, but the sacrifice of all participants¹¹, the pre-condition of the diaconal service.

The element of the sacrifice of the faithful is connected also with fasting. In Lent the Orthodox liturgical texts quote the words of Isaiah: «*Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?*» (Is. lviii. 6-11)

The contribution of the Greek Orthodox liturgy to the awakening of the diaconal spirit is also apparent in the remembrance in the liturgy of many saints who are models of diaconal service. They are people who show in their being and their behaviour both an ideal and a real sense of motivation. Their lives show that the true diaconal spirit sanctifies and strengthens the general desire to help.

Within Orthodox liturgical spirituality we also find monasticism linked with diaconia. Many monks have carried out the Church's diaconal ministry. As the disciples of Jesus came down from the mountain of transfiguration into the valley, in order to return to daily life

11. Trempelas, *op. cit.*, p. 167-168.

(*Mk. ix. 9*), so all true monks return from the *vita contemplativa* to the *vita activa*. Monks both deny and affirm life in society, they are asocial and social. Even hermits who go into solitude in order to find fulfilment there take all the sufferings of men with them and go down into the depths of their brothers' needs. They do not live their own life alone, they live the life of their brothers and offer it on the altar of their heart¹².

The relation of service of God and service of man in the Orthodox Church is also the basis of organised charitable work in the Church. To give just a few examples: according to the *Acts of the Apostles* works of mercy were closely connected with the breaking of bread, the Eucharist (*Acts ii, 42, 45f; cf. iv. 32f.*).

In his description of the eucharistic liturgy Justin says that «the wealthy, who wish to, give what they want. What is collected is left with the president, who... helps all in need with it»¹³.

In the «*Apostolic Constitutions*» there are prayers for the sick and those in need, to be used in public worship. The Church's diaconia is the responsibility of the bishops and of the deacons and deaconesses who are under them and responsible to them. The latter are to visit individuals and find out their need, report to the bishop and carry out his directions for their relief¹⁴. There are also characteristic instructions for the consecration of deaconesses¹⁵.

Among the Greek Fathers Basil the Great is particularly worthy of attention. In the terrible drought and famine in Caesarea Gregory of Nazianzus tells us how Basil as a priest with his sharp words «opened the barns of the rich and gave to the poor, like a second Joseph». He obtained rich gifts from the granaries and cellars of the wealthy. He used them for communal feeding. For many months he continued this charitable work and thus rescued those entrusted to

12. Hessen, Johannes, *Der Sinn des Lebens* (The Meaning of Life), 3. Aufl. Rottenburg a.N., 1947, p. 27-28. Heiler, Friedrich, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion* (Phenomena and Nature of Religion), Stuttgart, 1961, p. 563. Evangelos Theodorou, «Die Diakonie der Kirche nach dem hl. Athanasios (The Diaconia of the Church according to St. Athanasius)», *Kyrios*, 1974, Heft 1/2, p. 85ff.

13. Justin, *Apology* 1,67.

14. Liese, Wilhelm, *Geschichte der Caritas* (History of Caritas), Bd. 1, Freiburg i. Br., 1922, p. 166.

15. Theodorou, Evangelos, «Das Amt der Diakoninnen in der kirchlichen Tradition (The Office of Deaconess in the Tradition of the Church)», *Una Sancta*, 1978, p. 166.

him from misery. Basil gained an immortal name for himself as a bishop by setting up many diaconal institutions. One famous place is «*Basílias*», which reminds us of the «*Bethel*» institutions (near Bielefeld, Germany) founded by F. v. Bodelschwingh. «*Basílias*» had many different institutions, with the Church and its liturgical life as their centre¹⁶.

John Chrysostom was also a great organiser of diaconal works of mercy¹⁷. As Bishop and Patriarch of Constantinople he had many deaconesses working with him. We know, for example, the names of Olympias, Silvina, Procla, Amprucla, Saviniani, Elissanthia, Martyria and Palladia¹⁸.

The Byzantine Church organised many areas of works of mercy: among many others the care of the poor, the sick, lepers, widows and orphans, the elderly, the blind, hospitality, the care of congregations and youth work¹⁹.

