BEING AS COMMUNION

John D. Zizioulas
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JOHN D. ZIZIOULAS

BEING AS COMMUNION
Studies in Personhood and the Church

With a foreword
by
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Foreword

One of the major and permanent goals of a theologian, who wants to express the Christian faith, as it is held by the Orthodox Catholic Tradition, is to be able to do justice to history as well as to "systematic" thought addressed to contemporaries. In most cases, however, historians limit themselves to history establishing the facts of the past and leaving open the issue of objective truth. Systematic theologians, on the contrary, neglect the rigorous demands of historical criticism, and use the past merely as a source of proof-texts, selected by them to support their own, so often arbitrary interpretation of the truth.

This dichotomy is particularly dangerous for Orthodox theology, which simply ceases to be Orthodox if it either neglects Tradition, uncovered in history, or forgets the truth, which is its raison d'être.

The present work by John Zizioulas should, I believe, be seen as important not only because it obviously transcends the dichotomy referred to above, but also because it succeeds brilliantly in showing that the Orthodox doctrines of man and of the Church cannot be compartmentalized in nearly separate sections of theological science—"theology," "anthropology," "ecclesiology"—but are simply meaningless if approached separately. Only together do they reflect the true "mind of Christ" of which St Paul wrote, the "true gnosis" defended by St Irenaeus, and the authentic experience of God, called for by the Fathers of later centuries.

Abundant in the various languages of the Balkans and Eastern Europe, Orthodox theological literature has become, in the last two decades, much more accessible in English as well. It includes general introductions to Orthodox history and doctrine, some important specialized studies and monographs, and a great abundance of texts related to spirituality. In Being As Communion, attentive readers will discover how all these dispersed elements of Tradition are linked to the Gospel itself, as it was lived by the early Christian community and expressed by the great Fathers. They will also see that it transcends historical limitations and is immediately relevant to today's problems.

The book is not always easy reading. It presupposes some awareness of contemporary theological trends. Zizioulas' disciplined and
critical mind finds itself in constant dialogue with others, either giving them credit, or criticizing them—mostly on grounds of onesidedness, i.e. on the ground that they lack an authentically "catholic" grasp of ecclesial reality. His thought is, in many ways, close to that of the late Father Nicholas Afanasiev—well known exponent of "eucharistic ecclesiology"—but how sharp (and in my opinion, how justified) is also Zizioulas' criticism of Afanasiev? Was not Afanasiev somehow overlooking the trinitarian and anthropological dimension of ecclesiology, focusing his thought on the "local" nature of the eucharistic community and, somewhat, excluding the problems of truth and of the universal presuppositions of unity?

I hope that readers will not be set back by the technical character of this book. John Zizioulas is actually dealing with the most contemporary, the most urgent, the most existential issues facing the Orthodox Church today. Unless the visible reality of our Church life becomes consistent with that communion which is revealed to us in the Eucharist, unless our ecclesiastical structures—especially here in the West—conform themselves to that which the Church truly is, unless the eucharistic nature of the Church is freed from under the facade of anachronism, and ethnic politics, which hide it today, no ecumenical witness, no authentic mission to the world is possible.

Born in Greece in 1931, John Zizioulas is a graduate of the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens, where he also later received a degree of Doctor of Theology, with a thesis on The Unity of the Church in the Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries (Athens, 1965). He also studied Patristics at Harvard and was a Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies. For several years, he served on the staff of the Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches, in Geneva and was gradually recognized as one of the most influential Orthodox theologians of the younger generation. As a representative of the ecumenical patriarchate, he is a member of the International Commission for dialogue with Roman Catholicism. His ecumenical involvement has led him to publish a number of articles and studies in various periodicals. Some of these articles appeared in the French volume L'Être ecclesial (Paris, Labor et Fides, 1981). These same articles, with important additions are included in this volume.

At present, John Zizioulas is professor of theology at the University of Glasgow. He was also recently appointed to a part-time position at the University of Thessalonica.

— John Meyendorff

Preface

Certain parts of this book have already appeared in French in my L'Être ecclesial (Labor et Fides, Geneva, 1981). The rest are published for the first time here in English. In both cases the text has undergone special revision in view of the present English edition.

I should like to express warmest thanks to my friends, the Reverend John Clarke and Mrs Elizabeth Templeton for their invaluable help in translating from the French the Introduction of this book, and to Father Norman Russell for translating so brilliantly chapter I from the original Greek. My special gratitude is due to Dr Peter J. Bussey, of the Department of Natural Philosophy of the University of Glasgow, for the interest he has shown in chapter II of this book both as a scientist and as Christian. I am indebted to him for kindly taking the initiative to translate himself this chapter from French into English.

Finally, I wish to thank most warmly Mr Costa Carras for the great amount of time and work he contributed in arranging for the publication of this book. To him and to his wife Lydia I dedicate this book with gratitude for their unfailing friendship over the last years.

J.D.Z.
Introduction

The Church is not simply an institution. She is a “mode of existence,” a way of being. The mystery of the Church, even in its institutional dimension, is deeply bound to the being of man, to the being of the world and to the very being of God. In virtue of this bond, so characteristic of patristic thought, ecclesiology assumes a marked importance, not only for all aspects of theology, but also for the existential needs of man in every age.

In the first place, ecclesial being is bound to the very being of God. From the fact that a human being is a member of the Church, he becomes an “image of God,” he exists as God Himself exists, he takes on God’s “way of being.” This way of being is not a moral attainment, something that man accomplishes. It is a way of relationship with the world, with other people and with God, an event of communion, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an individual, but only as an ecclesial fact.

However, for the Church to present this way of existence, she must herself be an image of the way in which God exists. Her entire structure, her ministries etc. must express this way of existence. And that means, above all else, that the Church must have a right faith, a correct vision with respect to the being of God. Orthodoxy concerning the being of God is not a luxury for the Church and for man: it is an existential necessity.

* * *

During the patristic period, there was scarcely mention of the being of the Church, whilst much was made of the being
of God. The question that preoccupied the Fathers was not to know if God existed or not—the existence of God was a "given" for nearly all men of this period, Christians or pagans. The question which tormented entire generations was rather: how he existed. And such a question had direct consequences as much for the Church as for man, since both were considered as "images of God."

To answer the question about the being of God, during the patristic period, was not easy. The greatest difficulty stemmed from ancient Greek ontology which was fundamentally monistic: the being of the world and the being of God formed, for the ancient Greeks, an unbreakable unity. That linked together the being of God and the being of the world, while biblical faith proclaimed God to be absolutely free with regard to the world. The Platonic conception of the creator God did not satisfy the Fathers of the Church, and this, precisely because the doctrine of creation from pre-existing matter limited divine freedom. So it was necessary to find an ontology that avoided the monistic Greek philosophy as much as the "gulf" between God and the world taught by the gnostic systems—the other great danger of this period. The creation of this ontology was perhaps the greatest philosophical achievement of patristic thought.

The ecclesial experience of the Fathers played a decisive role in breaking ontological monism and avoiding the gnostic "gulf" between God and the world. The fact that neither the apologists, such as Justin Martyr, nor the Alexandrian catechetical theologians, such as the celebrated Clement and Origen, could completely avoid the trap of the ontological monism of Greek thought is not accidental: they were above all "doctors," academic theologians interested principally in Christianity as "revelation." By contrast, the bishops of this period, pastoral theologians such as St Ignatius of Antioch and above all St Irenaeus and later St Athanasius, approached the being of God through the experience of the ecclesial community, of ecclesial being. This experience revealed something very important: the being of God could be known only through personal relationships and personal love. Being means life, and life means communion.

Introduction

This ontology, which came out of the eucharistic experience of the Church, guided the Fathers in working out their doctrine of the being of God, a doctrine formulated above all by Athanasius of Alexandria and the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. Below, in brief, is the result of this important philosophical development which would never have been possible without the experience of ecclesial being, and without which ecclesiology would lose its deep existential meaning.

The being of God is a relational being; without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God. The tautology "God is God" says nothing about ontology, just as the logical affirmation A = A is a dead logic and consequently a denial of being which is life. It would be unthinkable to speak of the "one God" before speaking of the God who is "communion," that is to say, of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity is a primordial ontological concept and not a notion which is added to the divine substance or rather which follows it, as is the case in the dogmatic manuals of the West and, alas, in those of the East in modern times. The substance of God, "God," has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion.

In this way, communion becomes an ontological concept in patristic thought. Nothing in existence is conceivable in itself, as an individual, such as the τόκος τῆς of Aristotle, since even God exists thanks to an event of communion. In this manner the ancient world heard for the first time that it is communion which makes beings "be": nothing exists without it, not even God.

But this communion is not a relationship understood for its own sake, an existential structure which supplants "nature" or "substance" in its primordial ontological role—something reminiscent of the structure of existence met in the thought of Martin Buber. Just like "substance," "communion" does not exist by itself; it is the Father who is the "cause" of it. This thesis of the Cappadocians that introduced the concept of "cause" into the being of God assumed an incalculable importance. For it meant that the ultimate ontological category which makes something really be, is neither an impersonal
and incommunicable "substance," nor a structure of communion existing by itself or imposed by necessity, but rather the person. The fact that God owes His existence to the Father, that is to a person, means (a) that His "substance," His being, does not constrain Him (God does not exist because He cannot but exist), and (b) that communion is not a constraining structure for His existence (God is not in communion, does not love, because He cannot but be in communion and love). The fact that God exists because of the Father shows that His existence, His being is the consequence of a free person; which means, in the last analysis, that not only communion but also freedom, the free person, constitutes true being. True being comes only from the free person, from the person who loves freely—that is, who freely affirms his being, his identity, by means of an event of communion with other persons.

In this way the discussion of the being of God leads patristic thought to the following theses, which are fundamentally bound up with ecclesiology as well as ontology:

(a) There is no true being without communion. Nothing exists as an "individual," conceivable in itself. Communion is an ontological category.

(b) Communion which does not come from a "hypostasis," that is, a concrete and free person, and which does not lead to "hypostases," that is concrete and free persons, is not an "image" of the being of God. The person cannot exist without communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is inadmissible.

This theology of the person, which appeared for the first time in history through the patristic vision of the being of God, could never have become a live experience for man without the mystery of the Church. Humanism or sociology could struggle as much as they wished to affirm the importance of man. The existentialist philosophers, however, have shown in our day—with an intellectual honesty that makes them worthy of the name of philosopher—that humanly speaking, the person as an absolute ontological freedom remains a quest without fulfilment. Between the being of God and that of man remains the gulf of creaturehood, and creaturehood means precisely this: the being of each human person is given to him; consequently, the human person is not able to free himself absolutely from his "nature" or from his "substance," from what biological laws dictate to him, without bringing about his annihilation. And even when he lives the event of communion either in the form of love or of social and political life, he is obliged in the last analysis, if he wants to survive, to relativize his freedom, to submit to certain natural and social "givens." The demand of the person for absolute freedom involves a "new birth," a birth "from on high," a baptism. And it is precisely the ecclesial being which "hypostasizes" the person according to God's way of being. That is what makes the Church the image of the Triune God.

* * *

But patristic theology insisted from its origins on something very significant: man can approach God only through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Ecclesiology which uses the notion of the "image of God" cannot be founded simply on triadology. The fact that man in the Church is the "image of God" is due to the economy of the Holy Trinity, that is, the work of Christ and the Spirit in history. This economy is the basis of ecclesiology, without being the goal of it. The Church is built by the historical work of the divine economy but leads finally to the vision of God "as He is," to the vision of the Triune God in his eternal existence.

This meta-historical, eschatological and iconological dimension of the Church is characteristic of the Eastern tradition, which lives and teaches its theology liturgically; it contemplates the being of God and the being of the Church with the eyes of worship, principally of eucharistic worship, image of the "eschat" par excellence. It is for that reason that Orthodoxy is often thought of, or presented by its spokesmen, as a sort of Christian Platonism, as a vision of future or heavenly things without an interest in history and its problems. By contrast, Western theology tends to limit ecclesiology (and actually even the whole of theology) to the historical content of the faith—to the economy—and to project realities belong-
ing to history and time into the eternal existence of God. In this way the dialectic of God and the world, the uncreated and the created, history and the *eschata* is lost. The Church ends by being completely “historicized”; it ceases to be the manifestation of the *eschata* and becomes the image of this world and of historical realities. Ecclesial being and the being of God are no longer organically bound; ecclesiology no longer has need of “theology” to function. Orthodox theology runs the danger of historically disincarnating the Church; by contrast, the West risks tying it primarily to history, either in the form of an extreme Christocentrism—an *imitatio Christi*—lacking the essential influence of pneumatology or in the form of a social activism or moralism which tries to play in the Church the role of the image of God. Consequently, the two theologies, Eastern and Western, need to meet in depth, to recover the authentic patristic synthesis which will protect them from the above dangers. Ecclesial being must never separate itself from the absolute demands of the being of God—that is, its eschatological nature—nor from history. The institutional dimension of the Church must always incarnate its eschatological nature without annulling the dialectic of this age and the age to come, the uncreated and the created, the being of God and that of man and the world.

* * *

But how can we draw together ecclesial being and the being of God, history and eschatology, without destroying their dialectical relationship? To achieve this we need to find again the lost consciousness of the primitive Church concerning the decisive importance of the *eschast* in ecclesiology.

The rediscovery of this consciousness, lost in the tortuous paths of medieval scholasticism and the “Babylonian captivity” of modern Orthodoxy, presupposes that we give up envisaging the eucharist as one sacrament among many, as an objective act or a “means of grace” “used” or “administered” by the Church. The ancient understanding of the eucharist—common in its general lines until about the twelfth century to both East and West—was very different. The celebration of the eucharist by the primitive Church was, above all, the gathering of the people of God τοῦ στίλατος, that is, both the manifestation and the realization of the Church. Its celebration on Sunday—the day of the *eschata*—as well as all its liturgical content testified that during the eucharist, the Church did not live only by the memory of a historical fact—the Last Supper and the earthly life of Christ, including the cross and the resurrection—but it accomplished an *eschastological* act. It was in the eucharist that the Church would contemplate her eschatological nature, would taste the very life of the Holy Trinity; in other words, she would realize man’s true being as image of God’s own being. All the fundamental elements which constituted her historical existence and structure had, by necessity, to pass through the eucharistic community to be “sure” (according to Ignatius of Antioch) or “valid” and “canonical” (according to the terminology of contemporary canon law), that is, to be ecclesiologically *true*. No ordination to fundamental and structural ministries of the Church took place outside the eucharistic community. It was there, in the presence of all the people of God and of all the orders, in an event of free communion, that the Holy Spirit distributed gifts “by constituting the whole structure of the Church.” Thus the eucharist was not the act of a pre-existing Church; it was an event *constitutive* of the being of the Church, enabling the Church to be. The eucharist constituted the Church’s being.

Consequently, the eucharist had the unique privilege of reuniting in one whole, in one unique experience, the work of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. It expressed the eschatological vision through historical realities by combining in the ecclesial life the institutional with the charismatic elements. For it was only in the eucharist that the dialectical relationship between God and the world, between the *eschata* and history, was preserved without creating dangerous polarizations and dichotomies. This is because:

(a) The eucharist manifests the historical form of the divine economy, all that which was “transmitted” (cf. I Cor. 10:23; eucharist = “tradition”) through the life, the death and the resurrection of the Lord, as well as through the “form” of bread and wine and a “structure” practically unchanged
since the night of the Last Supper. The eucharist realizes in the course of history the continuity that links each Church to the first apostolic communities and to the historical Christ: in short, all that was instituted and is transmitted. The eucharist is thus the affirmation par excellence of history, the sanctification of time, by manifesting the Church as historical reality, as an institution.

