

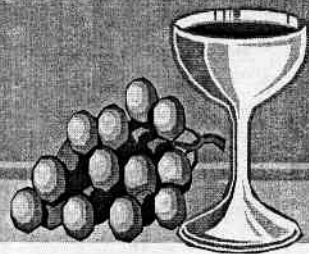
Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Youth Bishopric

The Characteristics of Orthodox Teaching

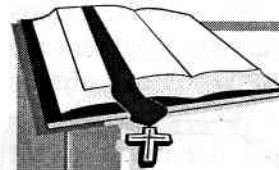


H.G
Bishop Moussa
Bishop of Youth

CONTENTS



Preface	5
1- Scriptural Teaching	6
2- Theological Teaching	14
3- Liturgical Teaching	25
4- Group Teaching	37
5- Spiritual Teaching	49
6- Patristic Teaching	67
7- Integrated Teaching	78



Preface

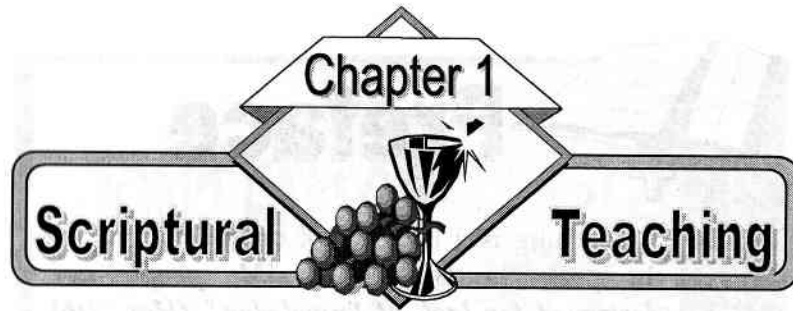
Teaching is a basic work of the church. In the past, the Bible said: "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" (Hos. 4:6) Knowledge is doubtless essential for salvation. The apostle Paul commended his disciple, Timothy, saying: "*From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*" (2 Tim. 3:15)

The church should, therefore, in all faithfulness and sincerity, offer its children pure and perfect teaching free of error in order to build up their spirits in the holy faith which was delivered to us by the saints. (Jg. 3)

Orthodox teaching has special traits that have characterized it throughout the ages. It has succeeded in preparing for the Lord a host of saints and martyrs, for it did not neglect any aspect of life, but was complete and effective throughout the ages.

Among the important characteristics of Orthodox teaching are the following:

- 1- **Scriptural teaching.**
- 2- **Theological teaching.**
- 3- **Liturgical teaching.**
- 4- **Group teaching.**
- 5- **Spiritual teaching.**
- 6- **Patristic teaching.**
- 7- **Integrated teaching.**



Orthodox teaching is based on a true understanding of both Testaments of the Holy Bible. Our holy fathers adhered to the spirit and letter of the Bible and followed it in their daily lives. St. Anthony the great obeyed one Biblical verse only and so became a monk and a father to all the monks of the world. Augustine, the philosopher, who lived removed from God, heard a divine voice in the life of St. Anthony and from the verses in Romans 13: **“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep....”**

We know that St. Didymus and other fathers learned whole books of the Bible by heart. Moreover, the fathers explained most of the books of both Testaments and set the rules for church readings with all the excellent Christian theological thought that they include. We now read a vast number of chapters and books of the Bible during Holy Mass and on the different church occasions such as Holy Week (**Paskha**), Advent, and during the rituals of the different sacraments.

The Holy Gospel is always on the altar and is always raised above our heads. When His Holiness the Pope reads the gospel, he removes his crown to indicate that the Lord Jesus is speaking in person.

The icon-bearer is lit up during the reading of the gospel and two lighted candles are held on both sides of the

gospel to show that it is the Divine Light that enlightens the minds of men and leads them to salvation. Everybody accepts the gospel with love, for it is the Good News that enables us to enter into life with Christ and to walk in the way of the eternal Kingdom.

All the doctrines of the Church are taken from the Holy Bible. All the Church rites include many chapters from the Bible. All the Church prayers quote the words of God from the two Testaments. That is why the Orthodox teacher is keen about reading the word of God and studies it every day. He is eager to understand it through the thought of the fathers and their interpretations of the Scriptures. He abides by it in his daily life, then presents it to people in all purity.

The Church has designated a special rank among the ranks of deacons for the reader of the Holy Bible. It is the rank of the **“aghnostos”** or **“reader”** and it commands him to do the following:

- ☞ To serve at the altar with humility and faithfulness.
- ☞ To study the Bible privately and at church.
- ☞ To read the Bible from the lectern.
- ☞ To offer the word of God to people in the services.

It is a well known fact that both the Testaments of the Holy Bible are studied as one unit **“For the Old Testament is revealed in the New, and the New Testament is hidden in the Old,”** says St. Augustine.

We have learned from His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III, the danger of **“the text taken out of context,”** for we should not take one text only and extract a doctrine or principle from it, but should study the spirit of the Bible as a whole and the sum total of its texts in order to arrive at a sound understanding of the word.

For example, some people say that sickness, poverty, academic failure, delay in marriage, and childlessness are all curses sent by God in punishment of sinners and that the generations inherit them! This teaching is derived from the Book of Deuteronomy when the people were in spiritual infancy, unable to learn except through their senses and when God's covenant with them was: ***"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword."*** (Isa. 1:20,21) The curses and blessings of this covenant were material and tangible. In the new covenant, however, the real curse of sin is a spiritual curse, the separation from God, spiritual destruction, and eternal perdition. The real blessings of repentance is union with God, spiritual growth, and eternal inheritance. Sickness, poverty, and academic failure are trials and not curses that are sent to the children of God in order to purify them, establish them, and keep them from pride. The apostle says: ***"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil and nor does He Himself tempt anyone, but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.'"*** (Jas. 1:13-15) This applies to the evil trials that are caused by sin, and that are not accompanied by peace or growth, except if the individual repents.

As for the other trials such as sickness, poverty, and failure, the apostle says: ***"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."*** (Jas 1:2,3) ***"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord***

has promised to those who love Him." (Jas 1:12) That is why the saints endured sickness with thanksgiving and never felt that it was a curse! On the contrary, they felt it was a blessing and a fellowship with the Crucified!

Orthodox teaching is Scriptural and takes the Bible as a whole. The Church passed it on to us, as it was lived by the saints and explained by the fathers!

The Characteristics of Orthodox Interpretation:

The Bible is a huge sea and a vast ocean. It is enough that it is the word of God and His Holy breath. That is why interpretations and opinions differ in accordance to the reader of the Bible and his intellectual, spiritual and temperamental circumstances. The Bible is infallible but open to the exertions of the interpreters. However, our Christian doctrines remain governed by the thought of the fathers, the laws of the councils, and the traditions of the Church which have been passed down to us.

Our Coptic Church deals with its children in this area with balance and equilibrium. It does not forbid its children from meditating on the Bible directly, but it also does not give them the freedom to infer doctrines. It gives them the opportunity to be spiritually filled with the world of God without their deviating in teaching or doctrine, and within the sound framework of what has been delivered and that which our fathers have struggled greatly to preserve for us.

The Scriptures were partially revealed through the prophets and priests. The meanings of the Psalms, the prophecies, and their religious practices did not become clear except in Christ. That is why, after the Resurrection, the apostles needed the Lord: ***"to open their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures."***

(Lk. 24:45) That is why St. Augustine said: **“The Old Testament is revealed in the New, and the New Testament is hidden in the Old.”**

1- Christ Interprets the Books to Us :

St. Luke says of the Lord that: **“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”** (Lk.24:27) Thus, the Lord was the first to interpret the Scriptures and He asked us to do the same. If we want to understand the word of God well, we have resort to its Author and Inspirer, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to deepen our fellowship with Him to be enlightened by His Spirit in order to understand what the Spirit says to the churches.

2- The Church Interprets the Books to Us :

We have to receive the sound interpretation from the holy Church in which the Holy Spirit resides, in which the fathers lived in the godly truth that is recorded in the Gospel, and where there is sound understanding of the word of God as a result of being enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

This should not upset us in any way. It can only upset our intellectual pride which will lead us nowhere. **“You have concealed it from the wise and those who have understanding and have revealed it to the children.”**

St. Augustine said: **“When I was a young man, I sought to understand the meaning of the holy books through my intellectual powers and not through humble petition to God... and so I closed the door leading to God with my pride and arrogance. Instead of knocking and having the door opened to me, my search was the reason for the door’s closing... I demanded with pride that which only the humble can obtain.”**

He also said: **“I believe only in the Gospel as directed by Church authority.”** Therefore, God reveals Himself to the simple who are more able to interpret the purpose of God than to the proud who imagine that they are wise!

The Holy Bible is part of the tradition delivered to us by the Church and it is the arbiter of every doctrine, ritual, or tradition.

That is why our Coptic Church honors the Bible, reading it, studying it, and living it. It quotes its texts in its prayers and doctrines, and offers it to its children as explained by the fathers and as lived by the saints.

3- The Apostles' Awareness of the Correct Interpretation :

The apostles were totally aware of and alert to the soundness of interpretation and of Christian teaching. Christianity rose on the ruins of paganism with its practices and philosophies, and on Judaism with its theology and its teachers. It was inevitable that those should try to interfere in Christianity to corrupt it, or at least, to remove its basic message, which is **“the salvation of man through Christ.”**

The apostles were careful to preserve the Christian truth and wrote refutations of the heresies of Judaizers and Agnostics, which are two false ways of salvation. The first offers salvation through belonging to the Jewish faith and observing its dead and symbolic rites, and the second offers salvation through human rational thought. Both are false and were refuted by the apostles in their writings and epistles such as Romans, Galatians, Colosions, and John. In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul explains the essence of justification by faith working through love. In his epistle to the Galatians, he fought the Judaizers and the return to a weak basis. In Colosions, he fought the Judiazers, the Agnostics, the worship of angels, and the mortification of

the flesh; all of them destructive pagan beliefs. As for St. John, he defended the truth of the incarnation of Christ against the heresy of the Docetists who conceived the body of the Lord to be ethereal or imaginary, thus depriving us of the most precious blessings of the incarnation which is union with God and sharing in the Divine nature.

4- The Awareness of the Fathers of the Church and Sound Interpretation :

The great fathers of the Church drew inspiration from the Bible in all their works, their asceticism, and the way they lived. That is why their lives were enlightened and evangelical. Their interpretation of the Bible was not scientific or intellectual, but practical aiming at our salvation and the growth and guidance of our spirits. Thus, St. Anthony says: **"The holy books are sufficient for our edification."** It is said of one of the epistles of St. Pachomios that it seems to be **"a summary of the Holy Bible."** His disciple, St. Tadros, used to extract chapters from the Bible for his children that were applicable to their circumstances. St. Amoun recounts that his children used to come to him asking him to reveal their shortcomings to them and he would recall for each of them a chapter of the Bible and read it to them, so that each of his sons would return with a repentant heart and tearful eyes.

They loved the Holy Bible; they lived it and read it regularly until they learned it. Thus, their lives became shining gospels. History quotes St. Anthony: **"If I want to read, I read God's Book."** St. Sisoy said: **"I read the old books, then turn to the new."** Hence, we realize that the fathers held both Old and New Testaments to be equally holy, in contrast to some claims made nowadays.

The fathers did not limit themselves to the interpretation of the Bible from a spiritual and life angle only, but some of them specialized in the interpretation of the holy books

in a scientific and intellectual way also. Thus, many of the fathers wrote exegeses of most of the books, such as: Clement of Alexandria and Origen, in the third century, Eusebius of Cesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius the Apostolic, Basil and Gregory of Nizanze and Nicea in the fourth century, and John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Jerome and Augustine in the fifth.

Although some commentators, influenced by Greek philosophy, attempted to deprive Christianity of its simplicity and make of it a philosophy (like Origen), the church was alert to this and preserved its Christian teaching from any distortion or spuriousness, even if it should be unintentional. Furthermore, the resolutions of the world councils were the best protection of the integrity of Christian teaching and of the accuracy of exegesis.

Summary :

We get our interpretation of the Holy Bible from:

- 1- **Jesus Christ Himself:** His life, work, our fellowship with Him, and the light of His Spirit within us.
- 2- **The Apostles:** they were alert to the importance of preserving Christian teaching from all Jewish or pagan influences.
- 3- **The Church:** the body of Christ, so that no one should stray because of his own personal ideas.
- 4- **The Fathers of the Church:** they lived the gospel in their daily lives; they interpreted it intellectually, and kept the holy teaching.
- 5- **The Council Laws:** these defined the Christian teaching legally so that it is preserved from any corrupting influences.

Therefore, let us be filled with the Bible, contemplating its words and nurtured by its teaching. Let us swim in its seas, but within the confines of the vast heritage that the Church has delivered to us. We do not start from a vacuum.

Chapter 2

Theological Teaching

The word “**orthodoxy**” is made up of two parts: “**ortho** = **integrity, soundness**” and “**doxy** = **glory**”; that is, its meaning is “**the sound way that glorifies God;**” not only through the soundness of its teaching, but also through the integrity of life and behavior.

