

Faith of Our Fathers: Holy Faith

A HANDBOOK FOR YOUTHS

The Faith of Our Fathers: Holy Faith A Handbook for Youths

Editor: Fr. A. K. Cherian

61 MARY STREET
TAPPAN, NEW YORK 10983
PHONE (845) 359 - 9583

Published by : **Sophia Books**
Surya Guest Lane, Thekkenada, Kottayam
Ph: 0481 - 3255054, 99471 20697

First Published : Aug. 2006

Copyright reserved

Number of copies : 1000

Cover, D.T.P. & Printing : Sophia Print House, Kottayam Ph: 0481 - 3255054

Faith of Our Fathers: Holy Faith

A Handbook for Youths

Editor

Fr. A. K. Cherian



Sophia Books
Kottayam - 686 001

Dedication

This hand book for the youths is dedicated to the
Blessed memory of the late Catholicos,
His Holiness Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II

And

To the present Metropolitan of American Diocese,
His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas who prayed and toiled
earnestly and selflessly for the betterment and spiritual
growth of the young men and women of the American Diocese.

FORWARD

INITIATION IN TO ORTHODOXY

Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios

Father A. K. Cherian is accomplishing an important task of conveying the faith of the Orthodox Church to the young generation of our times. The faith of our fathers / mothers is holy faith. It, as this volume very convincingly brings out, is based on the Scriptures experienced in our day to day life through liturgical celebrations, expressed in history through the the fathers of the Councils, lived out by the Saints and represented through various Christian arts such as icons music etc.

In the Orthodox understanding Holy Sacraments are Holy Mysteries since they initiate us into the saving works of Christ. In the Holy Baptism we are born anew and grafted into the very Body of Christ. Holy Chrismation is anointing of the Holy Spirit where by we are granted the gift of the Holy Spirit. Holy Eucharist is our communion in the Lord's Table. As we feed on the body of Christ we become the very Body of Christ, the Church.

We are very much delighted when we read in Section 3 Chapter 1 how do we need to conceive of our life of salvation:

in the teaching of the Orthodox Faith, salvation is never limited to a point in time. Salvation is not one-dimensional event, a past-tense occurrence with merely philosophical or positional implications for the present. Rather, as illustrated above, salvation is perceived to be a lifetime experience—a Journey not measured by the hours of our watch or the days of the Calendar, for, it is a journey out of time into eternity. (P. 51). This description is highly illuminating and we find that this is on one-hand very much Orthodox and very much Biblical as well on the other.

Very often Orthodox faith is misunderstood and misrepresented. Some think that it is very lithic and static having no dynamism within. On the contrary it is very challenging and moving. For example let us look into a small paragraph on p. 58 of this book, "Let's face it. If the Kingdom of God is worth anything, it is worth everything. We are called upon by Christ Himself to lay down everything that would keep us from entering it. That is why Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a treasure hidden in a field. Once we realize the incredible value of that precious piece we will sell everything we have to obtain it. This divesting of our private holdings is exactly what repentance means. We give up what we must not keep for the incomparable riches of Jesus Christ. This cost to us is the greatest bargain we can ever know."

It is worth noticing that any treatise on Orthodox faith is surcharged with Biblical references. It offers not only the Biblical background of the faith but also the Biblical passages take on new meaning in the light of the liturgical setting and faith of the Church handed over to us since Christian origins. A good example for this could be found in chapter one of section four of this book (pp. 71-72).

This book in addition situates the faith of the Orthodox Church in the history of the whole Christendom. How the two main families of the Orthodox Church, Oriental and Byzantine, parted their ways since A. D. 451 and amazingly how they hold the same apostolic faith. The need to affirm the St. Thomas Christian identity of the Malankara Orthodox Church also form a section of this book. Several other pieces of information from the history and the faith of the Church are also included in this volume.

The Faith of our fathers: Holy Faith is a treasure where we find several priceless pieces of information regarding the faith, life and history of the Orthodox Church amazingly brought together. This will be very much appreciated by all especially the youth of the Orthodox diaspora. Every page of this book shows that the author has a clear understanding of Orthodox faith and what all to be included so that the young generation of the Orthodox Church be benefitted.

I remember with all affection and reverence my older brother, Father A. K. Cherian since I met him, as a good lay Christian leader in youth and student conferences of the Church. He joined the Seminary committing himself to the call of the Lord to serve the Church as a priest and myself too just after my Higher Secondary education. We the young in the Seminary looked at our Senior brother as a model and appreciated his strength of conviction and rectitude of character. Our fraternal relationship continues in tact even today.

I am privileged to have an opportunity to write the forward to this wonderful volume. I am sure that this book will be of much use for all especially the Orthodox youth of the Church.

Thiruvananthapuram
Feast of Transfiguration, 2006

INTRODUCTION

It was my long cherished desire to make a hand book on faith, in English language, for the spiritual growth and guidance of the young men and women of my parish. They have a big challenge in front of them. Our worship service is written in Malayalam which is a language that most youngsters are not well versed in. Our faith is rooted in Eastern Christianity and we depend on the writings of the ancient times which were mostly written in Syriac, a language that is not in common use now. In the past there were great scholars in the Eastern Church who produced a lot of Christian literature in the nature of theological treatises. The depth and breadth of our theology and faith are involved in the lines of the long prayers which we say in different occasions in the church and in our homes. Even well-learned people cannot understand fully the meaning of those prayers that are translated to Malayalam from Syriac. In short, when our young men and women attend our services, they may be in the darkness due to lack of comprehension. Not all of them express their feelings, but it is a known fact. Unless our church takes a strong and speedy step to help their spiritual need of understanding the service, we are doomed! The late (blessed be his memory) Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios and the present Metropolitan of Madras Diocese, Dr. Yakob Mar Ireanios helped us to certain extent to get translations of certain services. The present Anaphora we use for liturgy is translated by Mar Gregorios (we should not forget the first translation was made by the late Catholicos Baselios Mathews I for our

side Kerala Diocese) and book of Baptism and Sleeba Namaskaram (morning) have been translated by Bishop Ireanios. His Grace Mar Ireanios graciously translated Koumas and some of the songs of the holy week. We use them and are very thankful to Thirumeni for his concern and understanding.

In short, our youngsters who love our church, do not have proper channels to understand the theology or history of our church. We should have a department of translation in our seminary to translate needed books and prayers to English and it should be done immediately.

The articles, anecdotes and other materials for this book have been taken from the writings of great orthodox scholars and renowned historians. I mainly depended on the Orthodox Study Bible, Church history by the first church historian Eusebius, the great traveler/chaplain Claudius Buchanan, scholars like B. J. Kidd, and J. W. Ehrhard.... etc.

I express my heart felt thanks to the Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc. for giving me permission to use some materials from the Orthodox Study Bible. A short but truthful history of the Indian Orthodox church written by Fr. Dr. K. M. George, Principal of Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam also is included.

I sincerely express my heartfelt thanks to the well renowned theologian and the present Metropolitan of Trivandrum Diocese Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios for writing a forward for this book. My earnest gratitude to Rev. Dr. T. P. Elias and Mr. Joice Thottackad who encouraged me to publish this book and the Sophia Print House for printing.

Mr. T. Mathai, one of the elders of the Bronx St. Mary's Church, and Mr. A. M. Alexander, one of my

friends, who had been here in the United States and now lives in India also deserve my gratitude for their comments at the initial stages of this book.

I would be glad if this book help the young people of our Church to understand atleast the basics of the faith of our Church.

Fr. A. K. Cherian

15 August 2006

CONTENTS

Foreword	Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios	6
Introduction		9
Introducing the Eastern Churches		17

SECTION I

The Church

Orthodox Church in Christendom	23
Oriental and Byzantine Churches	
Division between Roman Church and Byzantine Church	
Further division in the west	
The Orthodox Church Today	27

The Bible and Orthodox Tradition 29

Five Sources of Christian Tradition

The Holy Scriptures	29
The Liturgy	30
The Councils	31
The Saints	32
Church art	33

The Holy Sacraments 35

Holy Baptism	37
Holy Chrismation	39
The Eucharist	41
Confession	43
Ordination	45
Marriage	47
Healing of the sick	49

SECTION 2

Some Orthodox Beliefs and their Biblical foundations

How does the Orthodox view the Sacraments specifically Communion?	51
Why does the Orthodox continually honour and bless Virgin Mary?	52
Tradition of men and Holy Tradition	53
Do the icons of Orthodoxy border on idolatry?	54
Why do the Orthodox Christians honor the Saints?	55
What do the Orthodox Christians believe about liturgy?	56
Four orders of church government	58

SECTION 3

A guide to the spiritual life

Spiritual help in the examination of your conscience	72
Seven grievous sins	72
Seven capital Virtues	72
Work of the flesh	72
The fruits of the holy spirit	73
Theological Virtues	73
Chief aids to penitance	73
Chief corporal works of Mercy	73
Ten Commandments	74
Examination of Conscience before confession	76
Prayer before confession	78
A prayer before receiving blessed sacraments	79
A prayer after receiving the blessed sacraments	79
Intercessory prayer	80
A prayer	81

SECTION 4

Liturgy in the New Testament Church

The Creed	85
Priesthood - Earthly and eternal	87
Second coming, Christology, New Birth, John the Baptist	88
St. Mary	97
The Seventy	99
Where to turn in the Psalms	103
Where to turn in the New Testament	104
How to remain in communion with God	105
Conversion of St. Augustin - Aug. 386 A. D.	107
The Syrian Churches: Their Clergy	109
Justification by faith	111
The Independence of church in Persia	114
Futility of councils	115
The Lordliness of prelates	115
St. Martin and the beggar	116
Election of Eusabios to Bishopric	117
Our Lord's letter to King Abgar	118
Meaning of certain church articles	122

SECTION 5

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Historical Self-understanding and Identity:	
Some ecumenical Considerations	125
a. Early days	126
b. Parting ways	129
c. A new turn	131
d. The Mission of help	132
e. Syrian connection	132
f. Catholicate: Symbol of freedom and autocephaly	135
g. Search for unity	136
h. Conclusion	138

INTRODUCING THE EASTERN CHURCHES

Paulos Mar Gregorios

(His Grace Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, a bulwork in the orthodox faith matters, has been a distinguished theologian, philosopher and administrator. This article is one of those, to certain extend, distinguishes the faith of the Orthodox Church and other churches - Editor)

Most Indians have not even heard about an Eastern form of Christianity. They know mainly the two Western forms: Protestant and Roman Catholic. The average educated Indian, if he is wellread, knows the different forms and names of Protestantism: Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Congregational, Church of South India, Church of North India and so on. And he knows that all these forms of Christianity have come from Europe, along with the colonialist - imperialist movements of the 15th century and afterwards.

But he has seldom heard about an eastern Christian Church. Nor has he most likely encountered one in India. It comes to him as a surprise therefore to learn that, as Nehru once said, Christianity is older in India than in most parts of Europe. It is a fact that the Christian Church has existed in India ever since the first century. When one of the original Twelve Apostles of Christ, St. Thomas came to India (in 52 A.D.) and established Churches here.

This ancient Eastern Church continues to this day in India, though the coming of the Western missionaries has nearly destroyed this ancient church and broken it up into several factions.

What is left in the old Eastern Christian tradition in India is the Orthodox Church, sometimes called the Syrian Orthodox Church, because Syriac was once the language of worship of this Church. It is rather small, just 15 lakhs of members, which is only 10% of the total number of Christians in this country.

Their significance should not be evaluated in terms of size alone. They are cultured, fully Indian, and have produced outstanding leaders, like Mr. C. M. Stephen, Dr. P. C. Alexander, Mr. A. M. Thomas and many such national leaders.

In what way are they different from the western Churches? There are some easily recognizable external differences. Their priests usually are bearded and wear a black cap. Their Bishops can be recognized by a special head-dress with one large cross (for Christ) and 12 smaller crosses (for the 12 apostles) embroidered on it. Their worship is more colourful than that of the Western Churches.

In administrative structure, the Indian Church is not subordinate to or dependent upon any Church or group outside India. They have their own supreme Head in India, who resides in Kottayam, Kerala. The Indian Church is divided into dioceses, and there is an Indian Bishop or Metropolitan in charge of each diocese. The Metropolitans, along with the Catholicos constitute the Holy Synod, which is the supreme administrative body of the Church.

The differences in faith are more difficult to explain to the outsider. The main difference between Roman Catholics and the Orthodox is that the latter do not acknowledge the authority of the Roman Pope. Roman Catholic priests are unmarried, Orthodox priests can be married, unless they are monks (Orthodox bishops are always unmarried). The Roman Catholic Church follows the ways of thinking of certain Western thinkers like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Ignatius Loyola, etc. The Eastern Orthodox do not accept these teachers. They follow the teachings of the ancient Fathers (gurus) who lived before the Church was divided in the 5th century. Some of their teachers are St. Basil, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory

* The present Catholicos is His Holiness Mar Baselios Didymos I.

of Nyssa, St. Severus, etc. The differences between these two groups of teachers are subtle but significant. There are very difficult points like whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and Son; these are not easily comprehensible except for the trained theologian. On matters like sacraments, grace, sin, Holy Spirit also there are some significant differences of opinion between Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox.

With the Protestants, the differences are even greater. The Orthodox, do not believe that the Bible is the only authority for the Christian teaching. The whole tradition of the Church, which not only includes the Bible, but also the teachings of the ancient Fathers and the decisions of the Councils, is authoritative for them. They do not believe, as some Protestants do, that the Church is composed of the believers coming together. They believe that the Church is one in all ages and all places, and that all those who have ever believed in Christ (even those, who lived before Christ) are even now members of the Church, and that the Christians now living form only a small part of the Church. The Orthodox, do not regard the bishop, or his representative the priest, as merely someone commissioned to preach the word and administer the sacraments. The bishop or priest is a visible manifestation of Christ Himself and they revere Him accordingly. The Orthodox also give greater importance to the sacraments like Baptism, the Holy Anointing, Confession, Eucharist (Mass), Ordination of priests, the Sacrament of Matrimony, etc. Protestants have fewer sacraments (mainly Baptism and Lord's Supper) and do not give the same importance to these as the Orthodox do.

The forms of worship of the Orthodox are entirely Eastern, brought from Palestine and Syria, and indigenized in India through centuries of use. The Protestants and Roman Catholics are still trying to emancipate themselves from their recently imported Western heritage.

The main tenet of the Orthodox faith is the belief that salvation is by being united with Christ who is Isvara incarnate. By being united with Him, we are to grow into God's image by becoming more and more god-like in character, in love, in goodness and in wisdom. This process of transformation is called theosis or divinisation. This is

very close to certain schools of Hindu thinking about salvation by yoga or union with Brahma.

The Orthodox Church in India lives at peace with followers of other religions like Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Jains, Buddhists etc. They are not aggressive in trying to convert the others, but are prepared to live with them in peace and concord, and with respect. For this reason they are often accused by more aggressive Protestant and Catholics, of being defective or lacking in missionary Zeal.

The Orthodox place greater emphasis on the quality of spiritual life, on worshipping God in a fitting way, and in showing love and compassion to all, rather than on evangelism or social activism. They run schools and hospitals, orphanages and homes for the destitute, but not for the sake of attracting converts. It is a silent labour of service in humility, which is its own reward.

SECTION 1

THE CHURCH

One of the tragic aberrations of so-called modern religion is the presence of "Churchless Christianity". The assertion is that it is Christ who saves us, not the Church, so "all you need is Jesus."

Few who claim to be Christians would argue against the statement that it is Christ who saves. For He is the eternal Son of God who has assumed human flesh, and has done so "for us and for our salvation". Thus Paul writes, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1. Tim. 2:5).

But because this Mediator established the Church which is His body, we who are joined to Him are joined to His Church as well. To say we love Christ, who is Head of the Church, and at the same time reject his body is to deny New Testament teaching.

The Gospel and Acts

The first use of the word "church" (Gr. Ecclesia) in the New Testament comes in the Gospel of Matthew, when our Lord gives His approval of Peter's confession of faith and promises, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Jesus Christ builds and we cooperate with Him.

The Book of Acts discloses more of what Jesus meant in Matthew 16. When Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost concludes, those present ask for guidance toward salvation: "What shall we do?" (Acts. 2:37). Following Peter's word, they are baptized and joined with the other believers, three thousand of them (Acts. 2:38, 41).

Having been joined to Christ and His Church, these baptized believers begin living as the body of Christ. We find them looking

after each other, using their personal resources for the care of each other, continuing together in prayer and in the Eucharist (Acts: 2:42-47). From this point on the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47), and throughout Acts, the Church is being built as the gospel of Christ spreads.

The Epistles

Paul's instructions in his letters to the churches throughout the eastern Mediterranean clearly show what it means to be members of Christ: to be the Church and to be in the Church. Nowhere in the New Testament is Paul's teaching on the Church more fully disclosed than in Ephesians 4. He instructs us that:

1. The Church is one, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). There is one Church, one God, one doctrine, one baptism.

2. The Church is people, men and women who are energized by the Holy Spirit. For each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift (Eph. 4:7). We are not all given the same gifts, but together we are equipped to do God's will.

3. The Head of the Church is Christ, "from whom the whole body (is) joined and knit together" (Eph: 4: 14, 16).

4. The Church is "the new man" (Eph: 4:24), the new creation, made to be righteous and holy. We are no longer alienated from God (Eph. 4:18) but we are being renewed together (Eph. 4:23), "members of one another" (Eph. 4:25).

The Church, then, is that place established by Christ where we each may become what we are created to be, maturing and being perfected, while the Church as the body of Christ carries us beyond our petty and worldly personal concerns, stretching our vision to the eternal and the heavenly as we ascend together to worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN CHRISTENDOM

(a) The Orthodox Churches have two main branches: the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Byzantine orthodox Church. The oriental orthodox communion consists of the following churches.

Patriarchate of Alexandria (Coptic/Egyptian)

Catholicate of Ethiopia (Ethiopian Church)

Patriarchate of Antioch (Syrian Orthodox/Jacobite)

Catholicate of India (Malankara Orthodox/St. Thomas Christians)

Catholicate of Armenia (Armenian Orthodox Church)

Catholicate of Eritrea

(Newly formed - formerly part of Ethiopian church)

The Byzantine orthodox church has the following divisions:

Patriarchate of Constantenople (New Rome), Patriarchate of Russia, Serbia, Rumania, Bulgaria and Georgia, The Orthodox churches of Cyprus, Greece, Czecholovakea, Poland and Albania. The Orthodox churches in Finland, China, Japan and the monastery of Sinai.

All these churches are self governing or iAutocephalusî in nature. The churches in Byzantine family are acknowledging the honorary primacy of the Patriarch of Constantenople (Ecumenical Patriarch). He has no administrative function on other Orthodox churches at all, but he is the first among equals. The patriarchate of Constantenople accepts this ceremonial position with out any question. The constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Chruuch offers the same position to the Syrian Patriarch.

What is the difference between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Byzantine Orthodox Church?

The faith of the orthodox church is based primarily upon the dogmatic definitions on ecumenical councils. The oriental Orthodox Churches accept only the first 3 ecumenical councils, ie, Nicea, Constantenople amd Ephesus. But the Byzantine churches accept the first 7 councils. In the Ecumenical council in Chalcedon, the doctrine on the nature of Christ was the main subject in discussion and the oriental churches rejected the decision of the council which favoured 'Two Nature' theory. The Orientals stuck on the 'One Nature' theory and thus the eastern part of the church stepped out from the council of Chalcedon (For more detailed study read 'Does Chalcedon divide or unite' (World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1967) edited by Paulos Mar Gregorios (pages 76-92. Thesis by Dr. V. C. Samuel).

The division has been a subject of serious discussion in the later part of the 20th century. Theologians like Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios and Rev. Dr. V. C. Samuel from the Orthodox church of India along with the theologians of other oriental orthodox churches met 4 times with theologians from the Byzantine churches to discuss this matter, unofficially. The first consultation held in Denmark in 1964, the second in Bristol, England in July 1967 and the third one in Aug. 1970 in Switzerland and the last one in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 1971. They came to agreed statement that affirms that 'WE RECOGNISE IN EACH OTHER THE ONE ORTHODOX FAITH OF THE CHURCH... ON THE ESSENCE OF THE CHIRSTOLOGICAL DOGMA WE FOUND OURSELVES IN FULL AGREEMENT. THROUGH THE DIFFERENT TERMINOLOGIES USED BY EACH OTHER, WE SAW THE SAME TRUTH EXPRESSED.' Thus a good atmosphere had developed and a more closer relationship evolved among the orthodox but stays in that juncture, having no further movement. Most of those theologians who toiled to come to this state had entered in eternal glory. The common understanding about this standstill is that the Russian Bishops are not fully convinced about the positions of the theologians.

(b) Divisions in the West: Division between the Roman Church and the Byzantine Church

The second division happened in 1054 A. D., between the Roman Church and the Byzantine Church. It was a gradual process started many years before but came to the climax on the theological dogmas like *ifilioquei* (proceeding of the holy spirit) and *iazymusi* (the use of leavened bread or unleavened bread for eucharist). Orthodox are willing to regard the Pope of Rome as the chief Bishop in Christendom, but only first among equals in the Episcopal college and not assign to him a universal supremacy of Jurisdiction.