(b) But a eucharist founded uniquely on history and manifesting the Church as simply "institution" is not the true eucharist. It might be said, by paraphrasing the biblical sentence, that "history kills, it is the Spirit who gives life." The epiclesis and the presence of the Holy Spirit mean that in the eucharist the being of the Church is not founded simply on its historical and institutional base, but that it dilates history and time to the infinite dimensions of the eschaton, and it is that which forms the specific work of the Holy Spirit. The eucharistic community makes the Church eschatological. It frees it from the causality of natural and historical events, from limitations which are the result of the individualism implied in our natural biological existence. It gives it the taste of eternal life as love and communion, as the image of the being of God. The eucharist, as distinct from other expressions of ecclesial life, is unthinkable without the gathering of the whole Church in one place, that is, without an event of communion; consequently, it manifests the Church not simply as something instituted, that is, historically given, but also as something con-stituted, that is constantly realized as an event of free communion, prefiguring the divine life and the Kingdom to come. In ecclesiology, the polarization between "institution" and "event" is avoided thanks to a correct understanding of the eucharist: Christ and history give to the Church her being, which becomes true being each time that the Spirit con-stitutes the eucharistic community as Church. In this way, the eucharist is not a "sacrament," something parallel to the divine word: it is the eschatologization of the historical word, the voice of the historical Christ, the voice of the Holy Scripture which comes to us, no longer simply as "doctrine" through history, but as life and being through the eschaton. It is not the sacrament completing the word, but rather the word becoming flesh, the risen Body of the Logos.

* * *

Through the studies of this volume, the reader will easily recognize the fundamental presuppositions of "eucharistic ecclesiology." Since the late Fr Nicholas Afanasiev, a modern Orthodox theologian, published his well-known thesis, many Western theologians know Orthodoxy in the form of this "eucharistic ecclesiology." However the reader who wants to study the present texts with attention and to place them in the light of the history of theology will certainly discover some fundamental differences from this "eucharistic ecclesiology." It is therefore necessary to be aware in what important respects the author of these studies wishes to go further than Afanasiev, or to dissociate his own opinions from the latter, without either underestimating or minimizing the importance of this Russian theologian and those who have faithfully followed him.

First of all, the preceding pages have made clear the desire of the author of this book to enlarge, as much as possible, the horizon of ecclesiology in order to relate the theology of the Church to its philosophical and ontological implications as well as to the rest of theology. It is certain that such a project, to be properly carried out, demands a work of synthesis rather than a collection of studies as is the case in this present volume. However, in the first two chapters the efforts of the author seek to show that the mystery of the Church, and more especially its eucharistic realization and expression, are very deeply bound to the entirety of theology with its existential implications. That must be said so as to distance the present studies from the opinion that eucharistic ecclesiology is founded simply on the concept or on the celebration of a sacramental act. For the opinion frequently recurs among a great many Western Christians as well as among Orthodox, in referring to eucharistic ecclesiology, that Orthodox ecclesiology is only a projection of the mystery of the Church into sacramental categories: a sacramentalization of theology. And
in effect, such an impression appears inevitable if we do not go beyond what eucharistic ecclesiology has said up until now, if we do not try to widen both our theological and philosophical horizons.

Furthermore, eucharistic ecclesiology such as has been developed by Fr Aphanasiev and his followers raises serious problems, and because of this it is in need of fundamental correction. The principle "wherever the eucharist is, there is the Church" on which this ecclesiology is built, tends to lead towards two basic errors that Fr Aphanasiev did not avoid, any more than those who have faithfully followed him.

The first of these errors consists in considering even the parish where the eucharist takes place as a complete and "catholic" Church. Several Orthodox, following Aphanasiev, have come to this conclusion without recognizing that they are raising in a very acute manner the entire problem of the structure of the Church. The reason is the following: if a local Church comprises only a single eucharistic parish-community, as must have been the case in the primitive Church, it is then possible to speak of a complete and "catholic" Church, given that it fulfills all the conditions of catholicity: a gathering of all the members of the Church of one place (so an overcoming of all kinds of division: natural, social, cultural etc.) in the presence of all the ministers, including the college of presbyters with the bishop at its head. But when a eucharistic community does not meet these conditions, how can it be called a complete and "catholic" Church? The parish, as it has been formed in the course of history, does not include all the faithful of a place, nor all the presbyters with the bishop at its head. Consequently, in spite of the fact that the eucharist is celebrated there, the parish is not a complete and "catholic" Church. But then, does the principle of eucharistic ecclesiology "wherever the eucharist is, there is the Church" find itself weakened? Not necessarily, but it needs a new interpretation so as to manifest the correct relationship between the parish and the diocese, between the eucharist and the Church.

The other great problem created by "eucharistic ecclesiology" as Fr Aphanasiev has developed it concerns the relationship between the local Church and the Church "universal."

The eucharistic community envisaged in its parochial or even episcopal form is necessarily local. The principle "wherever the eucharist is, there is the Church" risks suggesting the idea that each Church could, independently of other local Churches, be the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." Here there is a need for special attention and creative theological work to keep an adequate balance between the "local Church" and the "universal Church." Roman Catholic ecclesiology before Vatican II (which drew attention to the importance of the local Church) tended to identify the "catholic Church" with the "universal Church" (an identification which had already begun in the West with Augustine), thus considering the local Church as simply a "part" of the Church. This tendency has begun to fade a little, at least among certain groups of Roman Catholic theologians, but it remains an open question. On the other hand, in certain Protestant churches, the local Church (whose meaning is not always clear) retains priority and almost exhausts the concept of Church. Several Orthodox theologians faithful to the doctrine of eucharistic ecclesiology—Aphanasiev had already given such an interpretation—have an equal tendency to give priority to the local Church. Others, by contrast, basically following Roman Catholic ecclesiology before Vatican II, refuse to accept both the catholicity of the local Church and eucharistic ecclesiology, which they regard as responsible for an inadmissible "localism" in ecclesiology.

It is clear that we must steer towards a third solution, which would justify eucharistic ecclesiology without carrying with it the risk of "localism." And it is the eucharist itself which will guide us in this, for, by its nature, it expresses simultaneously both the "localization" and the "universalization" of the mystery of the Church, that is the transcending of both "localism" and "universalism." It is in this direction that the studies of this volume would wish to point the reader.

* * *

These studies are not intended to be simply a contribution to the theological dialogue between Orthodox. Written in the West on the occasion of different international and ecumenical
theological conferences, they presuppose a certain knowledge of the theological problems which today preoccupy the Western world. Situated in the context of Western theological problematic, they are motivated by two basic concerns: the first consists in detaching Western theology from the confessional mentality with which it habitually approaches Orthodoxy, by considering it as something “exotic,” different, “worth the trouble” of being known. If Orthodoxy is only this sort of “interesting” subject, provoking the curiosity and enriching merely the knowledge of Western theologians, it would be better that it stop being presented; it has played this role enough up until now and accomplished this “task.” These studies are addressed to the reader who seeks in Orthodoxy the dimension of the faith of the Greek Fathers, a dimension necessary to the catholicity of the faith of the Church and to the existential implications of Christian doctrine and of the ecclesial institution. They are addressed to the Western Christian who feels, as it were, “amputated” since the East and the West followed their different and autonomous paths.

As for the second concern of these texts, it is a result and a consequence of the first: it provokes and invites contemporary theology to work with a view to a synthesis between the two theologies, Eastern and Western. It is of course true that, in some respects, these two theologies seem incompatible. That is due, among other things, to the independent historical roads followed by East and West since the great schism or perhaps even earlier. However, this was not the case during the early patristic period. As the late Fr Georges Florovsky liked to repeat, the authentic catholicity of the Church must include both the West and the East.

It may be said in conclusion that these studies are intended to offer their contribution to a “neopatristic synthesis” capable of leading the West and the East nearer to their common roots, in the context of the existential quest of modern man. This object may perhaps justify their appearance in the shape of this volume.

1. Personhood and Being

Respect for man's “personal identity” is perhaps the most important ideal of our time. The attempt of contemporary humanism to supplant Christianity in whatever concerns the dignity of man has succeeded in detaching the concept of the person from theology and uniting it with the idea of an autonomous morality or with an existential philosophy which is purely humanistic. Thus, although the person and “personal identity” are widely discussed nowadays as a supreme ideal, nobody seems to recognize that historically as well as existentially the concept of the person is indissolubly bound up with theology. Within the very narrow limits of this study an attempt will be made to show how deep and indestructible is the bond that unites the concept of the person with patristic theology and ecclesiology. The person both as a concept and as a living reality is purely the product of patristic thought. Without this, the deepest meaning of personhood can neither be grasped nor justified.

I. From Mask to Person:
   The Birth of an Ontology of Personhood

1. Many writers have represented ancient Greek thought as essentially “non-personal.”¹ In its Platonic variation, every-

¹The most categorical, though undoubtedly somewhat one-sided and exaggerated statement of this view, is to be found in the following words of the modern Russian scholar, A. Th. Losev, based on the study of Platonism and inspired by Hegel's interpretation of classical Greek culture through ancient
thing concrete and "individual" is ultimately referred to the abstract idea which constitutes its ground and final justification. Aristotelian philosophy, with its emphasis on the concrete and the individual, offers the basis of a certain concept of the person, but the inability of this philosophy to provide permanence, some kind of continuity and "eternal life," for the total psychosomatic entity of man renders impossible the union of the person with the "substance" (οὐσία) of man, that is, with a true ontology. In Platonic thought the person is a concept which is ontologically impossible, because the soul, which ensures man’s continuity, is not united permanently with the concrete, "individual" man: it lives eternally but it can be united with another concrete body and can constitute another "individuality," e.g. by reincarnation. With Aristotle, on the other hand, the person proves to be a logically impossible concept precisely because the soul is indissolubly united with the concrete and "individual": a man is a concrete individuality; he endures, however, only for so long as his psychosomatic union endures—death dissolves the concrete "individuality" completely and definitively.

sculpture: "Against a dark background, as a result of an interplay of light and shadow, there stands out a blind, colorless, cold marble and divinely beautiful, proud and majestic body, a statue. And the world is such a statue, and gods are statues; the city-state also, and the heroes, and the myths, and the ideas, all conceal underneath them this original scriptural intuition... There is no personality, no eye, no spiritual individuality. There is a "something," but not a "someone," an individualized "it," but no living person with his proper name... There is no one in all the there are bodies, and there are ideas. The spiritual character of the ideas is killed by the body, but the warmth of the body is restrained by the abstract idea. There are here beautiful, but cold and blissfully indifferent statues." Quoted by G. Florovsky, "Eschatology in the Patriarchic Age: An Introduction," in Studia Patristica, ed. F.L. Cross, II (1957), pp. 235-50, at p. 248.

According to Plato’s Timeaus (41 D f.) the souls were all created alike; they become "different" only when they acquire bodies. This could be taken to imply (see e.g. E. Rohde, Psyche [1922], P. 472) that there is some kind of distinct "personality" in an incarnate soul. However Plato seems to allow for many reincarnations of one and the same soul, even in the bodies of animals (see Phaido 240B; Repub. 618A; Tim. 42 BC etc.). This makes it impossible for a particular soul to acquire a distinct "personality" of its own on the basis of a particular body.

According to Aristotle (e.g. De Anima 2, 4, 415 A, 28-67), the concrete individual cannot be everlasting, since it cannot share in the δεό και θεόν. Death dissolves the individual thing (the οὐσία), and what survives is only

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The reasons for this inability of ancient Greek philosophy to endow human "individuality" with permanence and thus to create a true ontology of the person as an absolute concept are deeply rooted in Greek thought. Ancient Greek thought remained tied to the basic principle which it had set itself, the principle that being constitutes in the final analysis a unity in spite of the multiplicity of existing things because concrete existential things finally trace their being back to their necessary relationship and "kinship" with the "one" being, and because consequently every "differentiation" or "accidence" must be somehow regarded as a tendency towards "non-being," a deterioration of or "fall" from being.

This ontological monism which characterizes Greek philosophy from its inception leads Greek thought to the concept of the κόσμος, that is, of the harmonious relationship of existing things among themselves. Not even God can escape from this ontological unity and stand freely before the world, "face to face" in dialogue with it. He too is bound by the θεόν θεόν, i.e. the species (οὐσία). Cf. E. Rohde, op. cit., p. 511. Originally Aristotle seems to have held the view that the "mind" (νοῦς), as the intelligent part of the soul, survives after death (cf. Metaph. 11. 9. 1070 a, 24-26; De Anima 3, 5, 436a, 21). But he abandoned this view later on in life in favor of the position stated above in this note. Cf. H.A. Wolfson, "Immortality and Resurrection in the Philosophy of the Church Fathers," in K. Stendhal, ed., Immortality and Resurrection (1965), pp. 54-96, esp. 96.

From the Presocratics to the Neoplatonists, this principle is invariably maintained in Greek thought. Whatever exists is essentially one and its "essence" is "common" (οὐσία ἐν οὐσία) for all those who are "awake" (Heracleitus, Frs. 89, 73 etc.). "Being" and "knowing" (γνώσθε) also form a unity (Parmenides, Fr. 5d. 7. Cf. Plato, Parm. 128b). The creation of the world takes place on the basis of this principle of necessary unity, and it is for this reason that the creator does not simply choose to but must make the world spherical, since the spherical shape is that of unity and thus of perfection (Plato, Timaeus 32d-34b. Cf. G. Vasiles, Plato's Universe [1975], p. 28). For the Neoplatonists also there is a basic unity between the intelligible world, the mind and being (Plotinus, En. V, 1, 8. Cf. K. Kremer, Die neuplatonische Seinsphilosophie und ihre Wirkung auf Thomas von Aquin [1966, new ed. 1971], pp. 798ff.).

This was particularly present in Neoplatonism, which for this reason regarded as outrageous the Christian view that the world is contingent and not eternal. Cf. E. von Ivens, Plato Christianus [1960], pp. 125f. and 126f.

For the view that there is consistent monism in Greek thought, see C.J. de Vogel, Philosophia I, Studien inGreek Philosophy (Philosophical Texts and Studies 19, I, 1970), pp. 397-416.

The gods could always make extraordinary interventions in nature through
ontological necessity to the world and the world to him, either through the creation of Plato's *Timaeus* or through the Logos of the Stoics or through the "emanations" of Plotinus' *Enneads*. In this way Greek thought creates a wonderful concept of "cosmos," that is, of unity and harmony, a world full of interior dynamism and aesthetic plentitude, a world truly "beautiful" and "divine." However, in such a world it is impossible for the unforeseen to happen or for freedom to operate as an absolute and unrestricted claim to existence.

miracles as well as in men's lives, causing them even to suffer madness (δαιμονική). Cf. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1956), p. 49 and passim. This view, however, undergoes a radical transformation in the hands of the classical philosophers and the tragedians, who clearly deny the gods the right to transgress the laws of justice or "measure," i.e. the κόσμος (≈ just behavior) which holds the world together in one necessary unity. "If the gods do anything that is ugly, they are not the gods" (Euripides, Fr. 292 acc. to Bellerophon). Cf. M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, I (1970), p. 261. This transformation takes place together with the idea that Zeus is at the same time "nature's inflexible law and mind dwelling in mortal men," he who leads "according to justice all that happens here below" (Euripides, *Troad*, 884ff.).