Thus, we can perceive the necessity of Orthodox teaching’s combining doctrine with daily behavior. You do not feel, when you listen to an orthodox speaker, that he ignores the doctrine and is content to speak only of the spiritual, for doctrine is what life consists of. When the Orthodox preacher talks about God, he gives us an idea of the Unity of Substance and the Trinity of Hypostases. The Orthodox Church believes that: “**There is no life without theology and no theology without life.**” That is, it refuses to make theology consist purely of concepts and valid theories that are divorced from life and behavior. It rejects the notion that theology should be merely an intellectual activity that has no relation to the inner life. It connects it to man’s inner life so that it is inflamed with love for God, to our outer life so that we behave with honesty, and to the Church so that man is united with the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, with its heavenly branches, and with his brothers the believers.

When the Orthodox preacher speaks about redemption, it is not enough for him to speak only of the blood of Christ,

but he also explains the theology of redemption, the participation of the Hypostases in it, and the responsibility of the believer towards it. When he discusses the Incarnation, he is not content with a spiritual meditation, but with St. Athanasius the Apostolic, he looks into the dimensions of the divine Incarnation, its role in our salvation and redemption, and the possibility of our union with God. St. Athanasius says: “**If Christ were not God, how can I become a son of God?**” Origen said: “**The theologian is the man who knows how to pray.**” In the past, the fathers said: “**The theologian is the martyr.**”

That is why the Church opposed any theological or doctrinal deviation, not merely in order to adhere to the ancient teachings delivered by the apostles, but because this faith is basic to our daily life and to our eternal salvation. We therefore understand why they opposed Arius who diminished the significance of the divinity of the Lord Jesus. He made the Redeemer finite and redemption incomplete, which caused us to lose the divine blessings of infinite redemption and thus caused us to perish! The Church later also opposed Macdonius who diminished the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Who conveys to us the blessings of redemption. The Church also opposed Nestorius who separated the divine and human natures of Christ, because it feared that this heresy might deprive us of the indwelling of God in us, and so forth.

The epistles of St. John, written in opposition to those who denied the Incarnation, the mystery of holiness, give us the strongest evidence of the importance of theology in our teaching. How dangerous it is to raise the divine above the human and to claim that the former does not dwell in the latter! This means that God refuses to dwell in us; how then can we live with Him in eternity?

The epistles of St. Paul are full of Christian theological thought at the beginning, followed by its practical application at the end. Thus, he combines theology with life, and that is the orthodox way.

Some Important Theological Examples :

Example 1:



God is One Essence and Three Persons :

Of course, God is one, one “**Infinite**” essence without beginning or end. He is the origin of all being, an Infinite Being, Infinite Wisdom, and Eternal Life. It is impossible that there should be more than one Infinite Being; otherwise each of them would have finite limits. The Divine, Eternal, Infinite Being is different from man since man has a beginning (**which he takes from God**). And if he has eternity, he takes that too from God, because of the rational eternal spirit he gets from God at his creation. God said: “*Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth*” (Gen. 1:26,27).

Man thus consists of dust + the breath of life. “*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*” (Gen. 2:7) The dust of the ground became a body and the living spirit is a rational one, the divine breath that bestows eternity to humans.

All men have a beginning but no end!

All other creatures have both a beginning and an end!

God alone has no beginning and no end! He is eternal and everlasting, the only infinite Being in the universe, in thought and in existence!

However, this One Essence has Three Persons.

The Father is the Origin.

The Son is born of Him.

The Spirit of God emanates from Him.

This can be clarified if we consider the sun as a concrete illustration. The orb of the sun is the origin; its light is born of this fiery orb, and the heat of the sun emanates from this fiery orb.

One sun = an orb + light + heat

- 1- Just as it is impossible for the orb to be separated from the light or heat, so is it impossible for the Father to be separate from the Son or the Holy Spirit.
- 2- And just as the orb, the light, and the heat of the sun are one, so God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one God.
- 3- Just as it is impossible for the orb to exist without light or heat, so it is impossible for the light to exist without the orb or the heat, and for the heat to exist without the orb or the light. Similarly, it is impossible for the Father to exist without the Son and the Holy Spirit, for the Son to exist without the Father and the Holy Spirit, or for the Holy Spirit to exist without the Father and the Son. He emanates from the Father and is sent to us by the Son, but the Three are One essence.

We Believe in One God :

- ☞ In the Creed, which we recite many times a day, we say: **“We believe in One God”**. We then go on to explain the details, for He is One God in Essence and Three Persons.
- ☞ We end our Christian prayers with: **“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God”**.
- ☞ The two Testaments of the Holy Bible state: **“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one!”** (*Deut. 6:4, Mk. 13:29*).
- ☞ Even the devils believe that He is One **“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe --- and tremble”** (*Jas. 2:19*).

Our Unitarian faith is a firm tenet in Christianity, and he who says that there are many gods, is necessarily a heretic.

The Holy Trinity :

- ☞ The Father is **“the Wise”**, the Son is **“Wisdom”**, and the Holy Spirit is **“the Spirit of Wisdom”**. There is no doubt that the Wise + Wisdom + the Spirit of Wisdom = One.
- ☞ God the Father is **“the Loving”**, the Son is **“Love”** who is born of Him, and the Holy Spirit is **“the Spirit of Love”** that flows from Him. The Loving + Love + the Spirit of Love = One.
- ☞ God the Father is **“the Omnipotent”**, the Son is **“the Omnipotence”** that resides in Him, and the Holy Spirit is **“the Spirit of Omnipotence”** that emanates from Him. The Omnipotent + Omnipotence + the Spirit of Omnipotence = One.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit :

- ☞ The Son is born of the Father before the ages, Light of Light, just like light is born of fire. Is there any

difference in time? When I light a candle and it gives forth light, which precedes the other in time: the light or the fire? There is no difference whatsoever in time. Which emanates from the other: the light or the fire? Of course, the light comes from the fire, but simultaneously, without any difference in time.

- ☞ They are also inseparable. Although the light is born of the fire, it is inseparable from it. It is exactly the same with the Father and the Son, a spiritual birth before all ages. It is naturally not a physical birth as some imagine, but is the same as the birth of light from fire, or the birth of an idea from the mind. The fact that the light is born of fire means that it resides in it and is inseparable from it. When a thought is born of the mind and is recorded on paper, it still remains in the brain and is not separated from it.

If this is possible with concrete things such as fire and the human mind, how much more with what is divine!

- ☞ The Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Spirit. The Essence is one, while each is distinct as a Person without being separated from each other.
- ☞ St. Augustine says: **“God the Father is not the Son and He is not the Holy Spirit. But the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God”**.

The Golden Triangle :

If we visualize a golden equilateral triangle ABC :

- 1- Angle A is not angle B or angle C, but angle A = angle B = angle C.
- 2- All of A, B, and C equal the whole triangle. We find that each angle embraces the whole triangle.

Thus the Person of the Father is not the Person of the Son, nor the Person of the Spirit. The Father is the Origin, the Son is born of Him, and the Spirit emanates from Him. But:

☩ The Father is God.

☩ The Son is God.

☩ The Spirit is God.

It is impossible for A to be separated from B or C. Also it is impossible for the Three Persons to be separated from each other.

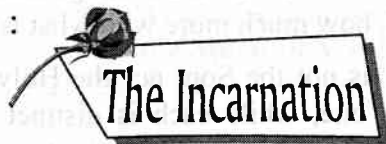
The Father creates the world with the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

The Son redeems the world with the Father and in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies the world according to the will of the Father and through the work of the Son.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are One God.

Example 2 :



Why the Incarnation?

This is an important question; it is all of Christianity. It is a question that has been raised in every era and in every place. This is a question that required that Divine Inspiration should speak through St. John the Beloved in his gospel and epistles to make clear the necessity of Incarnation for the salvation of humanity and the impossibility of salvation without faith in the incarnation of God the Word. In the epistles of St. John, he considers **(being, of course, inspired of God)** that: *“Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every*

spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” (1 Jn. 4:2,3) God intended that St. John the Beloved, who often leaned on Jesus’ breast, should live to the end of the first century as a faithful witness to sound Christian theological thought, exactly as he had received it from the Lord Himself. Whereas all the rest of the twelve apostles and St. Paul died as martyrs before 70 AD, St. John the Beloved survived almost to the end of the first century to establish the sound Christian doctrine in the face of numerous heresies such as:

1- The Gnostic Heresy :

The Gnostics imagined that salvation could be achieved through intellectual knowledge, Gnosis = Know. They said that rational contemplation purifies the spirit and saves it, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is merely a man upon whom a sublime spirit descended.

If we believe this we lose everything; salvation through the exercise of reason does away with the necessity for the incarnation and redemption. If we assume that Christ was only a man, this means that our redemption is finite and incomplete. That is why the Church rejected this dangerous heresy.

2- The Judaization Heresy :

This was prevalent for a while in the lives of some Jews who had become Christians because they were unable to be quickly liberated from the glories of their old formal worship with its rituals and symbolic devotions. St. Paul stood up to them to explain the glories of Christ and Christianity, especially in his epistle to the Hebrews, the key to which is the word **“better”**. The Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely better than the angels (Ch. 1,2), better than Moses (Ch .3),

better than Joshua (Ch. 4), and better than Aaron (Ch. 5). His promise is more sure (Ch. 6), and the offering of Melchizedek symbolized His sacrifice (Ch. 7); His priesthood is better than Aaron's (Ch. 8); His covenant is better than that of the Old Testament (Ch. 9); His holiness greater than that of the Temple (Ch. 10). Faith in Him is the secret of the patriarch's salvation (Ch. 11). His law is more perfect than the law of Moses (Ch. 12), and His blood is more precious than the blood of the sacrifices (Ch. 10,13).

3- The Docitian Heresy :

They imagined that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was ethereal and mythical, believing that it was improper for matter to be part of God's life. This heresy was revived in Eutychus' heresy, and its repercussions are still evident in the questions that are raised about the Incarnation such as:

- 1- Is the Incarnation contrary to the nature of God?
- 2- Is the Incarnation contrary to the holiness of God?
- 3- Is the Incarnation contrary to the power of God?
- 4- Why was the Incarnation necessary; was there no other solution?
- 5- What is the significance of the Incarnation in our lives?

There must be answers to these important questions for many reasons:

First: To establish our rock-like faith, on which all the heresies have been broken and destroyed.

Second: To support our brothers in Christ on the basis of the fundamental knowledge that is necessary for salvation, for the Bible says: "*my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" (Hos. 3:4)

Third: Giving up the doctrine of Incarnation is tantamount to giving up our portion in Christ and in the Kingdom. As

long as God does not condescend to take our flesh, He will not dwell in us. That is perdition itself, for how can we live with Him in the Kingdom if we do not resemble Him?

That is why the apostle said: "*Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh*" (1Tim.3:16). The Incarnation, therefore, is the mystery of human godliness, and hence eternal salvation.

Example 3 :



The Characteristics of the Required Redeemer :

The redeemer's task is vital, so he must have certain characteristics, such as:

- 1- The redeemer must be a man since it is man who fell and the redeemer will bear his penalty in his place.
- 2- This redeemer must die "*For the wage of sin is death.*" (Rom. 6:23) The sentence God passed on Adam and Eve was death; "*for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die*" (Gen. 2:17).
- 3- This redeemer, however, has to be infinite in order to pay the unlimited debt of man. That is because, as we previously mentioned, sin was committed against the infinite God. All mankind contributed to this debt so it became immense.
- 4- The redeemer had to be without sin, for he who lacks something cannot give it; for how could he save us if he were sinful and in need of redemption?

5- He has to be a creator, for what is required of him is not only forgiveness but also the renewal of man through the Holy Spirit.

In view of these characteristics, the Incarnation was necessary. Why?

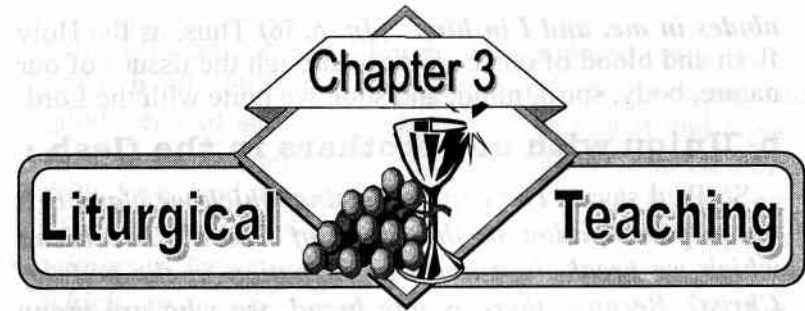
The Incarnation is the solution.

When the Hypostasis of the Word, the Divine Wisdom, took flesh and came to dwell among us, He was able to redeem man, since in Him were found all the necessary qualities:

- 1- In His humanity, He is man and dies.
- 2- In His divinity, He is infinite, without sin, and is a Creator.

Thus, the Lord of glory was able to resolve the problem of the corruptibility of human nature by **“taking what was ours and giving us what is His”** That is, He bore our sins and justified us by His righteousness. Also, he took our flesh, but without sin, and He gave us fellowship in the Divine nature.

Is there any other solution? Impossible!



The word **“liturgy”** means **“group work or popular work”**. It was later used to define the prayer of Holy Mass and the Eucharist.