Theodor Fliedner is regarded as the «*Restorer of the apostolic office of deaconess*» in the West. But in the Greek East this office was created and developed in connection with the liturgy and it reached its greatest development in this context. In the Byzantine period the Greek Church pioneered the development of the rite of ordination of deaconesses. The ordination rituals (χειροτονιὰ) are characteristic, as for example those in the famous Codex Barberinus (8th. - 9th. century), Codex Bessarianus (9th. - 10th. century), Codex 956 from the library of the Sinai Monastery (10th. century), Codex Coislinus 213 from Paris (11th. century), Codex 662 of the National Library in Athens (12th. - 13th. century), the «*Eilitarion*» 163 of the Xenophon Monastery on Athos, etc.

These rituals describe the ordination of deaconesses, which are carried out in a similar way to the ordination of deacons. My dissertation (Ἡ χειροτονία ἢ χειροθεσία τῶν διακονισσῶν) shows that the ordination of deaconesses is not like the blessing of the lower orders (singers, readers and subdeacons). The rite for the lower orders takes

16. Liese, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-113. Theodorou, Evangelos, *Ἱστορία τοῦ χριστιανικοῦ πολιτισμοῦ* (History of Christian Culture), Athens, 1950, pp. 224-228.

17. Liese, *op. cit.*, p. 113. Theodorou, *ibid.*, pp. 228-231.

18. Theodorou, Evangelos, *Ἡρώιδες τῆς χριστιανικῆς ἀγάπης - Αἱ διακόνισσαι διὰ τῶν αἰώνων* (Heroines of Christian love - Deaconesses through the Centuries), Athens, 1949, pp. 62-77.

19. Theodorou, *Ἱστορία τοῦ χριστιανικοῦ πολιτισμοῦ* (History of Christian Culture), pp. 218-223.

place outside the sanctuary and separate from the eucharistic liturgy. These lower «cheirothesias» are characterised by just one prayer. The «cheirotonia» (ordination) of deaconesses is exactly similar to the cheirotonias of the higher clergy (deacons, presbyters and bishops). Therefore the ordination takes place in the sanctuary and in front of the altar during the eucharistic liturgy and even after the anaphora, i.e. at a particularly holy moment²⁰.

During the ordination the Bishop says the following two prayers:

a) *«O God, Holy and Almighty, you have hallowed woman by the birth of your only Son from the Virgin Mary according to the flesh; you have given the grace and gift of the Holy Spirit not only to men but also to women; now, O Lord, look down upon your servant and call her to the work of your ministry (diaconia); send down on her the rich gift of your Holy Spirit; keep her in the true faith that she may fulfil her ministry for ever in a blameless manner of life and according to what pleases you...».*

b) *«Lord God Almighty, you have not rejected women who offer themselves to serve in your house in a fitting manner, but you have received them in the ranks of ministers (λειτουργοί), give the grace of your Holy Spirit to this your servant also, who wishes to offer herself to you and to fulfil the χάρις of diaconia. Bless her, as you gave χάρις to your deaconess Phoebe — Phoebe whom you called to the work of your ministry. Grant to her, O God, that she may abide without blame in your holy house, that she may concern herself about her own manner of life, above all with recollection, and show her, O God, to be your perfect servant so that she too when she appears before the judgement seat of Christ may receive her reward for her good life; through the blessing and mercy of your only Son, with whom you are praised...».*

The «Euchologion» of the Codex Barberinus says that after the Amen of the second prayer the Bishop puts the diaconal stole around her neck and draws both ends of this stole to the front. After she has received the sacred Body and Blood the Bishop gives her the chalice which she receives and then puts on the altar²¹.

Thus what Nicolae Chitescu and George Khodre assert is not

20. Theodorou, Evangelos, *Ἡ χειροτονία ἢ χειροθεσία τῶν διακονισσῶν* (The Ordination or the Blessing of the Deaconesses), Athens, 1954, pp. 50-78.

21. Goar, Jacobi, *Εὐχολόγιον sive rituale Graecorum, complectens ritus et ordines*, 2nd edition, Venice, 1730, p. 218.

true. The former wrote that deaconesses in the early Church «were not ordained into the diaconate. They only received a blessing»²². The latter maintained that «the imposition of hands (during the ordination of a deaconess) is to be understood as a simple blessing»²³. Such opinions are not correct and by no means express or represent the Orthodox understanding.