Unlike Heraclitus and the physiologists, Plato attributes the existence of the world to God, the creator νοῦς or θεότροφος. But Plato's creator is not absolutely free in relation to the world he creates. He is subject to necessity (δυναμική) in that he has to use matter (ὕλη) and space (χώρα), which not only pre-exist but also impose on him their own laws and limitations (Tim. 48a; 51a-b). Furthermore, Plato's creator has to take into account the ideas of symmetry, justice etc. (cf. above note 4), which pre-exist and serve as paradigmata for creation. The fact that, in one passage in the *Republic* Plato appears to identify God with the idea of the *Good* which ἐπεξεργάζεται τῆς οόδος, does not seem to have convinced the majority of specialists that Plato's God is above and independent of the world of ideas. See D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (1921), pp. 43-44, 78-79. In fact, it is open to discussion whether the idea of God is identical with God. See P. Shoemaker, *What Plato Said* (1945), p. 231, and for the opposite view C. Ritter, *The Essence of Plato's Philosophy* (1933), p. 374.


10See notes 4-6 above.

11Hegel speaks of ancient Greece as the place where the concept of "free individuality" appeared for the first time in connection with sculpture. However, as he puts it himself, this was "substantial individuality" in which "the accent is only put on the general and the permanent ... while the transitory and the fortuitous are rejected." (*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik, Sämtliche Werke*, X, pp. 353f. and 377).

whatever threatens cosmic harmony and is not explained by "reason" (logos), which draws all things together and leads them to this harmony and unity, is rejected and condemned. This also holds true for man.

The place of man in this unified world of harmony and reason is the theme of ancient Greek tragedy. And it is precisely here that (by coincidence?) the term "person" (πρόσωπον) appears in ancient Greek usage. Of course the term is not absent from the vocabulary of ancient Greek outside the life of the theater. It seems originally to have meant specifically the part of the head that is "below the cranium." 11 This is its "anatomical" meaning. 14 But how and why did this meaning come to be identified so quickly with the mask (προσωπείον) which was used in the theater? 21 What connection does the actor's mask have with the human person? Is it simply that the mask in some way recalls the real person? Or is there perhaps some deeper consideration linking these two uses of the term "person"?

The theater, and tragedy in particular, is the setting in which

12The original concept and root of the term *logos*, as analyzed by M. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1955), p. 96 ff., is characteristic. The growth of *logos* into a cosmological principle, as may be observed in a developed form in Stoicism, is a natural consequence of the original concept of *logos* with "being" (e.g. in Heraclitus) and of the whole outlook of ancient Hellenism.


14A concept of the person as one of reference or relationship could perhaps reasonably be put forward as the original concept of the term on the basis of some kind of etymological analysis of it. But there is no evidence for such a concept in the ancient Greek texts. Consequently an attempt has been made to trace the etymology of the word on the basis of a strict anatomical analysis: e.g. the part defined by the eyes (τὸ πρόσωπος τος ὁμώμος). See H. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* VI, col. 2048.

15This usage of the term *πρόσωπον* is already found in Aristotle (τὰ τραγικὰ πρόσωπα, *Problems* XXXI, 7, 958a, 17). See also Plato *Comics*, fragm. 142. This leads to the use of the term not only for the physical mask but also for the theatrical role of the actor: "there being three leading πρόσωπα as in the comedies—the slanderer, the one slandered, and the one who hears the slander" (Lucian, *Slander* 6). Thus the term πρόσωπον comes to be identified fully with the term *προσωπείον* as a synonym. (See Josephus, *Jewish War* IV, 156; cf. Theophrastus, *Characters* VI, 3).

16For this interpretation see, for example, S. Schlossmann, *Persoon und Profepon im Recht und im christlichen Dogma* (1906), p. 37.
the conflicts between human freedom and the rational necessity of a unified and harmonious world, as they were understood by the ancient Greeks, are worked out in dramatic form. It is precisely in the theater that man strives to become a "person," to rise up against this harmonious unity which oppresses him as rational and moral necessity. But it is there that he fights with the gods and with his fate; it is there that he sins and transgresses; but it is there too that he constantly learns—according to the stereotyped principle of ancient tragedy—that he can neither escape fate ultimately, nor continue to show hubris to the gods without punishment, nor sin without suffering the consequences. Thus he confirms tragically the view, expressed so typically in Plato’s Laws, that the world does not exist for the sake of man, but man exists for its sake. His freedom is circumscribed, or rather there is no freedom for him—since a "circumscribed freedom" would be a contradiction in terms—and consequently his "person" is nothing but a "mask," something which has no bearing on his true "hypostasis," something without ontological content.

This is one aspect, one concept, of the term "protopon." But together with this there is also another, namely, that as a result of this mask—the actor, but properly also the spectator—has acquired a certain taste of freedom, a certain

18Tragedy in art is poetically "man’s answer to this universe that crushes him so pitifully. Destroy scorns upon him; his answer is to sit down and paint his as he stands." P. L. Lucas, Tragedy (1957), p. 76.

19A profounder expression than all partial generation is for the sake of the whole in order that for the life of the whole blissful existence may be secured. For it (the whole) is not brought into being for the sake, but these are for its sake" (Plato, Laws, X, 505 e-4). This contrasts sharply with the Biblical and Pantheistic view that man was created after the world was brought into being and indeed for his sake. There is an intrinsic relationship between, on the one hand, the principle that it is wholesome and salutary that ultimately matter is ontologically (the partial exists for the sake of the total—hence man exists for the sake of the common), and on the other hand the necessity which is built into ontology by Greek thought through the ideas of "logos" and nature, to which we have been referring here. "No particular thing, even to the least, can be otherwise than according to common nature and reason (logos)" writes Plutarch in quoting and commenting on the Stoic Chrysippus (J. de Armin, op. cit II, 357). It is noteworthy that Plutarch himself understands this as meaning "fate" (Idem). Nature, logos and fate are intertwined; by being based on these ontological principles existence is inevitably determined by necessity.
concrete individuality, but in its sociological and later in its legal usage it never ceased to express the ancient Greek πρόσωπον or προσωπεύων in its theatrical sense of role. Person is the role which one plays in one's social or legal relationships, the moral or "legal" person which either collectively or individually has nothing to do with the ontology of the person.

This understanding of the person is tied to the concept of man in Roman antiquity in a very basic way. Roman thought, which is fundamentally organisational and social, concerns itself not with ontology, with the being of man, but with his relationship with others, with his ability to form associations, to enter into contracts, to set up collegia, to organize human life in a state. Thus personhood, once again, does not have any ontological content. It is an adjunct to concrete ontological being, something which permits—without this disturbing the Roman mentality in the least—the same man to enact more than one persona, to play many different roles. In this situation freedom and the unexpected are again alien to the concept of the persona. Freedom is exercised by the group, or ultimately by the state, the organized totality of human relationships, which also defines its boundaries. But exactly as we observed in the case of the Greek προσωπεύων, the Roman persona expresses simultaneously both the denial and the affirmation of human freedom; as persona it subordinates his freedom to the organized whole, but also assures himself simultaneously of a means, a possibility, of tasting freedom, or affirming his identity. This identity—that vital component of the concept of man, that which makes one man differ from another, which makes him he who is—is guaranteed and provided by the state or by some organised whole. Even when the authority of the state is called into question and man rebels against it, even then, if he succeeds in escaping punishment for this haeretic of his, he will look to some

31) The source of concrete individuality is first found in Cicero (De amicis, 1, 6; Ad Att. VII, 12; De or. II, 145 etc.). This author, however, uses persona also in the sense of role (theatrical, social etc.).

32) For further, after the 2nd century A.D. See R. Schramm, op. cit., p. 119 ff. For the collective sense of persona see already Cicero: Off. I, 124: "et... primum manus magistratus intelligere se genere humanum civitatis."
2. The concept of the person with its absolute and ontological content was born historically from the endeavor of the Church to give ontological expression to its faith in the Triune God. This faith was primitive—it goes back to the very first years of the Church—and was handed down from generation to generation with the practice of baptism. The constant and profound contact, however, between Christianity and Greek philosophy sharpened the problem of the interpretation of this faith in a manner which would satisfy Greek thought. What does it mean to say that God is Father, Son and Spirit without ceasing to be one God? The history of the disputes which broke out on this great theme do not interest us here in detail. What is significant is that this history includes a philosophical landmark, a revolution in Greek philosophy. This revolution is expressed historically through an identification: the identification of the “hypostasis” with the “person.” How was this unforeseen revolution accomplished? What kind of consequences did it have for the concept of the person? These are questions that must occupy us briefly.

The term “hypostasis” never had any connection with the term “person” in Greek philosophy. As we have seen, “person” would have been regarded by the Greeks as expressive of anything but the essence of man, whereas the term “hypostasis” was already closely linked with the term “substance” and finally was identified fully with it. It is precisely this identification of substance with hypostasis, diffused so widely in the Greek thought of the first centuries, that created all the difficulties and disputes concerning the Holy Trinity in the fourth century. It is relevant to our theme that the term “person” has already been used in the West from the time of Tertullian for the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (una substantia, tres personae). And it did not meet with acceptance in the East precisely because the term “person” lacked an ontological content and led towards Sabellianism (the manifestation of God in three “roles”). That is how foreign the term “person” was to ontology! Instead of this term the East was already in the time of Origen using the term “hypostases” for the Holy Trinity. But this term also had its dangers. It could have been interpreted in a Neoplatonic fashion—Plotinus already speaks of the hypostases of the divine—with all the dangers which a union of God and the world in the Neoplatonic manner would have held for Christian theology. Moreover, it could have been interpreted tritheistically if the then current identification of hypostasis with substance had been taken into consideration. A mode of expression thus had to be found which would give theology the ability to avoid Sabellianism, that is, which would give an ontological content to each person of the Holy Trinity, without endangering its biblical principles: monotheism and the absolute ontological independence of God in relation to the world. From this endeavour came the identification of hypostasis with person.

The historical aspect of this development is very obscure and does not interest us here directly. I believe myself that

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24 See Tertullian, Against Praxeas 11-12 (PL 2, 1670D).
25 See for example, St Basil, Ep. 255, 6: “those who say that ousia and hypostasis are the same (note the radical departure from the philosophical terminology of St Athanasius and his time—that note 23 above) are compelled to confess only different prosopa and by avoiding the use of the terms treis hypostates do not succeed in escaping the Sabellian evil.” We are clearly confronted with a change in terminology dictated by the concern, prompted by Sabellianism, to give to prosopa full ontological content.
26 Origen, Comm. on St John’s Gospel, II, 6 (PG 14, 12B).
27 Plotinus (Enn V, 1) defines the “primary hypostases” as the supreme good, intelligence and the world soul. This is yet another case of ontological monism (cf. above), linking God with the world in a single unity, which endangers the Biblical understanding of the relation between God and the world. For the contribution of Plotinus to the philosophical use of the term “hypostasis,” see K. Oehler, Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter (1969), p. 23 ff.
28 See note 23 above.
29 A detailed study of this problem is badly needed. On the notion of “Substance” see the work of C. Stead, Divine Substance (1977). A rather general but very careful discussion of the developments in philosophical terminology
the key to this development must be sought in the western Greek writer, Hippolytus, who is perhaps the first to use the Greek term ἐξ οὐδενος—in imitation of Tertullian—in trinitarian theology. It would be of historical interest to investigate the nuances of the term "hypostasis" which occasioned its divergence from the term "substance." However, none of this can explain the momentous step of the identification of "hypostasis" with the term "person," without an examination with regard to this subject is to be found in the now old but still very useful work of C. C. J. Webb, God and Personality (1918).

The history of the terms "substance" (ὕστασις) and "hypostasis" is extremely complicated. In particular there exists the opinion with regard to the use of these terms in the trinitarian theology of the Greek Fathers that the distinction between substance and hypostasis had been made possible on the basis of the logical distinction of Aristotle between "primary substance" and "secondary substance" (Categories 5, 2a, 11-16; Metaphysics VII, 11, 1037a 5). According to this opinion the Cappadocian Fathers in their trinitarian theology identified the term "hypostasis" with the "primary substance" (the individual and concrete), and the term "substance" with the "secondary substance" (the general and common) of Aristotle. See, for example, G. L. Bredeck, God in Patristic Thought (1956), p. 245 ff., J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds (1950), p. 243 ff. and K. Oehler, op. cit. p. 23 ff. But this opinion appears very debatable upon a close study of the Greek Fathers (e.g. for Athanasius see note 23 above), from whose thought the Aristotelian distinction between primary and secondary substance seems to be entirely absent. It is also doubtful whether this distinction represents even Aristotle's thought correctly, as an outstanding specialist observes. See D.M. Mackinnon, "Substance in Christology—A Cross-bench View," Christ, Faith and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology, ed. S.W. Sykes and J.P. Clayton (1972), pp. 279-300. A relationship between the development of these terms and the history of the philosophical sense of the term ὑποστάσεως in the period after Aristotle appears probable. Because of the double meaning which Aristotle seems to accord this term (ὑποστάσεως is [a] master and [b] concrete and independent being; see Metaphysics VII, 3, 1029a), in the period after Aristotle the term "hypostasis" displaces the term ὑποστάσεως because of the materialistic sense of the latter and itself assumes the meaning of concrete and independent being. Thus in the first centuries of the Christian era the term "hypostasis" gradually acquired the meaning of real and concrete being in opposition to that which is merely apparent and evanescent. This evolution seems to have been brought about mainly by the Stoics (cf. E. Zeller, Philosophie der Griechen III [1881], p. 644 ff.). Cf. on this C.C.J. Webb, op. cit. Granted that the influence of Stoicism in the Philosophy of the patristic period is strong, it is probable that the use of the term "hypostasis" for the expression of concrete (as opposed to general) being should have had the ground prepared for it in this way. It remains a fact, however, that the theological thought of the Cappadocians brought about a radical change in the philosophical use of these terms.

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of the broader philosophical changes which were effected in the patristic age in relation to Greek thought.

The deeper significance of the identification of "hypostasis" with "person"—a significance the revolutionary nature of which in the development of Greek thought seems to have escaped the attention of the history of philosophy—consists in a twofold thesis: (a) The person is no longer an adjunct to a being, a category which we add to a concrete entity once we have first verified its ontological hypostasis. It is itself the hypostasis of the being. (b) Entities no longer trace their being to being itself—that is, being is not an absolute category in itself—but to the person, to precisely that which constitutes being, that is, enables entities to be entities. In other words from an adjunct to a being (a kind of mask) the person becomes the being itself and is simultaneously—a most significant point—the constitutive element (the "principle" or "cause") of beings.

For Greek thought to have arrived at such a radical reappraisal of its ontology, two basic "leavenings" had previously taken place in the field of patristic theology. The first concerns that which I have just named the ontological absoluteness of cosmological necessity. In accordance with biblical theology, of which the Fathers cannot have been ignorant, the world is not ontologically necessary. Although the ancient Greeks assumed with regard to the ontology of the world that it was something necessary of itself, the biblical doctrine of creation ex nihilo obliged the Fathers to introduce a radical difference into ontology, to trace the world back to an ontology outside the world, that is, to God. Thus they broke the circle of the closed ontology of the Greeks, and at the same time did something much more important, which is of direct interest to us here: they made being—the existence of the world, existent things—a product of freedom: That is how the first "leavening" was accomplished: with the doctrine of creation ex nihilo the "principle" of Greek ontology, the ὑπόκεισθαι of the world, was transposed to the sphere of creation,

freedom. That which exists was liberated from itself; the being of the world became free from necessity.