The number of Orthodox communion is growing, especially in the United States. The total number of the orthodox according to a later count came closer to 300 million all over the world. The eastern European countries are mostly adhering to this faith.

Further Divisions in the West

During the centuries after A. D. 1054, the growing distinction between east and west was becoming indelibly marked in history. The eastern Church maintained the full stream of New Testament faith, worship, and practice - all the while enduring great persecution. The Western or Roman Church bogged down in many complex problems. Then, less than five centuries after Rome committed itself to its unilateral alteration of doctrine and practice, another upheaval occurred - this time *inside* the western gates.

Although many in the west had spoken out against Roman domination and practice in earlier years, now a little-known German Monk named Martin Luther inadvertently launched an attack against certain Roman Catholic practices which ended up affecting world history. His list of Ninety-Five Theses was nailed to the Church door at Wittenberg in 1517, signaling the start of what came to be called the Protestant Reformation. Luther had intended no break with Rome, but he could not be reconciled to its papal system of government as well as other doctrinal issues. He was excommunicated in 1521, and the door to future unity in the west slammed shut with a resounding crash.

The reforms Luther sought in Germany where soon accompanied

by demands of Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, John Calvin in Geneva, and hundreds of others all over western Europe. Fueled by complex political, social and economic factors in addition to the religious problems, the Reformation spread like a raging fire into virtually every nook and cranny of the Roman Church. The ecclesiastical monopoly to which it had grown accustomed was greatly diminished, and massive division replaced unity. The ripple effect of that division impacts even today as the Protestant movement continues to split.

If trouble on the European continent were not trouble enough, the Church of England was in the process of going its own way as well. Henry VIII, amidst his marital problems, replaced the Pope of Rome with himself as head of the Church of England. For only the few short years that Queen Mary was on the throne did the Pope again have ascendancy in England. Elizabeth I returned England to Protestantism, and the English Church would soon experience even more division.

As decade followed decade in the west, the branches of Protestantism continued to divide. There were even branches that insisted they were neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic. All seemed to share a mutual dislike for the Bishop of Rome and the practices of his church, and most wanted far less centralized forms of leadership. While some, such as the Lutherans and Anglicans, held on to certain forms of liturgy and sacrament, others, such as the Reformed Churches and the even more radical Anabaptists and their descendants, questioned and rejected many biblical ideas of hierarchy, sacrament historic tradition, thinking they were freeing themselves of only Roman Catholicism. To this day, many sincere, modern, professing Christians will reject even the biblical data that speaks of historic Christian Practice, simply because they think such historic practices are iRoman Catholic.î To use the old adage, they threw the baby out with the bathwater without even being aware of it.

Thus, while retaining in varying degrees portions of foundational Christianity neither protestantism nor Catholicism can lay historic claim to being the forfeited its place in the Church of the New Testament. In the division of the Reformation, the Protestants - as well - meaning as they might have been failed to return to the New Testament Church.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TODAY

That original Church, the Church of Peter, Paul and the apostles—despite persecution, political oppression, and desertion of certain of its flanks—miraculously carries on today the same faith and life of the Church of the New Testament. Admittedly, the style of Orthodoxy looks complicated to the modern Protestant eye, but given a historical understanding of how the Church has progressed, it may be seen that the simple Christ-centered faith of the apostles is fully preserved in its doctrines, practices, services, and even in its architecture.

In Orthodoxy today, as in years gone by, the basics of Christian doctrine, worship, and government are never up for alternation. One cannot be an Orthodox Priest, for example, and reject the divinity of Christ, His virgin birth, Resurrection, Ascension into heaven, and Second coming. The Church simply has not left its course in nearly two thousand years. It is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. It is the New Testament Church.

Orthodoxy is also, in the words of one of her bishops, the best kept secret in America. Although there are more than 300 million Orthodox Christians in the world today, many in the west are not familiar with the Church. In North America for example, the Orthodox Church has, until recently, been largely restricted to ethnic boundaries, not spreading much beyond the parishes of the committed immigrants that brought the Church to the shores of this continent.

Still the Holy Spirit has continued His work, causing new people to discover this Church of the New Testament People, have begun to find Orthodox Christianity through the writings of the early Church Fathers and through the humble witness of contemporary Orthodox

Christians. Significant numbers of evangelicals, Episcopalians, and mainline Protestants are becoming Orthodox, and Orthodox student groups are springing up on campuses worldwide. The word is getting out,

What then is the Orthodox Church? It is the first Christian Church in history, the Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ, described in the pages of the New Testament. Her history can be traced in unbroken continuity all the way back to Christ and His Twelve Apostles.

What is it that's missing in the non-Orthodox Churches—even the best of them? Fullness. For, the fullness of the New Testament faith is to be found only in the New Testament Church. Being in the Church does not guarantee all those in it will take advantage of the fullness of the faith, but that fullness is there for those who do.

For persons who seriously desire the fullness of Orthodox Christianity, action must be taken. Being aware of this ancient Church is not enough. There must be a return to this Church of the New Testament. In our day many people have taken ample time to investigate and decide about the Roman Catholic faith, the Baptist, the Lutheran, and so on, but relatively few have taken a serious look at the Orthodox Church. Three specific suggestions will provide those interested with a tangible means of becoming acquainted with Orthodox Christianity on a personal basis:

1. Read about it.
2. Participate in worship.
3. Witness to origin.

THE BIBLE AND ORTHODOX TRADITION

The Orthodox Church governs her life by Holy Tradition. Many, however, are confused as to what exactly Holy Tradition is.

The word *tradition* comes from the Latin *traditio*, which is a translation of a Greek word used frequently in the scriptures, *ēparadosis*.¹ Translated literally this word is something that is handed on from one person to another, in the same way that a baton is handed over in a relay race. Something that is *traditioned* is passed on from one person or group of people to another. St. Paul clarifies in Galatians 1:11 that the Tradition of the Church is *not* according to man. In other words, it is revealed by God. It is not a human product.

Tradition means an experience, an entire life-not simply a series of teachings, but the living out of those teachings that have come from the God who has revealed Himself to us. Tradition is the living out of the revelation of God by His people.

Where is this Tradition to be found? What are its sources?

Five Sources of Christian Tradition

The Holy Scriptures

The first place we give to the Holy Scriptures: the Bible, Old and New Testaments. The Bible is understood by Orthodox Christians to be the principal written record of the experience by God's people of God's revealing Himself to them. It is understood that the Church, therefore, wrote the Bible. The Bible is the word of God, but the word of God was not written directly and personally by God. The Holy Scriptures did not fall from heaven in a fully complete written form. By whom were the Scriptures written? They were written by

human beings who were inspired by God. What they write is the truth about God. They write what they write as members of God's people.

For example, in the early years of the Christian Church, those most important books of Holy Scripture that we call the Gospels did not exist. Several decades passed after Pentecost before the first Gospel was written. It was the end of the first century by the time all four Gospels were written. Three hundred more years passed before a decision was made in the Church that there would be only four Gospels.

The books that are in the Holy scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are there because God's people, through those who were set aside as having the authority to make the decision, decided that these books would be part of the Bible, and other books would not. The Church, as God's people inspired by God, wrote the Bible. The Church produced the Bible. The Bible did not produce the Church.

The Holy Scriptures are the principal and most honored written record of God's revelation to His people. But it is the understanding of the Orthodox that the Holy Scriptures cannot be completely, truthfully understood unless they are understood within the context of the Church that produced them, that declared them to be what they are. So the Bible is the Book of the Church, the first source of the Christian Tradition.

The Liturgy

The Second source is the liturgy of the Church. *Liturgy* is a word that means in Greek, *common work*. The liturgy of the Church means the work of the Church when it comes together to be the people of God and to worship God. Liturgy includes the whole body of the Church's common worship: the services for the various hours of the day, the days of the week, the feast days and seasons of the Church (baptism, the Holy Eucharist, marriage and others).

In all this public prayer of the Church we have a record of what the Church believes. In fact, there is a saying that has been popular among the Orthodox from the beginning: the rule of faith, The

standard of what we believe, is established by the way we pray (in Latin, *lex orandi, lex est credendi*). The best Orthodox answer to the question, *What do you believe as Orthodox Christians? How can I find out what you believe?* would not be simply to say, *Come, hear this talk or read this book.* Teaching is essential in the life of the Church and always has been. But the first answer that an Orthodox Christian always gives to that question is, *Come and see.*

That is always the Orthodox invitation. Come and see what we do when we assemble together to be the Church in the common worship of God. Anybody who exposes himself or herself intensely to the Church's common worship will have a better course in Orthodox Faith, doctrine and practice than any book could give and nothing can take the place of that. So the liturgy is the second source of the Tradition.

The Councils

The Third Source is the councils of the Church. A council is a meeting of those in the Church who have been given the authority to decide what is faithful to the Tradition of the Church and what is not. The first council that we hear described in the Holy Scripture (Acts 15) takes place in the Church of Jerusalem. This council was convened to decide the question of whether Gentiles could become Christians and whether they should be required to obey the Jewish Law. This was a situation that Jesus had not specifically prepared His Apostles to deal with. But He had given them the authority in the Church to distinguish between what was true and what was not, so they met to decide what to do with the Gentiles who wanted to become part of the Church.

The result of this council was a compromise, the Gentiles would be required to keep a few core principles of the Jewish law, but the rest of it was not binding on them. Moreover, the Apostles made it very clear that this was not merely a human decision. They were so bold as to say, *It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us that this is how we answer this question.*

Many councils have met through the centuries of the Church's life and they have decided many questions. The answers they give to

the questions that have to be resolved come in two forms: creeds and canons.

Creeds are statements of faith. The most important of the Church's statements of faith is contained in the creed called the Nicene Creed. It is called "Nicene" because it was written at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea in A. D. 325. ("Ecumenical" in this case means a council involving the whole Church throughout the Known World). There are many other creeds used in the Church that come from other councils, and all of them together constitute one source of the Church's Tradition.

Councils also produce canons. The word "canon" comes from the Greek *ēkanoní*, which means a ruler or a yardstick, something used to measure what is to be normative in the practice of the Church. Canons provide answers, for example, to questions of discipline or morality in the Church. What is to be done when people in the Church fall into sin? How are they to be reconciled to the Church? What is to be done when there are disputes between two churches, as there were disputes among the Apostles? There have always been disputes among the people of God. The people of God, though they receive the revelation of God, do not become perfect overnight, and most of them do not become perfect in this world. So the canons of the Church are a body of rules, or norms, to regulate the discipline of the Church, and their source is the Councils.

The Saints

The fourth source of the Church's Tradition, another double source, is the lives of the saints and the teaching of one particular group of saints who are called the Fathers (a group which includes some mothers).

In every generation in the life of the Church, there have been people who live the teachings of Christ faithfully, heroically, who attain while living in this world the destiny for which we as Christians believe God has created us: to share His own life.

The ultimate promise concerning the Christian revelation is that it is true. "You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you

free. Free from what? Free from error, free from sin, free from emptiness and ultimately free from death in the negative sense. Those are the things that God frees us from. But he does this so that we can be free for something that is indescribably greater: to reach our destiny as partakers of the life of God Himself.

There are those in the Church, who, by their faithful obedience and perfection in faith, hope, and love for God, are the greatest examples. We could call them the heroes of the Church. The icons (photos) in our churches show us the saints from every age. Those saints are present in the Church, are sources of the Church's experience to show the people who belong to the Church of God the way to life, the way to truth, to show each one of us that yes, it is possible. It is possible for the saints and it is possible for us to reach this destiny that God calls us to.

A certain group of those saints is called the Fathers. By a Father of the Church, we mean one who by his (or her) wisdom in teaching or defending Church Doctrine, often at the cost of his life or in the face of great suffering, bore witness to the Tradition of the Church. When we read the Gospels, we say yes, what is written in the Gospel here is what the Church has always believed. In the same sense, when we read the writings of the great Fathers, we can find in them a faithful and true testimony to what the Church has always believed and experienced about God.

Church Art

The final source of Christian Tradition we will call Church art. Now, it might come as surprise to some that along with such exalted things as the Holy Scriptures and the liturgy of the Church and the saints and the Fathers, we would speak of Church art. In the minds of some people, art is simply a kind of decoration, a secondary thing. But the Orthodox understanding of the nature of the human being, of how God has made us, how God has revealed Himself to us, is that material creation is very much involved. One could say that the Orthodox Faith, the Orthodox experience is a holistic one. It involves the whole man. It involves the material creation. In fact, Incarnation—the entry of God into the material world. God becoming man, God

becoming matter - is uniquely at the heart of the Christian Faith.

Art is, by definition, the use of material things as the medium for the revelation of God. So for the Orthodox, art is not icing on the cake; it is something very central to what we know of how God has revealed Himself to us. One goes into in an Orthodox Church building and is immediately surrounded by all sorts of things that appeal to the senses. We could divide them into three categories. Firstly, iconography: The way in which the images of Christ, His life, His Mother, and the saints are portrayed in the Church. Secondly, Church music: the way our Church services are sung, the chants that are used in the liturgical services. And finally, Church architecture: even the way Orthodox churches traditionally built is a visible testimony to the Faith of the Church as it has been experienced throughout the ages. None of these is understood to be merely accidental or a frill. Rather they are at the heart of our experience in the Church as the people of God.

So we have these five basic sources of the Orthodox Tradition, what has been passed on from one generation of the faithful to the next, from Christ and the Apostles even to the present time: the Scripture, the liturgy, the creeds and canons that have come from the Church councils, the lives of the saints and the teaching of the Fathers, and finally Orthodox Christian art.

HOLY SACRAMENTS

The orthodox church acknowledges the seven Sacraments or mysteries as they are termed, but orthodox theologians attach less importance than Roman Catholics to the precise number seven, and no rigid distinction is drawn between these seven sacraments and other sacramental actions, such as monastic profession, the great blessing of the waters at Epiphany, Burial of the dead, the anointing of the monarch...etc.

In the Orthodox Church baptism is performed by immersion, Chrismation (conformation) is administered immediately after baptism and children are taken to communion immediately after chrismation.

The bread and wine in eucharist are considered to become, at the consecration, the true and real Body and Blood of Christ, but not accepting the theory of transubstantiation. In olden days a devout orthodox normally communicates only four or five times an year during the fasts and other obligatory days, after careful preparation and confession. But there is a move among orthodox to take part in communion frequently.

Orthodox believe in the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - although it has never been formally defined or proclaimed as a dogma; at the same time deny the Roman Catholic teaching on her immaculate conception.

Intercession for the departed is much emphasized in the orthodox spirituality, but the doctrine of purgatory as developed in Roman Catholicism is not accepted. Prayer for the departed and intercession of the Saints are also a part of the orthodox faith. Parish priests in the orthodox church are generally married. The orthodox church had

never insisted upon the celibacy of the clergy. Any candidate for ordination, however, who wishes to marry, must do so before becoming a full deacon (6th order) and if a priest's wife dies he cannot marry again.

SEVEN HOLY SACRAMENTS

1. HOLY BAPTISM

What is Baptism? Simply put, baptism is our death, burial, and resurrection in union with Jesus Christ. It is a rite of passage, given by Christ to the Church, as an entrance into the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

The Apostle Paul describes the promise of God in this mystery as most Orthodox call it, most succinctly when he writes. Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, (Rom. 6:4). To baptize (Gr. Baptizo) literally means to immerse to put into. Historically, the Orthodox Church has baptized by triple immersion, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

In the Old Testament, baptism was pictured by the passage of God's people with Moses through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1, 2). John the Baptist the last prophet of the Old Covenant, baptized in water unto repentance (Mark 1:4, Acts 19:4). John's baptism was received by Jesus, who thereby transformed the water and baptism itself. In the New Covenant, baptism is the means by which we enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:5), are joined to Christ (Rom. 6:3), and are granted the remission of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

What Results from Baptism? From the start, the Church has understood baptism as:

1. A first and Second dying. Our first dying with Christ in baptism was our death with Him on the Cross. In the fourth century, Cyril of

Jerusalem instructed his new converts: iYou were led by the hand to the holy pool of divine baptism and each of you we asked if he believed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And you made that saving confession, you descended into the water and came up again three times. In the very same moment you died and were born.

The second death of baptism is continual-dying to sin daily as we walk in newness of life. St. Paul writes to the Colossians concerning Baptism (Col. 2:12) and concludes by saying, iTherefore put to death your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5).

2. The resurrection of righteousness. This is our life in Christ, our new birth and entrance into God's Kingdom (John 3:3), our newness of life, (Rom. 6:4). It is our being joined to Christ in His glorified humanity and indwelt by God Himself (John 14:23). Our relationship with God is not something static, a legal fiction given to us by a Divine Judge. Rather, this is a dynamic and real life in Christ, holding the promise of everlasting life. Our resurrection to new life now forms a prelude to the resurrection of our body at Christ's Second Coming.

3. An intimate and continual communion with God: We are raised to new life for a purpose: union and communion with God. In this sense baptism is the beginning of eternal life. For this reason, Peter writes that baptism now saves us (1 Pet. 3:21)-it is not the mere removal of dirt from our bodies, but it provides us with a good conscience toward God.

Because of these promises, the priest prays for the newly baptized, thanking God, iwho has given us, unworthy though we be, blessed purification through holy water, and divine sanctification through life-giving Chrismation, and who now also has been pleased to bring new life to Your servant newly illuminated by water and the Spirit, and granted remission of sins-Voluntary and involuntary.

One is born anew or born again in the Holy Baptism and grafted into the Body of the Christ the Church.

2. CHRISMATION

From earliest times the church has practised Chrismation immediately following baptism. In the sacrament of Chrismation (Greek *Chrismatis*, anointing) the newly baptized person receives the Holy Spirit through anointing with oil by the bishop or priest. The roots of this sacrament are clear in both the Old and New Testaments and are especially brought to light on the Day of Pentecost.

Promises of the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament

In his sermon on Pentecost, St. Peter quotes the well-known prophecy of Joel, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17. See Joel 2:28). This promise was significant because under the Old Covenant, the gift of the Spirit had been given only to a few – the patriarchs, the prophets, and some of the judges. Certain leaders of Israel were indwelt with the Holy Spirit to accomplish their tasks. Joel, however, prophesied that the Holy Spirit would be given to all God's people, all flesh. This was fulfilled at Pentecost, for Peter exclaims, this [outpouring of the Spirit] is what was spoken by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16)

Other Old Testament prophets who speak of this same promise of the Spirit include Jeremiah (Jer. 31; 31-34) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 36:25-27). In fact, the Ezekiel passage ties together the water and the Spirit in a prophetic vision of baptism and Chrismation.

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

Our Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly promised the gift of the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you (John 16:13, 14). Jesus

says the Holy Spirit will bring glory to Christ. This gives us an excellent means of testing whether or not acts attributed to the Holy Spirit are indeed valid.

The last words of Christ before His Ascension include a promise: *John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now* (Acts 1:5). This word was fulfilled ten days later on the Day of Pentecost.

How is the Holy Spirit given to us? The people who heard Peter speak at Pentecost asked him how they might receive salvation. He answered, *Repent, and let every one of you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38), *We repent (turn from our sins and toward Christ); we are baptized; we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, chrismation. That Practice has never changed.*

In Acts 8, Philip, the deacon and evangelist, preached in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8). Many believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12). The apostles came and later confirmed these new believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17). Here is the sacrament of chrismation following Holy baptism. Later, the Apostle Paul met some disciples of John the Baptist who had not been present when Peter spoke at Pentecost (Acts 19:1-7). They believed in Christ, *were baptized* (Acts 19:5) and *the Holy Spirit came upon them* (Acts 19:6), again through the hands of apostles.

The Promise of God includes both our union with Christ in Holy Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit at chrismation.

The Manifestation of Holy Trinity

St. Mark 1:9-11 says that the Holy Spirit came on Christ, immediately after Baptism. St. Luke (3:21, 22) agrees with that. Holy Chrismation immediately after baptism is, therefore, Biblical. This was the time of manifestation of Holy Trinity in New Testament.

3. THE EUCHARIST

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks (Gr. Eucharistesas), He broke it and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying. This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

With these words - quoting the same words of Christ in Luke 22:19, 20-St. Paul instructs the Corinthians concerning the Eucharist, the giving of thanks. Some two thousand years after Jesus gave Himself for the life of the world (John: 6:51), there are in Christendom at least three different interpretations of His words.

Orthodox Faith

How Do We View the Eucharist? For the first thousand years of Christian history the holy gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ were received as just that: His body and Blood. The Church confessed this was a mystery: The bread is truly His Body, and that which is in the cup is truly His Blood, but one cannot say how they become so.

Catholic Faith

The eleventh and twelfth centuries brought on the scholastic era, the Age of Reason in the West. The Roman Church, which had become separated from the Byzantine Orthodox Church in A. D. 1054, was pressed by the rationalists to define how the transformation takes place. They answered with the word *transubstantiation*, meaning a change of substance. The elements are no longer bread and wine; they are physically changed into flesh and blood. The

sacrament, which only faith can comprehend, was subjected to a philosophical definition. This second view of the Eucharist which was unknown in ancient Church became the faith of the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestant Faith

Not surprisingly, one of the points of disagreement between Rome and the sixteenth-century reformers was this issue of transubstantiation. Unable to accept this explanation of the sacrament, the radical reformers, who were rationalists themselves, took up the opposite point of view: the gifts are nothing but bread and wine, period. They only represent Christ's Body and Blood; they have no spiritual reality. This third *ěsymbol-onlyí* view helps explain the infrequency with which some Protestants partake of the Eucharist.