The Eucharist, in our Church and in the Holy Bible, is the gathering of the clergy and the congregation around the Lord’s Holy Body. That is why it is called the sacrament of thanksgiving or the sacrament of offering.

Thus, Orthodox teaching places Holy Communion at its very center. We see the priest declare, while he raises the platter with the Body over his head, **“Given on our behalf for our salvation, the forgiveness of our sins, and eternal life to all who partake of it.”** If the teaching of any man lacks this liturgical element and if it does not give Holy Communion the place it deserves as the basis of being rooted in Christ and of the resurrection in the age to come, it is not Orthodox teaching. Why?

1- The Effects of the Liturgy :

There is no doubt that the liturgy has many effects on the lives of the members of the Body of Christ, some of which we can summarize as follows:

a- Union with the Lord Jesus Christ :

This is the most important effect of the liturgy, for the Lord says: **“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood**

abides in me, and I in him.” (Jn. 6:56) Thus, as the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord pass through the tissues of our nature, body, spirit, mind, and soul, we unite with the Lord.

b- Union with our brothers in the flesh :

St. Paul says: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread.” (1Cor.10:16,17)* Thus, we only pray over one offering which we all share as members of one Body, one Christ.

c- Union with those in heaven :

We consecrate the icons in church with the Holy Chrism because we believe that the icon is a holy presence, that of a saint! Thus, the deacon cries out, alerting us: **“Lift up your eyes to the east to see the altar, with the body and blood of Emmanuel on it, with the angels and the archangels standing and crying, Holy, Holy, Holy.”**

We also mention the names of the departed saints in our prayers, and we pray for all those who have slept before us. At the end of Mass, the priest dismisses the angel of the Sacrifice saying: *“O angel of this Holy Sacrifice, remember us before the Lord, to forgive us our trespasses.”* Therefore, we feel that we are united with those who are in heaven, the saints and the angels.

d- Responsibility toward the world :

We cry out: **“Amen, amen, amen; O Lord, we preach Your death, and Your holy resurrection...”** This is a feeling of responsibility toward the world and to every person who does not yet know about his portion in salvation, or about

Christ, the Savior. The Church is not a closed entity, but is open to all. This is the responsibility for spreading the good news of salvation, whose head is Christ and whose spirit is God’s Spirit. The Heavenly Father takes care of it with love, and the heavenly host surround it with care *“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” (Heb. 12:1,2)*

The Christian individual leaves Holy Mass full of love and gentleness, full of the desire to talk about the Lord and what he has done for us, which is to have mercy on us, to save us, and to grant us His heavenly Kingdom. The Eucharist is the path to the ministry.

e- Forgiveness and Salvation :

The Liturgy is the means of salvation and forgiveness. We have evidence of this when the priest cries out in the final confession, as though warning those who neglect partaking of it: **“Given on our behalf for our salvation and the forgiveness of our sins..”** Did not the Bible say: *“without shedding of blood, there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22)? “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins;” (Eph.1:7) “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1Jn. 1:7) “Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” (Heb. 13:12)*

That is why the priest says in the prayer before Communion: **“Grant me, my Savior, that I might consider Your suffering my treasure, Your crown of thorns my glory, Your pain my happiness, Your bitterness my**

sweetness, Your blood my life, Your love my pride and thanksgiving. O wounds of Christ, wound me with the spear of Divine love. O death of Christ, intoxicate me with the love of the One who died for me. O blood of Christ, purify me of all sin." Attending Mass with reverence and going early in addition to partaking of the Holy Sacrifice vouchsafe forgiveness and salvation, for the priest prays saying: "When we offer the sacrifice on your altar, sin departs from our members through Your grace."

f- Achieving Immortality :

The Lord says: "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (Jn. 6:54) For this is "the bread of life that comes down from heaven," the food of the spirit, and the way of inheritance. It is as though there were an organic contact with the Eternal, Living God, Who said: "*Because I live, you will live also*" (Jn. 14:19). Therefore, the fathers say: "**he who is far from the altar, is deprived of the bread of God.**" We believe that everyone who neglects Holy Communion, becomes an abode for death and for every unclean spirit. We know that "*blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" (Mt. 5:8) "*...holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.*" (Heb. 12:14) Thus, Holy Communion is the way to see God, the Almighty, and to obtain the eternal heritage.

If such are the effects of Holy Communion, can we envisage orthodox teaching that does not speak about it urging people to partake of it without affectation or pretense and with the spontaneity of the experienced believer? One of the basic characteristics of Orthodox teaching is frequent speech about the liturgy, the Eucharist, the unity of the body, and abiding in Christ.

2- The Liturgy.. Kinds of Prayers :

One of the most important characteristics of the liturgy is that it raises those who take part in it from one level to another in different kinds of prayer, some of which are:

a- Thanksgiving :

There is no Orthodox prayer that does not begin with thanksgiving! In the Psalms, in praise, in the raising of incense, in mass, in weddings, and in funerals, thanksgiving is the most outstanding trait of liturgical prayer. The Church wants to teach us to live in it, thanking God Who controls everything, Who does all good, Who is merciful "in every state, for every state, and in whatever state."

b- Praise :

This is the rite of those in heaven and to which the church lifts us everyday before the offering of evening incense, at midnight, and before the raising of morning incense, as though it wants us to feel the presence with us of those who are in heaven. It makes us share with them in praising God, for there is nothing else but perpetual praise in heaven. That is why the priest prays: "**Give those who are on earth the praise of the seraphim...**" The praises of the Church are generally praises of salvation "**They sing the praise of our salvation with a voice that is full of glory.**" The order of the praise and hours of midnight constitute a journey of salvation:

The First Praise (Ex. 15) :

This is the praise of "salvation", for the people were liberated from the slavery of Pharaoh and went into the wilderness.. the praise on crossing the Red Sea.

The Second Praise (Ps. 132) :

This is the praise of "thanksgiving" After the removal of the bonds of slavery, we have to thank God for His great

mercy "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. For his mercy endures forever."

The Third Praise (The Three Young Men) :

After the crossing and thanksgiving comes "the struggle." The way of the kingdom is not strewn with roses only, but with thorns as well. Even if we have to face death in the furnace, there will be a fourth who is like a son of the gods!

The Congregation and the Doxologies :

The person who has overcome the death of sin through Divine grace and faithfulness in the struggle, enters into fellowship with the saints; he remembers them, asking for their intercession and prayers. He unites with them and gives glory in their names, for they form the procession of victors. We should "*consider the outcome of their conduct.*" (Heb. 13:7)

The Fourth Praise (Ps. 148,149,150) :

It is the praise of "praises." The one who has fellowship with the saints is invited to participate in the praise of those in heaven: "Praise God in all His saints..." There, they sing the hymn of Moses, the slave of God, and of the Lamb. There is fulfilled the verse: "*Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.*" (Jas. 5:13) It is the place from which sadness, gloom, and sighing have fled; in the light of the saints, we see God "face to face" and live with Him, by Him, and in Him for ever and ever.

The Psalmody of the Day:

It is general praise of the Lord Jesus Christ, the beloved author of our salvation. We meditate on His Name with David saying: Beloved is the Name of the Savior, which the psalmist boasts of saying: "If we are poor and lack the wealth of this world and have nothing to give in charity, we have

the gem, the pearl of great price, the sweet Name that is full of glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we stay with Him in our inner man, He makes us rich so that we can give others, not the wealth of this passing world that we ask for, but the salvation of our souls that we attain through calling on His Holy Name. When we sing hymns, let us sweetly say: Our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on our souls." (The psalmody of Wednesday)

The Day's Praise of Theotokos :

This is a marvelous theological praise which tells of the great mystery of the Incarnation and the unity of the two natures within our Mother, the Virgin, the Second heaven, the Beautiful Dove, the Censor, the Dome, the Kingly Throne, and the laboratory where the union of the two natures takes place. We call upon her saying: "All the heavenly hosts bless you for you are the Second Heaven who lives on earth. The Virgin Mary is the door of the east, the pure bride of the real bridegroom. The Father looked down from heaven, and did not find your equal; He sent His only Son, who came and was incarnated in you." (Theotokos of Wednesday)

We refer the reader to the praises of salvation of the "the night of the Apocalypse" in which the Book of Revelation is read while we keep vigil next to the tomb of the Savior, waiting for His saving descent to hell and His liberation of those enslaved there, those who lived and died in the hope of His coming. We sing, with the church, an enormous number of praises for salvation taken from both Testaments, the New and Old. If we meditate on them, we will realize the joy the Church possesses because of salvation, and the honor it wishes to offer the Savior!

c- Entreaties for Mercy :

Our human frailty, our shortcomings and our negligence often cause us to sin. That is why the Church has instituted for us

the sacrament of repentance, in extension to the commandment of the Lord: ***"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."*** (Jn. 20:23) Orthodox repentance has four components:

- 1- Repentance for sin, from all one's heart..
- 2- Determination to forsake it, striving as hard as possible, in all faithfulness.
- 3- Faith in the blood of Jesus which forgives all sin.
- 4- Confession to the priest, the steward of God's sacraments, who examines the sincerity of repentance through the Holy Spirit, and who grants forgiveness and absolution, also through the Holy Spirit.

The Church does not cease proclaiming throughout the liturgy: **"Have mercy upon us O God, be compassionate to us; hear us and bless us; keep us and help us; remove your wrath from us; surround us with your salvation and forgive our sins."** This is the prayer that the priest offers with reverence, lifting up his hands in the form of a cross, holding a cross with a candle which symbolizes the Lord Jesus Christ, the light of the world, crucified on the cross for our sakes.

Which one of us does not bow in reverence when the priest prays: **"Your people and your household ask You, and through You, the Father saying: Have mercy upon us, O God the Father, who controls all; have mercy upon us our Savior; have mercy upon us O God, and be merciful to us."**

We always say Psalm 50 after the prayer of thanksgiving: **"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to Thy tender mercies..."** We do not cease beseeching God saying; **"Lord, have mercy"** many times throughout mass.

d- The Requests :

God does not withhold anything from us. He grants us the privilege of asking but also commands us saying: **"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."** Thus, in the liturgy, we pray asking for: the sick, travelers, the dead, the place, the Church, the fathers, the meetings, the servants, all the people, the climate, the fruits, the water, the widow, the stranger, the guest, that unbelievers might come to the faith, the confessors, the gifts, those who are in debt, etc.

We take the excellent opportunity after the sanctification of the sacraments, with the descent of the Holy Spirit, to raise our requests to God, confident that He listens and answers.

These are only simple examples to demonstrate the kinds of prayers we offer up during the liturgy. The orthodox teacher thus lives, with his children, these different prayers that are capable of cleansing their hearts and of giving them an understanding of spiritual life.

3- The Liturgy... and the Word :

There is no doubt that the liturgy, and in particular the Coptic Orthodox liturgy, contains many chapters of the Bible in the readings that are selected with profound wisdom.

The readings on Sundays tell about the Savior and the plan of salvation from His birth to His passion, His resurrection, His ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of the Church.

The readings of the weekdays tell of the saint of that day, whether he is a patriarch, a saintly monk, a saintly virgin, or a martyr. When one contemplates the readings of

a single day, one discovers how coordinated they are and how they form the framework for one topic.

During every mass, we read three psalms and three gospel passages, during vespers, matins, and during mass as well as the a passage from the Pauline epistles, from the Catholic epistles, and from the Acts of the Apostles. We also read the prophecies and many other passages from the Old Testament during the “**Paskha**” and the praise. The Church wants to take us from the “**spoken word**” on the pulpit to the “**living Word**” on the altar.

There are many saints the secret of whose saintliness was one verse they heard from the pulpit, like St. Anthony. This happened at a time when sermons were rare and were replaced by reverence, submission and obedience to the Spirit of God!

The orthodox teacher does not ignore the relation between the liturgy and the word or the ritual cycle of the year and the observance of days. The liturgy teaches us using numerous methods:

- ✂ Listening to the word of God spoken from the pulpit.
- ✂ Union with the Word of God through communion.
- ✂ Taking the saints in the Synaxarium as examples.
- ✂ Through the Fathers’ exegeses of the Scriptures in the forms of sermons and through the Hagiology.

St. Augustine said: “**I receive the Bible from the Church, as interpreted by the fathers, and lived by the saints.**”

The Church frequently offers us sermons from the Fathers during the “**Paskha**” and on the different occasions when we remember the saints.

4- The Liturgy... and the Trinity :

In the liturgy, we meet with our God, Who is Consubstantial and three in one person, in a marvelous and secret manner.

1- In the Prayer of Reconciliation, we meet with “**the Heavenly Father.. Who is deserving and just...**”. We see our Heavenly Father Who created heaven and earth, the sea and all that is within them. We see the angels and archangels around Him, singing hymns of praise and saying: “**Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of hosts...**”.

2- During the “**Holy, Holy, Holy**”, we meet with the story of redemption. In it, we say about the Person of the Son: “**and in the last days, You appeared to us who sat in darkness and the shadow of death in Your Only Begotten Son, our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who, from the Holy Spirit and from the Virgin Mary, was incarnated and became man. He taught us the way of salvation and bestowed on us the grace of birth from above through water and the Spirit. He loved His own... and gave Himself for us to the death that prevailed over us... He arose from the dead on the third day, ascended... and sat...**”.