But there was also a second "leavening" which led to an even further reappraisal of Greek ontology. Not only was the being of the world traced back to personal freedom, but the being of God Himself was identified with the person. This "leavening" was effected through the disputes on the Holy Trinity, mainly through the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers and above all by St Basil. This theology does not concern us here except for one basic point, which unfortunately is usually overlooked. As is known, the final formulation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity speaks of "one substance, three persons" (μία οὐσία, τρία πρόσωπα). One would therefore have said that the unity of God, the "ontology" of God, consists in the substance of God. This would bring us back to the ancient Greek ontology: God first is God (His substance or nature, His being), and then exists as Trinity, that is, as persons. This interpretation in fact prevailed in Western theology and unfortunately entered into modern Orthodox dogmatics with the arrangement in the dogmatic handbooks of the headings "On the One God" followed by "On the Trinity." The significance of this interpretation lies in the assumption that the ontological "principle" of God is not found in the person but in the substance, that is, in the "being" itself of God. Indeed the idea took shape in Western theology that that which constitutes the unity of God is the one divine substance, the one divinity; this is, as it were, the ontological "principle" of God.

But this interpretation represents a misinterpretation of the Patristic theology of the Trinity. Among the Greek Fathers the unity of God, the one God, and the ontological "principle" or "cause" of the being and life of God does not consist in the one substance of God but in the hypostasis, that is, the person of the Father. The one God is not the one sub-

88The problem of the Filioque is linked directly with this theme. The West, as the study of the trinitarian theology of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas witnesses, had no difficulty in maintaining the Filioque precisely because it identified the being, the ontological principle, of God with His substance rather than with the person of the Father.

89See St Basil, Letter 38, 2, FG 32:325 ff. Cf. G.L. Prestige, op. cit., pp. 245 and 279. This important thesis is used later by St Maximus the Confessor, who distinguishes between λόγος φόρους and τρία, οπτές, and stresses that the various λόγοι never exist in a "naked" state but as "modes of existence" (see, for example, Ambigua 42, FG 91:1341 D ff.). Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius 1, PG 45:357.

86The basic ontological position of the theology of the Greek Fathers might
3. What therefore is important in trinitarian theology is that God “exists” on account of a person, the Father, and not on account of a substance. Because its significance is not simply theoretical or academic but profoundly existential, let us attempt a brief analysis of it.

(a) The ultimate challenge to the freedom of the person is the “necessity” of existence. The moral sense of freedom, to which Western philosophy has accustomed us, is satisfied with the simple power of choice: a man is free who is able to choose one of the possibilities set before him. But this “freedom” is already bound by the “necessity” of these possibilities, and the ultimate and most binding of these “necessities” for man is his existence itself: how can a man be considered absolutely free when he cannot do other than accept his existence? Dostoevsky poses this great problem in a startling manner in *The Possessed*. There Kirilov says: “Every man who desires to attain total freedom must be bold enough to put an end to his life... This is the ultimate limit of freedom; this is all; there is nothing beyond this. Whoever dares to commit suicide becomes God. Everyone can do this and so bring the existence of God to an end, and then there will be absolutely nothing...”

These words of Kirilov express the most tragic side of the person’s quest: the transcendence of the “necessity” of existence, the possibility of affirming his existence not as a recognition of a given fact, of a “reality,” but as the product of his free consent and self-affirmation. This and nothing less than this is what man seeks in being a person. But in man’s be set out briefly as follows. No substance or nature exists without person or hypostasis or mode of existence. No person exists without substance or nature, but the ontological “principle” or “cause” of being—i.e., that which makes a thing to exist—is not the substance or nature but the person or hypostasis. Therefore being is traced back not to substance but to person.

(b) But what is this freedom of self-affirmation of existence? How is it expressed? How is it realized? The disturbing words which Dostoevsky puts in Kirilov’s mouth sound an alarm: if the only way of exercising absolute ontological freedom for man is suicide, then freedom leads to nihilism; the person is shown to be the negator of ontology. This existential alarm, the fear of nihilism, is so serious that in the last analysis it must itself be regarded as responsible for the relativization of the concept of the person. Indeed every claim to absolute freedom is always countered by the argument that its realization would lead to chaos. The concept of “law,” as much in its ethical as in its juridical sense, always presupposes some limitation to personal freedom in the name of “order” and “harmony,” the need for symbiosis with others. Thus “the other” becomes a threat to the person, its “hell” and its “fall,” to recall the words of Sartre. Once again the concept of the person leads human existence to an impasse: humanism proves unable to affirm personhood.

At this point theology (literally, “speech or thought about God”) unavoidably intervenes yet again if the concept of the person is to receive a positive content. But, to repeat once more, only a correct (δόξα) theology, as formulated by the Greek Fathers, can give the answer. (Orthodoxy here is not an angelo’s words: when shall I finish with this marble to get on with my works?). What is apparent in all this is the tendency of the person to liberate itself in its self-affirmation from the “necessity” of existence, that is, to become God. The vital point is that this tendency is linked intrinsically with the concept of the person.
optimal extra for human existence.) How does God affirm his ontological freedom?

I have said earlier that man cannot exercise his ontological freedom absolutely, because he is tied by his createdness, by the “necessity” of his existence, whereas God as “uncreated” does not experience this limitation. If the ground of God’s ontological freedom lies simply in His “nature,” that is, in His being uncreated by nature, whereas we are by nature created, then there is no hope, no possibility, that man might become a person in the sense that God is one, that is, an authentic person. But no, the ground of God’s ontological freedom lies not in His nature but in His personal existence, that is, in the “mode of existence” by which He subsists as divine nature.⁴⁹ And it is precisely this that gives man, in spite of his different nature, his hope of becoming an authentic person.

The manner in which God exercises His ontological freedom, that precisely which makes Him ontologically free, is the way in which He transcends and abolishes the ontological necessity of the substance by being God as Father, that is, as He who “begets” the Son and “brings forth” the Spirit. This ecstatic character of God, the fact that His being is identical with an act of communion, ensures the transcendence of the ontological necessity which His substance would have demanded—if the substance were the primary ontological predicate of God—and replaces this necessity with the free self- affirmation of divine existence. For this communion is a product of freedom as a result not of the substance of God but of a person, the Father—observe why this doctrinal detail is so important—who is Trinity not because the divine nature is ecstatic but because the Father as a person freely wills this communion.⁵₀

⁴⁹God’s nature does not exist “naked” i.e. without hypostases (cf. note 36 above). It is this that makes it free. “Naked” nature or ousia by indicating being qua being points not to freedom but to ontological necessity.

⁵₀The concept of eb姿态 as an ontological category is found in the mystical Greek Fathers (particularly in the so-called Arecapagities writings and in Maximus the Confessor) and also totally independently in the philosophy of M. Heidegger. Chr. Yannaras, in his important work, Τὸ Ἀγαθολογικόν Περιέχομενον τῆς Θεολογίκης Ἐννοιας τοῦ Προσώπου (1970), attempts a use of Heidegger for the philosophical justification and understanding of Greek patristic theology. It is generally acknowledged that Heidegger represents an important stage in the progress of Western thought, especially in the liberation of ontology from an absolute “ontism” and from philosophical rationalism, though not in fact from the concept of consciousness and of the subject. (See the critique of Heidegger by the inimitable contemporary philosopher, E. Levinas, in his brilliant work, Totalité et Infinité, Essai sur l’Entéviorité [1971], p. 15: “Sein und Zeit n’a peut-être soutenu qu’une seule thèse: l’être est inépable de la compréhension de l’être [que se déroule comme temps], l’être est déjà appel à la subjectivité.”) However, the use of Heidegger in the interpretation of patristic theology runs into fundamental difficulties. As pointers to these one would have to pose among others the following questions: (a) Is it possible to conceive of an ontology outside one in Heidegger, or of an ontology within time predicated of God in the Greek Fathers? (b) Is it possible for death to be an ontological concept in the Fathers, who regard it as the last enemy of being? (c) Is it possible to regard the concept of truth (Αλήθεια), in the sense of a manifestation of or outgrowth from oblivion (Αφάντητον), as an inevitable attribute of the ontology predicated of God? These questions prove to be crucial when one takes into consideration that those contemporary Western theologians who have attempted to utilize Heidegger in their theology have not succeeded in avoiding either the introduction of the concept of time in God (K. Barth), or the view that the concept of revelation is an essential ontological category of the being of God, so that the “economy,” the mode of God’s revelation to man, constitutes the basis, the starting-point and the ontological structure of the theology of the Holy Trinity (K. Rahner). Yannaras, in a new edition of his book (under the title, Τὸ Προσώπο καὶ ο Ερω [1976], p. 60 ff.), attempts to advance beyond Heidegger by identifying ecstasy not simply with the mode by which whatever exists appears to emerge on the horizon of time, but “with the experience of personal catholicity, that is, of ecstatic, erotic self-transcendence.” The difficulty, however, in utilizing Heidegger in the interpretation of patristic theology remains insurmountable when one also takes into consideration, apart from the three crucial questions which I have just posed, the general problem of the relationship between philosophy and theology as it manifests itself in the case of Heidegger. With our insistence here on the thesis that God is ecstatic, that is, that He exists on account of being the Father, we deny simultaneously not only the ontological priority of the substance over the person, but also a “panoramic” ontology (the term belongs to the critique of Heidegger by E. Levinas, op. cit. p. 270 ff.; cf. p. 16 ff.), which would view the Trinity as a parallel co-existence of the three persons, a kind of multiple manifestation of the being of God. The insistence on the “monarchy” of the Father by Greek patristic thought excludes completely a differentiation of the persons thus justified ontologically by the “horizon” of their manifestation. In God such a horizon is non-existent and inconceivable, and consequently ontology as manifestation is (perhaps?) possible for the “economic” theology which is accomplished “in time” but not also for an ontology of the trinitarian existence of God who is outside time. This means that a theological ontology which is based on the concept of the monarchy of the Father and excludes equally the priority of the substance over the person and the parallel co-existence of the three persons of the Trinity in a common “horizon” of manifestation, liberates ontology from nosology.
It thus becomes evident that the only exercise of freedom in an ontological manner is love. The expression “God is love” (1 John 4:16) signifies that God “subsists” as Trinity, that is, as person and not as substance. Love is not an emanation or “property” of the substance of God—this detail is significant in the light of what I have said so far—but is constitutive of His substance, i.e., it is that which makes God what He is, the one God. Thus love ceases to be a qualifying—i.e., secondary—property of being and becomes the supreme ontological predicate. Love as God’s mode of existence “hypostatizes” God, constitutes His being. Therefore, as a result of love, the ontology of God is not subject to the necessity of the substance. Love is identified with ontological freedom.

All this means that personhood creates for human existence the following dilemma: either freedom as love, or freedom as negation. The choice of the latter certainly constitutes an expression of personhood—only the person can seek negative freedom—but it is a negation nevertheless of its ontological content. For nothingness has no ontological content when the person is seen in the light of trinitarian theology.

(c) The person does not simply want to be, to exist “eternally,” that is, to possess an ontological content. It wants something more: to exist as a concrete, unique and unrepeatable entity. The person cannot be understood simply as the “ecstasy” of the substance; it must necessarily be regarded

This is not the case in Heidegger, but perhaps neither in any philosophical ontology which is always tied to gnosology. Consequently, a mere general problem comes into being: is a philosophical justification of patristic theology possible? Or does patristic theology in its essence constitute the converse, that is, a theological justification of philosophy, a proclamation that philosophy and the world can acquire a true ontology only if they accept the presupposition of God as the only existent whose being is truly identified with the person and with freedom?

However, it must again be added at once that this love which “hypostatizes” God is not something “common” to the three persons, something, that is, like the common nature of God, but is identified with the Father. When we say that “God is love,” we refer to the Father, that is, to that person which “hypostatizes” God, which makes God to be three persons. A careful study of 1 John reveals that there too the phrase “God is love” refers to the Father: the word “God” is identified with Him who “sent His only-begotten Son,” etc. (1 John 4:7-17).

Also as a hypostasis of the substance, as a concrete and unique identity.

Uniqueness is something absolute for the person. The person is so absolute in its uniqueness that it does not permit itself to be regarded as an arithmetical concept, to be set alongside other beings, to be combined with other objects, or to be used as a means, even for the most sacred goal. The goal is the person itself; personhood is the total fulfillment of being, the catholic expression of its nature. This tendency of the person, like freedom, is the “two-edged sword” of existence. For applied to man it leads to the denial of others, to egocentrism, to the total destruction of social life. As in the case of freedom, so with the unique and hypostatic nature of the person, a relativisation appears to be indispensable if chaos is to be avoided. Thus uniqueness is relativised in social life, and man becomes—in a greater or lesser degree but nevertheless assuredly so—a useful “object,” a “combination,” a persona. But it is precisely this which constitutes the tragic aspect of the person. Diffused today throughout all forms of social life is the intense search for personal identity. The person is not relativized without provoking a reaction.

Man’s inability to ensure his absolute identity in the world culminates in death. Death becomes tragic and unacceptable only when man is regarded as person, and above all as hypostasis and unique identity. As a biological event death is something natural and welcome, because only in this way is life perpetuated. In the natural world “personal” identity is ensured by childbirth, by the “survival” of the parents in the faces of their children. But this is not a survival of persons; it is a survival of the species, which may be observed equally in the whole animal kingdom and is directed by the harsh laws of natural selection. The survival of the person as a unique identity is not ensured by marriage and childbirth, which in the last analysis are shown only to supply matter for death. For if through all this being survives finally as the “substance” or as the “species” of a man, what does not survive is the concrete and unique identity, the person.

The survival of the uniqueness, the hypostasis, of a person cannot be ensured by any property of the substance or nature.
The attempt of ancient Greek philosophy—and also under its influence of various forms of Christianity—to place the survival of man on a natural or "substantial" basis, such as the immortality of the soul, does not lead to a personal survival. If the soul is immortal by nature, then personal survival is necessary—and we return again to the ancient classical ontology. Even God is then immortal through His nature, that is, of necessity, and man is related substantially—necessarily—to God. All this, which was so natural for the ancient Greek, who had no full concept of the person, creates enormous existential problems when applied to the person in its Christian sense. For an inescapable immortality is not conceivable for the free God and constitutes a challenge to the person. How then is the absolute and unique identity of the person ensured, seeing that the substance cannot do it?

Humanistic existential philosophy tends to give the answer through an ontologizing of death, through an indissoluble union of being with non-being, of existence with death. This is not the place for a critique of this "ontology." Such a philosophy is absolutely consequent upon itself because it refuses from the beginning, exactly like ancient philosophy, to discuss whether the hypothesis of an ontology outside this world is tenable. It is those theologians who accept this "ontology" of death while speaking at the same time about God that are inconsistent. For God constitutes the affirmation of being as life "eternal life," and is not "God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32). And this means that theology, unlike philosophy, teaches an ontology which transcends the tragic aspect of death without in the least accepting death as an ontological reality, death being the "last enemy" of existence (I Cor. 15:26).

The survival of a personal identity is possible for God not on account of His substance but on account of His trinitarian existence. If God the Father is immortal, it is because His unique and unrepeatable identity as Father is distinguished eternally from that of the Son and of the Spirit, who call Him "Father." If the Son is immortal, He owes this primarily not to His substance but to His being the "only-begotten" (note here the concept of uniqueness) and His being the one in whom the Father is "well pleased." Likewise the Spirit is "life-giving" because He is "communion" (II Cor. 13:14). The life of God is eternal because it is personal, that is to say, it is realized as an expression of free communion, as love. Life and love are identified in the person: the person does not die only because it is loved and loves; outside the communion of love the person loses its uniqueness and becomes a being like other beings, a "thing" without absolute "identity" and "name," without a face. Death for a person means ceasing to love and to be loved, ceasing to be unique and unrepeatable, whereas life for the person means the survival of the uniqueness of its hypostasis, which is affirmed and maintained by love.