The Scriptures and the Eucharist. What do the Scriptures teach concerning the Eucharist?

1. Jesus said, *íThis is My bodyŒthis is my bloodí* (Luke: 22:19, 20). There is never a statement that these gifts merely symbolize His Body and Blood. Critics have charged that Jesus also said of Himself, *í I am the doorí* (John 10:7), and He certainly is not a seven-foot wooden plank. The flaw in that argument is obvious: at no time has the Church ever believed He was a literal door, But she has always believed the consecrated gifts of bread and wine are truly His Body and Blood.

2. In the New Testament, those who receive Christ's Body and Blood unworthily are said to bring condemnation upon themselves. *í For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleepí* (Literally, *íare deadí*, 1Cor. 11:30). A mere symbol, a quarterly reminder, could hardly have the power to cause sickness and death!

3. Historically, from the New Testament days on, the central act of worship, the very apex of spiritual sacrifice, took place on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread (Acts. 20:7). The Eucharist has always been that supreme act of thanksgiving and praise to God in His Church.

4. CONFESSION

Perhaps the most misunderstood sacrament of the Christian Church is confession. How did it originate? What role does a priest play? Is there a special procedure for confession? The Scriptures hold answers to these questions.

Concerning our sins, God's word gives a marvelous promise. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The faithful are to bring their sins to God in repentance and receive cleansing and forgiveness.

The early Christian community had a specific practice in this regard. People would stand and confess their sins to God in the presence of the whole congregation! Had not Jesus encouraged His followers to walk in the light together, to confront problems corporately, to tell it to the Church (Matt. 18:17)? Thus James writes, Confess your trespasses to one another (James 5:16). But as time went on and the Church grew in numbers, strangers came to visit and public confession became more difficult. Out of mercy, priests began to witness confessions of sin privately on behalf of the Church.

Jesus gave His disciples the authority to forgive sin. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (John 20:23; see also Matt. 16:19). From the beginning Christians understood that the grace of ordination endowed the shepherd of the flock with the discernment and compassion to speak the words of remission, on behalf of Christ, regarding the sins of those who confess and turn from sin. For God has promised the removing of sin from us as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).

“You did not choose me; Jesus told the twelve, “but I chose you and appointed (Ordained) you.” (John 15:16). To these same disciples Jesus promised, “It is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11). Whom God calls, He equips, Paul writes to Timothy, “I stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6). It is the grace of the Holy Spirit which enables the priest to serve God and the people.

Thus the Church has encouraged her faithful. If you know you have committed a specific sin, do not hide it but confess it before coming to the Holy Eucharist. St. Paul wrote, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Cor. 11:28), and “if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31).

King David learned a lesson regarding his sin which is recorded for our benefit. For about a year, he had hidden his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband (2 Sam. 11:1-12:13). Then, confronted by Nathan the prophet, David repented from his heart and confessed his sin in a psalm which is used for general confession to this day (Ps. 51). The joy of salvation was restored to him.

People ask, “Can I confess to God privately?” Certainly, though there is no clear biblical basis for it. Even general confession occurs in the Church. In His mercy, God provides the sacrament of confession (more properly called the sacrament of repentance) to give us deliverance from sin and from what psychologists call denial. It is easy to pray in isolation, yet never come clean. It is far more effective to confess aloud to God before a priest, and benefit from his guidance and help.

Thus we come before the holy icon of Christ, to whom we confess, and are guided by the priest, our spiritual father, in a cleansing inventory of our lives. When we tell God all, naming our sins and failures, we hear those glorious words of freedom which announce Christ’s promise of forgiveness of all our sins. We resolve to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

5. ORDINATION

Sacraments (or mysteries) are holy actions of the Church by which spiritual life is imparted to those receiving them. Ordination, which means to set in place or to select by the outstretched hand, is one of several Orthodox Sacraments. It is extended specifically to bishops, presbyters (Priests) and deacons, and generally to all through Holy Baptism.

Bishops

In His ministry Christ ordained or set in place the twelve, assuring them, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

Both the New Testament and the Church Fathers recognize the Twelve as the first bishops or overseers in the Church. When Judas had fallen away and the disciples were considering his successor, Peter said, "Let another take his office" (*Gr. episkopen, lit. ibishoprici*) (Acts 1:20). This bishopric was given to Matthias (Acts 1:26).

The apostles ñ these first bishops ñ in turn ordained presbyters and deacons.

Deacons

The account of the first ordination of deacons (Acts 6:1-6) is quite detailed. "Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, the apostles said, whom we may appoint" (*Gr. kathistemi to set down or to ordain*) over this business" (Acts 6:3). The manner of this appointment is clear. "They laid hands on them" (Acts 6:6). The ordination of deacons in

the Orthodox Church takes place in this same manner today, through the laying on of hands by the bishop.

Presbyters

The first account of the ordination of elders or presbyters is in Acts 14:23. The apostles Paul and Barnabas appointed (literally: elected by stretching forth the hand) elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, then commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Similarly, Paul reminds his apostolic apprentice, Titus, For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint (set in place, ordain) elders in every city as I commanded you (Titus 1:5).

The Titus passage brings to mind the first prayer the bishop prays over the one being ordained to the Orthodox priesthood: The grace divine, which always heals that which is weak, and completes that which is lacking, elevates through the laying on of my hands this most devout deacon to be priest.

The bishop continues to ask God to fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit this man that he may be worthy to stand in innocence before Your holy altar, to proclaim the gospel of your Kingdom, to minister the word of Your truth, to offer You spiritual gifts and sacrifices, to renew Your people through the laver of regeneration.

A dramatic moment in the service of ordination comes when the candidate is led around the altar kissing or venerating the four corners of the altar. This symbolizes his marriage to Christ, his death with Christ, and his willingness to serve the Church sacrificially after the example of his Master.

Ordination is seen as an eternal appointment, for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). It is in this spirit that during each Divine Liturgy the priest prays for his bishop that the Lord God remember him in His Kingdom always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Through the sacrament of ordination in His Church, Christ entrusts to the shepherd the very salvation of His people's souls.

6. MARRIAGE

The Bible and human history begin and end with weddings, Adam and Eve come together in marital union in Paradise, before the Fall revealing marriage as a part of God's eternal purpose for humanity in the midst of creation (Gen. 2:22-25). History closes with the marriage of the Bride to the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9), earthly marriage being fulfilled in the heaven, showing the eternal nature of the sacrament.

Between these bookend events of history are the accounts of numerous other unions of man and wife. In the centuries old Christian wedding ceremony, used to this day in the Orthodox Church, several of these historic marriages are remembered: Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 11:29-23:20). Isaac and Rebecca (Gen. 24). Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Virgin Mary, and Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke: 15-58).

The marriage most prominently featured in the wedding ceremony, however, is the one at Cana of Galilee, described in the Gospel passage read at every Orthodox wedding (John 2:1-11). In attending this wedding and performing His first miracle there, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, forever sanctifies marriage. As with all the Christian sacraments, marriage is sacramental because it is blessed by God.

Parenthetically, it is at this wedding at Cana that Mary first intercedes with Christ on behalf of others: "They have no wine" (John 2:3). Then she calls humanity to obey Him, "What he says to you, do it" (John 2:5).

In modern society, as well as in Christendom, a recurring debate is going on. It deals with the tension between equality of the partners in marriage and office or order in marriage. Often, this tension has

turned into a polarity between men and women, and sometimes even breeds hostility. There are two elements in the Orthodox service of marriage which serve to heal such tension, while making clear the teaching of the Church on the twin themes of equality and order concerning husband and wife.

As to equality, during the ceremony crowns are placed on the heads of the bride and groom. This act is symbolic of their citizenship in the Kingdom of God, where there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28) and of their dying to each other (the crown is often a symbol of martyrdom; see Rev. 2:10). The words of St. Paul are clear on marital equality: The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does (1. Cor. 7:4). Husband and wife belong to each other as martyrs, they belong to God as royalty, and they are called to treat each other accordingly.

But within marital equality there is also order. The epistle passage read at the Sacrament of Marriage is Ephesians 5:20-33, the exhortation to husbands and wives which begins with a call to submit to each other (Eph. 5:21). The husband is to serve God as head of his wife, as Christ is head of the Church (Eph. 5:23). The wife is to be subject to her husband as the Church is subject to her husband as Christ (Eph. 5:24). There is nothing here to suggest that the wife is oppressed in marriage, anymore than one would call the Church oppressed in relationship to Christ. He who calls us brethren (Heb. 2:11) and friends (John. 15:15) exhorts the husband to love his wife, to nourish and cherish her as He himself does the Church (Eph. 28, 29).

Thus marriage is a sacrament ñ holy, blessed, and everlasting in the sight of God and His Church. Within the bonds of marriage, husband and wife experience a union with one another in love and hopefully the fruit of children and one day the joy of grandchildren. And within the bonds of marriage there is both a fullness of equality between husband and wife, and a clarity of order with the husband as the icon of Christ, the wife as the icon of the Church.

7. HEALING (HOLY UNCTION)

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let him pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven (James 5:14, 15).

One of the great prophetic themes of the Old Testament concerning the promised Messiah is that the Father would send His Son to heal the brokenhearted and to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18, see Is. 61:1). The ministry of Christ was one of numerous occurrences of healings of all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease (Matt. 4:23). In addition, Jesus healed darkened hearts and minds as He released people from demonic oppression.

Like their Master before them the early apostles participated in God's work of healing as well, attributing their miracles to the risen and ascended Christ. "Jesus the Christ heals you," Peter told a newly restored man, who had been bedridden for eight years (Acts 9:34). St. Paul identified healing as a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9). Thus the New Testament foundation was established for the healing ministry to be a part of the sacramental life of the Church (James 5:14, 15).

Healings throughout History

The Orthodox Church has never believed or behaved as though the gifts of the Spirit or the healing miracles of Christ have somehow passed away. Did not Jesus promise, "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12).

St. Irenaeus, writing at the close of the second century, speaks of miracles in his day, iSome drive out devils...some have foreknowledge of the future...others heal the sick through the laying of handsÖand even the dead have been raised up before now and have remained with us for many years.î The writings of other Church Fathers speak often of miracles within the Church.

Quite widely known are the supernatural healings which Christ performed through the saints like Parumala Mar Gregorios. He was blessed with the gift of healing during his lifetime, and even after his death people would be restored to wholeness at his graveside.

The practice of the Church today

To this day, the Orthodox practice of prayer for the sick follows the New Testament instruction of St. James. The Orthodox Church has a special service of healing, which may be performed at any time. The presbyter prays for the ill person, anointing him with oil and saying,

îO Lord Almighty, healer of our souls and bodies, who puts down and raises up, who chastises and heals also, visit now in Your mercy our brother or sister ____ (Name)_____ who is ill. Stretch forth Your arm that is full of healing and health, and raise (him / her) up from this bed and cure this illness. Put away the spirit of disease and every malady and pain and fever. And if (he / she) has committed sins and transgressions, grant remission and forgiveness, because You love mankind.

As Orthodox Christians we pray, neither commanding God to heal, nor doubting His ability to heal, but pleading for His promised mercy upon all who are ill.

Of those accepted most important seven sacraments, the ordination and marriage are optional and all the other five are compulsory for any faithful.

SECTION 2

SOME ORTHODOX BELIEFS AND THEIR BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

1. How does the Orthodox Church view the sacraments, specifically Communion?

Some teach that Communion or the Lord's Supper (which Orthodox call the Eucharist) is only a sign or symbol. Most of Christendom, however, believes it is far more. The Orthodox Church has always believed that we, in a mystery, receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. What do the Holy Scriptures teach concerning Communion?

a. Jesus said at the Last Supper: "This is My body" and "This cup is ... My blood" (Luke 22:19, 20). The Lord states clearly that His gifts to us are more than just a sign or a mere memorial, and all of ancient Christendom took Him at His word.

The skeptic might say, "But Jesus also said, 'I am the door.' Certainly He did not mean He was a seven-foot wooden plank." No, and Christians have never interpreted His statement that way. But the Church does teach that He is our entrance into the Kingdom of God and that the bread and wine become, in a mystery, His Body and Blood.

b. In 1 Corinthians 11:29, 30, we read of people who became sick and even died through receiving Communion hypocritically. People are not affected in that manner by something that is merely symbolic. In this sacrament we commune with God Himself.

c. In 1 Corinthians 10, Saint Paul is comparing the manna and water in the wilderness with the true bread and drink of the New Covenant. In 1 Corinthians 10:4 he writes, "And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." The question is, was the Rock Christ? Under laboratory observation, the rock would still most likely be granite. But the Word of God says, "The Rock was Christ." We do not subject the gifts to chemical analysis, but to the Word of God. It is mystery, but never magic. Christ was present in the Rock; He is present in the Holy Gifts.

d. In John 6:53 we read, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.'" The Church receives this passage at face value—nothing added, nothing taken away. In Communion we become partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ. Just as the new birth (John 3) gives us life through water and the Holy Spirit, so the Body and Blood of Christ sustain His life in us.

e. There is also the fact (Heb. 9:11, 12) that Christ our High Priest enters the heavenly Sanctuary with His own Blood, and that it is in this heavenly Sanctuary that we worship (Heb. 10:19-25). There is only one Eucharist, the one in heaven, and we join in that one feast.

We must neither add to nor subtract from the Word of God. Therefore we confess with Holy Scripture that the consecrated bread and wine is the Body and Blood of Christ. It is a mystery: we do not pretend to know how or why. As always, we come to Christ in childlike faith, receive His gifts, and offer Him praise that He has called us to His heavenly banquet.

2. Why does the Orthodox Church continually honor and bless Mary?

Let us turn to the New Testament to learn what God says about Mary. A key passage is Luke 1:26-49.

a. The Archangel Gabriel calls the Virgin Mary "highly favored" with God and the most "blessed" of all women (Luke 1:28). The Church can never do less.

b. In Luke 1:42, 43, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, also calls Mary blessed, and the mother of my Lord. Can we not make the same confession? For centuries the Church with one voice has called Mary the mother of God. If God was not in her womb, we are dead in our sins. By calling her mother of God we do not mean, of course, that she is mother of the Holy Trinity. She is mother of the eternal Son of God in His humanity. Thus we call her the Theotokos or God-bearer.

c. Not only does Elizabeth call her blessed, but Mary herself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, predicts, "All generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). This biblical prophecy explains the Orthodox hymn, "It is truly right to bless you, O Theotokos, the Mother of our God." One cannot believe the Bible and ignore Mary. Orthodox Christians bless her in obedience to God, fulfilling these holy words. We do not worship Mary. Worship is reserved only for God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We honor or venerate her, as the Scriptures teach.

d. It is important to secure Mary's identity as the mother of God in order to protect the identity of her holy Son, the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32), God in the flesh. Jesus assumed His human flesh from her! Mary's role is essential in understanding that Jesus is both fully God and fully man.

3. Does the Orthodox Church place tradition above or equal to Scripture?

The Church sees the Scriptures as inspired and authoritative Holy Tradition: the Word of God. It is crucial to understand how the word "tradition" is used in the New Testament, which condemns the tradition of men but calls us to follow Apostolic or Holy Tradition.

Tradition of Men and Holy Tradition

a. First of all, Jesus warned against holding to the tradition of men and your tradition in the strongest possible terms (see Mark 7:6-16). All Christians agree: The Bible says "no" to man-made religious teachings and traditions.

b. Secondly, Saint Paul warns in Colossians 2:8: *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”* Here again, we notice the phrase *“tradition of men,”* which the Orthodox Church condemns.

c. In distinction to the tradition of men, the Bible calls us to obey tradition which has God as its source. In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Saint Paul writes, *“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”* In contrast to man-made tradition, *Apostolic Tradition is our foundation in the Church.*

d. Further, in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 we read, *“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”* Here again, we are dealing with Apostolic Tradition, the tradition which God planted in the Church. Thus, the Church is *“the pillar and ground [or support] of the truth”* (I Tim. 3:15).

e. All true tradition comes from the same source: the Holy Spirit in the Church. The same One who inspired Holy Scripture prompted all the teaching of the Apostles, whether written or oral (2 Thess. 2:15). Further, it was on the basis of Church Tradition that the biblical canon was determined.

f. Tradition, as G.K. Chesterton wrote, is *“giving our ancestors a vote.”* It is walking in the *“paths of righteousness for His name’s sake”* (Psalm 23:3). Or, as Jeremiah writes, *“living by Holy Tradition is a call from God Himself. Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls”* (Jer. 6:16). Thus, there are two kinds of tradition: that of God and that of men. It is to the former only that the Orthodox Church is committed.

4. Do the icons of Orthodoxy border on idolatry?

In Orthodox Christianity, icons are never worshipped, but they are honored or venerated.

a. The Second Commandment says, 'You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth' (Ex. 20:4, 5). The warning here is (1) that we are not to image things which are limited to heaven and therefore unseen, and (2) we never bow down to or worship created, earthly things such as the golden calf. Does this condemn all imagery in worship? The Bible speaks for itself, and the answer is no.

b. Just five chapters after the giving of the Ten Commandments, God, as recorded in Exodus 25, gives His divine blueprint, for the tabernacle. Specifically in verses 19 and 20, he commands images of cherubim to be placed above the mercy seat. Also, God promises to meet and speak with us through this imagery! (Ex. 25:22). It is not true imagery which is condemned in Scripture, but false imagery.

c. In Exodus 26:1, Israel was commanded in no uncertain terms to weave artistic designs of cherubim into the tabernacle curtains. Are these images? Absolutely! In fact, they could well be called Old Testament icons. And they are images which God commanded to be made.

From the beginning the Church has made images of heavenly things brought to earth: Christ Himself, the Cross (Gal. 6:14), and the saints of God (Heb. 11; 12). Worship is reserved for the Holy Trinity alone. But we honor the great men and women of the Faith by remembering them in the Orthodox Church via visual aids, called icons or 'windows to heaven.'

5. Why do Orthodox Christians honour the saints?

The Scriptures themselves call us to honor other Christians, both the living and departed.

a. In Acts 28:10, Saint Luke writes, 'They also honored us [the apostolic band] in many ways.' The biblical injunction concerning Mary, 'All generations will call me blessed' (Luke 1:48), is an example of how we are to honor the saints for all time (see also Heb. 11:4-40).

b. We are to honor all believers and true authorities, not just

departed ones. This is why Saint Paul exhorts us to honor one another (1 Tim. 5:17), and why Saint Peter tells husbands to honor their wives (1 Pet. 3:7). We are even called to obey and honor our civil authorities (Rom. 13:1-7).

c. In Orthodox worship, we see pictures or icons of the believers of history all around us. This is, in part, how we honor our forerunners in the Faith. In Hebrews 12:22-24 we read that in worship we join with the heavenly throng to praise and worship God. We come to join in an innumerable company of angels, in the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. And as in spirit and in truth we join these angelic and redeemed heroes of the Faith, we do give them proper honor, as the Scripture teaches.

d. Modern Christianity tends to give notice primarily to living heroes—often newly believing athletes, beauty queens, and political figures. But throughout Church history, honor went to those who had finished the race (1 Cor. 9:24-27), not to those who have merely begun or who are still on the earthly track (Gal. 5:7). And these saints of old are not dead, but alive in Christ forever!

6. What do Orthodox Christians believe about liturgy?

Biblically and historically, true worship has consistently been liturgical. Spontaneous worship is an innovation of the last century or so.

a. Liturgical worship, written prayers (the Psalms), and feast days were the norm throughout the history of Israel (see Ex. 23:14-19; 24:1, 2).

b. The worship of heaven is liturgical (Is. 6:1-9; Heb. 8:1-3; Rev. 4).

c. The foundations of liturgical worship in the Church are apparent in the New Testament. The most oft-repeated prayer of the Church is there (Matt. 6:9-13). The words we say at baptism are there (Matt. 28:19). The words spoken at Holy Communion are there, with Saint Paul repeating Jesus' words (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Further, the believers in Acts 13:2, about A.D. 49, were seen in a liturgical service to the Lord: As they ministered [Greek: *leitourgouaton*, the root word for

liturgy] to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said. . . . Note, too, in this passage that the Holy Spirit speaks to us during liturgical worship. Thus praise to God must never become dead form, but rather living worship, in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24).

d. Some Protestant groups have reacted against Rome by dismissing liturgical worship (though everyone has patterned worship, spontaneous or not!). But the Bible and Church history are clear: liturgical worship is the norm for the people of God. Documents like the Didache (A.D. 70) and the writings of Saint Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) and Hippolytus (early 200s) all show that the worship of the early Church was, without exception, liturgical.

THE FOUR ORDERS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

An ancient visitor to modern Christendom would be shocked to find that factions have pulled away from Apostolic Christianity not just over doctrinal matters but even over the issue of how the Church is governed. Thus, in quite a recent development, some religious bodies call themselves congregational (ruled by the people), others are presbyterian (ruled by the elders), still others are episcopal (ruled by the bishops).