This is followed by the prayer of Sanctification in which the priest tells how the Lord “**took bread in His hands... and gave thanks, blessed, and sanctified... and said Take eat; this is My body... and the cup also... etc**”.

He tells us that every time we eat of his Body and drink of His Blood, we witness to His death and confess His resurrection. We respond with our determination to do so.

3- The deacon then calls out: “**Bow down to the Lord in fear and trembling...**” while the priest kneels in reverence praying: “**We beseech You, O Lord our God, we Your undeserving sinful slaves, we kneel to You because it is Your good pleasure, may Your Holy Spirit descend upon us and upon this offering on the altar; may He purify it and transubstantiate it,**

and make it holy for your saints.” The priest makes the sign of the cross on the bread three times saying: **“May He make this bread His Holy Body,”** and **“this cup also, His Precious Blood of the new covenant...”**

Next, since the priest finds Emmanuel in our midst in the glory of His Father and the Holy Spirit, he begins the requests for the Church, the fathers, the meetings, the servants, the nuns, all the congregation, the dead, the plants, the winds, and the water, and the congregation of departed saints.

He then says the prayer of **“division”**, and distributes the sacrament to the congregation. Thus, all are united with the Lord Jesus Christ and with those in heaven, as well as with each other.

This is a brief overview of the holy liturgy which should form the axis of orthodox teaching because of the prayers, blessing, and theology it contains and because of the effects it has.

Truly, orthodox teaching is by necessity liturgical teaching!



Chapter 4

Group Teaching

I mean by this that no one should imagine that he constitutes the Church. He is merely a member of the body, and if he is separated from the body, he loses everything! The difference between an individual and a member is that the individual is separate with his own identity whereas the member is not; he has no identity except through fellowship in the group.

Is it possible for the body to be reduced to one member? This is impossible since it can no longer then be a body! Can a person isolate himself from the fellowship of the group and imagine that he is on the right path? This is wrong and dangerous for both him and his followers. The Church is one group, **“Ecclesiastical,”** and to reduce it to one person is to destroy the concept of its being one body with different and complementary members.

We see St. Paul the Apostle, who was called directly by God and who received the basic principle of Christianity directly from God, who served God as a giant for 14 years, coming to the apostles in all humility and **“setting before them his gospel”** saying: **“Lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.”** (Gal. 2:2) After a discussion with the pillars of the Church, the apostles gave him and Barnabas **“the right hand of fellowship.”** (Gal. 2:9) This is the unity of the Church and true Christian fellowship!

When the apostles had to deal with certain questions, they called a meeting at Jerusalem so that they should all be of one mind. After ample discussion they said: ***“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28)***

The Holy Spirit came upon the Church as it was gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit said: ***“Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them,”*** the Bible tells us that the apostles did not only listen to the call of the Spirit, but also ***“having fasted and prayed, and laid hands upon them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:3)***

When the Lord Himself appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus, He sent him Ananias to baptize him and teach him and to make him join the church group.

The spirit of individuality is a great danger to the individual and to his followers. History tells us that no one committed a heresy except as he became self-sufficient and isolated himself from the church group.

The orthodox teacher experiences the feeling of belonging to the church group and does not live apart or hold his own views and opinions. He lives in fellowship with the church and discusses his ideas and thoughts with his spiritual father and with the group so that they can evaluate them. If he is criticized, he listens in humility and if he is invited to a dialogue, he comes with an open heart and a humble mind! In Orthodox thought, nobody is infallible for we are all weak. That is why the apostle says: ***“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things.” (Jas. 1:1,2)*** The most dangerous thing in the life of a servant is to lose the sense of discipleship and the feeling that he needs to learn, and that he needs to correct himself from time to time.

Therefore, individuality in the Church, as in society and the nation, is a danger for the individual and the group at one and the same time. Let us examine some of the following points.

First: Individuality is an Annulment of the Body:

The **“individual”** is separate whereas the **“member”** is united. The individual is an entity that can be independent and his egoism and selfishness are extremely dangerous for him and for the group!

The **“member”** is an integral part of the body and cannot live alone or function or work alone. He needs the other members in order to form a body and in order to have life and work.

Likewise, the group takes care of the member since his membership in the group does not do away with his individuality, his distinctiveness, his privacy, or his private function which might not be fulfilled by anyone else but him. The group has to offer the member the opportunity to make a contribution and to work. As for the member, he cannot survive if he alienates himself from the group.

St. Augustine says: **“He whose mother is not the Church, cannot have Christ for his father,”** meaning that the member has to unite with the Holy Body (the Church) whose head is Christ, the Lord of glory.

We know that the word **“church”** = **“eklyssia”** = **“group”** and that it is composed of:

- ✦ The Lord of glory at its head, and He is its Holy Bridegroom.
- ✦ The heavenly members who have gone to paradise.
- ✦ The members who are still struggling here on earth.

The Christian person must be ecclesiastical, i.e. he has to unite with:

- ✦ The Lord Jesus through prayer, the Gospel, and Holy Communion.
- ✦ The saints whose intercession he asks for and whose lives he imitates.
- ✦ The faithful by feeling for his brothers and serving them in the life of fellowship.

Therefore, St. Paul cries out saying: *“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members*

suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” (1Cor 12: 13 - 27)

How beautiful this song about the Church, Christ's body, is. **We can deduce from this passage that:**

- 1- The believer is a member; the Church is the body; and Christ is the Head.
- 2- There is a distinct difference between one member and another, but all complement each other.
- 3- There is a role and a function for every member; otherwise, this member would be unnecessary.
- 4- All the members are equal and equally honorable.
- 5- There is unity and coordination in the body, without division or schism.
- 6- Each member needs the others.
- 7- There are shared feelings of pain and joy.
- 8- Each member serves the others.

This should be the feeling each of us has so that we do not adopt a detestable individualism, but each should have a “**team spirit**” or a “**group spirit**” through which the Spirit of God distributes different gifts, while He also unifies them all.

Second: Diversity does not Cancel Unity:

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples. First, the Spirit of God took the form of a strong wind that filled the house where they were staying. No doubt this wind was a spiritual revival of the disciples as a group. The word “**wind**” in the original is similar to the word “**spirit**” and in Hebrew both are designated by the one word “**Ruah**”, which means both wind and spirit. There is an obvious resemblance between wind and spirit, causing the Lord to tell Nicodemus: “*The wind blows*

where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (Jn. 3:8)

- ☞ The secret of the life of the body is the wind, and the secret of the life of the spirit is the Spirit.
- ☞ We do not see the spirit, but we see its manifestations; it is the same with the Spirit.
- ☞ The wind exerts pressure to give us life if we do not resist it. The Spirit also persists in giving life to our spirits if we do not reject Him.

As human beings, we cannot discern the boundaries of the spirit; the Spirit is infinite by nature.

Thus, we say that the Holy Spirit answered the prayers of the Fathers who were praying in one spirit, and was poured onto their lives as a group and a Church, and thus imparted spiritual life to them.

Next the Spirit, and at the same moment, appeared as cloven tongues of fire which rested on each of them. This constitutes the individual and distinctive gifts, for each of them was given a special gift. However, they all spoke together as one body.

That is why we say that the group does not do away with the individual, and that differences do not cancel unity. The basic endeavor of the group is to reveal the gifts of the members. It brings out their energies and utilizes them to build up the individual and the community.

The task of the individual is to remain united to the group, for this is the secret of his life and the meaning of his existence, for the Head of the group is Christ, the origin of existence.

Third: Individualism Cancels Authority :

It is most dangerous for an individual to make himself his own authority. Even if he resorts to another person as his authority, he is mistaken. Human beings, as individuals, are not guaranteed to think and make decisions soundly. But the sanctified group that is united to the Lord and is guided by the Spirit can be an authority for every believer.

Although St. Paul received his call to be an apostle directly from the Lord when He appeared to him and revealed Himself to him, he went to an authority, to the Church group, that is to say, to the group of disciples lest his striving be in vain, either in the present or future. *“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain...but from those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter... they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” (Gal. 2: 1-10)*

In this passage, we see the following :

- 1- St. Paul who received his apostleship directly from the Lord, did not think it beneath him to refer to the authority of the Church.
- 2- The apostle had ministered for 14 glorious years, but feared lest he should have worked in vain.

- 3- The apostle did not put forward the idea of ministering to the Gentiles, but he expounded the details of the gospel, **“and communicated to them that gospel which I preach”**. The oneness of the gospel was confirmed to all.
- 4- The authority referred to was not one of those who had been with the Lord but the group of apostles, in particular, Peter, James, and John. This is contrary to individualism in the church and an incentive to group work.
- 5- The group distributed the work among the apostles deciding who was to minister to the Jews and the Gentiles.
- 6- The group gave St. Paul the hand of fellowship in confirmation of the unity of the body and the fellowship of the members.
- 7- The commitment of all to serve the poor is an affirmation of the feeling that all the different peoples are united in one body, especially the Jews and the Gentiles.

That is why the individual who isolates himself from the body of the church is like the branch that separates itself from the vine, or like the stone that separates itself from the building. May God keep us from the spirit of individualism, and may He grant us that we live together in the spirit of the single group and of the one body.

Fourth: Diversification of Gifts :

In the Bible we find many analogies to the Church, the most important of which are: the body, the vine, and the building.

Each of these analogies has specific characteristics, the most important being that the individual lives only as he is rooted in the body **“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches...” (Jn. 15:4,5)**

These analogies also contain the element of **“complementing”**, for what is the significance of stones without pillars, foundations, or ceilings? **“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field; you are God’s building” (1Cor. 3:9); “you also, as living stones, are being built up..” (1Pet. 2:5)**

These similes confirm the concept of **“diversity”**. The work of the pillar is different from that of the foundation, which in turn is different form that of the stones. But this difference is not disagreement or conflict. The purpose of the difference is to do various jobs, but all the while being integrated, complementary, and united.

St. Paul devotes a whole chapter in his epistle to the Romans to the different gifts. He says: **“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them; if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith, or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Rom 12:6-16)**

In this chapter, we see many kinds of service, such as :

- 1- **Prophecy:** Predicting the future or preaching that is anointed by the Spirit.
- 2- **Service:** Seeing to the needs of different people, **“deaconia”**.
- 3- **Teaching:** Explaining the way of Christ spiritually, theologically, doctrinally, and ecclesiastically.
- 4- **Preaching:** Urging people to repent and to return to God.
- 5- **Giving:** Giving of material goods, energy and time with liberality.

6- **Leading:** Administrative services, organization and leadership.

7- **Acts of Mercy:** the service of God's loved ones, the poor, the sick, the handicapped, the aged, the blind, the deaf and dumb, the illiterate, and the mentally retarded.

8- **Love :** Having loving relations with all citizens.

9- **Worship:** The service of prayer and praise.

10- **Fellowship:** Sharing with the joyful and with those who weep.

11- **The saints:** The service of the ministers as well as of the poor.

12- **The strangers:** seeing to their needs and their welfare.

This is just an example of how many services there are in the church. Each of us must have a role according to the grace of God and through sound spiritual guidance.

Fifth: Authenticity of the Apostleship :

Apostleship cannot be authentic unless it emanates from the church. The evidence for this is seen when the Lord Jesus appeared to St. Paul on the way to Damascus, said to him: "*Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.*" (Acts 9:6) The Lord then appeared to Annanias and told him: "*Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Sall of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying..*" (Acts 9:10 -6) When Annanias went to St. Paul (Saul), he said to him: "*Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit....and he arose and was baptized.*" (Acts 9:17, 22:16) It was of course possible for the Lord to baptize St. Paul, to open his eyes, to give him the Spirit, to teach him, and to give him his apostleship directly, but He wishes to protect us from

the thinking we were wise of ourselves, so He stipulates that apostleship had to be granted through the church.

The same thing recurred when the Holy Spirit said: "*Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*" They could have started out on their ministry at once, but we find that the apostles, "*having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*" (Acts 13:2,3)

This is the role of the Church in the life of its children. It prepares them for service through the Holy Spirit and then sends them out officially, so that they do not send themselves out, in fulfillment of what the apostle said: "*And how shall they preach unless they are sent?*" (Rom.10:15).

Sixth: Council Resolutions :

The resolutions taken by the Councils did not emanate from individuals, but were taken by the members of the local or world councils, thus confirming the Church's rejection of individuality, and so that the decision is right and God's Spirit is at work.

A Biblical example is the Council of Jerusalem held in 50 AD which is mentioned in Acts 15. At that time, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to consult the church there about circumcision of the Gentiles "*And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all things that God had done with them.*" (Acts 15:4) And after "much dispute", in which many took part, especially St. Peter and St. James, they arrived at a final decision in the preamble of which they said: "*It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord,.. for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us,..*" (Acts 15:25 -28)

Similarly, in the story of the adulterous young man in Corinth, St. Paul decided to excommunicate him until he repented, saying: *“In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ...”* (1Cor. 5:4) Notice the three powers assembled together:

- ☞ The power of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ☞ The power of the clergy.
- ☞ The power of the believers.

This is how Church matters are decided, in partnership and in the congregation without individualism or separation.