II. From Biological to Ecclesial Existence:
The Ecclesiological Significance of the Person

The eternal survival of the person as a unique, unrepeatable and free "hypostasis," as loving and being loved, constitutes the quintessence of salvation, the bringing of the Gospel to man. In the language of the Fathers this is called "divinization"

The word "only-begotten" in the Johannine writings means not only the unique mode of generation of the Son by the Father, but also "Him who is beloved in a unique manner" (S. Agoutides, Hypomnima eis tis A', B' kai C' Epistolous tou Aπου: tolon Ioanou, 1975; p. 155). It is precisely this identification of ontology with love in God that signifies that eternity and immortality do not belong to His "nature" but to the personal relationship which is initiated by the Father.

Anyone interested in the ontology of love should take the trouble to read The Little Prince by Antoine de Sc-Espéry. In its simplicity it is a deeply theological book.

The mystery of the person as an ontological "principle" and "cause" consists in the fact that love can endow something with uniqueness, with absolute identity and name. It is precisely this which is revealed by the term "eternal life," which for this very reason signifies that the person is able to raise up to personal value and life even inanimate objects, provided that they constitute an organic part of a loving relationship (for example, all creation can be saved thanks to its "recapitulation" in the loving relationship between the Father and the Son). Conversely, condemnation to eternal death is nothing other than a person's being allowed to decline into a "thing," into absolute anonymity, to hear the terrifying words, "I do not know you" (Matt. 25:12). (It is precisely against this that the Church reacts when it commemorates the "names" at the eucharist.)
(thesis), which means participation not in the nature or substance of God, but in His personal existence. The goal of salvation is that the personal life which is realized in God should also be realized on the level of human existence. Consequently salvation is identified with the realization of personhood in man. But is not "man" a person even without salvation? Is it not sufficient for him to be a "man" in order to be also a person?

Patristic theology considers the person to be an "image and likeness of God." It is not satisfied with a humanistic interpretation of the person. From this standpoint patristic theology sees man in the light of two "modes of existence." One may be called the hypostasis of biological existence, the other the hypostasis of ecclesial existence. A brief analysis and comparison of these two modes of human existence will explain why the concept of the person is inextricably bound up with theology.

1. The hypostasis of biological existence is "constituted" by a man's conception and birth. Every man who comes into the world bears his "hypostasis," which is not entirely unrelated to love: he is the product of a communion between two people. Erotic love, even when expressed coldly without emotional involvement, is an astounding mystery of existence, concealing in the deepest act of communion a tendency towards an ecstatic transcendence of individuality through creation. But this biological constitution of man's hypostasis suffers radically from two "passions" which destroy precisely that towards which the human hypostasis is thrusting, namely the person. The first "passion" is what we may call "ontological necessity." Constitutionally the hypostasis is inevitably tied to the natural instinct, to an impulse which is "necessary" and not subject to the control of freedom. Thus the person as a being "subsists" not as freedom but as necessity. As a result it does not have the power to affirm its hypostasis with absolute ontological freedom as I have described it above: if it attempts to raise freedom to the level of its ontological absoluteness, it will be confronted with the dilemma of nihilism. 46

The second "passion" is a natural consequence of the first. At its earliest stage it may be called the "passion" of individualism, of the separation of the hypostases. Finally, however, it is identified with the last and greatest passion of man, with the disintegration of the hypostasis, which is death. The biological constitution of the human hypostasis, fundamentally tied as it is to the necessity of its "nature," ends in the perpetuation of this "nature" through the creation of bodies, that is, of hypostatic unities which affirm their identity as separation from other unities or "hypostases." The body, which is born as a biological hypostasis, believes like the fortress of an ego, like a new "mask" which hinders the hypostasis from becoming a person, that is, from affirming itself as love and freedom. The body tends towards the person but leads finally to the individual. The result of this situation is that for a man to take the affirmation of his hypostasis further he has no need of a relationship (an ontological relationship, not simply a psychological one) with his parents. On the contrary, the breaking of this relationship constitutes the precondition of his self-affirmation.

Death is the "natural" development of the biological hypostasis, the cessation of "space" and "time" to other individual hypostases, the sealing of hypostasis as individuality. At the same time it is also the definitely tragic "self-negation" of its own hypostasis (dissolution and annihilation of the body and of individuality), which in its attempt to affirm itself as hypostasis discovers that finally its "nature" has led it along a false path towards death. This "failure" of nature, as it is expressed in the biological identity of man, reveals two things simultaneously. The first is that, contrary to the "assurance" of its biological drive, for the "hypostasis" to survive it must express itself as "ecstasy"—not sequentially but simultaneously, not first as being and then as person.

46 Cf. the reference made earlier to Duns Scotus. The youth in adolescence, in the very period in which he becomes conscious of his freedom, asks: "and who controlled me when I was brought into the world?" Unconsciously he articulates the great theme of the ontological necessity which exists in the biological hypostasis.
The second is that this “failure” of the survival of the biological hypostasis is not the result of some acquired fault of a moral kind (a transgression), but of the very constitutional make-up of the hypostasis, that is, of the biological act of the perpetuation of the species.⁴⁶

All this means that man as a biological hypostasis is intrinsically a tragic figure. He is born as a result of an ecstatic fact—erotic love—but this fact is interwoven with a natural necessity and therefore lacks ontological freedom. He is born as a hypostatic fact, as a body, but this fact is interwoven with individuality and with death. By the same erotic act with which he tries to attain ecstasy he is led to individualism. His body is the tragic instrument which leads to communion with others, stretching out a hand, creating language, speech, conversation, art, kissing. But at the same time it is the “mask” of hypocrisy, the fortress of individualism, the vehicle of the final separation, death. “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24). The tragedy of the biological constitution of man’s hypostasis does not lie in his not being a person because of it; it lies in his tending towards becoming a person through it and failing. Sin is precisely this failure. And sin is the tragic prerogative of the person alone.

Consequently, for salvation to become possible, for the unsuccessful hypostasis to succeed, it is necessary that eros and the body, as expression of ecstasy and of the hypostasis of the person, should cease to be the bearers of death. Two things therefore appear to be indispensable: (a) that the two basic components of the biological hypostasis, eros and the body, should not be destroyed (a flight from these elements would entail for man a privation of those means by which he expresses himself equally as ecstasy and as hypostasis, that is, as person⁴⁷); and (b) that the constitutional make-up of the hypostasis should be changed—not that a moral change or improvement should be found but a kind of new birth for man. This means that although neither eros nor the body are abandoned, they nevertheless change their activity, adapt themselves to the new “mode of existence” of the hypostasis, reject from this activity of theirs which is constitutive of the human hypostasis whatever creates the tragic element in man, and retain whatever makes the person to be love, freedom and life. This is precisely what constitutes that which I have called the “hypostasis of ecclesial existence.”

2. The hypostasis of ecclesial existence is constituted by the new birth of man, by baptism. Baptism as new birth is precisely an act constitutive of hypostasis. As the conception and birth of a man constitute his biological hypostasis, so baptism leads to a new mode of existence, to a regeneration (1 Pet. 1:3, 23), and consequently to a new “hypostasis.” What is the basis of this new hypostasis? How is man hypostasized by baptism and what does he become?

We have seen that the fundamental problem of the biological hypostasis of man lies in the fact that the ecstatic activity which leads to his birth is bound up with the “passion” of ontological necessity, in the fact that ontologically nature precedes the person and dictates its laws (by “instinct”), thus destroying freedom at its ontological base. This “passion” is closely connected with createdness, that is, with the fact that

⁴⁶St. Maximus the Confessor, following Gregory of Nyssa (On the Creation of Man 16-18, PG 44:177 ff.), comes to the very root of the problem of human existence when he regards the biological mode of procreation as a result of the Fall (Ambigua 41, 42, PG 81:1309A, 1340C ff.; cf. To Thaddeus: On Various Questions 61, PG 90:656). Those who attribute this view of Maximus to a monastic or ascetic bias ignore the fact that he is not an ordinary thinker but perhaps one of the greatest and most creative geniuses in history, and that it is therefore impossible for him to say something without this being an organic and integral part of his whole thought. Maximus’s position on this question is inspired by Matt. 22:30; that is, by the basic presupposition that the true “being” of man is found only in his eschatological state (see below). Victory over death, the survival of the person, is incomprehensible without a change in the constitutive mode of the human hypostasis, without a transcendence of the biological hypostasis. This does not imply Manichaeanism: the biological and the eschatological hypostases are not mutually exclusive (see below at note 61).

⁴⁷Soteriologies which are not inspired by genuine patristic theology have created the following dilemma: either hypostasis without ecstasy (a kind of individualist pietism), or ecstasy without hypostasis (a form of mystical escape from the body, an ecstasy of the type of the Hellenistic mysteries). The key to the soteriological problem lies in the safeguarding of both the ecstatic and the hypostatic dimensions of the person equally, without the “passions” of ontological necessity, individualism and death.
man as a person confronts, as we have already seen, the necessity of existence. Consequently it is impossible for created existence to escape ontological necessity in the constitution of the biological hypostasis: without "necessary" natural laws, that is, without ontological necessity, the biological hypostasis of man cannot exist.\footnote{The artificial conception of a human being, if it is ever achieved, will by no means imply freedom as regards the constitutive mode of the human hypostasis. Instead it will imply the henceforth unfore replacement of nature and its laws with the laws of human reason.}

Consequently, if, in order to avoid the consequences of the tragic aspect of man which we have discussed, the person as absolute ontological freedom needs a hypostatic constitution without ontological necessity, his hypostasis must inevitably be rooted, or constituted, in an ontological reality which does not suffer from createdness. This is the meaning of the phrase in Scripture about being born "anew" or "from above." (John 3:3,7). It is precisely this possibility that patristic Christology strives to proclaim, to announce to man as the good news.

Christology, in the definitive form which the Fathers gave it, looks towards a single goal of purely existential significance, the goal of giving man the assurance that the quest for the person, not as a "mask" or as a "tragic figure," but as the authentic person, is not mythical or nostalgic but is a historical reality. Jesus Christ does not justify the title of Savior because he brings the world a beautiful revelation, a sublime teaching about the person, but because He realizes in history the very reality of the person and makes it the basis and "hypostasis" of the person for every man. Patristic theology therefore regarded the following points as the indispensable elements of Christology:

a) The identification of the person of Christ with the hypostasis of the Son of the Holy Trinity. The long dispute with Nestorianism was not an exercise of academic theology but a hard struggle with the existential question: how is it possible for Christ to be the Savior of man if His hypostasis is what I have called here the "hypostasis of biological existence"? If Christ as a person "subsists" not in freedom but according to the necessity of nature, then He too finally, that

is, definitively, fails to escape the tragic aspect of the human person.\footnote{I stress the word "finally" because this is of vital importance in Christology. All things in Christology are judged in the light of the resurrection. The incarnation in itself does not constitute a guarantee of salvation. The fact that finally death is conquered gives us the right to believe that the conqueror of death was also originally God. This is the way in which Christology in the New Testament has developed—from the resurrection to the incarnation, not the other way round—and patristic theology has never lost this eschatological approach to Christology. Consequently, when we say that Christ escaped the necessity and the "passions" of nature, we do not imply that He remained a stranger to the conditions of biological existence (for example, He suffered the supreme passion of the biological hypostasis, the passion of death). But the fact that He rose from the dead rendered this passion "without hypostasis": the real hypostasis of Christ was proved to be not the biological one, but the eschatological or trinitarian hypostasis.}

b) The hypostatic union of the two natures—divine and human—in Christ. At this point it is important that a difference of emphasis should be stressed between the Greek and the Western Fathers which is parallel to that which was noted earlier in relation to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In the West, as is apparent in the Tome of Pope Leo I, the starting-point of Christology is found in the concept of the "natures" or "substances," whereas in the Greek Fathers, for example in Cyril of Alexandria, the starting-point of Christology is the hypostasis, the person. However much this might seem at first sight a mere detail, it is of the greatest significance. For it stresses not only, as we have seen, with regard to God but now also with regard to man that the basis of ontology is the person: just as God "is" what He is in His nature, "perfect God," only as person, so too man in Christ is "perfect man" only as hypostasis, as person, that is, as freedom and love. The perfect man is consequently only he who is authentically a person, that is, he who subsists, who possesses a "mode of existence" which is constituted as being, in precisely the manner in which God also subsists as being—
in the language of human existence this is what a "hypostatic union" signifies.

Christology consequently is the proclamation to man that his nature can be "assumed" and hypostasized in a manner free from the ontological necessity of his biological hypostasis, which, as we have seen, leads to the tragedy of individualism and death. Thanks to Christ man can henceforth himself "subsist," can affirm his existence as personal not on the basis of the immutable laws of his nature, but on the basis of a relationship with God which is identified with what Christ in freedom and love possesses as Son of God with the Father. This adoption of man by God, the identification of his hypostasis with the hypostasis of the Son of God, is the essence of baptism.

I have called this hypostasis which baptism gives to man "ecclesial" because, in fact, if one should ask, "How do we see this new biological hypostasis of man realised in history?" the reply would be, "In the Church." In early patristic literature the image of the Church as mother is often employed. The spirit of this image is precisely that in the Church a birth is brought about; man is born as "hypostasis," as person. This new hypostasis of man has all the basic characteristics of what I have called authentic personhood, characteristics which distinguish the ecclesial hypostasis from the first hypostasis, the biological one. In what do these characteristics consist?

The first and most important characteristic of the Church is that she brings man into a kind of relationship with the world which is not determined by the laws of biology. The Christians of the early centuries, when their consciousness of what the Church is was lucid and clear, expressed this transcendence over the relationships created by the biological hypostasis by transferring to the Church the terminology which is used of

The structure of the sacrament of baptism was identified at the outset with the structure of the evangelical narrative of the baptism of Jesus. The words, "this is my beloved [for: only-begotten] Son in whom I am well pleased," uttered by the Father with reference to the Son of the Trinity in the presence of the Spirit, are pronounced at baptism with reference to the person being baptized. In this way the structure of the Trinity is made the structure of the hypostasis of the person being baptized, a fact which makes Paul summarize the sense of baptism with the phrase, "Spirit of adoption, in which we cry Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15).

Thus for the new ecclesial hypostasis "father" was not the physical progenitor but He "who is in heaven," and "brothers" were the members of the Church, not of the family. That this signified not a parallel co-existence of the ecclesial with the biological hypostasis but a transcendence of the latter by the former is apparent from the harshness of sayings like those which demand of Christians the abandonment—even the "hatred"—of their own relations. These sayings do not signify a simple denial. They conceal an affirmation: the Christian through baptism stands over against the world, he exists as a relationship with the world, as a person, in a manner free from the relationship created by his biological identity. This means that henceforth he can love not because the laws of biology oblige him to do so—something which inevitably colors the love of one's own relations—but unconstrained by the natural laws. As an ecclesial hypostasis man thus proves that what is valid for God can also be valid for man: the nature does not determine the person; the person enables the nature to exist; freedom is identified with the being of man.

The result of this freedom of the person from the nature, of the hypostasis from biology, is that in the Church man transcends exclusivism. When man loves as a biological hypostasis, he inevitably excludes others: the family has priority in love over "strangers," the husband lays exclusive claim to the love of his wife—facts altogether understandable and "natural" for the biological hypostasis. For a man to love someone who is not a member of his family more than his own relations constitutes a transcendence of the exclusiveness which is present in the biological hypostasis. Thus a characteristic of the ecclesial hypostasis is the capacity of the person to love without exclusiveness, and to do this not out of conformity with a moral commandment ("Love thy neighbor.")

"And I take it to mean Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5:22).