The New Testament teaches that all four orders which form the government of the Church - laity, deacons, presbyters, and bishops - are necessary to the proper functioning of the body of Christ. All four are clearly visible in Paul's first letter to Timothy.

(1) **The laity** are also called saints (Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:1; Tim. 5:10), the faithful (Eph. 1:1), and brethren (Col. 1:2). The laity (Gr. laos) are all the people of God, the Priesthood (1 Pet. 2:4 - 10). Technically laity includes clergy, though in our day the word usually refers to those in the Church who are not ordained. It is from among the laity that the other three orders emerge.

(2) **The deacon**, literally servants are ordained to serve the Church and must meet high qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13). The Apostles were the first to take on the service tasks of deacons, and when the workload became too great they called for seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business (Acts 6:3). Besides serving the material needs of the people, deacons occupy a crucial role in the liturgical life of the Church.

(3) **The presbyter**, or elders, are visible throughout the New Testament. Their ministry from the start was to rule, labor in the

wordî and teach true ðoctrineî (1 Tim. 5:17) in the local congregation. Paul iappointed elders in every churchî (Acts 14:23) and later instructed his apostolic apprentice, Titus, to do the same in Crete. (Titus 1:5). From the word ðPresbyterî came the shorter form ðprestî, which was used in the early Church and finally became ðpriestî. In no way is the ordained Christian priesthood seen as a throwback to or a reenacting of the Old Testament priesthood. Rather, Joined to Christ who is our High Priest iaccording to the order of Melchizedekî (Heb. 5:6, 10), the Orthodox priest is likewise a minister of a New Covenant which supersedes the old.

(4) **The bishop** is the ioverseerî of the congregation and clergy in a given area. Often the terms ðbishopî and ðelderî are interchangeable in the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 28), with the bishop being the leader of the elders. The qualifications for bishop listed in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9 underscore this role. Nonetheless, ðbishopî is a specific office both in the New Testament and in the early Church. The twelve were the first to hold this office (in Acts 1:20) iofficeî is literally translated ðbishopricî) and they in turn consecrated other bishops to follow them. For example, Timothy and Titus are clearly of a separate order from that of elder (see 1 Tim. 5:17 - 22; Titus 1:5). Early records show James was bishop of Jerusalem by A. D. 49 and functioned accordingly at the first council there (Acts 15:13-22). Peter is on record as the first bishop of Antioch prior to A. D. 53, and later first bishop of Rome, where he was martyred about A.D. 65.

Perhaps the strongest early reference outside the New Testament to the presence of the four orders in Church government occurs in the writings of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch from A. D. 67-107, the very heart of the New Testament era. To the church at Philadelphia (See Rev. 3:7-13) he writes of ðChristians (laity) at one with the bishop and the presbyters and the deacons....î (Ign. Phil., Salutation).

In the Orthodox Church, authority is resident in all four orders, with the bishop providing the center of unity. His authority is not over the Church but within the Church. He is an icon of Jesus Christ, ðthe Shepherd and Overseer [literally, ðBishopî] of your soulsî (1 Pet. 2:25). Church leadership is not one or more of the orders

functioning without the others. Rather the Church, with Christ as Head, is conducted like a symphony orchestra, a family, the body of Christ, were all the members in their given offices work together as the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity.

SECTION 3

A GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

One of the best known of the Desert Fathers of fourth-century Egypt, Saint Sarapion the Sindonite, traveled once on pilgrimage to Rome. Here he was told of a celebrated recluse, a woman who lived always in one small room, never going out. Skeptical about her way of life — for he was himself a great wanderer — Sarapion called on her and asked “Why are you sitting here?” To this she replied: “I am not sitting, I am on a journey.

I am not sitting, I am on a journey. Every Christian may apply these words to himself or herself. To be a Christian is to be a traveler. Our situation, say the Greek Fathers, is like that of the Israelite people in the desert of Sinai : we live in tents, not houses for spiritually we are always on the move. We are on a journey not measured by the hours of our watch or the days of the calendar, for it is a journey out of time in to eternity.” (Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, SVS press).

Introduction

What does it mean to be a true Christian- to walk as a committed disciple of Jesus Christ at the dawn of a new millenium of human existence? Once again, the Orthodox Church provides profound answers, based on two thousand years of Spirit-led experience.

In the teaching of the Orthodox Faith, salvation is never limited to a point in time. Salvation is not one-dimensional event, a past-tense occurrence with merely philosophical or ipositional implications for the present. Rather as illustrated above, salvation is

perceived to be a lifetime experience—a Journey not measured by the hours of our watch or the days of the Calendar, for it is a journey out of time into eternity. Like every Journey, this journey must have a beginning. And like every journey, this journey continues until it reaches its final destination. By faith we come to Christ. Through His sacraments we walk with Him daily — hour by hour, moment by moment. And with hope and love we move ahead to that time when we will be eternally in His presence, worshipping with the angels. As Saint Paul says; “Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part but then I shall know just as I also am Known” (1. Cor. 13:12).

We now turn to a brief examination of the Christian life — how we become Christians, and how we remain in communion with God throughout our entire lives.

Beginning the Journey to the Kingdom*

Most people at one time or another wonder if there is real meaning to life - an underlying pattern or purpose to it all. For me, that quest for meaning and purpose took place in college.

By the end of my junior year, I was ready to do a turn around. I knew that Jesus Christ had a rightful claim on my life. And I had come to see that life apart from Him—even the enjoyable and constructive parts of life—held little meaning and satisfaction. I was into myself, out for myself, but at a point of wanting to start over.

That spring, I consciously committed my life to Christ. I acknowledged that I had shut Him out of my life, that I was honestly sorry for not following Him. And that I wanted Him to take full control of my life. Without much realization of what it would mean, I told him, “From here on out, I’m Yours.”

The inner results of my initial repentance and belief in Christ are difficult for me to describe. While some people have very dramatic turn-arounds, others experience few or no spiritual feelings. For me, there were lightning bolts, no shock waves. But what I did sense was a distinct new awareness of the Lord’s presence, and an accompanying peace in my heart and life. A love for God and a desire to please

Him-experiences left behind in childhood-were rekindled to Him, and to attain to His heavenly Kingdom

Of course, turning to Christ is nothing new, either to people in our age or to those in ages past. The fact is, Jesus Christ has changed the lives of countless men and women over the last two thousand years. People meet him and are never the same again. Their lives are transformed. Christ has so deeply affected His followers that millions have willingly died for Him - and counted it an honor to have done so. But why?

Who is this Man who came into the world so unobtrusively, yet can change us so drastically, take away our loneliness, forgive our sins, restore and stabilize our minds and hearts, and even take us into the very Kingdom of God?

An incomparable Life

Often when we think about the life of Christ, we start two thousand years ago at a manger in the Middle East, with the Baby, the Wise men, the star. While these things concern His earthly birth, His story really begins in eternity past. Because before time began, before the world was ever made, before the beginning, Christ was there. For there never was a time when He did not exist!

The first words in the Bible are, "In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). For God was there from the start, always existing in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From God the Father there was begotten or born from before all time God the Son. And eternally proceeding from the Father is God the Holy Spirit.

At the creation of the human race, we find God saying, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). Note the plurality of Persons in the Godhead. Thus, from before all ages, God the Son - also called in Scripture the Word of God - reigned with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. That explains why the Gospels teach that God the Son, Jesus Christ, came to reveal the Father to us, and to send to us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the history of ancient Israel, the Prophets foretold the coming of One who would be the Messiah of Israel, the Anointed

One. They predicted He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), that a sign of His coming would be that a virgin would conceive Him (Is. 7:14), and that He would suffer and die for the sins of the people (Is. 53:5, 6). There are some three hundred references to His coming in the Old Testament Scriptures, all penned hundreds of years before He came.

Then, just as promised, in the fullness of time the angel appeared to a godly young Jewish virgin named Mary, and announced to her that she would bear a Son. *“You shall call His name Jesus, the angel said, for He will save His people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21). Thus, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the humanity of Jesus Christ was formed. The Son of God became everything we are *“not except for sin”* in order that we might become the recipients of everything He is. And Saint John writes, *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14). God became man to reveal Himself to us.

Most of us ask ourselves at one time or another, *“Does anyone else in all the world understand me?”* The incarnation—the *“enfleshment”* of the Son of God answers that question once and for all *“not with a resounding Yes!”* Because Jesus Christ is fully God, He knows all things *“not even the number of the hairs on our heads”* (Luke 12:7). He created us. And because He is fully man, He is acquainted firsthand with our weakness, our disappointments, our sufferings. He knows about rejection, loneliness, hunger, and death because He went through them. Isaiah the Prophet wrote of Him, *“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”* (Is. 53:4).

Taking His flesh from His Holy Mother Mary, Jesus experienced birth and growth like all of us. In his early years He knew both servitude and apprenticeship to His earthly father, Joseph, in his trade of carpentry. And He knew the higher priority of obedience and submission to His heavenly Father, on one occasion staying behind in the temple to be about *“His Father’s business”* instead of accompanying Mary and Joseph back home from a trip to Jerusalem.

He went through the adolescent years *“not he experienced what it was like to be thirteen, fifteen”* and faced head *“not on the opportunities for loss of temper, moral compromise, dishonesty and rebellion”*

present in His day. He knows about human frailty because He was tempted in every way we are, yet He never succumbed to sin.

At the age of thirty, He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. In doing so, He not only began His own public ministry, but also forever set apart water as the means of beginning our new life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. This is why the Church, His followers here on earth, has baptized her converts in water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Baptism is that God given rite of passage into the Kingdom of God whose mystic power to change us surpasses all human reason.

Throughout His three year public ministry; Jesus Christ worked countless Miracles. He healed the sick, He brought sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and help to the helpless. He stilled a storm, cast out demons, and raised the dead. All these miracles established the presence of God's Kingdom and further affirmed that He was God. Those who knew Him but a short time said, iHe has done all things well (Mark. 7:37). And when pressed on specifics, even His enemies could find no fault in Him (John 19:4, 6). The daily routines of entire towns and villages were cancelled or changed when He visited. Everything, it became apparent, was subject to Him.

After three years of His ministry the Jewish religious establishment could stand no more of Him. Because He was God and said so, calls for Jesus' death began to mount. Some of His followers saw the implications and fell away. Even the disciples whom He had hand-picked faltered, one of them denying Him three times. Finally; the religious and civil authorities teamed up against Him, put Him through a sham of a trial, and crucified Him as a common criminal between two thieves. In a few hours, He was dead. No one yet understood that He had died for the entire world, carrying our sins and transgressions with Him into the grave.

Then came the culmination, the most powerful and supernatural event of all history. Three days after dying, Jesus Christ was alive again. He rose from the grave, a champion over death. Death would never touch Him again, for He cancelled out its power. And to those who are joined to Him, His promise is, iBecause I live, You will live

also (John 14:19). He had forever trampled down our greatest enemy, death, by His own death. And in His Resurrection He bestows life on the living as well as upon those long dead.

For forty days after His Resurrection, Jesus opened the Scriptures to the eyes of His disciples, teaching them about His everlasting Kingdom, and commissioning them to take the gospel to the whole world. He instructed them to build his Church, the expression of His Kingdom on the earth, and fulfilled for them His promise of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task.

To be sure, the one thing Jesus Christ left behind in this world is His Church. The Scriptures describe that Church as an assembly of His people, a new nation, a royal priesthood, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Because those who make up His Church share in His Resurrection, they are called the Body of Christ, and He Himself is Head.

At the end of His forty days of teaching, while His disciples stood by as witness, Jesus Christ ascended in His glorified body into heaven. He regions at the right hand of His Father. As our heavenly bishop, He is Lord of His Church. In Him, Saint Paul writes, all things consist or are held together (Col. 1:17).

One day Jesus Christ will return to earth, to confront the living and the dead. All humanity will appear before His awesome and dread judgement seat. The righteous will inherit eternal life; the wicked, everlasting darkness. The Kingdom of God will be established in his fullness, and Christ will reign, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever.

Knowing God

Some years ago, while I was speaking, a student stepped forward with an important question. "What does it take for a person to truly become a Christian ñ what is the price tag for me?"

I told him that night there are two answers to his question. On the one hand, our salvation is a gift. It is freely given. There is nothing we can do to merit a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That is what the Cross is all about, For when Jesus Christ dies for us,

He triumphed over the result of our sin, which is death. He died that we might live. Because of the mercy of God, we therefore read in Scriptures that salvation is a free gift bestowed upon those who are joined to Christ.

That beloved passage, John 3:16, sums it up: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* Saint Paul reminds us, *The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 6:23). Through Christ we are born from above through Holy Baptism into newness of life. We are given a fresh start in life - *not* forgiven of all our sins, freed from the hold of evil in our lives, and filled with the Spirit of God to pursue a process of maturity in Christ. His grace to us is a gift.

But I also told my student friend there is a second answer to his question. *Let me say it as plainly as I can,* I told him. *Coming to Christ will cost you everything you have. Your whole life must be changed and keep changing to become what He wants it to be. If you're into sexual immorality, it will cost you that. Cheating you'll need to stop it. Drugs and drunkenness- you will need to turn from those. And if you are the sort of person who wants to withdraw from life and is not much interested in people, that will have to change as well.*

You, See, Jesus Christ preached one central message. It is called the gospel the good news and it is this: *Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!* (Matt. 3:2). To repent means to turn around, to commit one's life fully to Christ, to say *Yes!* to the Lord and absolutely mean it. And why are we called to this life of repentance? Because to enter God's Kingdom there is one requirement. We must be righteous. We repent because we are unrighteous *and* we come far short of living lives that bring glory to God.

Isn't it true, when we look at our motives and actions, we see we must be an embarrassment to God? We have basically gone our own way; We have ignored His will and commands for us; we have acted in ways that have damaged other people *and* some permanently. Sometimes we turn to God in a pinch, but when things smooth out

we return to doing our own thing. And we know it.

When we first repent, we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and tell Him we are sorry at heart for how we have lived. As undeserving sinners, we ask for His mercy and His forgiveness and commit ourselves into His care for the rest of our lives.

Let's face it. If the Kingdom of God is worth anything, it is worth everything. We are called upon by Christ Himself to lay down everything that would keep us from entering it. That is why Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a treasure hidden in a field. Once we realize the incredible value of that precious piece we will sell everything we have to obtain it. This divesting of our private holdings is exactly what repentance means. We give up what we must not keep for the incomparable riches of Jesus Christ. This cost to us is the greatest bargain we can ever know.

When we turn to the Lord in this way, we begin the thrilling and adventure some process of knowing God.

Consider one Saul of Tarsus who lived in the first century. We know him better, of course, as Saint Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ. Well educated under leading Jewish rabbis, the young Saul took it upon himself to persecute the early Christians at every turn. One day on the road leading to the city of Damascus, he was blinded by an overpowering light. Jesus Christ appeared to him from heaven asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Having been struck to the ground, Saul uttered his prayer of repentance. "Lord what do you want to me to do?" he asked no doubt trembling. He was instructed by Christ to go into Damascus, where he would be told what to do. Ananias the prophet met him there and confirmed his faith and repentance. Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit, healed of his blindness, and baptized (Acts 9:1-19). He went on to bring the word of God to countless men and women.

Or consider the venerable Polycarp, who was probably baptized into Christ as an infant or young Child in about A. D. 70, still in the heart of the New Testament era. He was brought up to love and serve Christ, and became the bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor just after the

turn of the century. Polycarp now an old man, was given the choice of denying Christ or being burned alive. *‘I have served Him eighty six years’* replied Saint Polycarp, *‘and in no way has he dealt unjustly with me. So how can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?’* (Martyrdom of Polycarp, chapter 9). Burned for his faith, Saint Polycarp is an example not of a dramatic adult conversion, but rather of a Christian privileged to live his whole life in peace and repentance.

Santa Barbara, California is a city named for Saint Barbara, who lived in Nicomedia in the third century. Her father was an avowed pagan, a fanatical worshiper of idols, and he kept his daughter insulated from the outside world to keep her from contact with Christians. But in spite of it all Barbara heard the gospel of Christ, and turned to Him in Holy Baptism. When her father was told of her conversion, he marched her to the executioner’s block and she was beheaded-possibly at her father’s hand. Her pure and godly life, and her willingness to die for Jesus Christ, have brought great glory to Christ throughout history.

A century later in northern Africa, another Christian Woman, Monica, gave birth to a son named Augustine. Though raised in a Christian home, Augustine, like many of us, determined to ignore God and live for himself. This gifted young man pursued a life of both academic achievement and immorality, and by his mid-twenties was miserable and empty. He tells in his classic autobiography, *Confessions*, of his surrender to Jesus Christ. *‘You have made us for yourself, O Lord,’* he writes *‘and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.’* It was though he came to Christ by the process of elimination. Nothing else worked. Under the guidance of his spiritual father, Ambrose, the young convert grew steadily in the grace of God. Saint Augustine went on to become a bishop in the Church and one of the most influential Christian writers and thinkers of all time.

Space does not permit us to tell of Saint Katherine of Alexandria, Saint John of Damascus, Saint Maximus the confessor, Saints Cyril and Methodius, Saint Gregory Palamas, Saint Seraphim of Sarov, St. Gregorios of India and the hosts of others who lived their lives under the lordship of Christ as fellow heirs of His Kingdom.

Besides their love for Christ, there is at least one other vital characteristic these people held in common. They all grew to know God and serve Him in the Church. This stands in stark contrast to much of what is taught today under the guise of Christianity. Tragically some who still use His name have so willfully departed from the path which Christ set forth and those heroes and heroines of the Faith followed, that they have made knowing God nearly impossible. This coupled with the Churchless Christ of televangelism has prompted people who sincerely desire to serve the Lord to try to make it on their own. But this option works no better.

Coming to Christ and His Church

For two thousand years, the Orthodox Christian Church has held intact the fullness of Christ that we have discussed here. She has maintained this Faith in the face of almost indescribable persecution and suffering. Within the gates of Orthodox Christianity is the totality of the New Testament Faith, the Apostolic Church.

By the mercy of God, this Faith has never been reduced or diminished. Nor has it been added to or altered. The Orthodox Church is that one place, that zone of safety, if you will, where the God of the Scriptures-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ñ can be fully known, loved, and worshipped.

One of the great Fathers of Orthodoxy is Saint John Chrysostom, a Bible teacher and preacher of the fourth century who has brought and still brings thousands of people to saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through his writings. Whenever this man encountered a person who wanted to commit himself to Christ and learn to know Him, Saint John would agree to instruct him in the Orthodox Faith, after which would come Holy Baptism and the anointing with oil to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But before the actual instruction was begun, the godly pastor would offer a prayer of enrollment by which the person was entrusted to Jesus Christ as his Lord and King. Look carefully at how it begins:

iIn Your Name, O Lord, God of truth, And in the Name of Your Only-begotten Son. And of your Holy Spirit, I lay my hands upon

your servant, Who has been found worthy to flee to your Holy Name
And to take refuge under the shelter of Your wings.†

Let me ask you sincere question. Are you willing to flee to Jesus Christ for protection in His Holy Church, to learn to know Him, to be cleansed and changed? If so, a new life in Christ lies ahead for you. Your next step is to get to know an Orthodox priest in area who can guide you through a time of preparation and instruction in the Faith, and then union with Christ in Holy Baptism.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me† (John 14:6). Determine to follow Jesus Christ and learn to walk with Him on that path which leads to the knowledge of God. For Jesus Christ has promised, IThe one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out† (John 6:37). The door has been opened to you, and he will receive you as His disciple.

SPIRITUAL HELPS IN THE EXAMINATION OF YOUR CONSCIENCE

The Seven Grievous Sins

1. **PRIDE**: the lack of humility befitting a creature of God.
2. **GREED**: too great a desire for money or worldly goods.
3. **LUST**: impure and unworthy desire for something evil.
4. **ANGER**: unworthy irritation and lack of self - control.
5. **GLUTTONY**: the habit of eating or drinking too much.
6. **ENVY**: jealousy of some other person's happiness.
7. **SLOTH**: laziness that keeps us from doing our duty to God and man.

The Seven Capital Virtues

The seven capital virtues are the opposite of the seven grievous sins.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Humility. | 2. Liberality. |
| 3. Chastity. | 4. Mildness. |
| 5. Temperance. | 6. Contentment. |
| 7. Diligence. | |

The Works of the Flesh

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Adultery. | 2. Fornication. |
| 3. Uncleaness. | 4. Licentiousness. |
| 5. Idolatry. | 6. Sorcery. |
| 7. Hatred. | 8. Contentions. |
| 9. Jealousies. | 10. Outbursts of wrath. |
| 11. Selfish ambitions. | 12. Dissensions. |

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| 13. Heresies. | 14. Envy. |
| 15. Murders. | 16. Drunkenness. |
| 17. Revelries. (see Gal. 5:19-21) | |

Nine Ways of Participating in Another's Sin

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. By counsel. | 2. By command. |
| 3. By consent. | 4. By provocation. |
| 5. By praise or flattery. | 6. By concealment. |
| 7. By partaking. | 8. By silence. |
| 9. By defense of the sin committed. | |

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Love. | 2. Joy. |
| 3. Peace. | 4. Longsuffering. |
| 5. Kindness. | 6. Goodness. |
| 7. Faithfulness. | 8. Gentleness. |
| 9. Self - control. | 10. Modesty. |
| 11. Continenence. | 12. Chastity. |
- (See Gal. 5:22, 23)

The Three Theological Virtues

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| 1. Faith. | 2. Hope |
| 3. Love. | (See 1 Cor. 13:13) |

The Chief Aids to Penitence

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Prayer. | 2. Fasting. |
| 3. Performance of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. | |
- (See Matt. 6:1-18)

The Chief Corporal Works of Mercy

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. To feed the hungry. | 2. To give drink to the thirsty. |
| 3. To shelter the homeless. | 4. To clothe the naked. |
| 5. To visit those in prison. | 6. To visit the sick. |
| 7. To bury the dead. (See Matt. 25:34 - 45) | |

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.

2. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

3. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

6. You shall not murder.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You Shall not steal.

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his Ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

(Ex. 20:1-17)

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE BEFORE CONFESSION

Before going to confession, the penitent should make an appraisal of his or her personal shortcomings. For guidance, the following questions, based upon the Ten Commandments, are suitable for examination of one's conscience.

1. Have you experienced doubts in your faith? Have you failed to trust in God's mercies or spoken against the Lord in time of adversity? Have you doubted the Christians faith and the teachings of the Church?

2. Have you made an idol of any person or thing? Have you given to anyone or anything the worship that is due to God alone? Have you put your belief in fortunetellers or consulted those who presume to predict the future?

3. Have you taken the name of God in vain? Have you spoken lightly of religious matters or of sacred objects? Have you cursed yourself or others? Have you sworn a false oath or broken any solemn vow or promise?

4. Have you attended church regularly? Have you prayed regularly, remembering others in your prayers? Have you kept the Sabbath holy and refrained from doing any unnecessary work on Sundays? Have you spent the day in any unwholesome fashion or profaned it by improper conduct? Have you kept the fasts and Holy Days prescribed by the Church?

5. Have you honored your parents, superiors, teachers, and spiritual advisors? Have you done your duty towards your family? Have you

been wanting in love or kindness towards your family in any way? Have you caused them pain by your words or actions, or neglected them, or failed to help them?

6. Have you oppressed anyone, held hatred for others, envied others, or desired revenge on anyone? Have you injured anyone by word or deed? Have you desired or hastened the death of anyone? Have you done anything to shorten your own life or that of someone else by injuring health or through intemperate living?

7. Have you willfully entertained impure thoughts or desires? Have you committed any unworthy actions alone or with others? Have you read immoral literature or been guilty of unchaste words or actions? Have you chosen bad companions or frequented unwholesome places? Have you led others to commit sinful acts?

8. Have you taken any property belonging to others or wished to do so? Have you kept anything that did not belong to you? Have you deceived anyone in business transactions? Have you paid your debts? Have you given to charitable causes in proportion to your means?

9. Have you witnessed falsely against anyone or passed unconfirmed judgment on anyone? Have you gossiped about anyone or harmed their reputation? Have you told lies, added to or subtracted from the truth, concealed the truth, or assisted in carrying out a lie?

10. Have you coveted the possessions of others? Have you been jealous of another's good fortune? Have you wished for things God has not given you, or been discontented with your lot?

Other useful preparations for confession include:

- Reflecting on the Lord's commandments (Matt. 22:37, 39)
- Reading and meditating upon the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7; Luke 6:17-49).
- Reading and meditating upon Psalm 50 (51) and other penitential psalms.
- Reading the moral exhortations found in Romans 12 and 13; Galatians 5:14 - 25; Ephesians 4 - 6; and 1 Peter 2 - 4.

A Prayer Before Confession

O GOD, who wilt not the death of the sinner, but rather that he repent and live, I confess before thee that I have sinned before heaven and in thy sight, while enjoying thy great goodness. By this ungratefulness have I fallen from the estate of sons and am no more worthy to be called a son of thy grace. Make me, O Father, as one of thy hired servants. But blot out my transgressions in thy mercy. Cleanse me from my sin. O merciful Father, turn thy face from my sins and look not upon mine iniquities. Cast me not from before thy face, O Gracious Lord. Rebuke me not in thine anger, but harken to the voice of my sorrow, O Lord, and look upon my tears. May they wash me clean in thy sight, O God, for I do repent most humbly and am heartily sorry for all that I have done amiss. Moreover, I have determined not to return to the hateful paths of sin again. Receive thou my confession and help me in thy mercy and grace to live a life that bringeth thy glory and praise.

I make my confession to God the Father Almighty, and to his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, in the presence of our Lady the Virgin ever sacred in her virginity, and all the Holy Angels, of Michael, of Gabriel, chief of angels both, and Saint John the Baptist, of the Holy Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and of the four and twenty prophets; of the Twelve Apostles, of the Four Evangelists, of Seventy and two Sent forth.

I confess the holy faith of the three Eccumenical Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus in the most noble priesthood ascribed unto thee. Father Priest, by which thou settest loose and bindest.

I have sinned through all my senses, both inwardly and outwardly in word, in deed and in thought. My sin is great, very great, and I repent of it most sincerely, purposing not to fall again into the same ever, preferring death rather than embrace sin. And I ask you, by the authority of the sacred priesthood, that you absolve me and forgive, asking God to pardon me through His grace. Amen.

Prayer Before Receiving the Blessed Sacrament

O BREAD coming down from heaven, to nourish every man, grant that I may partake of Thee in all pure desire, adoration and godly fear. O gladsome Wine of Life, may I be intoxicated by Thy love. O thou who didst cry saying: whosoever is athirst let him come unto me and drink, behold my soul in thirst hath come to thee to be assuaged by the water of life. O God, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come into my heart. Do Thou speak a word to heal my soul which is athirst for you even more than the thirst of the deer to the streams of water. O cup of blessing and salvation. O heavenly manna, and bread of life do Thou dwell in me forevermore. Amen.

Prayer After Receiving the Blessed Sacrament

With what tongues shall I utter Thy praise, O God, most high and greatly to be praised, for this Thy wondrous grace. It passeth all telling; for Thou hast even been pleased to give of Thyself to Thy servant, to his nourishment; and hast rejoiced his heart with the wine of Thy Sacrifice. Thou hast sanctified me by Thy Spirit, and hast assuaged my hunger from out of the bounty of Thy house. Lo! my heart is Thy perpetual dwelling place, that Thou mayest preside over all my faculties and my desires, controlling them as thou wilt. And I beseech Thee that this my communion increase my faith and strengthen my trust in Thee; that it rekindle the fire of Thy love within me, causing me to grow in every virtue; that it be a weapon to shield me from all the wiles of the enemy of my soul, until I become one with thee in that life above where thou art, with all saints, so that I may join in the chorus of praise and adoration to Thy Father and Thy Holy spirit forever and forever. Amen.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

Remember, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, your mercies and loving kindnesses, which have been from everlasting, and for the sake of which You did become man and deign to endure crucifixion and death for the salvation of all who rightly believe in You. You rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and sit at the right hand of God the Father, and regard the humble prayers of all who call upon You with their whole heart. Incline Your ear and hear the humble entreaty of me, Your unprofitable servant, who offers it for an odor of spiritual fragrance for all Your people.

And first of all remember Your Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, which you have purchased with Your precious blood. Confirm and strengthen it, enlarge and multiply it, keep it in peace, and preserve it unconquerable by the gates of hell forever. Heal the schisms of the churches, quench the ragings of the heathen, speedily undo and root out the growths of heresies, and bring them to naught by the power of Your Holy Spirit.

Save, O Lord, and have mercy upon all world rulers, on our president (name), on (names), and on all our civil authorities. Speak peace and blessing in their hearts for Your Holy Church and for all Your people, in order that we may live a calm and peaceful life, in all godliness and dignity.

Save, O Lord, and have mercy upon our Catholicos, metropolitans, Priests, ministers, and deacons, and the whole clergy of Your Church, which You have established to feed the flock of Your word, and by their prayers have mercy upon me, and save me, a sinner.

Save, O Lord, and have mercy upon my spiritual father (name) and by his holy prayers forgive me my transgressions.

Save, O Lord, and have mercy upon my parents (names), my spouse (name), my brothers and sisters (names), my children (names), my kinsmen after the flesh, and my friends, and grant them Your blessings both here and here after.

Save, O Lord, and have mercy upon the old, the young, the needy, the orphans and the widows, and on all that are in sickness and sorrow, in distress and affliction, in oppression and captivity, in prison and confinement. More especially have mercy upon Your servants who are under persecution for Your sake and for the sake of the Orthodox Faith at the hands of heathen nations, of apostates, and of heretics; remember them, visit strengthen, keep, and comfort them, and make haste to grant them, by Your power, relief, freedom, and deliverance.

Save, O Lord, and have mercy upon all who are sent on duty, all who travel, our fathers, brothers, and sisters, and upon all true Christians.

Save, O Lord, and have mercy upon those who envy and affront me, and do me harm, and do not let them perish through me, a sinner.

Those who depart from the Orthodox Faith, dazzled by destroying heresies, enlighten by the light of Your holy wisdom, and unite them to Your Holy, Apostolic, Catholic Church.

[Add here any additional Petitions]

A Prayer

O Christ Our God, who at all times and in every hour in heaven and on earth are worshiped and glorified; who are longsuffering, merciful, and compassionate; who love the just and show mercy upon sinners; who call all to salvation through the promise of the good things to come; O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Your commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, correct our thoughts cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulation, evil, and distress. Surround us with Your holy angels, so that guided and guarded by them, we may attain to the unity of the Faith and to the full knowledge of Your unapproachable glory. For you are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

SECTION 4

LITURGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Virtually all students of the Bible realize there was liturgical worship in Israel. Immediately after the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17), instructions for building the altar were set forth (Ex. 20:24-26). Then comes instruction concerning keeping the Sabbath (Ex. 23:10-13), the annual feasts (Ex. 2, 3:14-19) and the various offerings and furnishings in the sanctuary (Ex. 25:1-40). Following this, chapters 26-30 deal with such matters as the design of the tabernacle, the altar, and the outer court, the priests' vestments and their consecration, and instructions for daily offerings.

Most Bible scholars also find liturgical worship in heaven, which is to be expected, since God instructed Moses to make the earthly place of worship as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things (Heb. 8:5; see Ex. 25-40). Heavenly worship is revealed in such passages as Isaiah 6:1-8, where we see the prophet caught up to heaven for the liturgy, and Revelation 4, which records the Apostle John's vision of heavenly liturgy.

But these same scholars often fail to see that there is also liturgy in the New Testament Church.

The key to comprehending liturgy in the New Testament is to understand the work of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who inaugurates the New Covenant. Christ is a priest forever (Heb. 7:17, 21). It is unthinkable that Christ would be a priest but not serve liturgically: forever suggests He serves continually, without ceasing, in the heavenly tabernacle. Further, He is called not only a priest but a liturgist: a Minister (Gr. *leitourgos*, iliturgist) of the

sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected (Heb. 8:2). Christian worship on earth, must mirror the worship of Christ in heaven.

Moreover, Christ is iMediator of a better covenant (Heb 8:6). What is that covenant? In the words of the Lord, iThis cup is the new covenant in My blood (1 Cor. 11:25). Just as the blood of bulls and goats in the Old Covenant prefigured Christ's sacrifice to come, so the Eucharistic Feast brings to us the fullness of His New Covenant offering, completed at the Cross and fulfilled in His Resurrection. This once-for-all offering of Himself (Heb. 7:27) which He as High Priest presents at the heavenly altar, is an offering in which we participate through the Divine Liturgy in the Church. This is the worship of the New Testament Church!

Given this biblical background, a number of New Testament passages take on new meaning.

(1) *Acts 13:2*: iAs they ministered to the Lord [literally, ias they were in the liturgy of the Lord] and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, eNow separate to Me Barnabas and Saul... We learn that (a) these two apostles were called by God during worship, and (b) the Holy Spirit speaks in a liturgical setting.

(2) *Acts 20:7*: iNow on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them. Communion was held each Sunday.

(3) *Rom. 16:16*: iGreet one another with a holy kiss. A kiss of greeting was common in this ancient culture. The iholly kiss, however, was an element of the Christian liturgy which signified that the people of God were reconciled to one another, so that they might receive the Body and Blood of Christ in peace.

(4) *Eph. 5:14*: iAwake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Biblical scholars tell us this is an ancient baptismal hymn, already in use by the time Ephesians was written. (Note other preexisting New Testament creeds and hymns such as 1 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Tim. 2:11-13.)

(5) *Heb. 13:10*: iWe have an altar reveals the continuation of the altar in New Testament worship.

(6) *Rev. 1:10*: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Many scholars believe John saw his vision of Christ during the Sunday liturgy, as the Lord appeared to him in the midst of the seven lampstands (Rev. 1:13). Lampstands would be found in the Christian sanctuary just as they were in the Hebrew temple.

THE CREED

[The Nicene creed was formulated at the first two Ecumenical Councils. At the first council, held in A. D. 325 at Nicea, the first seven articles were adopted. The second council, which convened in A. D. 381 at Constantinople, added the last five articles of the Creed. The Creed expresses the belief of Orthodox worshippers, and is often referred to as 'The Symbol of Faith.' The Nicene Creed (together with the other Ecumenical Councils) distills the basic theology of the New Testament into a concise definition of what is to be believed, and serves as a guidepost for the interpretation of Scripture.]

1. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Only begotten; begotten of the Father before all worlds.

3. Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.

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

5. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;

6. And the third day He rose again, according to the *Scriptures*, (His will).

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

9. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets; (and the Apostles) and we believe in Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

10. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.

11. We look for the resurrection of the dead;

12. And the life of the world to come. AMEN.

THE PRIESTHOOD EARTHLY AND ETERNAL

A major theme of the Book of Hebrews is the contrast between the earthly, or Levitical, priesthood, and the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek, which is fulfilled in Christ.

The Levitical priesthood, established by Aaron of the tribe of Levi, is limited simply because those who fill it are ordinary human beings. The Levitical priests carry out God's instructions and assist the people in their worship, but they cannot ultimately reconcile people to God.

The mysterious figure of Melchizedek, on the other hand, represents an entirely different kind of priesthood. Melchizedek appears in Genesis (Gen. 14:18-20), long before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. He is given no genealogy, and nothing is said of his death. He receives tithes from Abraham, implying he is superior to Abraham in rank and by extension, superior to Abraham's descendants, the Levites. Melchizedek is not only a priest but a king as well. In this dual office he is able to reconcile the justice of God (the business of a king) with His mercy (the business of a priest). His name means "King of Righteousness," and his title "King of Salem" (Gen. 14:18) means "King of Peace." He may be a theophany or a preincarnate appearance of Christ; at the very least he is a type of Christ, as the author of Hebrews explains in detail.

There are several specific points of contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek, which is fulfilled in Christ.

The Priesthood of Levi

(1) *Genealogical requirement:* The Levitical priesthood is limited

to one tribe It cannot transform mortal and corrupt humanity, because it consists of mere men.

{2} *Ordination:* The power given at ordination is incomplete. The Levitical priesthood is weak, its sacrifices have to be repeated, and it cannot perfect the worshipers. It cannot reconcile people to God, nor give them the inner power to obey. The ordination is without direct confirmation from God.

(3) *Term of office:* The Levitical priesthood is temporary. Since it is composed of mortal men, it requires many members.

(4) *Moral and spiritual requirements:* These must be less than perfection, for the Levitical priests are all created beings subject to sin.

The Priesthood of Melchizedek

As Melchizedek was without earthly genealogy, so is Christ by virtue of His virgin birth. He is God incarnate, immortal and sinless, and therefore His priesthood is able to transform humanity.

(2) The power given at ordination is strong and effective. The power of Christ's priesthood is perfect and draws us near to God. His sacrifice is offered once for all. The Father Himself ordains the Son.

(3) Since Christ is immortal, the priesthood of Melchizedek needs only one, eternal priest.

(4) The requirement of perfect holiness is met in Christ, the only sinless One. He is more than mere man - He is the Son of God.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The Orthodox understanding of the Second Coming of Christ is clear: the Lord Jesus Christ truly will return. His second advent is not a myth, nor an empty promise, nor is it a metaphor. In fact, each time the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, the priest makes a proclamation to the Father which reveals how the Church responds not only to the Second Coming of Christ, but to all of His work.

iRemembering this saving commandment [Jesus' command to

eat His flesh and drink His blood] and all that has been done for usó the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into Heaven, the sitting at the right hand and the Second and glorious Comingówe offer You Your own, from what is Your own, on behalf of all and for all.†

Orthodox Christians also believe the New Testament revelation of the Second Coming of Christ is meant to stimulate our preparation for it, not our speculation about it. This explains the relative simplicity with which the Nicene Creed, the most universal confession of faith in all of Christendom, addresses Christ's return: "He... will come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end."† The emphasis of historic Orthodoxy is that Jesus will come again, not when He will come again.

Thus, St. Paul writes, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:12-14).

There are signs of Christ's coming, to be sure. Jesus prophesied many events that would take place in the world prior to His return (Matt. 24; Luke 21:7-36). But even here the teachings of Jesus in these gospels close with His exhortation to virtue, righteousness, and preparation for the Judgment. Christ and His apostles issue severe warnings, implicit and explicit, against second-guessing the time of His coming (Matt. 24:3-8, 36, 43, 44, 50; Luke 21:7-9, 34; Acts 1:7; 1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:8-10).

Much of modern Christendom has succumbed to divisive speculation regarding Christ's return. We are divided into pre-millennial, post-millennial, and a-millennial camps. Breaking it down even further, there are pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and post-tribulation adherents. Christians part ways and new denominations spring up around interpretations of events which have not yet even come to pass!

Throughout history the Orthodox Church has steadfastly insisted

on the reality of the Second Coming of Christ as a settled belief, but granted liberty on the question of when it will occur. In the last chapter of Revelation, Jesus speaks the words, *“I am coming quickly”* three different times (Rev. 2:21:7, 12, 20). His coming will occur on a day, at an hour when it is not expected. The Apostle John, the author of Revelation, concludes his book with a warning:

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18, 19).

To confess the return of Christ is to stand squarely within the apostolic tradition. To add *“when”* to the promise of His coming is warned against in the Scriptures. As members of the Bride of Christ, let us attend instead to being ready.

CHRISTOLOGY

The center of Christianity is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In fact, He is the centerpiece of all history. But the world struggles with His identity. Who is He? Is He God? Is He man? Both? The Scriptures clearly answer these crucial questions.

In his Gospel, John gives a specific and definitive explanation of who Christ is. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (1:1). John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, revealed God the Word as *“the Light”* (1:6, 7). *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (1:14). Who then is Jesus Christ?

(1) He is God, for He was with God from before all time. Clearly, the One born Jesus of Nazareth did not have His beginning in His earthly birth. Rather, He is the eternal Son of God, without beginning. There never was a time when the Son of God did not exist.

(2) He is also man, for He *“became flesh.”* He has become one of us, being like us in all things but without sin.

(3) He acts both as God and as man, doing what is appropriate for each nature in the unity provided by His one divine Person. Never does divine nature and activity become changed into human nature and activity. The two are in union without confusion. Christ does, however, *“energize”* human nature with divine energy so that human nature is redeemed from sin and death and brought into union with God. He thus *“deifies”* humanity.

The miracle of these incomparable truths is known as the knowledge of Christ, or *“Christology.”* Many documents have expounded on Christology, but the definitive text is the Nicene Creed, the outcome of the first and second Ecumenical Councils in the fourth

century. The Creed of Chalcedon (issued by the fourth Ecumenical Council, A. D. 451) embodies other truths concerning the Incarnation of the Word. These creeds set the doctrinal fences outside of which we do not wander in our knowledge of Christ.

The Apostle John bears witness to Christ: iThat which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christî (1 John 1:1 - 3).

We, too, bear witness to Jesus Christ. For since God became man, and we are united with Him in baptism, we experience His Incarnation in our lives. The miracle of Christology for us is that, as the Son of God became man, we in turn may partake of God.

THE NEW BIRTH

Early in His ministry Jesus revealed the way to enter God's eternal Kingdom. We must be reborn again (John 3:3), a birth from above brought about by water and the Spirit.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Christ states "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). From the beginning the Church has recognized "water" to be the waters of baptism, "the Spirit" to be the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the new birth is being joined to Christ in the water of baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit through anointing or "Chrismation".

Salvation, then, is more than forgiveness of sins, more than a mental acceptance of Christ and His teachings. For in salvation we are given union with God through Christ, a right and full relationship with the Holy Trinity, and the restoration of our full humanity. All these things are accomplished through the Incarnation, the union of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. Salvation, then, is founded upon a substantial union of the believer with Christ in His full humanity, a flesh - to - flesh relationship. Paul likens it to the joining of husband and wife (Eph. 5:23-32).

Throughout their letters the apostles remind us that the new birth is necessary for salvation. We die to sin; then, buried with Christ and risen with Him, we are united to Christ and to His body, the Church. We are cleansed, justified and sanctified- all in baptism, the "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). Without repentance and faith, however, immersion in water would be of no effect.

Some Christians bypass baptism and stress only faith. Why is the

mystery of the water necessary? Because just as Christ actually died on a cross, was buried, and rose again - all through His faith and God's grace - so we must be actually immersed in the sacramental waters of baptism, made effectual through our faith and God's grace.