The Church has proceeded along these lines, holding holy councils to look into and legislate for the matters of faith and doctrine, such as the Council of Nicea which was held to oppose Arius, the Council of Constantinople to oppose Macdonius, and the Council of Ephesus to oppose Nestorius.

The Church is a group, and the Orthodox teacher is committed to the spirit of the group, determined never to be separate from it. He does not depend on himself and his intellect, but sees in the church group a fundamental authority for his life, behavior and ideas, so that he does not lose the way and neither does anyone else with him.



Chapter 5

Spiritual Teaching

1- The Roles of Spirit and Mind :

It is a well known fact that Christian teaching in general, and orthodox teaching in particular, is spiritual. Its aim is to address the spirit, the divine element within us which lifts us up to spiritual, eternal, and doctrinal concerns. The Spirit is **“meek and mild,”** speaks quietly, and moves the depths of our beings with power. The Spirit addresses the whole human entity. The Spirit is in touch with the divine, while the mind studies, analyzes and comes to conclusions, and the self feels and is emotionally stirred. Even the body has to be disciplined to give the spirit the opportunity to be released.

Orthodox teaching rejects the emotional and sentimental methods of teaching because this would address only one of the basic components of human nature, that is, the self. So you see a person being stirred and weeping, or being moved and joyful. But all this takes place at the level of the self only, and does not encompass the whole being.

The danger here is that emotions are closely attached to the ego. When a person ends his emotional prayers, his ego is comforted because he feels he has made a great effort. Here is where the danger lies, for man feels that he has achieved something and has prayed with fervor. The enemy then comes and plants self within him, and so man deviates from the path and is lost.

Orthodox prayer is the prayer of the spirit, the mind, the emotions and the body together. The spirit contemplates God; the mind talks calmly and reasonably with God; the emotions experience the enlightening light; the body kneels, lifts its hands and beats its breast in reverence. The person leaves his prayer chamber humbler and calmer and with more peace and meekness.

Let us study those four elements that work together to form Orthodox spirituality.

a- The spirit :

It is the basic element in spiritual life, for very simply, it is the element that makes us reach God and takes us beyond the horizons of the finite to what is outside time, matter, and death to the eternal and immortal world of the spirit. It is the element through which we believe in God and get to know the Creator, His angels, and His heavenly world. It is the most important component of man that distinguishes him from other creatures. Many creatures share with us the material body, and some, such as animals, share with us a self which has reactions and instincts. However, man is different from all of them because of the spirit which communicates with God and the other world, and the mind which thinks, studies, analyzes and deduces.

The role of the spirit in faith is more important than the role of the mind, although they complement each other. The apostle says: *"For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are*

foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. but he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." (1Cor. 2:10-16)

We can deduce from the above passage the following :

- 1- The apostle said this to the Greek Corinthians who possessed human wisdom and philosophy to confirm that the mind alone cannot know God. They had the **"unknown god"** whom they worshipped without really knowing him (*Acts 17 23*).
- 2- There is a difference between God's Holy Spirit and the human spirit within us, even though God's Spirit works in us through this human spirit which God has implanted within us as a means of connecting us to God.
- 3- The things of God cannot be known by anyone other than the Spirit of God. Therefore, we cannot know God except when we give our spirits the opportunity to commune, to contemplate, and to worship, so that we, who are finite, can understand a little about infinite God.
- 4- It is important to compare the spiritual with spiritualities. This means that we should not try to get to know God who is spirit using material criteria: time, space, and senses... etc. This is clearly wrong, since we should not measure length using kilograms, or weight using kilometers. We have to use the appropriate means in studying the matter at hand. That is why the human spirit must move within us in prayer, reverence, contemplation, holiness, and striving in order to get to know God partially and incompletely since man is finite. However, in eternity, knowledge will be fuller and more complete, **"face to face"** (*1 Cor. 13:13*), because we will be in the world of the spirit. The human spirit will then have the freedom to soar, probe, understand, and express.

Thus, Job says: "*and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.*" (Job 19:26). God does not submit to the senses, but reveals Himself to the spirit as an abundant divine grace within man's limited capacity to comprehend.

5- There is a difference between natural man and spiritual man. Natural man is born with sin and his nature is corrupt. That is why it is difficult, and even impossible, for him to seek the world of spiritualities and to know it: God, the angels, immortality, the saints...etc. As for the spiritual man, he has:

- * Been renewed through baptism.
- * Been sanctified by the Chrism.
- * Been united with the Lord through Holy Communion.
- * Renewed his promises through repentance.

He can, with the grace of God working in him, and with the Spirit of God abiding within him, penetrate into the spiritual world, for he is not under judgment (**because of defilement, corruption, and bodily sin**), but has the mind of Christ, to Whom be glory.

Thus, we can say that the spirit is the first factor in the Christian life which we always call the spiritual life, in recognition of the importance of the human spirit in its contact with God and its entrance into the metaphysical world (**beyond nature**).

I quote here a well-known saying of Pope Shenouda III's, "**Spiritual life means that the body submits to the spirit, and the human spirit submits to the Holy Spirit.**"

b- Mind :

The one who believes that the mind, this gift of God to man and the second element that distinguishes man from other creatures, has no role in the Christian life is mistaken.

It is a dangerous crime to attempt to remove the mind from the spiritual life so that it remains "fruitless" Sufficient evidence of this is provided by St. Paul in his request to his children at Corinth to pray with the mind and not with the spirit only. He says: "*Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the result then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.*" (1Cor. 14:13-20)

We can deduce from this passage the following:

- 1- The gift of speaking in tongues was a miracle for the benefit of the unbelievers, to the extent that the apostle wanted to limit it if it was not accompanied by the gift of translation. This meant that the tongue would be comprehensible to the unbeliever who was filled with wonder at the sight of a Jewish fisherman speaking in it without any previous learning. As a miracle, it was evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in the apostles. However, moving the muscles of the mouth, jaw, and tongue in incomprehensible jargon is not a gift or a miracle by any criteria. It is an emotional reaction resulting from a concentrated attempt to obtain this gift, as though it were the only manifestation of the work of God's Spirit, although the Spirit of God has many other gifts.

- 2- There was another necessary accompanying gift, that of translation of the tongues so that ordinary believers could benefit from what was being said in that tongue. We can visualize Jerusalem, the religious and touristic city, with many nationalities each with its mother tongue, meeting with the Jews of the "**Diaspora**" who came from different parts of the world. They had learned the language of these countries along with their Hebrew language. They all gather together. The apostles speak in different tongues, and many believe when they see this miracle. The apostles spoke in tongues they did not know before in the midst of this great throng on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand souls believed after listening to St. Peter's speech in the Hebrew that all know, the Judiazed Gentiles as well as the Jews of the "**Diaspora**". This was the miracle of the day of Pentecost.
- 3- Later on, in the local churches, if someone spoke in a tongue for the benefit of a non-believer, the apostle stipulated that there should be a translation and that this should be done with decorum and in an orderly manner. In Christian spirituality, both the mind and the spirit participate; the enlightened mind responds to the activity of the spirit. As for unintelligible behavior or words that belong to no language whatsoever, that is not of the Spirit.
- 4- There is a close tie between the spirit and the mind, or between faith and understanding. The apostle says: "**By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.**" (Heb. 11:3) Faith is our way to understanding and to the solution of many intellectual problems. It is sufficient to examine Darwin's theory which is still just that, a theory. He was unable to understand two points, either intellectually or scientifically. They are the first origin of life and the missing link between the ape and man.

- By faith, we solve all these problems. God is the origin of existence, and by necessity exists. This is the secret of life. There is no missing link between the ape and man; God created man along different lines from other creatures, as He gave him a mind and a spirit. There is a resemblance to animals in body and self as evidence of there being one Creator. There is no problem in man's resembling animals in some of the physical systems since these systems serve the same functions in both. The same applies to reactions and instincts; the resemblance is evidence of there being one Creator, the Great Architect who is behind all the universe.
- 5- There is no contradiction between faith and science. Faith deals with what is unseen while science is concerned with the concrete world. Faith supports science and scientists since it considers man to be the crowning of all creatures and priest over all creation. He is able, thanks to his inherent wisdom, to probe the depths of the world, and to discover the laws that the Creator has laid down. Although the Holy Bible is not a scientific book, it contains no scientific errors and does not contradict any of the givens of science. In fact, it was the first to state that the world is a sphere, for it says: "**It is he who sits on the circle of the earth.**" (Is. 40:22) When Newton was asked about how he felt at having discovered the greatest of natural laws, he said, "**I was like a small child diverting himself on the shore of a huge ocean,**" and Einstein said: "**Whenever I contemplate this universe, I become more ignorant.**"
 - 6- Just as faith does not contradict the mind or reason, and both are complementary, so the finite mind cannot penetrate into the infinite, just like the microscope is used by the finite eye to see small organisms and the telescope to see distant phenomena. The eye cannot dispense with the telescope and

the telescope cannot dispense with the eye. Both complement each other. In the same way, the mind helps faith, and faith helps the mind to explore the other world.

7- Also there is no conflict between the spiritual and general culture, whether literature, art, philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, geography, mathematics, and the different sciences. All of these are the product of the human mind. But for a glimpse of divine knowledge and inspiration from God, man would not have reached many of them, such as the discovery of natural laws (**Newton's apple**), or Archimedes' displacement, or the discovery of penicillin... etc.

Therefore, it is dangerous to despise the mind, for it is a divine gift. God created us in His image in many respects, one of which is the mind and wisdom. Also the work of the mind is absolutely essential in the study of the Holy Bible, ecclesiastical subjects, general culture and contemporary trends. All that is required is that the mind be enlightened with the light of God through baptism and sanctification, through unity with the Lord, and through the constant filling of the mind with the thought of the Fathers and with spiritual writing. Thus, we will have a mind that is able to discriminate and benefit.

The Danger of ``Brainwashing`` :

There is a method which is scientifically studied in universities abroad called Brain-washing or Mind Control in which a leader, usually the member of an organized group having specific religious or political aims, undertakes to wash the brains of his listeners so that they totally follow him mindlessly and blindly. They acquire a "**personal loyalty**" to this leader and can see no other way out and no other teacher. They are perfectly ready to become his followers and totally devoid of will. They do not think about or discuss anything with him or anyone

else, but they live in a totally passive state that strips them of their humanity, their characteristics, and their ability to discriminate and make appropriate decisions. They ask the leader to make decisions on their behalf so that they do not take responsibility for them. They do not want to take the trouble of thinking or praying, or experiencing God's guidance of the reason, the will, and their being.

This dangerous method creates rubber stamp copies, each losing its distinct characteristics and individual traits. Man then loses the feeling that he is loved by God "**personally**" and "**individually**", in a way differing from any other and in keeping with his needs, problems, nature, and spiritual, educational, and social circumstances. This follower also gradually loses his role in life, his ability to be responsible and to communicate and engage in a dialogue with others. Furthermore, he loses his family, church, and social relationships and becomes merely an instrument or tool in the hand of the leader, to be used as the latter wishes.

Perhaps we recall the so-called Rev. Jones who managed to persuade an enormous number of people to commit mass suicide in the hopes of all going together to a happier after life. This is the utmost that an absolute leader can do, but there are degrees of submission and dependence and of the loss of spiritual and intellectual vision and insight, differing according to the strength of the leader and his dominance over souls and to the weakness of the personalities, intellects, and spiritual awareness of his followers.

How Does Brainwashing Take Place?

- 1- There is an intelligent leader who has studied this method or belongs to this school or to an organization whose aim is Mind Control.
- 2- This leader addresses his listeners' physical and psychological needs, and even their spiritual needs. They feel that he

is aware of their pain and hopes...; this one is ill and that one is about to commit a sin; the third has a family or a financial problem. The leader offers them solutions that are in fact stupid solutions.

- 3- Psychological suggestions are exploited to influence the listeners. For instance, they suggest: **"We are all in the presence of God; the Spirit of God is moving among us now; all those present will receive strength and liberty from all enslavement, I trust that God is working now in this meeting; you will leave this place a totally new person; what you could not do for decades, you will now be able to do... etc"**.
- 4- The suggestions are made more potent by playing on feelings and emotions through sentimental hymns, or through emotionally moving appeals, so that the leader addresses the individual's psyche, not his soul or his reason.
- 5- The body is involved in this process; they stand, move, bend with the music, go into convulsions, weep, and laugh. In the West and in Africa, they dance to music; this emotional charge expresses itself through physical movement. The work here is not spiritual at all, but is emotional. It takes place at the level of spirit and body, not on the level of soul and mind.
- 6- The effectiveness of the leader increases when he presses his followers heads, or when he breathes violently in their faces. The follower moves back or bends his head backwards. The leader presses on the center governing balance, so the follower falls to the ground. This is repeated particularly with young girls and women because of their strong emotionalism. Thus the other followers feel that this leader who causes people to fall to the ground with a touch is truly strong. Naturally, there is no spiritual strength here, no sign of the cross and no anointing with oil. It is all merely suggestions made to people who are in need, who are psychologically, mentally, and spiritually weak, in

addition to the pressure exerted on the cervical nerves, which causes a loss of balance and falling.