"You are all brethren; and call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:8-9). Cf. Matt. 4:21; 10:25,27; 19:29 and parallel texts, especially Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life . . ." that is, the whole network of relations that constitutes the biological hypostasis.
etc.), but out of his "hypostatic constitution," out of the fact that his new birth from the womb of the Church has made him part of a network of relationships which transcends every exclusiveness.\textsuperscript{58} This means that only in the Church has man the power to express himself as a catholic person. Catholicity, as a characteristic of the Church, permits the person to become a hypostasis without falling into individuality, because in the Church two things are realized simultaneously: the world is presented to man not as mutually exclusive portions which he is called upon to unite \textit{a posteriori}, but as a single whole, which is expressed in a catholic manner without division in every concrete being; simultaneously the same man, while relating to the world precisely through this catholic mode of existence that he has, comes to express and realize a catholic presence in the world, a hypostasis which is not an individual but an authentic person. Thus the Church becomes Christ Himself in human existence, but also every member of the Church becomes Christ\textsuperscript{64} and Church.\textsuperscript{58} The ecclesial hypostasis exists historically in this manner as a confirmation of man's capacity not to be reduced to his tendency to become a bearer of individuality, separation and death. The ecclesial hypostasis is the \textit{faith} of man in his capacity to become a person and his \textit{hope} that he will indeed become an authentic person. In other words it is faith and hope in the immortality of man as a person.

This last sentence leads us to a most important point, to which we must address ourselves at once. For all that I have said so far leaves a question unanswered: what happens to the biological hypostasis of man when that which I have called the ecclesial hypostasis is brought into being? Experience tells us that in spite of the existence of baptism and the ecclesial hypostasis, man does not cease at the same time to

\textsuperscript{58}Thus the Church proves (a) that salvation is not a matter of moral perfection, an improvement of nature, but a new hypostasis of nature, a new creation, and (b) that this new hypostasis is not something theoretical, but a historical \textit{experience}, even though it is not permanent.

\textsuperscript{64}It is characteristic that according to the Fathers every baptized person becomes "Christ."

\textsuperscript{59}St. Maximus the Confessor in his \textit{Mystagogy} (4, PG 91:672 BC) applies the catholicity of the Church to the existential make-up of each believer.

be born and to die in accordance with his biological hypostasis. What kind of experience of authentic personhood is it that the ecclesial hypostasis offers?

In order to reply to this question we really need a new ontological category—not to destroy the distinction which I have made between biological and ecclesial hypostases, but to express the relationship of these two to each other. In fact the encounter between the ecclesial and the biological hypostases creates a paradoxical relationship in human existence. Man appears to exist in his ecclesial identity not as that which he is but as that which he \textit{will} be; the ecclesial identity is linked with eschatology, that is, with the final outcome of his existence.

This consideration of the human person from the point of view of a \textit{telos} must not be interpreted with the help of an Aristotelian entelechy, that is, with the help of a potentiality existing in man's nature which enables him to become something better and more perfect than that which he is now.\textsuperscript{56}

Through all that I have said in this study, I have excluded every possibility of regarding the person as an expression or emanation of the substance or nature of man (or even of God Himself as "nature"). Consequently there is no question of the ecclesial hypostasis, the authentic person, emerging as a result of an evolution of the human race, whether biological or historical.\textsuperscript{67} The situation created by the expectation and hope of the ecclesial identity, by this paradoxical hypostasis which has its roots in the future and its branches in the present,\textsuperscript{88} could perhaps have been expressed by another ontological category, which I would call here a \textit{sacramental} or \textit{eucharistic hypostasis}.

3. All that I have said above to describe the ecclesial hypostasis as something different from the biological corresponds

\textsuperscript{56}Telljard de Chardin's understanding of man bears no relation to patristic theology.

\textsuperscript{67}Herein also lies a fundamental distinction between Christianity and Marxism.

\textsuperscript{88}The Epistle to the Hebrews (11:1) uses the term "hypostasis" precisely with the meaning which I am endeavoring to describe here, that is, as an ontology which has its roots in the future, in eschatology.
historically and experientially only to the holy eucharist. The transcendence of the ontological necessity and exclusiveness entailed by the biological hypostasis constitutes an experience which is offered by the eucharist. When it is understood in its correct and primitive sense—and not how it has come to be regarded even in Orthodoxy under the influence of Western scholasticism—the eucharist is first of all an assembly (συναχία), a community, a network of relations, in which man "subsists" in a manner different from the biological as a member of a body which transcends every exclusiveness of a biological or social kind. The eucharist is the only historical context of human existence where the terms "father," "brother," etc., lose their biological exclusiveness and reveal, as we have seen, relationships of free and universal love. Patristic theology saw in the eucharist the historical realization of the philosophical principle which governs the concept of the person, the principle that the hypostasis expresses the whole of its nature and not just a part. There Christ is "parted but not divided" and every communicant is

The term ἑκκαθαρία is not unrelated in its original Christian usage to the fact of the eucharistic community. For the relevant sources see my work, The Unity of the Church in the Holy Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries (in Greek—1965), pp. 29-59.

If the Lord's prayer was indeed, as it appears, a eucharistic prayer from the beginning, there is special significance in the fact that the expression, "Our Father, who are in heaven," appears there evidently in contradistinction to the relation of every believer with his earthly father. Also illuminating is the history of the use of the term "father" for the clergy. Originally it was used only of the bishop, precisely because only he was seated "in the place of God" (Ignatius) and offered the eucharist. Then it was transferred to the presbyter when he finally assumed a role of leadership in the eucharistic community with the creation of parish. With regard to the ecclesia of the eucharistic community, that is, the transcendence of natural and social divisions, let us note the strict ancient canonical requirement that only one eucharist should be celebrated in the same place on the same day. This prescription (which today among the Orthodox is circumvented "intelligently" by the erection of a new altar and the services of another priest in the same church on the same day) had as its aim precisely the practical safeguarding of the possible for all the faithful of the same locality to participate in the same eucharistic community. I leave aside the other new custom of celebrating the eucharist only for certain groups of Christians, whether social (for students, scholars, etc.) or natural (for small children, etc.), or even specially for members of organizations. What we have here is the establishment of a heresy in the midst of Orthodoxy, the denial of the ecclesia of the eucharistic community.

the whole Christ and the whole Church. The ecclesial identity, consequently, in its historical realization is eucharistic. This explains why the Church has bound every one of her acts to the eucharist, which has as its object man's transcendence of his biological hypostasis and his becoming an authentic person, like those acts which we call "sacraments." The sacraments when not united with the eucharist are a blessing and confirmation which is given to nature as biological hypostasis. United, however, with the eucharist, they become not a blessing and confirmation of the biological hypostasis, but a rendering of it transcendent and eschatological.

It is precisely this eschatological character of the eucharist that helps us to reply to the question, "What is the relationship of the ecclesial with the biological hypostasis?" The eucharist is not only an assembly in one place, that is, a historical realization and manifestation of the eschatological existence of man; it is at the same time also movement, a progress towards this realization. Assembly and movement are the two fundamental characteristics of the eucharist, which unfortunately have lost their vigor in the modern teaching of dogma, even in the Orthodox Church. However, they constitute the vital core of eucharistic patristic theology. Besides this, they make the eucharist liturgy. This liturgical, progressive movement of the eucharist, its eschatological orientation, proves that in its eucharistic expression the ecclesial hypostasis is not of this world—it belongs to the eschatological
transcendence of history and not simply to history. The ecclesial hypostasis reveals man as a person, which, however, has its roots in the future and is perpetually inspired, or rather maintained and nourished, by the future. The truth and the ontology of the person belong to the future, are images of the future.65

What exactly does this hypostasis mean for the existence of man, this hypostasis which is "the assurance (ὑπόστασις) of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1)? Does not this situation bring us back to the tragic aspect of the person?

This eschatological character of the ecclesial hypostasis contains, of course, a kind of dialectic, the dialectic of "already but not yet." This dialectic pervades the eucharist.66 It makes man as a person always sense that his true home is not in this world, a perception which is expressed by his refusal to locate the confirmation of the hypostasis of the person in this world, in the goods and values of this world.67 The ecclesial hypostasis, as a transcendence of the biological, draws its being from the being of God and from that which will itself be at the end of the age. It is precisely this which makes the ecclesial hypostasis ascetic.68

65Maximus gives a philosophical summary of the authentic patristic (and one would also say "biblical") ontology when he identifies the true nature of beings with the future, with the last things: "For 'shadow' refers to the things of the Old Testament, 'image' to the things of the New Testament, and 'truth' to the future state" (Scholion on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 3, 3, 2, PG 47:137/D). Cf. below ch. II.

66See, for example the Revelation of St John: although nothing is more certain than the presence of Christ in the eucharist, and yet the cry, "Come, Lord," and the assurance, "I am coming soon" (22:8-17) change Him who is already present into Him who is expected, or rather, make Him present precisely as the expected one. Cf. Didache 9, 10.

67It is therefore better understood for example why "the root of all evils is avarice" (1 Tim 6:10) and wealth excludes from the Kingdom of God (Luke 6:24 etc.). This has to do not with a moral fault but with the location of the hypostasis of being, of its security, in this world, in the substance and not in the person. (Is it simply a coincidence that the term ὑπόστασις came also to mean "property" or "possessions" very early on? See Luke 15:12. Cf. Euripides. Madness of Heracles 537; Aristophanes, Ecclesiazousai 729.)

68The meaning of asceticism consists in the fact that the less one makes one's hypostasis rely on nature, on the substance, the more one is hypostasized as a person. In this way asceticism does not deny "nature", but frees it from the ontological necessity of the biological hypostasis; it enables it to be in an authentic manner. It is superfluous to stress that this does not suffice to bring about the transcendence of the biological hypostasis if nature is not "hypostasized" simultaneously in the eucharistic community. Other, non-Christian soteriological systems also exhibit asceticism as a transcendence of the biological-hypostasis. But only the Church offers the positive side of this transcendence in the way I have just described with reference to the eucharist. (From the point of view of the historical phenomenology of religions it must some day be understood that only the eucharist in its correct sense is the specific differentiating factor of Christianity.) Without the ascetic dimension, the person is inconceivable. But in the end the context of the manifestation of the person is not the monastery: it is the eucharist.

69The λόγος φίλος has no need of transformation; the τρώγων φίλος demands it. Maximus, Ambiguus 4, PG 91:1540B/C, 1541C.
its part, as the hypostatic expression of the human person, is liberated from individualism and egocentricity and becomes a supreme expression of community—the Body of Christ, the body of the Church, the body of the eucharist. Thus it is proved experientially that the body is not in itself a negative or exclusive concept, but the reverse: a concept of communion and love. In this hypostasis which it has, the body transcends together with its individualism and separation from other beings even its own dissolution, which is death. Since it has been shown as a body of communion to be free from the laws of its biological nature with regard to individualism and exclusiveness, why should it not also be shown finally to be free even from the very laws relating to death, which are only the other side of the same coin? The ecclesial existence of man, his hypostasization in a eucharistic manner, thus constitutes a pledge, an "earnest," of the final victory of man over death. This victory will be a victory not of nature but of the person, and consequently not a victory of man in his self-sufficiency but of man in his hypostatic union with God; that is, a victory of Christ as the man of patristic Christology.

It is precisely on this point that the eucharistic hypostasis differs from the tragic person of humanism, that is, on the fact that in spite of living the tragic aspect of the biological hypostasis intensely and absolutely—from which Christian asceticism also comes—it does not draw its being from what it is now but is rooted ontologically in the future, the pledge and earnest of which is the resurrection of Christ. As often as he tastes and experiences this hypostasis in the eucharist, man is confirmed in his certitude that the person which is hypostasized by love—freed from biological necessity and exclusiveness will not finally die. When the eucharistic community keeps alive the memory of our loved ones—living as well as dead—it does not just preserve a psychological recollection; it proceeds to an act of ontology, to the assurance that the person has the final word over nature, in the same way that God the Creator as person and not as nature had the very first word. Belief in creation ex nihilo—biblical faith—thus encounters belief in ontology—Greek faith—to give to human existence and thought its most dear and precious good, the concept of the person. This and nothing less than this is what the world owes to Greek patristic theology.

60The similarities which appear at first sight to exist between the understanding of man in the works of the ascetic Fathers and the insights of contemporary existentialism arise from this. But the ascetic Fathers do not exhaust the concept of the person in the reality of the biological hypostasis; they also recognize its eschatological transcendence.
2.

Truth and Communion

1. Introduction: The Problem of Truth in the Patristic Era

Christology is the sole starting point for a Christian understanding of truth. Christ's claim to be the truth (John 14:6) constitutes a fundamental presupposition for Christian theology. On this point, both East and West have always been in agreement. It would serve no purpose to make reference to concrete examples from the history of Christian thought to demonstrate this common presupposition to all the Christian traditions. Nevertheless, this presupposition is by no means easy to interpret. How should one understand Christ to be the truth? "What is truth?" (John 18:38) Christ left Pontius Pilate's question unanswered, and throughout the ages the Church has not answered it with one voice. Our problems today concerning truth appear to stem directly from these different understandings of truth in the course of the Church's history.

The fundamental distinctions which are made in connection with this subject appear to date back to the first encounter of Christianity with Greek thought. Even though we must always keep in mind the fact that in the Bible itself Greek thought is very often mixed up with what is customarily termed Semitic thought, or the Jewish mentality,1 we should nevertheless be aware of the existence of a particular thought-form which could be called "Hellenic" and which tends to assert

1See J. Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (1961), and recently the massive study by M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, I-II (1974).
its own characteristics in its encounter with the Gospel. This being said, it would be wrong to deduce too easily, as many scholars have done, that biblical thinking, particularly in its New Testament form, is to be identified with what one would call Hebrew or Jewish thought-forms. When St Paul presents the cross of Christ as the content of his preaching, he stands against the Greek and Jewish mentalities simultaneously. The Christian message may be confused neither with the "wisdom" of the Greeks nor with the Jewish preoccupation with "signs" (I Cor. 1:22).

This confrontation between the Christological content of the Gospel message on one hand, and on the other the Jewish as well as the Greek mentality, is directly connected with the problem of truth. It is usually felt that the principal characteristic of Hebrew thinking as opposed to that of the Greeks resides in the Jews' interest in history. The "signs" which the Jews seek, says St Paul, are precisely the manifestations of God's presence and His activity in history. By and in these "signs," truth makes itself known historically as God's faithfulness towards His people. When in the Old Testament the "emeth of God is proffered, it follows that the Word of God is sound, certain and consistent. Truth thus becomes identical with the "oath" of God who goes back on nothing (Ps. 132:11) and for this reason offers security. All this takes place within the field of a history which is created by God's promises to His People. Consequently, the people's response itself forms part of this definition of truth. Loyalty to God, the carrying out of His will or the fulfilling of His Law amount to "doing the truth." According to this way of understanding truth, it is God's promises which may be considered as ultimate truth, and these promises coincide with the goal or fulfilment of history. It is in short an eschatological truth which orients the human spirit towards the future.

The Greek mind, for its part, seeks truth in a way which transcends history. Starting from the observation of the world, Greek thought raises the question of being in a way which

is organically and inseparably connected with the observing and perceiving mind. In the pre-socratic period Greek thought concentrated on the basic link between being (eimi) and thought (noētö). Despite later developments, and many variations throughout its history, Greek thought never abandoned the unity existing between the intelligible world (noητός), the thinking mind (noōs) and being (eimi). Thanks to the unity between these three elements, the Greek mind achieved a wonderful sense of καθός, a term which signifies harmony and beauty. It is precisely in this unity that truth is to be found. Truth is essentially identical with virtue (dike) and beauty (tò kallōn). This is why truth for the Greeks is primarily a cosmological question.