The basic form of baptism is simple. The person to be born again, joined to Christ, is immersed in the water three times in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). One first-century document teaches, if you do not have running water, use whatever is available. And if you cannot do it in cold water, use warm. But if you have neither, pour water on the head three times - in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles [The Didache], 7:1-3).

In the new birth, a true mystery takes place. For in the sacrament of baptism, we die, going down into the water to be mystically united to Christ in His death, and we live again, rising up out of the water in His resurrected humanity. In short, we are born again.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).

John the Baptist plays a crucial role in the history of salvation. Chosen before his birth to be the herald and forerunner of the Messiah (Luke 1:13-17), he knew his Lord from the beginning. Luke writes of the miraculous conception of John (Luke 1:24). He then records that when the Virgin Mary visited Elizabeth, who was then six months pregnant with John the Baptist, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped at the sound of Mary's voice (Luke 1:41).

Jesus taught that John fulfilled the prophecy of the return of Elijah (Matt. 11:14), who was to precede the Messiah as the voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD" (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23).

Shortly before Jesus began His public ministry, John went out to the wilderness of Jordan to prepare the way for the Messiah. He carried out his prophetic role with a brotherhood of disciples characterized by: (1) repentance in expectation of the Kingdom, (2) baptism for forgiveness of sins, (3) bearing the fruit of righteousness, and (4) spiritual discipline. John himself lived by an ascetic rule of poverty and fasting; in fact, he may have been a lifelong Nazirite (see Luke 1:15; Num. 6). His eyes were set not on the body and its desires but upon Christ the Lord, and this influence was widespread (see Mark 11:32; Luke 7:29; Acts 18:25; 19:1-7).

John prophesied that the Messiah was coming, One immeasurably greater than himself, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose (Mark 1:7). This One would baptize not only with water but with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8). When Jesus appeared

before him to be baptized, John was humbled, realizing he himself was in need of being baptized by the Messiah, Jesus (Matt. 3:14). But Jesus knew what was fitting to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15), and John obeyed. Thus came the event so familiar in Orthodox icons: Christ in the Jordan, being baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descending on Him in the form of a dove. The Father's voice from heaven declares, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

John's work was crucial to Jesus' ministry. Jesus considered John's testimony important - not because Jesus, the Son of God, needed to be validated by any human witness but because the people's acceptance of John as a godly man prepared them to accept Jesus as well (John 5:33-35). Jesus' first disciples came from John's brotherhood (John 1:35-39), and the vacancy in the apostolic college was filled by one who had been John's follower (Acts 1: 21, 22).

John the Baptist died a martyr for Christ (Mark 6:24 - 29). The Orthodox Church commemorates him in prayers as well as on designated feast days throughout the year.

MARY

For behold, all generations will call me blessed. (Luke 1:48)

For two thousand years the Church has preserved the memory of the Virgin Mary as the prototype of all Christians - the model of what we are to become in Christ. Mary was truly pure and unconditionally obedient to God. The tradition of the Church holds that Mary remained a virgin all her life (see note on Matt. 12:46-50). While lifelong celibacy is not a model for all Christians to follow, Mary's spiritual purity, her wholehearted devotion to God, is certainly to be emulated.

Mary is also our model in that she was the first person to receive Jesus Christ. As Mary bore Christ in her womb physically, all Christians now have the privilege of bearing God within them spiritually. By God's grace and mercy we are purified and empowered to become like Him.

The honor we give to Mary also signifies our view of who Jesus is. From early times the Church has called her Mother of God (Gr. Theotokos, lit. God - Bearer), a title which implies that her Son is both fully man and fully God. As His mother, Mary was the source of Jesus' human nature; Yet, the One she bore in her womb was also the eternal God.

Therefore, because of her character and especially because of her role in God's plan of salvation, Christians appropriately honour Mary as the first among the saints. The archangel Gabriel initiated this honor in his address to her. "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" (Luke. 1:28). This salutation clearly indicates that God Himself had chosen to honor Mary. Her favored status was confirmed when she went to visit her

cousin Elizabeth, who was then six months pregnant with John the Baptist. Elizabeth greeted Mary with these words: *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”* (Luke 1:42, 43). And Mary herself, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, predicted the honor that would be paid her throughout history: *“For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed!”* (Luke 1:48).

In obedience to God’s clear intention, therefore, the Orthodox Church honors Mary in icons, hymns, and special feast days. We entreat her, as the human being who was most intimate with Christ on earth, to intercede with her Son on our behalf. We ask her, as the first believer and the mother of the Church, for guidance and protection. We venerate her - but we do not worship her, for worship belongs to God alone.

In Matins, Vespers, and all the service of the hours of prayer, we sing this hymn, which expresses Mary’s unique place in creation.

“It is truly to bless you, O Theotokos, ever - blessed and most pure, and the mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: True Theotokos, we magnify you.”

THE SEVENTY

In Luke 10:1 the Lord appointed seventy men to go out as missionaries - as apostles. Though not so prominent as the Twelve, the Seventy carried out their missions with fervor and enthusiasm. The Tradition of the Church confirms that the Seventy remained true to the Lord and their calling, fulfilling a vital role in the spread of the gospel. These were not random choices or accidental volunteers but true disciples, true apostles, whose labor carried the message of their Lord throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Though lists of the Seventy vary somewhat, all are remembered in the calendar of the Church (see chart, *The Seventy*, on page 818 of the *Orthodox Study Bible*). One day, January 4, is set aside to remember them all, and the record of their work is preserved in accounts handed down through the centuries from place to place, especially in those locations where they labored.

To tell the stories passed down in the Church concerning all of the Seventy would fill a book of considerable size, but the compromise of telling the stories of a few, both prominent and relatively obscure members, will relate the conviction and faith of this illustrious body.

Barnabas, a Jew of the tribe of Levi, was born in Cyprus of wealthy parents. He is said to have studied under Gamaliel with Saul of Tarsus, who was to become Paul the Apostle. Originally named Joseph, he was called Barnabas (Son of Consolation) by the apostles (Acts 4:36) because he had a rare gift of comforting the hearts of people. He sought out Paul when everyone else was afraid of him, bringing him to the apostles. And it was Barnabas who was first sent by the apostles to Antioch to find out what was going on there (Acts 11:22) Barnabas sought out Paul to work with him, and their long association was broken only when Barnabas was determined to take his cousin Mark,

Whom Paul did not trust just then, on a missionary journey. The mutual relationships among the three were later healed (Col. 4:10). Many ancient accounts say Barnabas was the first to preach in Rome and the first in Milan, but he was martyred in Cyprus, then buried by Mark at the western gate of the city of Salamis.

Among the more prominent of the Seventy was the Apostle Titus, whom Paul called his brother (2 Cor. 12:18) and his son (Titus 1:4). Born in Crete, Titus was educated in Greek philosophy, but after reading the Prophet Isaiah he began to doubt the value of all he had been taught. Hearing the news of the coming of Jesus Christ, he joined some others from Crete who went to Jerusalem to see for themselves. After hearing Jesus speak and seeing His works, the young Titus joined those who followed. Baptized by the Apostle Paul, he worked with and served the great apostle to the Gentiles, traveling with him until Paul sent him to Crete, making him bishop of that city. It is said that he was in Rome at the time of the beheading of St. Paul and that he buried the body of his spiritual father before returning home. Back in Crete, he converted and baptized many people, governing the Church on that island until he entered into rest at the age of ninety-four.

There are many less prominent among the Seventy who also labored for Christ unto death. Aristarchus, whom Paul mentions several times (cf. Acts. 19:29; Col. 4:10; Philem. 24), calling him a fellow laborer, became bishop of Apamea in Syria. Sosthenes (Acts 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:1) became bishop of Caesarea, and Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12) succeeded him in that city. Simeon (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), son of Cleopas (who was the brother of Joseph the betrothed of the Virgin Mary), succeeded James as bishop of Jerusalem. Aristobulus (Rom. 16: 10), the brother of the Apostle Barnabas, Preached the gospel in Britain and died peacefully there.

The lives of these few are quite representatives of the Seventy who were instrumental in helping to plant the Church throughout the world. Many became bishops, but the names of all are numbered in heaven in the Book of Life, as faithful servants of the Lord, apostles and foundations of the Church.

The Seventy

Name	N. T. REFERENCE (S)
Achaicus	1 Cor. 16:17
Agabus	Acts 11:28; 21:10
Amplias	Rom. 16:8
Ananias	Acts 9:10 -17; 22:12
Andronicus	Rom. 16:7
Apelles`	Rom. 16:10
Apollos	Acts 18:24; 19:1; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-22; 4:6; 16:12; Titus 3:13
Aquila	Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19
Archippus	Col. 4:17; Philem. 2
Aristarchus	Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10; Philem. 24
Aristobulus	Rom. 16:10
Artemas	Titus 3:12
Asyncritus	Rom. 16:14
Barnabas	Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11-15; 1 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 2:1, 9, 13; Col. 4:10
Caesar	2 Tim. 4:13
Carpus	Phil. 4:3
Clement	
Cephas	Luke 24:18; John 19:25
Cleopas	2 Tim. 4:10
Crescens	Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14
Crispus	Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philem. 23
Epaphras	Phil. 2:25; 4:18
Epaphroditus	Rom.16:5
Epaenetus	Acts 19:22; Rom. 16:23; 2 Tim. 4:20
Erastus	Phil. 4:2
Euodia	1 Cor. 16:17
Fortunatus	Acts 19:29; 20:4 Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14;
Gaius	3 John 1

Hermas	Rom. 16:14
Hermes	Rom. 16:14
Herodion	Rom. 16:11
James, the brother of the Lord	Matt. 13:55; Mark. 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13; James
Jason	Acts 17:5-9
Justus	Acts 1:23; 18:7; Col. 4:11
Linus	2 Tim. 4:21
Lucius	Acts 13:1; Rom. 16:21
Luke, the Evangelist	Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem.24
Mark, the Evangelist called John Mark	Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37-39; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24
Mark	1 Pet. 5:13
Narcissus	Rom. 16:11
Nicanor	Acts 6:5
Olympas	Rom. 16:15
Onesimus	Col. 4:9; Philem.10
Onesiphorus	2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19
Parmenas	Acts. 6:5
Patrobus	Rom. 16:14
Philemon	Philem. 1
Philip, the Deacon	Acts. 6:8; 21:8
Philologus	Rom. 16:15
Phlegon	Rom. 16:14
Prochorus	Acts. 6:5
Pudens	2 Tim. 4:21
Quadratus	
Quartus	Rom. 16:23
Rufus	Mark 15:21; Rom. 16:13
Silas (Silvanus)	Acts 15:22- 40; 16:19-40; 17:4-15; 18: 5; 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:12
Simeon, Son of Cleophas	Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3
Sosipater	Rom. 16:21
Sosthenes	1 Cor. 1:1

Stachys	Rom. 16:9
Stephen, the Archdeacon	Acts 6:5-7:60; 8:2; 11:19; 22:20
Tertius	Rom. 16:22
Thaddaeus	Matt. 10:3; Mark. 3:18
Timon	Acts 6:5
Timothy	Acts 16:1; 17:14, 15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16: 21; 1 and 2 Timothy
Titus	2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6-14; 8:6-23; 12:18; Gal. 2:1-3; Titus
Trophimus	Acts 20:4; 21:29; 2 Tim. 4:20
Tychicus	Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim.4:12 Titus 3:12
Urbanus	Rom. 16:9
Zenas	Titus 3:13

Where to Turn in the Psalms....

When you are tempted to Compromise	Psalm 1:1-7
When you are unjustly criticized	Psalm 3:1-4
When you are lacking in joy	Psalm 5:11, 12
When you are being tested	Psalm 10:5-7
When you need encouragement	Psalm 17:6-8
If you doubt the Scriptures	Psalm 19:7-11
When you are lonely	Psalm 23:1-6
When you mourn	Psalm 30:10-12
When you need God's forgiveness	Psalm 32:1-5
When you are tempted to miss church	Psalm 34:1-10
When you are worried	Psalm 37:1-8
When you are sad	Psalm 43:3-5
Before you go to confession	Psalm 51:1-19
When you are depressed	Psalm 57:6-11
When you need God's protection	Psalm 61:1-8

When you need strength	Psalm 62:5-8
When enemies come against you	Psalm 70:1-5
When there is a shortage of money	Psalm 72:12-19
When you are deeply troubled	Psalm 77:1-15
When you feel insignificant	Psalm 84:5-12
When you wonder about life's meaning,	Psalm 90:10-17
In times of anxiety	Psalm 94:16-19
If you are tempted to disobey God	Psalm 95: 6-11
When you need God's mercy	Psalm 103:1-14
When you are discouraged	Psalm 109:21-31
When you have opportunity to serve God	Psalm 112:1-10
When a loved one dies	Psalm 116:1-19
When you need God's guidance	Psalm 119:9-16
Before leaving on a journey	Psalm 121:1-18
When you contemplate marriage	Psalm 127:1-5
To find a litany of Prayer	Psalm 136:1-26
If God seems far away	Psalm 139:1-18
Before retiring for the night	Psalm 141:1-10
If you want to complain to God	Psalm 142:1-7
When you want to give praise to God	Psalm 150:1-6

Where to turn in the New Testament.....

For the Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 5-7
When you are under pressure	Matthew 11:25-30
For Jesus' teaching on the Second Coming	Matthew 24:3-44
For the distribution of the Holy Eucharist	Matthew 26:26-30
For the Great Commission	Matthew 28:18-20

For Jesús teaching on servanthood	Mark. 10:42-45
For the Annunciation to Mary	Luke 1:26-56
For the earthly birth of Jesus Christ	Luke 2:1-20
For Jesús teaching on eternal punishment	Luke 13:24-30
For the death, burial and resurrection of Christ	Luke 23:33-24:49
For how one is born again	John 3:1-8
For Jesús teaching on the Eucharist	John 6:30-59
When you feel estranged from Christ	John 10:7-30
When you need comfort	John 14:1-6
To learn about union with Christ	John 15:1-17
For Jesús teaching on the Holy Spirit	John 15:26-16:15
For the coming of the Holy Spirit	Acts 2:1-21
For the first Church Council	Acts 15:1-35
For the scriptural teaching on sexual Immorality and homosexuality	Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:15-20
For St. Paul's teachings on justification	Romans 5:1-21
For St. Paul's teachings on holy baptism	Romans 6:1-11
When the unexpected happens	Romans 8:28-39
When you are tempted to break the law	Romans 13:1-10
To learn of true Christian love	1 Corinthians 13:1-13

To learn of sin and righteousness	Galatians 5:19-26
To learn of faith and works	Ephesians 2:8-10
To learn of Christian marriage	Ephesians 5:22-33
To understand the unseen warfare	Ephesians 6:10-18
To learn of the communion of the saints	Hebrews 12:1-3, 22-24
To learn of Christian healing	James 5:13-16
For St. Peter's teaching on marriage	1 Peter 3:1-9
For St. Peter's teaching on false prophets	2 Peter 2:1-22
To learn about confession of sin	1 John 1:5-2:1
To learn about eternal life	1 John 5:11-13
To learn of the eternal Kingdom	Revelation 21; 22

How to Remain in Communion With God

There are many necessary elements for remaining in communion with God. Among the chief are:

- Regular attendance at Sunday Divine Liturgy, as well as consistent participation in the feasts and fasts of the Church year.
- Maintaining a daily prayer rule
- Daily reading and study of the Scripture
- Regularly partaking of the Eucharist.
- Regular repentance and confession of sins.

AUGUSTINE

No. 169 - The Conversion of St. Augustine Aug. 386

From Augustine, *Conf. viii. 28-30 (Op. ii. 155-6, P.L. xxxii. 716:4)*

(β 28) But when a deep consideration had from the secret bottom of my soul drawn together and heaped up all my misery in the sight of my heart; there arose a mighty storm, bringing a mighty shower of tears. Which that I might pour forth wholly in its natural expressions, I rose from Alypius: solitude was suggested to me as fitter for the business of weeping; so I retired so far that even his presence could not be a burthen to me. Thus was it then with me, and he perceived something of it; for something I suppose I had spoken, wherein the tones of my voice appeared choked with weeping, and so had risen up. He then remained where we were sitting, most extremely astonished. I cast myself down I know not how, under a certain fig-tree giving full vent to my tears; and the floods of mine eyes gushed out, an *acceptable sacrifice to Thee*. And not indeed in these words, yet to this purpose, spake I much unto Thee: *And Thou, O Lord, how long? how long, Lord, will thou be angry for ever?* (Ps. vi. 4). *Remember not our former iniquities* (Ps. lxxix. 5, 8), for I felt that I was held by them. I send up these sorrowful words; How long? How long, tomorrow and tommorrow? Why not now? Why not is there this hour and end to my uncleanness?

(β 29) So was, I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and of repeating, *Take up and read; Take up and read.* Instantly, my countenance altered. I began to think most intently, whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to

be no other than a command from God, to open the book, and read the first chapter I should find. For I had heard of Antony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was being read, was spoken to him; *Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure to heaven, and come and follow me* (Matt. xix. 21). And by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto thee. Egerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle, when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section, on which my eyes first fell: *Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh* (Rom. xiii. 13, 14), in concupiscence. No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.

(30) Then putting my finger between, or some other mark, I shut the volume, and with a calmed countenance made it known to Alypius. And what was wrought in him, which I knew not, he thus showed me. He asked to see what I had read; I showed him; and he looked even further than I had read, and I knew not what followed. This followed, *him that is weak in the faith, receive* (Rom. xiv. 1); which he applied to himself, and disclosed to me. And by this admonition was he strengthened; and by a good resolution and purpose, and most corresponding to his character, wherein he did always very far differ from me, for the better, without any turbulent delay he joined me. Thence we go in to my mother, we tell her; she rejoiceth: we relate in order how it took place; she leaps for joy, and triumpheth, and blesseth Thee, *who art abale to do above that which we ask or think* (Ephes. iii. 20); for she perceived that Thou hadst given her more for me, than she was wont to beg by her pitiful and most sorrowful groanings. For Thou convertedst me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife, nor any hope of this world, standing in that rule of faith, where Thou hadst showed me unto her in a vision, so many years before. And Thou didst *convert her mourning into joy* (Ps. xxx. 11), much more plentiful than she had desired, and in a much more precious and purer way than she erst required, by having grandchildren of my body.

THE SYRIAN CHURCHES

THEIR CLERGY

WHEN we were approaching the church of Chenganoor, we met one of the *cassanars*, or Syrian clergy. He was dressed in a white loose vestment, with a cap of red silk hanging down behind. Being informed who he was, I said to him, in the Syriac language, *Peace be unto you.* He was surprised at the salutation, but immediately answered, *The God of peace be with you.* He accosted the rajah's servant in the language of the country to know who I was, and immediately returned to the village to announce our approach. When we arrived, I was received at the door of the church by three *kasheeshas*, or presbyters, who were habited in like manner, in white vestments. Their names were Jesu, Zacharias, and Urias, which they wrote down in my journal, each of them adding to his name the title of *kasheesha*. There were also present two *shumshanas*, or *ideacons*. The elder priest was very intelligent man, of reverend appearance, having a long white beard, and of an affable and engaging department (P. 116).

Candenad, a church. This is the residence of Mar Dionysius, the metropolitan. He resides in a building attached to the church. I was much struck with his first appearance; he was dressed in a vestment of dark red silk, a large golden cross hung from his neck, and his venerable beard reached below his girdle. Such thought I, was the appearance of Chrysostom in the fourth century. On public occasions he wears the episcopal mitre, a muslin robe is thrown over his undergarment, and in his hand he bears the crosier, or pastoral staff. He is a man of highly respectable character in his church, eminent for his piety, and for the attention which he devotes to his sacred functions. I found him to be far superior in general learning to any of

his clergy whom I had yet seen.... His official designation is Mar Dionysius, metropolitan of Malabar.

In a conversation on the subject of ordination, the metropolitan's chaplains expressed their doubts as to Romish and English orders: but their conviction that if there is such a thing in the world as ordination by the laying on of hands in succession from the apostles, it was probable that they possessed it; and that there was no record of history or tradition to impeach their claim. They expected that in any official negotiation on the subject of an union with the church of England, the Antiquity and purity of Syrian ordination should be expressly admitted.

(*Christian Researches in Asia*, Dr. Claudius Buchanan, p. 160).

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

For most of Church history, salvation was seen as comprehending all of life; Christians believed in Christ, were baptized, and were nurtured in their salvation in the Church. Key doctrines of the faith centered around the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the atonement.

In Western Europe during the sixteenth century, however, and even before, justifiable concern arose among the Reformers over a prevailing understanding that salvation depended on human works of merit, and not upon the grace and mercy of God. Many involved with the Reformation experienced a rediscovery of Romans 5. Their slogan of salvation became *sola fides* (Lat.): justification was by faith alone.

This Reformation debate in the West was late-breaking news for the Orthodox East: why this new polarization of faith and works? It had been settled since the apostolic era that salvation was granted by the mercy of God to righteous men and women. Those baptized into Christ were called to believe in Him and do good works. A discussion of faith versus works was unprecedented in Orthodox thought.

The Orthodox understanding of justification differs from the Protestant in several ways.