- 7- Some of these people have said that they felt they were in heaven. The reason is that they needed to feel that they were far removed from their problems, a well-known type of defense mechanism resorted to by a person who cannot face his problems and who thus regresses to infancy, to sleep, or to drug addiction, or who escapes from this world through this type of suggestion.
- 8- There is no doubt that the greatest danger to these souls is the danger of dependence. That is, they become totally dependent on the leader for everything. You notice that:
 - a- They stop thinking for themselves and ask the leader to decide about all the issues in their lives.
 - b- They are addicted to listening to this leader in order to obtain the tranquilizing doze from him.
 - c- They are naturally unable to listen to anyone else; they are addicted to him and wholly dependent upon him.
 - d- They lose their personality and spiritual individuality; they are united to this leader and have canceled themselves in order to avoid any conflict, engaging in dialogue, facing up to problems, or taking responsibility for themselves.

This method is extremely dangerous for the spirits, minds, and souls of people, especially young men and women. We have to be alert to this danger and avoid it so that a person can grow as a child of God, a member in the Church, interacting with society, responsible for his choices, fulfilling God's purpose for his life, preserving his individuality and his distinctiveness in accordance with the gifts and talents granted him by God.

(1Cor. 12 and Rom. 12) present us with the one body which has many different, complementary and cooperative members, united in the Holy Spirit and in love for the growth of the group (**not of the individual alone**) in the Church of Christ.

2- The Participation of Spirit and Body :

In Orthodox spirituality, it is not enough that the soul and mind work together; the spirit and the body have to take part too.

a- The Participation of the Spirit :

The human spirit is the source of instincts, spiritual needs, emotions, habits and tendencies. All these combined take part in forming Orthodox spirituality. The Lord Jesus sanctifies the human entity in its totality and in its parts and creates man anew through baptism and the Holy Chrism, through repentance and Holy Communion, through the anointing of the sick and marriage, and through the holy priesthood. Man with all his components thus becomes a vessel for grace and a useful tool of the Holy Spirit. There are some examples of how the spirit participates in Orthodox Christianity:

1- The instincts :

The Spirit of God sanctifies the human instincts, such as the sexual instinct, hunger and thirst, man's curiosity, his love of life, and his need to belong. All of these instincts which God has implanted in us are thus used for the service of man and for the continuity of the human race. They are put to the use of the spirit and to the expansion of the kingdom of heaven. A man marries in order to live in the unity of love, in the purity of conduct, to cooperate in life, and to beget children for the Kingdom. The husband becomes a father and the wife a mother, offering to their children the love of God through their own love, and the gentleness and care of God through their own, bringing up their children in the fear of the Lord.

The Christian individual takes care of his life for it is a talent in the service of the Kingdom and because it is a gift of God which does not belong to him.

As he acquires the instinct of curiosity, the Spirit exploits it in the discovery of immortality and in the knowledge that glorifies God, and in other achievements that build up man and humanity.

2- Our Spiritual needs :

These can only be satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ :

- ☆ He is our way to success.
- ☆ He is the way for man to become loving and loved.
- ☆ He satisfies the need to belong: to the family, to the Church, to society, and to all of humanity.
- ☆ He is our basic and only reference: in His Book and in the writings of the Fathers of the Church.
- ☆ He realizes for us our individuality and our distinctiveness. We are not just numbers for Him, but individuals with names He knows and loves and cares for.
- ☆ He is the source of our feelings of security **“Believe and you will be safe”**.

Thus, the Lord Jesus satisfies all our spiritual needs, and so our souls grow and increase in peace and we live in harmony.

3- General motives :

As for our general motives such as following the crowd or imitating others in their conduct, the Lord Jesus sanctifies them so that I do not follow the majority in wrongdoing, but I have a strong flexibility that allows me to cooperate with people in what is right and to desist in what is wrong. I imitate people in what is good and avoid doing so in what is not **“But it is good to zealous in a good thing always” (Gal. 4:18) “And do not be conformed to this world.” (Rom. 12:2)**

4- The emotions :

Orthodox spirituality disciplines natural emotions in man which are developed by repeated arousal, maybe in what is right

or maybe in what is wrong! Orthodox spirituality gives the individual the capacity for spiritual love (**agape**) which is more sublime than human love (**philia**) and rejects lust (**eros**).

The Christian person, in the Holy Spirit, knows how to direct his emotions so that they are controlled and rational; he even makes them spiritual and sanctified. Our emotions do not become rampant, running away with us at the expense of the salvation of our souls and our faith in Christ.

Orthodox Christianity does not address the feelings and natural emotions of man with cries, tears, hysterics, or physical movements, or with rhythmic clapping. On the contrary, it rejects all of these for two reasons:

- 1- Emotions are close to the ego, for after this kind of emotional worship, the self becomes inflated and is aware of the effort it has expended and feels pleased with itself. It also feels that it is superior to others, or that it has reached the end of the way to the Kingdom.
- 2- Emotions are inseparable from the flesh and are often the expressions of emotional desires, and natural emotions frequently lead to the dangerous slopes of sin.

But emotion that is sanctified by the Spirit is "*the ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit*" (1Pet. 3:4) which appeared to Elijah in the form of a gentle breeze, not in the form of a storm or an earthquake. Naturally, this is not a literal explanation, for the Spirit often comes in the form of a strong wind (as at Pentecost) or in an earthquake, but what we mean is that the daily life of the Spirit of God in us is generally quiet and stable, moving, not the emotions in us, but the spirit.

5- Habits :

Who can deliver us from them save Christ? "*Therefore if the Son makes you free you shall be free indeed.*"

(Jn. 8:36) The Holy Spirit delivers us from the slavery of habits such as youthful sins, smoking, alcohol, and drugs. No one but God sanctifies us and releases the energies of a pure will, and it is only God who delivers us from the slavery of the evil one and his evil powers.

Habits are only overcome :

- ☆ By being convinced of their spiritual, psychological and physical dangers.
- ☆ By being filled spiritually so that we are enabled to despise them "*A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb.*" (Pr. 27:7)

We hear that the saints were careful of their physical health, feeding their bodies and resting them so that they would serve their spirits and so that they would be their partners in future glory.

The great St. Anthony left his cell after twenty years. He was not gloomy, but on the contrary, cheerful He was not overweight (**from too great a laziness**), nor was he weak (**from too severe an ascetic life**); his body was neither too fat nor too thin. It was made healthy by sound spiritual fighting, by fasting, and by other ascetic disciplines while at the same time taking care of the body and keeping it healthy.

A- Scriptural Verses and the Sayings of the Fathers :

1- On the Freedom of the Soul Verses :

- ☆ "*But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*" (2Cor. 11:3)
- ☆ "*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*" (Is. 5:21)
- ☆ "*But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life.*" (Lk. 21:34)

☆ "... abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." (1 Pet. 2:11)

☆ "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal 5:24)

Sayings of the Fathers:

☆ Let us ask God to give us the wings of a dove (Ps. 55:6), that is, the Holy Spirit to fly to Him and be safe (St. Macarius the Great).

☆ Sin... we resist it, struggle against it, and fight it... but to remove it and uproot it is the part that is in the Hand of God and which He grants us (St. Macarius the Great).

☆ Those look to the world and the valuable luxuries in it as though they were insignificant, nay hateful things because of the love that is in them (St. Macarius the Great).

☆ When you fight a habit, you will naturally encounter opposition from the evil one.. You have to double your fight... and know that the Lord is near your soul and body, and can see your struggle, though He leaves you so you acquire knowledge and efficacy until you are disciplined. Grace also guides when your trouble increases and when you attain rest, grace makes itself known to you and shows you it left you to struggle for your good (St. Macarius the Great).

☆ I ask you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you do not neglect your life and salvation and do not let this passing time rob you of eternal life, nor this heated body keep you away from the Kingdom of light, nor this temporary passing seat remove you from the seats of the angelic hosts. Truly, my children, my spirit is amazed and my soul disturbed, for we were all given the liberty to be saints, but in our blindness we are drunk with the pleasures of this world (St. Anthony the Great).

B- On the Incense :

Verses :

☆ "And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hands." (Rev. 8:4)

☆ "Let my prayer be set before You as incense." (Ps.141:2)

☆ "In every place, incense shall be offered to My Name." (Mal 1:11)

☆ "While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance." (Song. 1:12)

Sayings of the Fathers :

☆ Moses asked Aaron to offer incense in the midst of the people, so the Lord lifted His anger from them (Num. 16: 44-48).

☆ Presenting incense to the priest is in order to receive the blessing of their prayers which are raised with the prayers of the people, as members of one body (St. John Chrystotem).

☆ The incense offered to the high priest is offered to the Spirit of God and to the Divine Authority that he bears for the glory of God (Bishop Yousab Al Abahi).

C- On Kneeling :

Verses :

☆ "For the Father is seeking such to worship Him... in spirit and truth." (Jn. 4:23-24)

☆ "That at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth." (Phil 2:10)

Sayings of the Fathers :

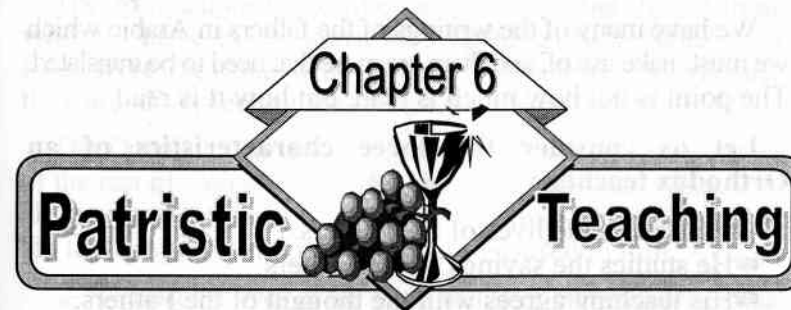
☆ Every time we kneel on the ground, we indicate how sin has brought us down, and when we get up and

stand, we acknowledge the grace of God and His mercy which lifted us up from the ground and granted us a portion in heaven (**St. Basil the Great**).

- ☆ The person who prays begins by prostrating oneself once or three times and at the end of each psalm or hymn, and during prays whenever worshipping God is mentioned. As for the times when it is forbidden to prostrate oneself, when it is enough to kneel only, these are on Saturdays, on Sundays, during the fifty days after Easter and the on Lord's feast as well as after Communion (**Church Laws**).
- ☆ Force yourself to bow before the Lord (**metania**) for He is the One who moves you to pray.
- ☆ If we are troubled by thoughts during prayer or if we feel bored, let us fall to the ground with our prayer book in our hands, and let us plead while we are kneeling, that the Lord may grant us energy to complete the service of prayer.
- ☆ The smell of sweat during prayer is better than the smell of incense and fragrances (**Mar Isaac the Syriac**).
- ☆ From many "**matanias**", the body is tired and heated and the many thoughts leave it. The heart is humbled and man experiences great spiritual joy (**Bishop Ignatius**).

Thus, all of man's being takes part in Orthodox spirituality :

- ☆ The spirit is in touch with God in reverence.
- ☆ The mind contemplates and meditates on the word of God.
- ☆ The spirit humbles itself and offers its emotions sanctified by the Spirit.
- ☆ The body also abases itself and takes part with all its strength in glorifying God.
- ☆ May God help us so that we can offer Him true spiritual worship.



Christianity did not begin with us; we have a vast patristic heritage which we inherited from those who were contemporaries of the apostles and of those who came after them in the holy apostolic line. There are hundreds of volumes that explain to us how spiritual life should be lived, what sound teaching is, and what living service should be.

The Orthodox Teacher :

- * Studies the life of the Fathers. We hold specially to the Fathers who lived holy lives and whose teachings were sound, as it says in the Bible: "**whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct**" (*Heb.13:7*).
- * Studies the sayings of the holy Fathers who explained to us most of the books of the Holy Bible. They discuss in great detail the spiritual way, the opposition of Satan, and Christian behavior.
- * Always quotes the Fathers and is inspired by their spirit. Thus, his speech acquires the tone of the Spirit, the unity of the Body, and continuity with the holy tradition.

There is an important distinction between reading the works of the Fathers in order to learn from them in all reverence and reading them so that I can extract a few expressions out of context in order to demonstrate my own learning. This is exploiting the fathers for one's own benefit, not for the benefit of the spirit.

We have many of the writings of the fathers in Arabic which we must make use of, and there are more that need to be translated. The point is not how much is read, but how it is read.

Let us consider the three characteristics of an Orthodox teacher :

- ☞ He studies the lives of the Fathers.
- ☞ He studies the sayings of the Fathers.
- ☞ His teaching agrees with the thought of the Fathers.

1- He Studies the Lives of the Fathers :

The Lord's command is clear: "*whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*" (Heb.13:70) This means that studying the lives of the saints is a Biblical command and being remiss in doing so affects the very core of man's spiritual life in many ways.

1- Reading the lives of the saints is an excellent spiritual incentive.

When a person sees their spiritual zeal, their daily struggles, their Christian behavior, their living example, and their various virtues, he absorbs from this spiritual zeal what builds his own life and motivates him to spiritual work, whether prayer, studying the Bible faithfully, performing "**metanias**", discipline, fasting, watching, obeying the commandments, humility, love, concealing one's own achievements etc. There is no doubt that being close to the fervor of the saints increases that of the spiritual individual, and being close to the indifference of worldly people affects man with a deadly spiritual coldness "*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed*" (Pr. 13:20). "*Evil company corrupts good habits*" (1Cor. 15:33). "*Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*" (1Tim. 2:22)

The companionship of live saints is vital, but that of those who are alive in the spirit is even more so because their lives were crowned with success and victory and because they are alive, feeling for us and watching our struggles.