As a consequence of this way of thinking, the place of history is problematical in Greek ontology. Historical events either have to be explained by some λόγος, that is, they must be attributed to some cause which accounts for them, or else explained away, i.e. dismissed as having no meaning in existence. To explain history or to explain it away are not as different as might appear at first sight. The Neoplatonism which explains away history and matter was as Greek in mentality as the great historians and artists of the classical

5 E.g. Parmenides, Fragments 3d, 7: "Thought and being are one and the same. Thought and that for which thought exists are one and the same." Cf. Plato, Parmenides 126b. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. VI.

6 On the nuances of the relationship between eimi and λόγος, see M. Heidegger's observations in his Einführung in die Metaphysik (1953), esp. p. 88f.

7 This is found as late as in the history of Greek thought as the Neoplatonic period. See e.g. Plotinus, En. V, 1, 8, etc. C.f. K. Kremer, Die neuplatonische Seinsphilosophie und ihre Wirkung auf Thomas von Aquin (1966 [1971]), p. 79ff. Concerning the fact that we have here a survival of the original monoism of Greek thought, see C.J. De Vogel, Philosophia 1, Studies in Greek Philosophy (Philosophical Texts and Studies, 19) 1 (1970), pp. 397-416. Cf. on these problems Chapter I of this book.

8 The idea of the good appears also to be identical with truth, and it is the λόγος which creates this identity so that dike and γνώσις become one and the same (e.g. throughout the Meno and in the Republic of Plato).

9 Greek classical historiography used this method. See C.N. Cochrane, Christianity and Classical Culture (1944), p. 457ff.

10 Neoplatonic thought betrays this attitude. According to his biographer Porphyry, Plotinus was ashamed of his body and refused to speak of his ancestors or to pose for a sculptor or painter (Porphyry, Vita Plot. 1).
period. Both sides shared the same ontological presupposition which assumed that existence constituted a unity, a closed circle\textsuperscript{11} which is formed by the λόγος and the νοῦς. History and matter either had to conform to this unity or else fall from existence. History insomuch as it is the domain of freedom, where the person—divine or human—seems so often to be operating "irrationally" and arbitrarily, thus contradicting the closed ontological unity created by the conjunction of being and λόγος, could not be the basis for and approach towards truth.\textsuperscript{18}

This "closed ontology" or monism of the Greek mind constitutes in our opinion the crucial point of conflict between Greek thought and biblical thought in the period of the Greek Fathers. It is this point which, with the inseparably linked problem of history and matter, illustrates the challenge hurled at the Bible by Greek thought concerning truth, not just in the period of the Greek Fathers but also in the Middle Ages and in modern times, including our own era. The problem may thus be presented as follows: How can a Christian hold to the idea that truth operates in history and creation when the ultimate character of truth, and its uniqueness, seem irreconcilable with the change and decay to which history and creation are subject?

The New Testament way of understanding truth, with its christological character, seems to contradict both the Jewish and Greek ideas of truth such as have been presented here. By referring to Christ as the Alpha and Omega of history, the New Testament has transformed radically the linear histori-

\textsuperscript{11}Cf. E. L. Mascall, \textit{The Openness of Being} (1971), p. 246f., who refers to classical Greek thought, Platonic and Aristotelian alike, as holding a doctrine of "closed" natures. For all pagan Greeks "everything had a nicely rounded-off nature which implicitly everything that the being could ever become... What Greek thought could not have tolerated... would have been the idea that a being could become more perfect in its kind by acquiring some characteristic which was not implicit in its nature before."

\textsuperscript{18}It is noteworthy that, whatever notion of history one encounters in Middle Platonism, one is always faced with the conviction that the original truth suffers a sort of deprivation or "fall" when it passes through history. See, for example, concerning Celsius, C. Andresen, \textit{Logos und Nomos: Die Polemik des Kelsus wider das Christentum} (1955), pp. 146ff., or concerning Nemesis, J. H. Wesse, \textit{Timaeus a Calcido Translatus} (1962), pp. XLIff.

\textsuperscript{15}For a Greek life Plato, for example, truth is not only one but also stable and unchanging. As such it belongs to the world of ideas and not to history or the world of sensible reality: to the latter belongs only opinion (66ε).\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{17}The association of truth with the "nature" of being (φύσις) in the Christian tradition arises out of the Greek concept of truth. Cf. T. E. Torrance, "Truth and Authority: Theses on Truth," in \textit{The Irish Theological Quarterly} 39 (1972), p. 222. This is established principally through Aristotle, whose metaphysics is "not torn between ontology and theology, as is often still asserted, following Jaeger, but finds its centre of gravity in ontosology, substance being for Aristotle the foundation for all ontology." H. Barreau \textit{Aristote et l'analyse du savoir} (Philosophie de tous les temps 81) 1 (1972), p. 113. The problem thus made out, and the way that the Greek Fathers overcame it, will be discussed in part II, 3 of this chapter.
Jews), and from the viewpoint of Christ, who is both a historical person and the permanent ground (the λόγος) of being (the Christian claim)—and all while preserving God's "otherness" in relation to creation?

The intention of this study is to try to give an answer to this question, with the aid of Greek patristic thought. We believe that the question and also the answer worked out by the Greek Fathers for their age are extremely meaningful for ourselves today. We also think that the idea of "communion" has been the decisive tool in the hands of the Greek Fathers to allow them to answer this question, and that it continues to be the key to our own answer to the problem today. And so we shall try first to understand the efforts of the Greek Fathers, their failures and their successes, in arriving at an understanding of truth which might have meaning for a person of Greek mentality, without betraying or distorting the message of the Bible. From there we shall pass on to apply this understanding of truth to the essential requirements of the Christian faith, that is, to the relationship between truth and salvation. Finally, we shall try to see the importance of all this for ecclesiology, in both its theoretical and its practical implications for the structure and ministry of the Church.

II. Truth, Being and History: The Greek Patristic Synthesis

1. The "Logos" Approach

One of the most dramatic attempts to reconcile the Greek idea of truth with the Christian claim, that Christ is the truth, was made in the first three centuries with the help of the idea of logos. This attempt seems to have originated with the Greek apologists, particularly Justin, but found its most audacious representatives among the Alexandrian theologians: Clement and above all Origen.

It is well known that the concept of logos became in the hands of Philo an instrument for harmonizing Greek cosmology with the Old Testament (Gen. 1: the world was created by the logos of God). By applying this idea to Christ, on the

basis of the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, Justin established a foundation from which to communicate to the Greeks the affirmation that Christ is the truth. But although this offered the possibility of converting Greek thought to Christianity and made all Christians debtors to the apologists, it was nevertheless full of danger for the Christian gospel. This becomes clear when we consider the question of truth.

In declaring that Christ is the truth just because He is the logos, in and through whom the world was made and existence finds its foundations and meaning, Justin developed an idea of truth similar if not identical to that of Platonism. God, as ultimate truth, is understood to be "he who is always the same in himself and in relation to all things," and who is known "only through the mind." Truth is thus taken in the Platonic sense of something fixed which establishes its links with the world in and through the mind. This mind (νοῦς) was given, according to Justin, simply "in order to contemplate (καθόρον) that same being who is the cause of all intelligent beings (νοητῶν)."

The significant point about this way of approach to truth is that the possibility of knowing God, the truth, for Justin is due to the συγγένεια (relationship of an ontological character) between God and the soul or νοῦς. In a typically Platonic manner, Justin attributes error, or ἐφεσία, entirely to the presence of things of the senses, and to the body especially. The νοῦς is present equally for all men, and the bond (συγγένεια) between God the truth and man is permanent. It suffices that man should liberate himself from the influences of the body in order to "behold" truth. From what we have just said, it is clear that underlying Justin's way of understanding truth is not only the dualism between things

16Justin, Dial. 3, 5: "Τὸ κατὰ τὰ ὠάτα καὶ ὄσα ἄνωτος ἐστὶν ἔχον" c.f. Plato, Republic 6.484b: "τὸ ἐξ ἀληθείας τὰ ὄντα ἄλογα ἔχοντας." The reading τὸ ἔνυντα is preferred by some, does not affect in any essential way what we are seeking to show here.
17Ibid. 3, 7: "τὸ θεῖον ... ὁδῷ κατὰ κατάληπτον" Compare this with the Greek Fathers' idea of the "Incomprehensibility" (ἀκατάληπτον) of divine nature.
18Ibid. 4, 1.
19Ibid. 4, 2.
20Ibid. 4, 3.
of the senses and of the intellect but—more importantly—the ontologically necessary link between God and the world. The permanent συγγενεία between God and man through the medium of νοῦς leads us to take the idea of logos, employed by Justin in a christological sense, as the bond between God and the world, between truth and the mind. Christ, as the logos of God, becomes this very link between truth and the mind, and the truth of philosophy is nothing less than part of this logos.

The danger of monist ontology is evident in all this, but in this case the danger was not apparent at the level of constituting a problem for the Church. The reason is probably that Justin neither elaborated theologically upon the basis of this monism nor claimed any official place for philosophy in the life of the Church. This was done by Clement of Alexandria, who introduced philosophy officially into the Church, and by Origen, who tried to elaborate a theological system starting from Greek philosophy. The application of the logos concept in this context led to the crisis of Arianism, which compelled the Church to revise the concept radically.

Clement's way of understanding truth develops along the direction mentioned in connection with Justin. The influence of Greek thought on Clement's conception of truth can be seen in his way of envisaging the idea of God—truth as the "nature" of being. This viewpoint was to have a decisive importance for later theology in the East, as we shall see, and equally in the West. In the fragments of Clement which the works of St Maximus the Confessor have preserved for us, "nature" is equivalent to "the truth of things." This concept of truth as "nature" leads Clement to understand the nature of God as "spirit" (based on Jn. 4:24). Consequently, "spirit" is defined as "nature" which leads to the idea developed by Origen that "spirit" is God's corporal "substance."

Origen, by contrast with Clement, did not wish to be a philosopher but an ecclesiasticus, a man of tradition. He therefore tried to construct a system based on the creed, denying nothing which the Church professed, but attempting to explain tradition in a philosophical manner. Whether he managed to do this while preserving the biblical perspective on truth can be decided only after examining two fundamental aspects of his teaching: the doctrine of creation, and the interpretation of Scripture.

Despite his doctrine of creation ex nihilo, Origen connected the idea of God so closely with that of creation that he came to speak of eternal creation, arguing that God would not be eternally omnipotent with no object on which to exercise his power. God thus becomes eternally a creator, and the link between the logos of God and the logos of creation thus comes to be organic and unbreakable, as in the Greek idea of truth. The interpretation of the Scriptures in Origen...
likewise implies an idea of truth which is essentially Greek. Although Origen does not deny the reality or historicity of the biblical events, what definitely counts when interpreting the Bible is the meaning of these events. Even the cross of Christ is the symbol of something higher, and only the simpliciores can be content with the pure fact of the crucifixion. Truth resides in the meaning of things, and once this meaning has been grasped, the things bearing it lose their importance. In quite an interesting way, this leads Origen to place the accent on eschatology, although this eschatology is oriented not towards a consummation of history, but towards the eternal significance of events.

This view of things has very clear implications concerning the understanding of Christ's claim to be the truth. Christ is "truth itself" (οὐτος ἡθελεία), but not because of his humanity. "No one among us is so simple minded as to think that the essence of truth was not in existence before the moment of its manifestation in Christ." This does not mean that Christ's humanity is to be rejected, but that in its relation to truth, it is "true" only in so far as it participates in the truth.

The crucial point enabling us to judge Origen's position on this delicate topic is precisely the importance for truth of the historical Christ. Interpreting John 1:17 ("... the truth came (ἐγένετο) by Jesus Christ") and attempting to reconcile this with John 14:6 ("I am the truth"), Origen writes: "Nothing is produced by its own intermediary. But this (i.e. the word ἐγένετο) must be taken as meaning that truth itself, the essential (οὐσιώδης) truth... the prototype of...

the truth which is found in spiritual souls, this truth of which a kind of image has been imprinted in those who think according to the truth, has not been produced by the intermediary of Jesus Christ, nor by any other intermediary, but has been actualized (ἐγένετο) by God." Origen thus appears to understand the "came" of John 1:17 not as a historical event, such as the incarnation, but in cosmological terms, the truth has been directly imprinted by God—evi-
dently in the eternal creation of the world. For this reason, truth exists as the very nature of being (οὐσιώδης). "Every man of wisdom, in the measure of his participation in wisdom, participates in the Christ who is wisdom." Our remark here, delicate but fundamental, is that "wisdom" does not depend on the Christ-event, but, in a sense, Christ participates in wisdom. We cannot invert the assertion "Christ is the truth" and say "the truth is Christ," since the historical Christ appears to be the truth precisely because of his participation in truth, being the logos of creation—not because he is Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus, the problem which Origen and the whole current of logos theology leave unanswered is: how can we understand the historical Christ to be the truth? If the historical Christ is the truth by virtue of his being simultaneously the logos of God and of creation, it seems to indicate that the incarnation does not realize the truth in a fundamental way, but merely reveals a pre-existing truth. This idea of revelation seems to lie at the very heart of the problem, since revelation always unifies existence, through an idea or a meaning that is singular and comprehensive, forming a connection between created and uncreated rationality. One of the criticisms which modern theology can make of Origen is that if he undermined the historical Christ, it is because he was preoccupied above all

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81 In Jo, I, 9: To preach "Christ and Christ crucified" is the "somatic gospel" aimed at the simple people, while for the "spiritual" the Gospel is that of the Logos and its being in God since the beginning. Cf. G. Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius and the Iconoclastic Controversy," in Church History 19 (1950), pp. 77-96, esp. p. 88.
82 Thus the Old Testament prophets in effect knew the truth essentially as much as the apostles themselves. See In Jo, I, 24, cf. G. Florovsky, op. cit. p. 89.
83 In Jo, VI, 6.
84 Contra Celsum VIII, 12.
85 See H. Crouzel, Origène et la connaissance mystique (1961), p. 34, on the idea of participation and its place in Origen's conception of truth.
86 In Jo, VI, Praef. 8.
88 Note how the idea of "nature" reappears when truth is approached from a cosmological viewpoint. Cf. above, and notes 15, 26, 28.
89 In Jo, I, 34.
with revelation. It is an essential point, and the criticism is fully justified, because there appears to be an intrinsic contradiction between revelation and history, in that the former tends to lead to a unification of existence so that its meaning can be apprehended, while the latter presents existence in the form of fragmentations and antinomies. If an interest in truth as revelation eclipses an interest in truth as history, it inevitably results in the human mind becoming the ground of truth, the crucial bond between truth and creation. This brings us back to the problem presented in our introductory comments, regarding the synthesis between the idea of truth as being and of truth as history. From what we have just seen, we can state that the way in which the apologists and Origen approached the problem did not succeed in creating this synthesis. Let us now pass on to other currents of Greek patristic thought to see how the synthesis was performed.

2. The Eucharistic Approach

While an interest in knowledge and revelation and the search for the meaning of existence led the *logos* theologians of the first three centuries to understand truth in terms of cosmology, the bishops’ absorption in the life and struggles of their communities led them into an entirely different approach to the idea of truth. Already in the writings of St Ignatius of Antioch, it is made clear that the idea of truth is not primarily a matter of epistemology—in the strict sense of the word—but is connected with what we might call *life*. In our Western minds the use of the word “life” implies the idea of something “practical” as opposed to “contemplative” or “theoretical,” and thus the use of this word brings us automatically back to the Old Testament idea of truth as *praxis*. This takes us away from the ontological problem of truth and deprives the gospel of all real contact with Greek thought. But why should life be put in opposition to being? In actual fact, are not life and being identical?