(1) Justification and the New Covenant - When Orthodox Christians approach the doctrine of salvation, the discussion centers around the New Covenant. Justification (being or becoming righteous) by faith in God is part of being brought into a covenant relationship with Him. Whereas Israel was under the Old Covenant, wherein salvation came through faith as revealed in the law, the Church is under the New Covenant. Salvation comes through faith in Christ who fulfills the law, and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who

dwells in us, leading us to the knowledge of God the Father. Whereas some Christians focus on Justification as a legal acquittal before God, Orthodox believers see justification by faith as a covenant relationship with Him, centered in union with Christ (Rom. 6:1-6).

(2) Justification and God's mercy - Orthodox emphasizes it is first God's mercy - not our faith - which saves us. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1,2). It is God who initiates or makes the New Covenant with us.

(3) Justification by faith is dynamic, not static - For Orthodox Christians, faith is living, dynamic, continuous - never static or merely point-in-time. Faith is not something a Christian exercises only at one critical moment, expecting it to cover all the rest of his life. True faith is not just a decision, it's a way of life.

This is why the modern evangelical Protestant question, "Are you saved?" gives pause to an Orthodox believer. As the subject of salvation is addressed in Scripture, the Orthodox Christian would see it in at least three aspects: (a) I have been saved, being joined to Christ in baptism; (b) I am being saved, growing in Christ through the sacramental life of the Church; and (c) I will be saved, by the mercy of God at the Last Judgement.

A final difficulty for Orthodox Christians is the word alone. Justification by faith, though not the major New Testament doctrine for Orthodox as it is for Protestants, poses no problem. But justification by faith alone brings up an objection. It contradicts Scripture, which says: "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). We are justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law (Rom. 3:28), but nowhere does the Bible say we are justified by faith alone. On the contrary, "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James. 2:17).

As Christians we are no longer under the demands of the Old Testament law (Rom. 3:20), for Christ has fulfilled the law (Gal. 2:21; 3:5, 24). By God's mercy, we are brought into a New Covenant

relationship with Him. We who believe are granted entrance into His Kingdom by His grace. Through His mercy we are justified by faith and empowered by God for Good works or deeds of righteousness which bring glory to Him.

No. 155 - The Independence of the Church in Persia, 424

From the Synod of Dadisoí, 424, *ap. J. B. Chabot, Synodicon Orientale*, 285, 302,

Assembly of the Metropolitans and Bishops, which took place at Markabta of the Arabs, in the time of Waran,¹ the king of kings [420-138],

In the fourth year of Waran, king of kings; in the presence of Mar Dadisoí, Catholicus [421-456], supreme head of the bishops and governor of all Eastern Christendom, there were assembled at Markabta of the Arabs, the bishops [thirty-six in number].

As for that which has been decreed by the Western Fathers: i That the bishops are not permitted to hold an assembly against the will of their head, nor to prepare in writing heads of accusation or reproach, but that, if they have any complaint to make and obtain no satisfaction at the assembly in presence of the Patriarch, they must appeal to his colleagues, who will decide between him and them, after having examined the affair; since we have often had experience of the fact that those who complain of the *Catholicus* were treated as blameworthy; received punishment for their folly by deprivation and deposition; were robbed and spoiled of the title of their order and of the vesture which they wore: Now, by the word of God, we decree that the Easterns will not be permitted to carry complaints against their *ëPatriarchí before the ëWestern Patriarchsí*; and that every cause which cannot be determined in the presence of their Patriarch shall be left to the judgment of Christ. - K.

[Here the title iCatholicosî and iPatriarchî are used intermixedly. It shows both designations are noble in the sense that they are equals in

authority. It is just right to call the Catholicos of the East iCatholicos - Patriarch.î - Ed]

No. 85.6 The Futility of Councils

From Gregory of Nazianzus, 390. *Ep-* cxxx. [A.D. 382] to Procopius, Prefect of Constantinople (*Op.* iii. no; *P.G.* xxxvii. 225A).

For my part, if I am to write the truth, my inclination is to avoid all assemblies of bishops, because I have never seen any Council come to a good end, nor turn out to be a solution of evils. On the contrary, it usually increases them. You always find there love of contention and love of power (I hope you will not think me a bore, for writing like this), which beggar description; and, while sitting in judgment on others, a man might well be convicted of ill-doing himself long before he should put down the ill-doings of his opponents. So I retired into myself; and came to the conclusion that the only security for one's soul lies in keeping quiet. Now, moreover, this determination of mine is supported by ill-health; for I am always on the point of breathing my last, and I am hardly able to employ myself to any effect. I trust, therefore, that, of your generosity, you will make allowances for me, and that you will be good enough to persuade our most religious Emperor also not to condemn me for taking things quietly, but to make allowances for my ill-health. He knows how it was on this very account that he consented to my retirement, when I petitioned for this in preference to any other mark of his favour. - K.

No. 83. - The Lordliness of Prelates, 381

From i The last Farewellî of Gregory of Nazianzus, Archbishop of Constantinople, 380-1, in *Orat.* xlii. ß 24 (*Op.* ii. 765 ; *P.G.* xxxvi. 486).

[ß 24] Perhaps we may be reproached, as we have been before, with the exquisite character of our table, the splendour of our apparel, the officers who precede us, our haughtiness to those who meet us, I was not aware that we ought to rival the consuls, the governors, the most illustrious generals, who have no opportunity of lavishing their incomes; or that our belly ought to hunger for the enjoyment of the

goods of the poor, and to expend their necessities on superfluities, and belch forth over the altars. I did not know that we ought to ride on splendid horses, and drive in magnificent carriages, and be preceded by a procession and surrounded by applause, and have every one make way for us, as if we were wild beasts, and open out a passage so that our approach might be seen afar. If these sufferings have been endured, they have now passed away : iForgive me this wrong.î Elect another who will please the majority; and give me my desert, my country life, and my God, whom alone I may have to please, and shall please by my simple life.óN. & P.- N. F. vii. 393.

[Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389) was one of the iCappadocian Fathers.î He studied at the university of Athens, where he was contemporary of St. Basil [His father (the same name) was the Bishop of Nazianzus too]. After his fatherís death, He was summon to constantinople and appointed Bishop of Constantinople in 380 A.D. Later he resigned and went back to Nazianzus and died in his own estate. He was an eloquent preacher and theologian and a staunch supporter of Nicene faith - Ed]

No. 152, - St. Martin and the Beggar at Amiens

From Sulpicius Severus [420 p], *Vita Martini*, B 3 (*P.L.* xx. 162).

Accordingly, at a certain period, when he had nothing except his arms and his simple military dress, in the middle of winter, a winter which had shown itself more severe than ordinary, so that the extreme cold was proving fatal to many, he happened to meet, at the gate of the city of Amiens, a poor man destitute of clothing. He was entreating those that passed by to have compassion upon him; but all passed the wretched man without notice, when Martin, that man full of God, recognized that a being to whom others showed no pity was, in that respect, left to him. Yet what should he do ? He had nothing except the cloak in which he was clad, for he had already parted with the rest of his garments for similar purposes. ëFaking, therefore, his sword with which he was girt, he divided his cloak into two equal parts, and gave one part to the poor man, while he again clothed himself with the remainder. Upon this, some of the bystanders laughed, because he was now an unsightly object, and stood out as but partly dressed. Many, however, who were of sounder understanding groaned deeply because they themselves had done nothing similar. They especially

felt this, because, being possessed of more than Martin, they could have clothed the poor man without reducing themselves to nakedness. In the following night, when Martin had resigned himself to sleep, he had a vision of Christ arrayed in that part of his cloak with which he had clothed the poor man. He contemplated the Lord with the greatest attention, and was told to own as his the robe which he had given. Ere long he heard Jesus saying with a clear voice to the multitude of angels standing round: ì Martin, who is still but a catechumen, clothed me with this robe.îó/V. &ì P. -N.F. xi. 5.

No. 81.óThe Election of Eusebius to be Archbishop of Csesarea in Cappadocia, 362-70

From Gregory of Nazianzus, 390; *Oraf.* xviii. B 33 (*Of.* i. 354; *P.O.* xxxv. 1027).

[B33J ì ì ì The city of Csesarea was in an uproar about the election of a bishop; for one¹ had just departed, and another must be found, amidst heated partisanship not easily to be soothed. For the city was naturally exposed to party spirit, owing to the fervour of its faith, and the rivalry was increased by the illustrious position of the see. Such was the state of affairs; several bishops had arrived to consecrate the bishop; the populace was divided into several parties, each with its own candidate, as is usual in such cases, owing to the influences of private friendship or devotion to God; but at last the whole people came to an agreement, and, with the aid of a band of soldiers at that time quartered there, seized one² of their leading citizens, a man of excellent life but not yet sealed with the divine baptism, brought him against his will to the sanctuary, and setting him before the bishops begged, with entreaties mingled with violence, that he might be consecrated and proclaimed, not in the best of order but with all sincerity and ardour. Nor is it possible to say whom time pointed out as more illustrious and religious than he was. What then took place, as the result of the uproar? Their resistance³ was overcome, they purified him, they proclaimed him, they enthroned him.óN. & P.-N.F. vii. 265.

1. Dianius (A.D. 342 - 62).

2. Eusebius.

COPY OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY ABGAR THE TOPARCH TO JESUS AND SENT TO HIM AT JERUSALEM BY THE COURIER ANANIAS

Abgar Uchama the Toprach¹ to Jesus, who has appeared as a gracious saviour in the region of Jerusalem - greeting.

I have heard about you and about the cures you perform without drugs or herbs. If report is true, you make the blind see again and the lame walk about; you cleans lepers, expel unclean spirits and demons, cure those suffering from chronic and painful diseases, and raise the dead.² when I heard all this about you, I concluded that one of two things must be true - either you are God and came down from heaven to do these things, or you are God's Son doing them. Accordingly I am writing to beg you to come to me, whatever the inconvenience, and cure the disorder from which I suffer. I may add that I understand the Jews are treating you with contempt and desire to injure you: my city is very small, but highly esteemed adequate for both of us.

[He wrote this letter when the heavenly light had shone on him only a little while. It is desirable also to hear the letter which Jesus sent him by the same letter - carrier. It is only a few lines long, but very impressive. Here it is³].

JESUS'S REPLY TO THE TOPARCH ABGAR BY THE COURIER ANANIAS

Happy are you who believed in me without having seen me!⁴ For it is written of me that those who have seen me will not believe in me, and that those who have not seen will believe and live.⁵ As to your request that I should come to you, I must complete all that I was

sent to do here, and on completing it must at once be taken up to the One who sent me. When I have been taken up I will send you one of my disciples to cure your disorder and bring life to you and those with you.

(Eusebius who wrote *The History of the Church* vouches that he has seen these letters preserved in the archives in Edessa, which was the capital of King Abgar. This is the only writing our Lord made during his life time. - Ed)

To these letters is subjoined the following in Syriac:

After Jesus was taken up, Judas, also known as Thomas, sent to him an apostle⁶ Thaddaeus, one of the Seventy, who came and stayed with Tobias, son of Tobias. When his arrival was announced [and he had been made conspicuous by the wonders he performed], Abgar was told: *“An apostle has come here from Jesus, as He promised you in His letter.”* Then Thaddaeus began in the power of God to cure every disease and weakness, to the astonishment of everyone. When Abgar heard of the magnificent and astonishing things that he was doing, and especially his cures, he began to suspect that this was the one to whom Jesus referred when He wrote in His letter: *“When I have been taken up I will send you one of my disciples who will cure your disorder. So summoning Tobias, with whom Thaddeus was staying, he said: ‘I understand that a man with unusual powers has arrived and is staying in your house (and is working many cures in the name of Jesus. Tobias answered: ‘Yes, sir. A man from foreign parts has arrived and is living with me, and its performing many wonders.’ Abgar replied] ‘Bring him to me.’”*

So Tobias went to Thaddaeus and said to him: *“The Toparch Abgar has summoned me and told me to bring you to him so that you can cure him. Thaddaeus answered: ‘I will present myself, since the power of God has sent me to him. The next day Tobias got up early and escorted Thaddaeus to Abgar. As he presented himself, with the king’s grandees standing there, at the moment of his entry a wonderful vision appeared to Abgar on the face of Thaddaeus. On seeing it Abgar bowed low before the apostle and astonishment seized all the bystanders; for they had not seen the vision, which appeared to Abgar*

alone. He questioned Thaddaeus.

“Are you really a disciple of Jesus the Son of God, who said to me, ‘I will send you one of my disciples who will cure you and give you life?’”

“You whole heartedly believed in the One who sent me, and for that reason I was sent to you. And again if you believe in Him, in proportion to your belief shall the prayers of your heart be granted.”

“I believed to Him so strongly that I wanted to take an army and destroy the Jews who crucified Him, if I had not been prevented by the imperial power of Rome from doing so.”

“Our Lord has fulfilled the will of His father: after fulfilling it He was taken up to the Father.”

“I too have believed in Him and in His Father.”

“For that reason I lay my hand on you in His name.”

When he did this, Abgar instantly was cured of the disease and disorder from which he suffered. It surprised Abgar that the very thing he had heard about Jesus had actually happened to him through His disciple Thaddaeus, who had cured him without drugs of herbs and not only him but also Abdus son of Abdus, who had gout. He too came, and falling at his feet found his prayer answered through the hands of Thaddaeus, and was cured. Many other fellow-citizens of theirs Thaddaeus restored to health, performing many wonders and preaching the word of God.

After this Abgar said: “It is by the power of God that you, Thaddaeus, do these things; and we ourselves were amazed. But I have a further request to make: explain to me about the coming of Jesus and how it happened, and about His power - by what power did He do the things I have heard about?”

Thaddaeus replied: “For the time being I shall say nothing; but as I was sent to preach the word, be good enough to assemble all your citizens, tomorrow, and I will preach to them and sow in them the word of life - about the coming of Jesus and how it happened; about His mission and the purpose for which His Father sent Him: about

His power and His deeds, and the mysteries He spoke in the world, and the power by which He did these things: about his new preaching; about His lowliness and humility, and how He humbled Himself and put aside and made light of His divinity, was crucified and descended into Hades⁷, and rent asunder the partition which had never been rent since time began, and raised the dead; how He descended alone, but ascended with a great multitude to His Father; and how He is seated on the right hand of God the Father with glory in the heavens; and how He will come again with power to judge living and dead.

So Abgar instructed his citizens to assemble at daybreak and hear the preaching of Thaddaeus. After that he ordered gold and silver to be given to him. But Thaddaeus refused them and asked, if we have left our own property behind, how can we accept other people?⁸

All these happened in the year 340.⁸

1. A. D. 13-50.
2. Similar to, but not identical with, the list in Matt. xi. 5 and Luke vii.2.
3. The bracketed passages are wanting in some MSS. Possibly they were added by Eusebius to his final edition.
4. See John xx. 29. The whole letter bears a resemblance to that gospel.
5. This sentence is somewhat like Is.vi. 9.
6. The word *ēapostleí* meaning *ēan emissaryí*, is not used in the narrow sense, but simply to denote a person sent by Christ: the Greek word is the noun corresponding to the verb *ēsendí*, used in this sentence, in Jesusís reply, and in John Passim.
7. It is worthy of note that this phrase should occur in an early Syriac document. The doctrine can be found in a member if N. T. passages, but no where in these words, which appear nowhere else at such an early date. They form, of course, a clause, of the Apostles creed, a much later document produced in the West and never yet adopted by Eastern Christendom.
8. Of the seleucid era - apparently A. D. 30, the probable year of the Ascension.

MEANING OF THE VARIOUS CHURCH VESSELS, ALTAR. ETC.

The Church bell at the tower

The use of a bell is a very old tradition and points to the ancient horn which was blown to call a people together to greet their king, or to receive his beneficence, or perhaps to gather against their enemies in battle. Thus the bell calls Christians to foregather in the church. When we hear it we cross ourselves and praise God, saying *halleluia, halleluia! All praised to thee, O God, Or Open Thou my lips, O Lord, that I might praise Thee.*

The Two Choirs

The two Choirs is an arrangement introduced by Mar Ignatius Nuro. Third Patriarch of Antioch, as far back as the First Century. He tells us that this was suggested to him by a vision he had of the Angels worshipping God in two great groups. It is said that the right-hand group represents the prophets and the left-hand one the Apostles.

Lectern

Lectern on which the Gospel stands points to the Lord Christ Himself.

The Lamps and Candles

The hanging-lamps and candles stands for spiritual luminaries, which in turn are the Angels and the Saints; and for the illumination of our souls by the Spirit.

The Fans

The two fans speak of the six winged seraphim, proclaiming *holy,*

Holy.î The deacons represent the Angels, and for this reason they wear white surplices and Stoles, the latter standing for the Angels wings.

The Vestments

Kutino (White Kuppayam)

The white surplice of the Priests points to their purity.

Hamnikho (Stole)

The Stole tells of their being armed with the fear of the Lord.

Zunoro (Belt)

The girdle speaks of their control over all bodily desires.

Zende (Kaiyyura)

The Maniples tell of their readiness to keep Godís Law and do works of righteousness.

Phaino (Kappa)

The Cope Symbolizes Aaronís robe of many colors and the Saviorís seamless robe.

Masnafta (Head Cover)

The mitre or Head-Cover worn by the Arch bishops reminds us of the cloth with which the Lordís head was bound for His burial. The Crosier, the Bishopís staff, is meant to indicate authority, and to remind us of the shepherdís staff.

*Those who wish further information might consult the ìEthikon,î by Bar Hebraeus, the ìTreasuryî by Barteli, ìCommentary on the Eucharist,î by Bar Saleebi, *Commentary on Sacramentsî* by Bar Kipha, ìThe book of Theologyî by Ivanius of Dara. ìThe Defenition of Prayer,î by Bar Waheeb, and several other works.*

The Censer

The Censer points to the blessed Virgin, in whose countenance shone the light of God head continously, spreading the while a blessed fragrance upon all around, to the banishment of all noisome evil and sin, with its bestowal or refreshing and sanctifying breaths of holiness and the aroma of Heaven itself.

Ikons

Ikons have their benefit too, as a reminder and a source of inspiration to the faithful.

The Curtain

The curtain before the Altar and the Sanctuary is a token of the veil that hangs between us and the heavenly host.

The Sanctuary

The sanctuary is to remind us of Heaven, while the steps to the Altar speak of the ascending ranks of the Angels.

The Altar and Tabalitho

The Altar is really the Tomb of Christ, and the Tabalitho or Altar-Stone speaks of the Sacred Cross. The Altar Covering, which is of linen, reminds us of the burial wrappings of the Savior. The adornment of the Altar with finely wrought vessels suggests to us that we should adorn our souls with every spiritual virtue.

The Paten and Chalice

The paten and Chalice recall the mystery of the Last Supper, the Bread standing for the Body of Christ and the Wine for His precious Blood.

The Spoon

The Spoon recalls the tongs with which the Seraph placed the live coal on Isaiah's lips (Is. 6:6, 7).

The Shushafo

The Shushafo, Chalice-veil used to cover the Elements and the two small coverings for the chalice and the Paten, besides recalling the stone before Christ's tomb, they represent the fact that the Divine Mysteries are hidden from the understanding of men, and that we cannot comprehend how divinity and humanity are united in Christ, the Divine Word, just as we cannot perceive how the bread and the wine become the flesh and blood of Christ our God.

SECTION - 5

THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH:

HISTORICAL SELF - UNDERSTANDING AND IDENTITY SOME ECUMENICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Fr. Dr. K. M. George

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, together with all churches belonging to the Nazarani Christian community of Kerala, traces its origin to the work of St. Thomas the Apostle of Christ who is believed to have arrived at the ancient seaport of , Kodungalloor (Cranganore) on the Malabar coast in CE 52. In writing about the history and identity of the ancient Christian community in India one has to deal with the figure of St. Thomas both historically and symbolically. While most historians of the west in the colonial period doubted the authenticity of the St. Thomas story, the Christian community in Kerala clung to it as part of its most sacred and cherished tradition. Here one has to look critically at the dominant historiography as developed in the European west and as applied to the non-western world in order to grapple with the issue of early Christianity in India.

In this brief article I shall mention the major historical landmark in the life of the Malankara Orthodox Church and point out some of the key methodological problems we confront in retelling our history and defining our identity. This is done in an ecumenical spirit remembering that the ancient Christian community in India was one body, one family and one church until the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century

who came as traders and as missionaries of the Roman Church but soon became colonial and ecclesiastical overlords. With their occupation of this ancient Eastern Church started a series of unfortunate divisions that plague us till this day. The present writer fervently hopes that the lost unity of the St. Thomas Christians would be restored in the 21st century.

Name and Family

The name of the church appears in formal documents as Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church under the Catholicate of the East. The Catholicos, the head of the Church now resides at the headquarters of the Church at Devalokam, Kottayam, Kerala, India. (The present Catholicos is His Holiness Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II. The title Mar Thoma meaning St. Thomas appears formally with the name of every Catholicos in order to signify the apostolic successor: and the continuity of the apostolic seat from Thomas the Apostle of Christ).

The Church is variously and popularly referred to as Malankara Sabha in Malayalam, as The Indian Orthodox Church by some of its historians, as the Syrian Church in some non-Christian circles, as the Jacobite Church by the indiscriminating members of some other Churches. Greeks and other Eastern Orthodox sometimes refer to this church as the ancient Church of Malabar.