The Orthodox teachers greatly needs to make the acquaintance of the rest of "*members of the household of God.*" (Eph. 2:9) He needs to learn from them so that his spiritual longings for the Kingdom and its service are aroused in him.

2- Reading the lives of the saints increases our store of spiritual experience. Our experience is limited and simple, but the study of the lives of the Fathers adds to our store of spiritual experience. The way of the Kingdom is full of pitfalls and dangerous slopes, for the Lord described is as "**narrow**" and "**difficult.**" This does not mean we have to be gloomy or afraid of failing, or anxious. On the contrary, it means struggling and self-discipline, with powerful Divine help, happiness in our companionship with Christ, joy in our fellowship with the saints, and learning daily from their holy lives.

When we study the lives of the fathers, we add whole lives to our own, and we add their successful experiences to our store of faltering spiritual experiences.

3- Studying the lives of the Fathers teaches us different virtues. The Lord does not create his children to be carbon copies, but gives each one his special needs. He fills each one with different gifts and talents. Thus, virtues and talents differ from one person to another, but all come together and complement each other in one Body and in one Spirit.

- * The great Athanasius is an example of endurance. He stood against the whole world because he believed in his cause and was ready to be exiled and to die for it.
- * And the great Anthony is a model of self-sacrifice; he sells all he has and gives it to the poor, confident of a heavenly treasure.

- * Arsanius, the teacher of the king's children is a model of humility. He comes from far to learn the rudiments from the simple monks.
- * Dioscorus, the defender of Orthodoxy, is a model of one who preserves the faith. He was ready to lose his life rather than change one letter of the faith that was received from the Fathers.
- * Pishoy, the perfect man, the lover of our Savior, is a model of prayer and love, for he washed the feet of the Lord.

What can we say about the thousands of fathers who went before us, and whom we must "**follow in the footsteps of the flock**" (*Song 1:8*)?

4- The study of the lives of the Fathers also gives us new intercessors for in them we find "**a cloud of witness... we are surrounded with**" (*Heb. 12:1*) They are a cloud that is:

- * White to symbolize purity.
- * High above to indicate sublimeness.
- * Near to show tenderness.
- * Showering good things on us.

The person who comes in contact with the fathers with love will learn that they are very close to us. For though they are high above, they are near, witnesses of our struggles, who intercede for us with the Lord. They pray for us until we reach their blissful paradise and stand in the presence of the Lord of Glory and of the hosts of holy angels.

5- The Orthodox teacher studies the lives of the fathers because they are the heavenly members in the Body of the Lord. Can we conceive of the head being separated from the body, of one half being separated from the other? Impossible! It is simple and natural that we should feel totally united with our holy fathers through membership in one body and through the Holy Eucharist and continuous fellowship with them. They are "**the rest of our**

family", "**the members of the household of God**". Is it possible for one member of the Body to be severed and to continue to live? Is it possible for one body to be in pain and not for the other members to feel this pain, or for one member to be happy and for the other members not to share this happiness with him?

These are our feelings when we study their lives, or when we ask for their intercession, or when we enter into fellowship with them. This is a daily feeling that the Orthodox teacher experiences simply and spontaneously without pretense or artificiality.

2- He Studies the Sayings of the Fathers and Quotes them in his Speech :

The Orthodox teacher is only satisfied with true Orthodoxy through reading the teachings, the exegeses, and the sayings of the Fathers.

This is not a "**glorification of the past**" or mere "**traditionalism**," a doing away of the present, or a failure to grow in the direction of the future. On the contrary, the whole matter may be summed up in the saying "**Christianity did not begin with us**". We have to go back to our roots in the earth of Christianity, in the tree of Orthodoxy, in the heart of history. We will find an inexhaustible source of help and a treasure that is not depleted in the sayings, the studies, the exegeses, and the teachings of the Fathers which are valid for our day and age and for every age.

These deal with two fundamental topics :

- * The way of the Kingdom.
- * Holy Scriptures.

Long ago, the philosophers asked St. Anthony, "**How can you spend so much time alone in a barren desert without companionship or friendship, without reading books?**" He answered, "**My books are my predecessors,**

and if I want to read I read the word of God.” This is indeed a study in the lives of the Fathers, their teachings, and in the living word of God!

a- Who are the Fathers?

The Jews and pagans cried out during the martyrdom of St. Polycarpus: “**This is the father of the Christians!**”.

Teaching in the Church was restricted to the bishops, the priests, and the deacons who were allowed to benefit thereby. The intention was not to establish a monopoly but to ensure the soundness of the teaching, for as St. Paul says: “*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine... for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*” (1Tim. 4:16) The teacher who taught his disciples was called “**Father**”, as St. Paul says of himself: “*for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*” (1Cor.4:15) He says about Onesimus “*My son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains,*” (Phil 10) and about Timothy, “*my true son in the faith.*” (1Tim. 1:2) and he also said: “*for though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers.*” (1Cor. 4:15)

Those who wonder about the meaning of the Lord Jesus’ injunction not to call anyone on earth “**Father**” should remember that we call our fathers at home “**father**.” Are we thus breaking the commandment of Christ? Not at all. “*For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*” (2Cor. 3:6) God wants to warn us that He is the real and final Father, and that are father in the flesh could only exist through the Heavenly Father. The same is true of our father in the Spirit; he takes his fatherhood from the Heavenly Father who granted him the sacrament of the priesthood and the spirit of fatherhood.

* When a man learns from another, he is said to be the son of this teacher, and the latter is said to be his father (St. Iraneous).

* Speech is the child of the spirit; that is why we call those who teach us fathers, and the one who learns has the submission of a son (St. Clement of Alexandria).

b- The Conditions of Fatherhood :

The one who is called “**Father**” in the holy Church has to fulfill the following conditions:

- 1- He has to believe the Orthodox doctrine, living according to the thought of the Church and its spirit without any doctrinal deviation.
- 2- He must have had a holy life. Words and ideas have no value without behavior and conduct.
- 3- He should have authored essays, books, or epistles recorded by his spiritual children or by historians as have Palladius, Cassian, and Rufinius.
- 4- His teachings should conform to those of the Church Fathers. He should not have separate or strange ideas, or an unacceptable heresy. That is why, despite his being a genius, Origen is not called “**father**”, but “**the learned**”, because he castrated himself thus annulling the struggle and the work of God’s grace, and because he combined theology with Greek philosophy.

St. Augustine says: “**He who despises the fathers, despises the whole Church**”.

We do not mean that the fathers are “**infallible**”. None of them was, for all of them often described themselves as being weak and asked for their readers’ forgiveness if they made a mistake when explaining a Bible verse or when expounding a theological issue. The prevailing characteristic in their lives, their sayings, and their writings is “**Orthodoxy**”, both in teaching and in life.

c- How We Should Read the Fathers :

- 1- We should read them as a group, meaning that we should read the writings of many of them. They complement

each other, offering us the spirit of the universal church. There are specializations, insights, and concentrations, but the important thing is the spirit of the group.

- 2- We should not extract a line from the sayings of the father to support a private view we hold, but just as we read the fathers in totality, so should we read all the writings of each father.
- 3- We have to take into consideration the age in which each father lived. In each era, there are certain spiritual and social defects that differ from one age to another. In each age, the meanings of words and expressions change as the language evolves. That is why we have to carefully examine the connotations of every expression, not only the literal meanings.

d- The Copts and the Fathers :

- 1- The Copts were, and still are, close to the Patristic thought of the universal Church. They translated all that came down to them and all that was written in Greek into the language of the people, the Coptic language, so that all the people became “**theologians**,” meaning that they became acquainted with sound teaching and rejected all heresies and heretics.
- 2- Archeologists have discovered many papyri in Coptic, such as the papyrus containing the epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (**now in Berlin**), and another of the same epistle in Strasbourg. A third papyrus is of the epistle of St. Ignatius of Antioch in Vienna and London, as well as The Shepherd by Hermamel...etc.
- 3- The Copts were pioneers in theological literature. St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Timothy and others are among the prominent writers, in addition to the teachers of the Theological School of Alexandria such as Clement of Alexandria, Pantinus, and Origen.
- 4- Many historians came to Egypt, visited our monasteries, met our fathers, and wrote their biographies and their

spiritual sayings which are still a light to the souls of those on the Kingdom way. Some of these are:

- * St. John Cassian (**360-435 AD**) was a disciple of the great fathers of Egypt and who recorded their experiences and their sayings in The Debates and The Laws. In the first, he records conversations with the desert fathers, and in the second, he records the laws and regulations of monasticism.
- * The historian, Palladius, (**365-425 AD**) came to find out about the life of the Egyptian fathers and their asceticism. He met St. Didymus the Blind, the head of the School of Alexandria many times. He recorded the life of the fathers and their sayings in his famous book Lusiac History or The Paradise of the Fathers.
- * The historian, Rufinius, (**345-410 AD**) collected the conversations of the fathers of Egypt in his important book, The History of Monasticism (Historia Monachorum). He spent a number of years in Egypt and was the disciple of St. Didymus the Blind.
- * St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyzanze considered the Egyptian Origen their professor. They collected some extracts of his book The Principles (Principles) in a book of their called Philokalia, or The Love of Godliness.
- * The emergence of historians like Eusebius of Caesaria (**260-340 AD**) had a great impact on preserving the tradition of the fathers, so that he has been rightly called “**the Father of Patrology**.” He indicates in his important book, Ecclesiastical History, that his main aim was to write a report of all the successors of the holy apostles, who preached the divine word orally or in writing. In fact, Eusebius made as complete a list as he could of all the writers and their works and gave us some extracts from their writing.
- * Others tried to complete what Eusebius had started, such as Socrates, Sozomene, Theodoret, and Rufinius.

- * St. Jerome (342-420 AD) wrote his important book, Famous men in which he discusses the apostolic age and about those who came after the apostles up to his own era. He relied on the writings of Eusebius and was not sufficiently accurate.
- * Over the ages, there have been many attempts to collect the writings of the fathers, the most important of which was the Coptic Synaxarium.
- * In the modern age, modern scientific schools have appeared. These search for the heritage of the fathers and publish it so that we have numerous collections that are scientifically authenticated in English, French and German. They are, of course, available in the original Greek and Latin. In all their research and studies, the scientists and men of religion in the world looked up to the Coptic Church as a living source that overflows to the Christian world with a great deal of the patristic heritage, textually and spiritually. The products of the fathers of the Church are still revered and honored by all the churches in the world.

e- Classification of the Writings of the Fathers :

It is possible to classify the writings of the fathers chronologically, particularly those of the first five centuries. Some believe that the first Ecumenical Council (Nicea, in 325) should separate the fathers in terms of their writings and their heritage.

They divide the fathers into :

- 1- Ante-Nicene Fathers: their heritage is very simple. These are Justinius, Iraneous, Hermas, Tatian, Athanagorus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertillian, Heolitus, Novatian, etc.
- 2- Post-Nicene Fathers: Theological debates started then in response to the many heresies that had emerged. These were Augustine, Crystotem, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyzanze, Gregory of Nisisi, John of Damascus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Cassian, Ephraim the Syriac, etc.

The works of the Fathers can be classified according to the languages in which they were written :

- 1- Greek Fathers (Eastern), in addition to Coptic, Syriac, and Aramaic.
- 2- Latin Fathers (Western).

The Fathers can also be classified geographically :

- 1- The Fathers of Egypt, particularly of the School of Alexandria and the Desert Fathers.
- 2- The Fathers of Antioch.
- 3- The Fathers of Cappadocia.
- 4- The Latin Fathers.

We can classify the writings of the Fathers according to the subjects they deal with :

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1- Apologetic writings. | 2- Exegesis of the Holy Bible. |
| 3- Sermons and essays. | 4- Epistles. |
| 5- Church liturgies. | 6- Poetry and hymns of praise. |
| 7- Dialogues. | 8- Ascetics. |
| 9- Church law. | 10- Ecclesiastical history. |

Before this vast ocean of patristic writing, each of us stands like a small child on the shores of a huge ocean, drinking of their writing, and reading their exegeses, being filled with their spirituality, and learning from their experiences and teachings.

We have a great many of their works in Arabic thanks to the efforts of many, the most important of whom is Fr. Tadros Yacoub. The important thing is to read and to learn, and may God grant us His grace.

Note : The essence of this chapter is taken from the book An Introduction to Patrology, by Fr. Tadros Yacoub.

Chapter 7

Integrated Teaching

Because the aim of Orthodox teaching is to form the whole Christian personality, it attends to all the aspects of human personality: the soul, the spirit, the mind, the body and human relationships. We read a great deal about these different directions that complement each other in the Bible, in the writings of the Fathers, and in the Church laws.