There is no doubt that in the Byzantine church deaconesses were reckoned among the clergy. According to the «*Didascalia*» the deaconess has a position of honour among the clergy, for the bishop is likened to God the Father, the deacon to Christ, the deaconess to the Holy Spirit and the presbyters to the apostles. The Codex Justinianus orders the deaconesses among the clergy and mentions them in the laws with the title «*De episcopis et clericis*». The 6th Novella of Justinian, which speaks of the «*ἱερωσύνη*» (sacerdotium) of the deaconesses²⁴, bears the title: «*How bishops, priests and deacons, male and female, are to be ordained*»²⁵.

The 3rd Novella of Justinian specifies that in the church of Sancta Sophia in Constantinople 60 priests, 100 deacons and 40 deaconesses are to serve. (Literally «*deacons: 100 male, 40 female*» — διακόνους δὲ ἄρρενας ἑκατὸν καὶ τεσσαράκοντα δὲ θηλείας)²⁶.

Apart from charitable work and catechetical and pastoral work, the liturgical duties of deaconesses were very important. This represents another link between diaconia and the liturgy. The most important liturgical function of a deaconess was her participation in the baptism of women. Because baptism was by total immersion of the naked body, the presence of deaconesses was necessary at the baptism of women, in order that the sacrament might be performed with fitting decency and scandal of any sort avoided. The deaconess assisted primarily with the undressing and dressing of the women and carried out the anointing of the woman to be baptised with oil of catechumens and chrism; the priest or bishop only anointed her head. A further function of the anointing of deaconesses was taking and

22. Chitescu, Nicholas, «The Problem of the Ordination of Women» in *The Ordination of Women*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1964 (German ed.: *Zur Frage der Ordination der Frau*), p. 67.

23. Khodre, George, «The Ordination of Women», *ibid.* (German ed.), p. 74.

24. Theodorou, *ibid.*, p. 69.

25. «Περὶ τοῦ πῶς δεῖ χειροτονεῖσθαι τοὺς ἐπισκόπους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους καὶ διακόνους ἄρρενας καὶ θηλείας».

26. Theodorou, *ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

distributing Communion to sick women who could not come to church²⁷.

In this context one could remark that the development of the office of deaconess in the Greek Orthodox Church can help us to find the right attitude to the problem of the ordination of women to the priesthood.

The development of the office of deaconess shows that this office was necessary for the perfect building up of the Church, i.e. of the Body of Christ. Thus the Byzantine Church, just as the early Church, took as its first criterion an ecclesiological understanding, which always connected with a consideration of the current situation and with pastoral concern. Consequently the question of ordination of women is in the first instance a question of ecclesiology and only in the second and third instance a question of biology, psychology, sociology and the women's movement. In any case we must remember that the ordination of deaconesses, although it has almost completely disappeared in practice, remains in force. In this century St. Nektarios on the Island of Aigina ordained nuns as deaconesses. The revival of the ordination of deaconesses could create a new experience and new ecclesiological and pastoral aspects, which would give the whole Orthodox Church an all-round foundation and a contemporary formulation for its position on the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood.

As far as diaconia in the modern Greek Church is concerned, the link between service of God and service of man is in her a living reality. During the 400 years of Turkish rule, which explains some wrinkles in the Church of Greece, she took on the responsibility for the subject Greeks as a whole, like a loving mother and «*as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings*», and she contributed to Greece's maintenance of its Christian identity and its national consciousness and to its escape from assimilation. This happened above all through the liturgy, which passed on from generation to generation the cultural values of our Church. The main reading books in the schools functioning under the care of the Church were the liturgical books. The Church saw to it that schools were built, libraries founded, meals arranged for the pupils, among many other things.

During this period the Church even cultivated science. It is for

27. Theodorou, *ibid.*, pp. 78-82.

example typical that the men who introduced the modern natural sciences into Greece were two clerics: Eugenios Vulgaris and Nikephoros Theotokis.

An indication of the close links of the Church with the people during the period of Turkish rule is the fact that many Greeks gave their lives rather than deny their Christian faith. A new «*cloud of witnesses*» appeared in the Greek Church, watering with their own blood the new Greek Christian tree. They were called «new martyrs» (Νεομάρτυρες). These new martyrs came from every level of society and were of all ages. The Patriarch of Jerusalem Nektarios (1660-69) wrote: «*A few years ago we even saw boys who fearlessly bent their necks to the executioner*»²⁸.