The Malankara Orthodox Church is a founding member of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and is in the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches with the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian and Eritrean Churches. The Church, together with other Oriental Orthodox, is a dialogue partner with the Eastern Orthodox Churches of the Byzantine liturgical family since 1967, unofficially with the Roman Catholic Church under the aegis of the Pro Oriente Foundation since 1971 and officially with the Roman Catholic Church since 2002. There is also an official bilateral dialogue going on between the Malankara Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in India since 1986. The Church is also participating in dialogues with the Anglican Church, the EKD or the federation of Protestant Churches in

Germany and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The first division in the one church of St. Thomas in India occurred during the occupation of the church by the Portuguese. The Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama landed on the Kerala coast in 1498. The real division occurred after the mid 17th century, precisely after the historic pledge of the Coonen Cross in 1653 when the Christian community rose in protest against the Portuguese and the Roman Catholic colonial domination of the ancient Christians of St. Thomas. The history up to this point is common to all presently different churches that were one and the same church in the pre-Portuguese period. But in narrating this story some of these churches take their later ecclesiastical connections and attribute them anachronistically to the earlier period of Indian Christianity. This is a serious methodological fallacy. The common knowledge handed on to the successive generations arises from the strong conviction that the Indian Christians of St. Thomas were an independent local church (local in the technical ecclesiological sense in which it is used in early Christian ecclesiology. In this sense the Church of Rome, the Church of Alexandria, the Church of Antioch and so on are all local independent churches but inter dependent in faith and sacramental communion).

The Malankara Orthodox Church is deeply aware that the St. Thomas tradition has been kept unbroken in spite of the vicissitudes of history and the various contacts, both friendly and unfriendly, with the ancient Church traditions outside India like Persian, Roman, Syrian and Anglican. We can legitimately say that the community always silently assumed in its self-understanding three elements:

(a) the church in India was founded by St. Thomas the apostle and is apostolic like any other church in the world founded by Peter, Paul and other apostles.

(b) The church in India is Eastern in its ethos and worship and is clearly distinguished from the Latin/Western tradition. This awareness of distinction dawned on them when they first met the Latin West through Portuguese colonial conquerors.

(c) The Church is fully self-governed by its own local heads and

is rooted in the social and cultural soil of India.

This awareness always remained latent in the mind of the Church, and there was no challenge to it from any quarters before the arrival of the Portuguese Roman Catholics. It became articulate and explicit beginning with the resistance at the forced Synod of Diamper called by the Portuguese Roman Catholic Archbishop Menezes in 1599. The resistance, however, had been suppressed by the iron hand of the colonial master for more than half a century, but it exploded in the 1653 uprising of the Coonen Cross Oath.

The oral tradition and folklore of the Church had always celebrated the founding of seven churches in Kerala in the Malabar / Malankara region on the South West Coast of India, presently known as Kerala. Some of these historical sites like Niranam are still venerated as centers of the early church in India. In the same way the various Christian families in Kerala trace their family tree back to the four families in which St. Thomas was believed to have established priesthood through laying on of hands in order to continue the ministry of Christ in India. These so-called folk traditions are integral to the self-understanding and identity of the Malankara church. In fact the members of the ancient Christian community, irrespective of their present church affiliation, firmly share this deep conviction. This provides a common ground for the self-understanding of the presently separated churches which emerged from the undivided tradition of 1653 years or so.

This shows, in ecumenical terms that the present division of St. Thomas Christians is a rather recent one and is fomented and sealed by the intervention of colonial and ecclesiastical interventions from Christian centers outside India as mentioned above.

Spiritually and liturgically the ancient Indian church in the medieval period before the Portuguese era was with the Persian church.

Apparently this was a cordial relationship that fully respected the autonomy / autocephaly of the Indian church and its particular cultural context. The Persian Church in the Mesopotamian region became

associated with the name of Nestorius; Patriarch of Constantinople who was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Ephesus in A.D.431. This incident in the 5th century happening within the Roman Empire did not affect the reputation of the Persian church flourishing in the Mesopotamian region and reaching out in an amazing missionary enterprise to several countries in Asia up to China. There is no evidence that the St. Thomas Christians in India were aware of the political and ecclesiastical implications of the issue of Nestorius and the Persian church's association with that name. For the Indians the connection was primarily liturgical and pastoral. The doctrinal and political ramifications of an event that happened in the far away Roman Empire in the 5th century were not probably known to them or irrelevant to their solid self understanding and heritage as the Christians of Thomas, the Apostle of Christ. Syriac language in its Eastern version was known to the Church only through the liturgical tradition. The Christian spiritual and ascetic tradition familiar to the clergy and the people were smoothly in agreement with some of the best spiritual practices of ancient Indian religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The community affairs were conducted under the leadership of the clergy. There is no evidence that any bishop coming from the Persian tradition ever interfered with the freedom and self-government of the Indian Church.

Parting Ways

The Malankara Orthodox Church in its historical self - understanding claims abides by the Oath of the Coonen Cross of 1653. This was the uprising of the Nazarani Christian community against the Portuguese / Roman Catholic colonial domination of their ancient, independent, Eastern Church in India. In the dramatic act of holding on to the long rope tied to the stone cross in Mattanchery near Cochin, thousands of Malankara Christians took the solemn pledge that they would never go back under the yoke of Rome and the Portuguese. This was the declaration of independence of Indian Christians from foreign political and ecclesiastical colonialism. Essentially this was the first organized self - affirmation of the Indian Christian community against all forms of alien domination.

Although almost all of the Nazarani parishes then existing took part in the Coonen Cross, a large number of them were gradually lured away from their position of resistance back to the old loyalty or *iPazhaya Coorî* (ie.. 53 Years of complete subjugation to Portuguese and Roman Catholic rule) by the concerted efforts of Carmelite missionaries sent by Rome. People who stood by their really old loyalty, that is, the pre-Portuguese and pre-Roman Catholic tradition were called *iPuthen Coorî* (new loyalty) *probably* because they sought to restore their Eastern Church connections. This is ironic, but can be understood in the colonial context. No wonder the imperial might of the Roman church and the colonial power of the Portuguese could easily interpret in their favour the history of a tiny Indian community in such a way that insiders could be made outsiders and real heirs could be called false claimants and vice versa. This is a major historiographical problem for the Malankara Church. The way they crushed the total opposition of an ancient, indigenous Christian community in India in the 17th century to impose foreign rule and doctrine bears witness to the tremendously oppressive colonial power of the rising West vis-a-vis the rest of the world, and the sad plight of the native communities in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, was a willing collaborator and beneficiary in the rise and expansion of European empire all over the earth.

Soon after the event of Coonen Cross the Indian Nazarani community consecrated the head of their community Archdeacon Thomas as a bishop with the title Mar Thoma. The very title of *Mar Thoma* they chose for their new spiritual and temporal head was ample evidence for the real conviction and feelings of the Indian Christian community. The Portuguese rulers and the Jesuit and Carmelite missionaries all had tried to wipe out the deep conviction of the Indian Christians about their apostolic rootedness in the Thomas tradition and their autonomy and indigenous character.

True children of the vigorous Counter Reformation and aggressive colonial and missionary movements, these Roman Catholics earnestly attempted to supplant the conviction of the Indian Christians with the medieval Roman Catholic concepts of Petrine primacy, universal

church, universal papal jurisdiction over all Christians and so on. They highlighted the iLaw of Peterî over against the iWay of Thomaî (Thomayude margam). They had no knowledge of the indigenous forms of Eastern Christianity nor any respect for the idark skinned, barbarianî people outside of the west European region. The significance of the Coonen Cross and the later division of the one Indian Church to *Pazhaya Coor* and *Puthen Coor* has to be understood in the light of these circumstances.

A New Turn

The line of the indigenous *Mar Thoma* bishops continued in the tradition of the Puthen Coor people (later known as - the Orthodox / Jacobite Church). Faced with the imposing power and threat of the Portuguese / Roman church, the community leaders wrote to several Eastern Patriarchates like Alexandria and Antioch to bring them help against the western invaders. Thus in 1665 came Abdul Jaleel Gregorios, a bishop from Jerusalem belonging to the West Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch. He began to introduce the practices of the West Syrian Church in India, a process completed over the next two centuries by successive bishops from the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Middle East visiting Malankara.

The title *Mar Thoma* was changed to *Mar Dionysius* by another Syrian bishop *Mar Gregorios* who re - consecrated *Mar Thoma VI* in 1770. Once again we see the efforts of foreign prelates to mask or eradicate the tradition of St. Thomas symbolized by the title *Mar Thoma*. They invariably see it as, a threat to their authority and dominion. We will see this colonial interest to keep the Indian church under subjugation reemerging in various forms in the relationship of the Malankara Church with the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch until today.

Although the title *Mar Thomas* was out of use for over a century and the title *Malankara Metropolitan* became prominent, especially for legal purposes, the former title was resumed by the Catholicate of the East in the 20th century.

The Mission of Help

The arrival of the Anglican Missionaries at the beginning of the 19th century, and their proposal of the 'Mission of Help' apparently to reinvigorate the ancient Malankara Church had far reaching consequences for the unity of the Church. Under the spell of the British colonial rule, Kerala witnessed an all round renaissance in education and social order. The founding of the Kottayam College, presently known as Old Seminary or Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam by Pulikottil Joseph Mar Dionysius II in 1815 with the help of the British Resident Col. Munro and the Travancore Royal family was a major landmark in the cultural history of Kerala.

The collaboration between the British missionaries and the Malankara Church came to an end in 1836 with the Mavelikara Synod where the Malankara Church rejected the proposals of Bishop Wilson of Calcutta for 'reforming' the Church. However, the Protestant teachings of the Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society so influenced Abraham Malpan, a teacher of theology at Old Seminary that he began to edit the Eucharistic liturgy according to the theological principles of Protestant Reformation in Europe. This led to a crisis. After many years of bitter controversy and litigation, the Mar Thoma Church was formed in the latter part of the 19th century thus dividing the Malankara Church once again.

The Syrian Connection

In the fight with the Portuguese, and the British, with the Roman Catholic and Anglican Protestant missionary enterprises, the Malankara Church sought the help of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch in order to maintain its eastern and apostolic character. Some of the bishops who arrived from the Middle East were very committed to the cause of Malankara Church. The Church is very grateful to them, for their sincere spiritual efforts to pastorally help the Indian Church. Unfortunately not all of them had the same pastoral intention. Some of the Syrian prelates began to exploit the muddled situation in the Indian Church and catered to their desire for lording over the Indian Church. The 19th century also witnessed the beginning

of a chain of unfortunate litigation within the Malankara Church. Though details vary in each instance of the court case, there were common questions in the mind of the community like the following:

Has the Patriarch of Antioch any authority of jurisdiction over the Malankara Church?

Who has the power of temporal authority over the parish churches and their property - the Malankara Metropolitan or the foreign bishops delegated by the Patriarch?

What is the basis of the identity of the autonomy and identity of the Malankara Church? In what ways can it be fully expressed and realized?

The answers received from various quarters, both directly and indirectly, can be generally indicated as follows:

Firstly, in the circumstances of the Malankara Church in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries no one raised the issue of the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch, because the Church was in a life and death struggle, first with the Portuguese / Roman Catholic invaders, and then with the British / Protestant colonial reformers. The Syrian Church of Antioch was invited to help the Indian Church. It was clear in the minds of those Indian leaders who invited the foreign prelates that they were guests of the Malankara Church. According to the best of Indian hospitality tradition guest - host relationship is only politely assumed and not explicitly stated. Every time a foreign bishop conducted himself against this understanding there was simmering resistance in the minds of the leaders of the Malankara Church. It was in 1876 that the Patriarch Peter III decided to visit the Indian Church in the context of the fight between the Malankara Church and the Reform party. The Patriarch felt that his authority would be undermined if he did not act. The Synod that the Patriarch convened at Mulanthuruthy in 1876 was a crucial landmark in the organizational history of the Malankara Church. While acknowledging the positive organizational aspects, one should note that the Patriarch could affirm his direct jurisdiction over the Indian Church. He considered the ancient Malankara Church as some sort

of an Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and subdivided it into seven dioceses. Later Patriarchs generally followed this line, and continued to affirm their direct jurisdictional power over the Indian Church.

The Malankara Church now woke up to the fatal consequences of this patriarchal claim. The Church had barely escaped the colonial clutches of Rome and the British. Now they found themselves in a new situation of subjugation to the Syrian prelates who were originally considered as brothers in faith, helpers and collaborators coming from a sister Church. The waking up process slowly expressed itself in the deep desire for an Indian Catholicos as the head of the Indian Church and symbol of the apostolic autonomy and indigenous identity of the Malankara Church.

Secondly, though the Malankara Church conceded a brotherly spiritual and pastoral care of its faithful by the foreign bishops (they were invited to do so), there was absolutely no doubt in the mind of its leaders about the autonomy of the Malankara Church. The Malankara Metropolitans understood themselves as heads and rulers of the Church in the succession line of Archdeacons and Mar Thoma Bishops. Gradually, however, the Syrian bishops and Patriarchs understood themselves, as in any colonial situation, as the rulers of the Malankara Church. They expected the Malankara Metropolitans, or later Catholicoses, to behave as their subordinates. While the Indian Metropolitans and Catholicoses asserted their community's self-understanding of the succession of the apostle Thomas and explicitly affirmed the freedom and identity of the Indian Church, the Patriarchs began to undermine the very tradition of St. Thomas and used spiritual weapons like excommunication of the Indian leaders. For example, the infamous bull No. 203 (June 1970) of Patriarch Yakoob III stating that St. Thomas was not a high priest, and not even priest, because he was absent when Jesus commissioned the apostles, were targeted at the apostolic claims of the Indian Church, (i...for he was not a priest as it is evident from the gospel of St. John 20:21-24. As he was not a priest how did he become high priest?î, asked Patriarch Yakoob III).

Unfortunately, like the Portuguese and the British, the Syrians also succeeded in further dividing the Malankara Church, because one section of the Church, though a minority, supported the uncanonical claims of Patriarchal authority over the Indian Church and agreed to the Patriarchal act of totally trivializing the venerable Indian heritage of St. Thomas and humiliating the great leaders of the Indian Church through such illegitimate acts like excommunication.

(It should be remembered that when the Syrian Antiochian Church came into contact with the Malankara Church from 1665 and onwards, the Syrian Church, in spite of its glorious past, was a small, poor, scattered and illiterate community in the Middle East under the oppressive Muslim rule of the Ottoman Turks. It was always a point of pride for them that they could rule over a church in India with a far larger number of faithful than their own, over a community that was socially superior, economically strong and politically free. People in India received these bishops with generous hospitality and devotion simply because of the latter's spiritual garb and fair skin! A similar situation prevailed in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church with respect to the white Latin / European bishops who ruled over them until the end of the 19th century. The well-known fulminations of a prominent 17th century Syro-Malabar clergyman like Paremakal Thoma Kathanar against the arrogance of such white skinned European clergy and how they treated the dark-skinned Indians are worth remembering here.)

The Catholicate: Symbol of Freedom and Autocephaly

The event of momentous importance in the history of the Malankara Church after the Coonen Cross Oath of 1653 was the instituting of the Catholicate in 1912. This was not a sudden happening, but the climax of a long process of awakening in the Indian Church ever since the Portuguese occupation of the Church. All the aspirations of the community to express its identity and apostolic freedom culminated in the Catholicate. The question whether it is a re-establishment of the Persian Catholicate of ancient

days or reestablishment of an independent Catholicate as the symbol of the identity of the ancient Church of St. Thomas in India is irrelevant to a large extent. We cannot ignore the historical aspects of such an institution nor can we underestimate its actual missionary and canonical potential in India. A Christian Church like the Malankara Church with a profound awareness of its apostolic roots, freedom, and long heritage in India has all the authority to institute its own head and organize its own hierarchy like any other ancient apostolic church in the world.

In the 1930s Mar Ivanios, head of a monastery and one of the bishops of the Malankara Orthodox Church joined the Roman Catholic Church with some of his clergy and faithful and set up what is known as Malankara (Rite) Catholic Church. This was a typical case of Uniatism practised by the Roman Church amidst all Eastern Church since the 16th century.

Search for Unity

In 1934 the Malankara Association, the representative body of the people and the clergy of the Church adopted a constitution for the Malankara Church. The then separate positions of the Malankara Metropolitan and the Catholicos held by two different incumbents were integrated in one incumbent of the apostolic seat of St. Thomas as both the temporal and spiritual head of the Malankara Church. The Constitution, however generously and with a view to future unity of the two factions, provided space for a Patriarch recognized by the Malankara Church, as spiritual head without any power of ordination or jurisdiction, appointment or disposal in the Malankara Church.

Already at the beginning of the 20th century the Malankara Church was divided into two factions: one side supporting the Patriarchal claims of jurisdiction over Malankara and other side holding the ideal of the indigenous, autonomous Malankara Orthodox Church ruled by its own Indian heads. Since the prominent leader of the Indian side then was Malankara Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Dionysius (Vattasseril), it was called by the other party as Metranis faction. The Patriarch wreaked vengeance on Mar Dionysius, an outstanding

theologian, administrator and saintly figure, by excommunicating him uncanonically. The Malankara Church and the civil courts in India rejected the excommunications as an illegal, individual and uncanonical act of a foreign prelate who wanted to suppress the genuine canonical aspiration of the apostolic church of India to manage its own affairs without alien intervention.

The long litigation between these factions was ended in 1958 by the verdict of the Supreme Court recognising the authority of the Catholicos cum Malankara Metropolitan over the Malankara Church. The Patriarch's party that contested his authority was ordered by the Supreme Court to pay up all the court expenses incurred by the Catholicos side. Immediately after the Supreme Court verdict, the then Patriarch Yakob III of Antioch and the Catholicos Baselius Geevarghese II agreed to a historic peace settlement by accepting and acknowledging each other. The Catholicos exchanged the Reconciliation document with the Patriarchal delegate Metropolitan Mar Julius at the Old Seminary, Kottayam in December 1958. All peace-loving people of Malankara and members of the sister churches rejoiced at this precious gift of peace. The Malankara church became one, spiritually and administratively.

Unfortunately this blessing remained only for about 12 years. The Catholicos had exchanged the peace document, with the formula "accepting the Patriarch of Antioch subject to the constitution". However, the Constitution of 1934 and the title of the Catholicos/Malankara Metropolitan and his apostolic authority all were questioned in a new series of litigation by the Patriarchal party. This led to another historic verdict of the Supreme Court in 1995 reaffirming the validity of the Constitution of 1934 and the authority and position of the Catholicos cum Malankara Metropolitan. The court instructed the Catholicos to convene a Malankara Association meeting of all the parishes of the Malankara Church in order to begin a new era of peace and unity. Although the Association was validly and canonically held in the presence of a Supreme Court observer in 2001 at Parumala, unity was not achieved, not because of the lack of desire for peace on the side of the common people and parishes, but because of the great manipulative skill of a church leader who had

ambitions to fulfil in a divided church. Four bishops on the former Patriarchal side declared allegiance to the Constitution of 1934 and to the Catholicos and along with their priests and faithful were reunited with the Malankara Church. The Catholicos publicly declared that doors were still open for peace and unity and exhorted all leaders to respect the people's desire for unity.

It is important to note that both factions held on to their common ground of the same liturgy and same faith in spite of long years of litigation. It is really one Church. The litigation and division were essentially on account of the dispute on authority and jurisdiction, particularly in temporal matters and not on matters of faith. The Supreme Court has upheld more than once the constitution of 1934 as providing solutions for these disputes and as an effective instrument for unity. But far above such legal aspects, most of the true believers are conscious that the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church is really one body in Christ, in one faith and one worship. Many fervently are hoping against hope that the Church would be united once again for the glory of God. (The present writer, for instance, who enjoyed the bliss of unity in the 1960s has never accepted that there are two different churches with the names Jacobite and Orthodox, but keeps its oneness in his heart in all humility and hope in God's healing power.)

Conclusion

Retelling the sad story of division among the Nazrani Christians of Kerala has to be necessarily an exercise of hope for unity as well. Looking at the history and identity of Malankara Orthodox Church from an ecumenical perspective, I am led to raise some broad, elementary questions that I hope will remain with us in order to help us in some soul-searching and to take us out of the present state of separate existence.

1. If the Nazrani Christian community of St. Thomas could remain as one single Church and family until the 16th century, who divided us and for what cause?
2. To what extent are we justified in fighting each other in the

name of Rome or Antioch, Bagdad or Canterbury? Can we the Christians of St. Thomas with as much antiquity, apostolicity and autonomy as these ancient churches organize our affairs on our own without any subservient reference to them or accepting any alien superior authority except that of loving communion?

3. Can we agree on an essential basis of common Christian faith and practice of the undivided Church, choose our own head for the united Church, and evolve our own Indian system of hierarchy and administration while maintaining very cordial and Christian communion with other Churches?

4. What are the racial and economic factors involved in our people's easy submission to foreign ecclesiastical authority during the colonial period as well as in the contemporary post-colonial era?

5. How can we reinstate our own ecclesiological historiographical methods unlike those used by the dominant Churches and colonial masters from the West for their own interests, so that we as a united Church can do effective Christian witness in our pluralistic and secular context?