The Orthodox teacher's message is complete. It contains a glimpse of Church history and the lives of the saints. Each tree has roots as well as a stem, and it is impossible for it to flower or come to fruition except if it be satisfied and nurtured on its original food. That is why you find a doctrinal glimpse in his speech and in the manner of his delivery, for doctrine is basic to sound spiritual building up, although it is devoid of meaning if it is not lived and experienced. His speech also does not lack spiritual explanations of Church ritual with its spiritual, theological, and educational riches. We also find that this teacher shares the daily life of the Church with his students, for he says the prayers of the Hours with them; he enjoys the Holy Liturgy with them; and is punctilious in his attendance of Paskha and the Keyahk evening services. From time to time, he spends periods of love and "agapi" and teaches them the feeling that the individual is a member of one body and the need to open up in affection to others and to all of society, so that they may be bright lights and loving hearts, regardless of the pain and hindrances they may encounter.

The orthodox Christian personality is integrated, experiencing union with the Lord, fellowship with those in heaven, unity with the faithful, and witnessing to those who are outside. It is a personality that reacts to the age, to culture, and to society, and is aware of the role it is required to play, thus witnessing to the Lord who lives in it.

We have the best example in St. Mark, who when he discovered that Greek philosophy had a great influence on Alexandrian thought, faced up to it with studies and learning. He established the Theological School of Alexandria which studied the era and its culture, then accepted and rejected, then selected and graduated a great number of theologians and teachers of the world.

The objective of Orthodox teaching is to make the orthodox individual a whole personality through whom God is glorified whether he is active or at rest, and in all the areas of his life, the private, familial, church, and societal. This aim is inseparable from the comprehensive work of shepherding man, whether rich or poor, with all his different needs and component parts, neither is it divorced from sublime spiritual prayer. Did not St. John command his disciple, Gaius, saying: "*Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*" (3Jn.2) Success, therefore, is required in all things and in all the facets of the human personality.

The Church endeavors to make her children whole and perfect in a number of important areas:

- 1- Perfect in knowledge.
- 2- Perfect in personality.
- 3- Perfect in relationships.

First : Perfect in Knowledge :

St. Peter says: "*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" (2Pet. 3:18) The Apostle

thus advises a balanced and parallel growth that is a reciprocal growth in two directions that progress together as a whole:

- a- A growth in grace which is spiritual and experiential growth that takes place in the heart.
- b- A growth in knowledge, which is the cultural and intellectual growth of the mind.

The person who grows in knowledge without grace is in danger of pride, while the person who grows in grace without knowledge is in danger of ignorance. The Holy Bible advises us to be wise, for in the book of Proverbs it says: "*seek wisdom, seek understanding.*" It asks us to have the "*mind of Christ*" (1Cor. 2:16), and to ask the Lord of Glory for the wisdom we need: "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*" (Js.1:5) He differentiates between heavenly wisdom and earthly wisdom which he describes as "**earthly, sensual, and demonic**", whereas the wisdom which is from above is first of all pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy (Js.3:15-17).

In the Church, there are a great number of sciences which the Orthodox teacher should acquire, some examples of which are:

1- Ecclesiastical Sciences :

These are a wide ocean from which the believer drinks to quench his thirst and the teacher drinks to overflow to others. **These are some of them:**

- a- **The Holy Bible:** how we got it, the languages it was written in, its geography, its historical events, the personalities in it, its book, its archeological digs, the ancient manuscripts, the schools of exegesis, its translation, its Greek origins, etc.

- b- **Theology and its Branches:** scholastic theology deals with our Loving and great God, His existence, His Oneness, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, salvation, eternity, the infinite qualities of God. Doctrinal theology studies orthodox dogma, its origin, its legislation, its Biblical support, its traditional support, and its patristic origin. Literary theology explains conscience, responsibility, and freedom. Comparative theology deals with the differences in the concept of Divinity held by the different Christian sects. There are also the different branches of theology like Positive Theology (**western**) which attempts to give us positive descriptors of God, and which, in our view, is certainly limited and cannot reach the depths. Passive Theology (**eastern**) explains how sublime and infinite God is and how impossible it is for our limited minds to comprehend Him. It negates some traits in Him and confirms others, as in the Gregorian mass: "**The power of Your Wisdom is indescribable; no tongue can define our love for man... We thank you O One and Only True God, lover of mankind, who cannot be described, invisible, without limits, without beginning, eternal, timeless, from time immemorial, who cannot be bounded.**"
- c- **Theology of Salvation:** Soterology and Christology study the nature of the Lord Jesus who is One nature in two and the difference between our conception and that of the Calcedonian Orthodox as well as our joint condemnation of Eutychism and Nestorianism.
- d- **Ecclesiastical Theology:** which studies the Church whose head is Christ, its heavenly members, and its struggling members on earth, and the fellowship of all. It deals with the meaning of membership and the meaning of function and role, the group spirit and the avoidance of individuality.

- e- **Ritual Theology:** It takes us deep into the Church ritual such as the Holy Liturgy and the other holy sacraments, into the Paskha and Keyahk, the various services, and the Church praise.
- f- **Church History:** whether it is the history of the general Church (**before and after schism**) or the history of our Coptic Orthodox Church in the apostolic age, in the age of the Councils, monasticism, and the ministry. It explains how our Church was ecumenical, not isolated from the general Church or from contemporary intellectual trends, such as the eastern Greek philosophies. It also studies the important personalities in Church history in the areas of asceticism, theology, martyrdom, and ministry.
- g- **Patrology:** is a broad science which we mentioned in a previous section. It deals with who the Fathers were, how to read their works, how they are classified either on the basis of language, geography, history, subject matter, or on what they wrote.

These are only a few simple examples to show how vast Church knowledge is and how greatly in need the ministers are to drink from this ocean of learning till they are full to overflowing!

2- General Culture :

The minister must be cultured, which means that he must acquire general culture and the human sciences such as:

- a- **Psychology:** whose various branches deal with the different areas of human activity. It takes us into the depths of the human psyche and its reactions without, with its finite human resources, being able to cure the human crisis or the psychological troubles. It is here that the spiritual minister, the father confessor comes forward to heal the spirit through faith in God, through the work of grace, through Christian society, and through training in public life.

- b- **Philosophy:** How marvelous it is to study the achievements of the finite mind of man and to add to it the infinite power of faith! The mind will have rest if it "*understands: that the two worlds were made perfect by the word of God*" (Heb. 5). We mentioned before that faith cannot dispense with the mind and the mind cannot dispense with faith. This is exactly similar to the naked eye, which has limitations and which must use the microscope or the telescope. Many philosophers were able to get to God by contemplating the infinite in nature, in the human body (**anatomy and histology**) and in numbers.
- c- **Sociology:** It offers us good studies of the growth of societies and the differences between them. It first studies small societies and how they were formed and their doings. It carries out field research on different phenomena like addiction, deviation, and apostasy in a scientific way that is not devoid of the work of God's Holy Spirit. Thus, science and religion are united in the service of contemporary man.
- d- **Management:** We greatly need to make use of the modern science of management in the administration of our churches, of our ministry, and of our meetings. How can we discover talents and how can we exploit them, coordinate them, supervise them, and promote them? How can we organize our work and delegate responsibility? How can we take group decisions in which the group does not do away with the leader and neither does the leader do away with the group? What about successful debate and what about the means of communication?
- e- **Electronic Computation:** we must make use of it in the storage and retrieval of data, in making Church membership lists, in the possibility of retrieving specific data, or a name of an individual with all the information as to his needs, his potential, and his circumstances. We must make

use of it in the recording of marriages, deaths, baptism, for the production of books and bulletins, for activities and study sessions. Computations by computer and laser, this is the language of the age; we must not be left behind.

f- **The Arts:** The Church was a pioneer in this area through its icons, its church architecture, its cells, its monasteries, and through the different types of leather work, of ceramics, through Coptic art and music which is our immortal heritage, through work on wood, through photography and the theater.

g- **Literature:** such as poetry, the short story, the novel, Church publications, and other different literary forms which we must study so that we can present Christianity through them. They are doubtless effective and affective means and certainly there is, among the children of the Church, literary talents and superior appreciation.

h- **The Sciences:** This includes modern technology and means of communication, such as the cassette tape, video, and the cinema; and the modern sciences such as genetic engineering, space exploration, test tube babies, and the relationship of all these with religion.

Second : Perfect in personality :

The aim of Orthodox upbringing is to form an integrated personality that can lead a Christian life that glorifies God in all areas: individual, familial, church, and societal. If the personality is the outcome of the reaction of man with his environment, the Church intervenes to help him control the way his private life is going. It offers him a holy environment where his social character is developed, then sends him into the world to bear witness to the Christ who dwells in him. Because of his great flexibility, he is able to interact with his friends, his colleagues, and his compatriots without deviating or getting lost.

This integrated personality, in our Church view, is characterized by :

- a- **A full spirit:** in touch with God, which reads the Bible and lives it in daily conduct. It takes Holy Communion in a spirit of readiness, so that it may be rooted and established in God and so that God may be established in it. It attends spiritual meetings and reads spiritual literature regularly. It serves in the church in accordance with its talents.
- b- **A Sublime spirit:** controls its instincts by striving and through grace. It satisfies its needs with the work of God and with decent human conduct. It sanctifies its general incentives and so does not follow the crowd in wrongdoing; it shows discrimination and does not emulate people in everything, but discriminates between what is of value and what is not. It distributes its sanctified, purified, and controlled feelings among God, the Church, school, knowledge, service, psalms, worship, friends, and those whom it serves. It watches its habits, rejecting those that are evil and acquiring every good habit. It determines its path in accordance with the leadership of God's Holy Spirit.
- c- **An enlightened mind:** the integrated personality is mentally active in spiritual readings, in various fields of knowledge, and in general culture. It has an enlightened mind that is able to distinguish and discriminate, profit and criticize, accept and reject.
- d- **A healthy body:** Christianity was never against the body; on the contrary, it advises us to strengthen it, to condition it, to control it so that it is neither weakened by asceticism or illness nor made flabby by laziness and gluttony. It should be controlled by fasting and "metanias", by repentance and watchfulness. It is rendered healthy by an adequate amount of food, rest, sleep, and physical exercise.

e- **Good relationships:** in the family circle, on the street, in the school, in church and in society. Christianity does not teach us to live in isolation from society, but that we should be a light and salt for it, and that we should function as ambassadors of Christ who interact with, influence, and serve others, and spread love and good.

Third : The Environment :

Through various activities, the Church creates a good environment for the spiritual seed to grow. These activities help us discover our weaknesses, our talents, and our role in the service of the one body. **These activities are:**

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1- Trips and picnics. | 2- Meetings. |
| 3- Exhibitions. | 4- Church clubs. |
| 5- Performances. | 6- Competitions. |
| 7- Service of the environment. | 8- Service of rural areas. |
| 9- Service of the needy, such as the poor, the sick, the old, the handicapped, the blind, the deaf and dumb, the mentally retarded, etc. | |

Through sound interaction between the individual and his environment, such as the home, school, church, and society, he becomes a whole integrated personality that is able to give and take without waste or excess, but rationally and with commitment.

Fours: Perfect in relationships :

The Christian individual must be successful in his relationships, either in the family, in church, or in society. He has a living relationship with God and fellowship with the saints. Through this divine gift and through heavenly aspirations, he is able to build successful relationships in the family, in church, and in society.

a- In the family :

- ☞ He has good relations with his parents; **“Honor thy father and mother.”**
- ☞ He respects his older siblings and learns from their experience.
- ☞ He is tender with his younger siblings and serves them.
- ☞ He holds married life sacred and is united with his wife spiritually.
- ☞ He endeavors to give his children a Christian upbringing within the Church.
- ☞ He respects the humanity of those who work for the family.

b- In Church :

- ☞ He knows that he should be an active member.
- ☞ He knows that he needs the other members.
- ☞ He works in all humility, without jealousy or envy, without disputes or conflicts, preserving the peace and promoting the welfare of the ministry.
- ☞ He understands the concept of the One Body and is quick to serve others.
- ☞ He knows how important order and discipline are and so behaves with the clergymen and those responsible in all love, humility and gentleness.
- ☞ He is aware of human frailty and so judges no one but himself.
- ☞ He knows the value of constructive criticism and offers it with love, gentleness, and humility.
- ☞ He knows that judging others is a noxious wind that blows away all fruits.
- ☞ Schism is a great undertaking, but for the welfare of Satan.

c- In society :

- ☞ He knows that he is part of the fabric of the country. We are not a minority; being a numerical minority does not negate our ethnic origin.

- ⦿ He knows that he is a witness to Christ in society. That is why he presents a faithful Christian model, spreading love and doing good to all.
- ⦿ He is the light of the world, the salt of the earth, and an ambassador of Christ.
- ⦿ He is not a fanatic, for his mind is enlightened with the Spirit of God and the words of the Gospel.
- ⦿ He is not sectarian for he knows that it is one of the most powerful tools for the destruction of the homeland.
- ⦿ He rejects violence, for it is a means of expression that the God of love does not accept.
- ⦿ He contributes his opinion, his efforts, and his work to the building of the country.
- ⦿ He has the feeling of belonging, giving before taking.
- ⦿ He makes sure that he has a voice in building the national entity.

May the Lord grant that we may strive together so that the Orthodox servant might glorify God in his public and religious life.

May the grace of God be with us all