The Church of Greece is working to overcome the damage she has suffered. Apart from a rich variety of homiletic, catechetical and pastoral work she is remarkably active in works of Christian charity. There are many diaconal institutions which have been founded by the Church or are under the control of the Metropolitans. One can read in the Year Book of the Church of Greece that under the Metropolitans there are poor-houses, orphanages, sanatoria, domestic science colleges, old people's homes, schools for the illiterate, technical and craft schools, kindergarten, libraries and reading rooms, camp sites and hostels for schoolchildren, student hostels, organisations for the care of prisoners and ex-prisoners, help for mothers at work, and much else besides.

As is well known some of these works of the Greek Church are only possible thanks to money given through the World Council of Churches. The «Diaconal Work» of the Protestant Church in Germany has also contributed a great deal.

Many aspects of this many-sided work are carried on by Christian organisations under different names (brotherhoods, sisterhoods, societies, etc.) founded by zealous clerics. It is to be expected that the work of all these organisations will be co-ordinated by the «*Apostolic Diaconia of the Church of Greece*». This is an official branch of the Home Mission of the Church, it is directly under the «*Holy Synod*» and is the organ through which the practical forces of the Greek Church are drawn together and structured. The «*Apostolic Diaconia*» has founded its own modern church printing press and published

28. Theodorou, Evangelos, *The Church of Greece*, Athens 1959.

many books for the Christian renewal and edification of the people. In particular one should mention the publication of the Old and New Testament, of the works of the Greek Fathers and of ecclesiastical writers as well as the liturgical books of the Church.

The «Apostolic Diaconia» had also founded a «*deaconess school*», with help from the World Council of Churches. This school had been open since 1957-8 and its aim was to train «*deaconesses - social workers of the Church of Greece*» who will dedicate themselves to the social tasks of the Church. The syllabus included, beside the Bible and the history of Orthodox diaconal work, sociological subjects and methods of practical social work. The students were instructed in pastoral problems and the pastoral care of prisoners, in domestic, psychological and medical questions. After their theoretical studies they did practical work in hospitals, old people's homes, orphanages, schools, and homes for the blind, as well as a period in a parish²⁹.

Finally we may note that current theology in Greece sees its task as adapting the gospel to the needs of today and influencing the attitude of the Church to current social, economic and political problems. For even Greek academic theology is affected by modern questions. New departments have been introduced into theological faculties, in order to give the theoretical basis for modern educational and social activity³⁰.

In conclusion, we establish that the diaconia of the Greek Orthodox Church originates from a complex, varied complex, of motives, influenced by the liturgy³¹.

Of course there are still faults, deficiencies and ritualistic tendencies in the Orthodox people. But these can be traced to historical causes, to external circumstances and historical events befalling the Church; they do not stand in any organic relationship to her being, her quintessence. Impartial research during recent years has shown that the Greek Orthodox Church is not a mummy, not a ritualist, passive and quietist cult-community, but a living reality in which the

29. The «*Deaconess School*» in Athens has discontinued its function for the present time.

30. Cf. Louvaris, Nikolaos, «Kirche und Welt (Church and World)» in Bratsiotis, *op. cit.*, Teil II, Stuttgart 1960, p. 144ff.

31. Cf. Weber, Heinrich, *Das Wesen der Caritas (The Nature of Caritas)*, Freiburg i. Br., 1938, p. 260.

causa efficiens, the *causa formalis* and the *causa finalis* of her service of God is the service of man.

Leading personalities in ecumenical theology and the ecumenical movement recognise today that the inner genuine development of Greek church life has a message for the whole Church, that the separation of service of God and service of man leads inevitably to two contractions: the action of the liturgy hovers in a vacuum and loses its orientation towards the world, and works of love lose their spiritual content and degenerate into a feeble, humanitarian social work.

Orthodox liturgical spirituality can contribute to the orientation, profile, qualification and motivation of diaconia, so that those who exercise this diaconal service may have an unselfish willingness to serve, joyous and heroic self-abandonment, sincerity, goodness and gentleness, humility and hiddenness, enthusiasm, warmth, spontaneity. Every form of diaconal work must be carried out from the conviction that in the garden of diaconal service the seeds of all flowers come from heaven and they can only flourish if – within the atmosphere of the liturgy – they are nourished from heaven³².

32. Cf. *Louvaris*, *op. cit.*