The problem reappears along with the Greek conception of existence which has found a place in our Western minds, particularly in its Aristotelian form. For Aristotle, life is a *quality added to being*; and not being itself. The truth of being is not found in life, but precedes it; a lifeless stone can claim for itself the verb “to be” just as much as an animal can. That an animal should *have* life, and the stone not have it, is something else. With being we use the verb *to be* while with life we use the verb *to have*: life is *possessed* by being, just as a movement or *telos* is possessed by things in general (*en-tel-echeia*). It is precisely because life is something possessed, and cannot precede being, that truth as the meaning of being relates ultimately to being as such, and not to life. Now if a Greek mind was unable to say *in the same breath* “being and life,” the Christian had to say both at once. This identification of being with life affected the idea of truth in a decisive way. This can be seen in the current of Greek patristic thought which developed in the second century. We have already pointed out that Ignatius of Antioch prefers to speak of truth in connection with life. In fact, this is only the continuation of the Fourth Gospel’s definition of knowledge as “eternal life” or “true life.” (Jn. 3, 15, 36; 14:6; 17:3) But while the Johannine definition of knowledge lends itself to an understanding of truth as *praxis* in the Old Testament sense (an understanding which specialists tend to accept too readily, neglecting the differences between Old and New Testament thought), Ignatius’ way of combining knowledge with life points more clearly towards an ontological approach to truth. It is this which should be seen in Ignatius’ concern with immortality and incorruptibility. For Ignatius, life signifies not only *praxis* but *being for ever*: i.e. that which does

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41An important attempt in modern theology to overcome this contradiction is found in W. Pannenberg; see especially his *Revelation as History* (London, 1969).

42Ignatius, *Magn. 1, 2*; *Eph. 3:2, 7:2, 20:2; Sm. 4:1*, etc.

43Aristotle, *De Anima*, 402a-b, 431b, 434b.

not die. Here we have the first profound identification of being with life.

The theme re-appears in a more elaborate form in the theology of St Irenaeus. The Greek concern with being becomes more evident, yet the response to it remains entirely biblical. Irenaeus likewise makes use of the idea of incorruptibility. He sees Christ as being the truth not of the mind—his fight against Gnosticism, the most rationalistic movement of the period, leads him away from this—but of the incorruptibility of being. This was an extremely profound assimilation of the Greek concept of truth as the "nature" of things with the Johannine and Ignatian concept of truth as life: Christ is the truth not because he is an epistemological principle which explains the universe, but because he is life and the universe of beings finds its meaning in its incorruptible existence in Christ, who takes up into Himself (ἐν ουσίαν) the whole of creation and history. Being is inconceivable outside of life, and because of this the ontological nature of truth resides in the idea of life.

This identification of being with life is so decisive for the history of Christian theology that, in our opinion, it is solely upon this basis that the great achievements of Trinitarian theology of the fourth century can be judged to their full value. It is therefore important to consider the reasons for this phenomenon. What was it among the Greek Fathers that made it possible to identify being with life?

This question cannot be answered by attempting to associate the ideas of Ignatius and Irenaeus with some intellectual movement, for the simple reason that such a movement did not exist. What seems to have formed the foundation of these "two Fathers' thought is not an intellectual tradition, but their common experience of the Church as a community, and especially as a eucharistic community. The role played by the eucharist in the theology of Ignatius is so decisive that it would be surprising if it had not had an influence on this identification of existence with life. In fact, we meet the idea of immortality in his writings in connection with the eucharist. In Irenaeus we find the same centrality of the eucharist, and there is no doubt that this is what influenced his conception of incorruptibility, with its ontological connotations, since this emerges from the relationship which he establishes between creation and the eucharist.

How could a theology of the eucharist lead to an identification of existence with life? The answer is found firstly in the biblical roots of the relationship between the eucharist and life. The Fourth Gospel provides an adequate base to establish this relationship. Secondly, both Ignatius and Irenaeus have to fight on behalf of the reality within the eucharist—the former in combating docetism and the latter in combating gnosticism. If the eucharist is not truly Christ in the historical and material sense of the word "truth," then truth is not life and existence at the same time, since for both men the eucharist imparts life. Thus truth had to become historical without ceasing to be ontological.

Finally there was the understanding of the eucharist as community. The life of the eucharist is the life of God Himself, but this is not life in the sense of an Aristotelian movement which flows out mechanically from the interior of existence. It is the life of communion with God, such as exists within the Trinity and is actualized within the members of the eucharistic community. Knowledge and communion are identical.

All this leads naturally to the theological developments of

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47Note the remarkable parallel between the understanding of the eucharist as "medicine of immortality, an antidote against death" in Irenaeus (ibid.), and its description in Irenaeus as antidotum vitae (Adv. Haer. III, 19:1).
52For a detailed discussion of sources concerning this aspect of the problem, see J.D. Zizioulas, The Unity of the Church in the Eucharist and the Bishop during the first three Centuries (1963, in Greek) esp. pp. 87-148.
the fourth century. But it must be strongly underlined that without this foundation of the Church’s eucharistic experience, such as exhibited in Ignatius and Irenaeus, the trinitarian theology of the fourth century would remain a problem. We must therefore pause briefly on this point before passing to the fourth century.

The identification of existence with life through the idea of immortality and incorruptibility will lead naturally into trinitarian theology. If incorruptibility is possible only in and through communion with the life of God Himself, creation or being can exist and live only insofar as the source of being—God—is Himself life and communion. The eucharistic experience implies that life is imparted and actualized only in an event of communion, and thus creation and existence in general can be founded only upon this living God of communion. Thus the divine act that brings about creation implies simultaneously, the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

Irenaeus seems to stop here. He is concerned mainly with created being and sees existence as ultimately dependent upon the Trinity. But what about uncreated being? Could it not be said, perhaps, that in the last resort, i.e., in our reference to God as being, being precedes life and life springs from being? Is it not possible, in other words, to postulate a divine nature (φύσις—φύσις) as the ultimate ontological truth, and to make life and communion depend upon it under the form of the Trinity? The answer to this question is given by the Greek Fathers in their historic attempt to press the identification of being and life with communion to the ultimate point of existence, God Himself. This came about in the fourth century.

3. The Trinitarian Approach

The Arian crisis highlighted the need for radical revision of Origen’s teachings and the cosmological approach to truth. This could be achieved only through a revision of the doctrine of the logos, and Arianism provided the appropriate opportunity. Could the doctrine of the logos be of use in talking about ultimate being, the truth of the Greeks? For an instant, the Church found itself shaken with uncertainty, but the answer came from the great Alexandrian theologian St Athanasius. His answer, which was the theological basis for the definition of Nicaea, was in the affirmative, but subject to one essential condition: the doctrine of the logos can be maintained only if the logos becomes identical with the Son as part of the Trinity.

Athanasius’ standpoint, which proved crucially important in the Church’s struggle against Arianism, was a direct consequence of the ontology of communion formed within the current of eucharistic theology that connected Ignatius, through Irenaeus, up to Athanasius. That Athanasius belongs theologically to this movement, rather than to the catechetical tradition of Alexandria, follows clearly from a general study of his theology. It will be sufficient for our present purposes to consider his way of using ontological ideas in his struggle against Arianism. It is interesting to note the points where his thought is indebted to the ontological ideas of Ignatius and Irenaeus of which we have attempted a presentation in this study.

In his fight against Arianism, Athanasius developed an ontology whose characteristics are as follows:

First, he made a clear distinction between substance, which he regarded as ultimate, and will, attributing to being the same ultimate character which it had always enjoyed in Greek thought. This distinction was needed in order to make it plain that the being of the Son in his relation to God was not of the same kind as the being of the world. The Son’s...
being belongs to the substance of God, while that of the world belongs to the will of God. It was a distinction needed in order to argue against the Arians, but its importance went far beyond the particular occasion. Its wider significance rests in the fact that, through this distinction between substance and will, Athanasius was in a position to break out of the closed ontology of the Greeks which linked God to the world by an ontological syngeneia. He thus avoided the trap into which Justin and Origen had fallen, not by abandoning ontological thought but, on the contrary, by raising it up to the ultimate character which its nature requires.\footnote{Ibid. II:2.} \textit{To be} is not the same as \textit{to will} or, hence, as \textit{to act}. This assertion, apparently Greek and not Hebrew, presented itself as the means for protecting the biblical roots of the Gospel from the dangers of Greek ontology. God’s being, in an ultimate sense, remained free in relation to the world, in such a way that the Greek mind could identify it as “being” without having to link it with the world out of an ontological necessity.

But this was not all. By connecting the Son’s being with the very substance of God, Athanasius also transformed the idea of substance. And it is here that his departure from the cosmological thinking of Justin and Origen appears to be actually an adoption of the eucharistic thinking of Ignatius and Irenaeus. To say that the Son belongs to God’s substance implies that substance \textit{possesses almost by definition a relational character}. “Has God ever existed without His own (Son)?”\footnote{Ibid. I:20.} This question has an extreme ontological importance. The word “ever” in the sentence is used of course not temporally but logically, or rather ontologically. It refers not to a time in God, but to the nature of His being, to His being \textit{qua} being. If God’s being is by nature relational, and if it can be signified by the word “substance,” can we not then conclude almost inevitably that, given the ultimate character of God’s being for all ontology, substance, inasmuch as it signifies the ultimate character of being, can be conceived only as communion\footnote{The following passages, among others, support our interpretation of Athanasius in a striking way. Without the relationship between the Father and the Son “the perfectness and fullness of the Father’s substance is depleted (or eliminated = εξεπεραιτοτι)” \textit{Contra Arianos} I:20. This leads Athanasius to make the extraordinary statement “If the Son was not there before He was born; there would be no truth in God,” which implies that it is the Father-Son relationship that makes God be the truth eternally in Himself.}

\begin{quote}
Any identification between Platonic and Athanasiian ontology (see, for example, E.P. Meijering, \textit{Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis} [1968]) collapses at this point. There are many similarities between Athanasius and Middle Platonics or Neoplatonic ontology. (Meijering’s work is extremely successful in bringing these out.) But nowhere in Platonics or, for that matter, ancient Greek thought in general can we find the view that the perfectness and fullness of a substance is depleted (or eliminated), if a certain relationship is absent from it. Athanasius himself (\textit{De Syn.} 51) is conscious of this difference between his ontology and that of the Greeks as he rejects any notion of divine substance \textit{per se}, i.e. without its being qualified with the term Father, calling it the way of thinking “of the Greeks” (“Εξεπεραιτοτι Επιστοτιτι Πατεροτι”). But “Father” is by definition a relational term (no father is conceivable without a son), and it is precisely this that makes the use of “substance” by Athanasius un-Greek. It is clear that we have here the emergence of a new ontology (cf. below).
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\footnote{In his profound analysis of Aristotle’s idea of substance, Prof. D.M. MacKinnon (“Aristotle’s Conception of Substance,” in R. Marbrough, ed., \textit{New Essays on Plato and Aristotle}, [1965], pp. 97-11a) has revealed to us the subtleties of this idea in Aristotle, and it would be extremely wise for historians of doctrine to take these seriously into their consideration. See also his “Substance in Christology: A Crosshatch View,” in S.W. Sykes and J.P. Clayton, eds., \textit{Chris, Faith and History} (Cambridge Studies in Christology, 1972), pp. 279-300.}

which had acquired an ontological significance in and through the eucharistic approach to being, Athanasius develops the idea that communion belongs not to the level of will and action but to that of substance. Thus it establishes itself as an ontological category. This was significant progress towards an ontology founded on biblical premises, a decisive step towards a Christianization of Hellenism. But without denigrating Athanasius’ greatness or his importance as a theologian, we must recognize that in this ontology he left a number of basic problems unanswered. One concerns the ontological status, as it were, which we are to attach to that being which does not come out of substance but out of will and action: namely, creation. If the world’s being is a product not of God’s substance but of His will, what is then its ontological base?

If we say that this base is the will of God, do we not once more risk attributing an ontological content to the will of God, thus making almost useless the distinction that was developed to confront the Arian position? This is such a difficult and fundamental question as to lend support to the ontological monism of the classical Greeks as a more sensible alternative to a Christian ontology based on God’s ontological otherness. It is the question of knowing whether otherness can make sense in ontology, whether ontology can do anything more than rest on the idea of totality. To a large extent this is still an open question—even though the first attempt towards answering it was made long ago by St Maximus the Confessor, when he employed (and radically transformed) the idea of ekstasis from pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

The second problem raised by Athanasius’ ontological basis concerns the being of God Himself. Athanasius’ ontology rests, as we have just seen, on the assertion that between God and the world there exists an otherness founded on the fact that the world’s being is based on the will, not the substance, of God. In this sense, the use of the idea of substance in theology played an indispensible part in the development of an ontology along biblical lines. But what about the otherness within the very substance of God which is implied by Athanasius’ assertion that the Son has “always” belonged to God’s being? Athanasius demonstrated that ontological otherness is an inevitable result of the distinction between will and nature, but he does not show to what extent “interior” communion within one substance implies otherness at an ontological level.

Such a fundamental question cannot be answered without clarifying further the idea of relational substance which was developed in the eucharistic approach to ontology, and exploited by Athanasius. This was to be the great contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers. Let us now turn briefly to their views.

One of the difficulties in developing an ontology of communion which possessed clarity was the fact that, as an ontological category, substance did not differ essentially from hypostasis. Athanasius lets us clearly see that for him—and for his contemporaries—ousia and hypostasis mean exactly the same thing. And so, if it is desired to speak of an “interior” otherness within one substance (i.e. an otherness not based on will), how can this be expressed? Anyone who studies the history of this period knows the confusion and misunderstanding that terminology was able to generate then. A term such as “person” smacked of Sabellianism and was insufficiently ontological for some, while for others hypostasis implied tritheistic views. But the significant thing is that the solution developed by the Cappadocians led, in fact, to a further stage in the revision of Greek ontology and the formation of a Christian ontology.

Up until the period when the Cappadocians undertook to develop a solution to the trinitarian problems, an identifying of ousia with hypostasis implied that a thing’s concrete individuality (hypostasis) means simply that it is (i.e. its ousia). Now, however, changes occurred. The term hypostasis was dissociated from that of ousia and became identified with that of prosopon. But this latter term is relational, and was so when adopted in trinitarian theology. This meant that from

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63. Here Christian theology can benefit considerably from E. Levisus’ remarkable work Totalité et Infini (1971).

64. See Athanasius, Ep. ad episc. etc., PG 26: 1036.
now on a relational term entered into ontology and, conversely, that an ontological category such as hypostasis entered the relational categories of existence. To be and to be in relation becomes identical. For someone or something to be, two things are simultaneously needed: being itself (hypostasis) and being in relation (i.e. being a person). It is only in relationship that identity appears as having an ontological significance, and if any relationship did not imply such an ontologically meaningful identity, then it would be no relationship. Here is certainly an ontology derived from the being of God.

What was the importance of this stage in ontology, reached by the Cappadocians? Above all, it was that the being of God became placed on a new and more biblical foundation. By usurping, as it were, the ontological character of ousia, the word person/hypostasis became capable of signifying God’s being in an ultimate sense. The subsequent developments of trinitarian theology, especially in the West with Augustine and the scholastics, have led us to see the term ousia, not hypostasis, as the expression of the ultimate character and the causal principle (δύναμις) in God’s being. The result has been that in textbooks on dogmatics, the Trinity gets placed after the chapter on the One God (the unique ousia) with all the difficulties which we still meet when trying to accommodate the Trinity to our doctrine of God. By contrast, the Cappadocians’ position—characteristic of all the Greek Fathers—lay, as Karl Rahner observes, in that the final assertion of ontology in God has to be attached not to the unique ousia of God but to the Father, that is, to a hypostasis or person.

This identification of God’s ultimate being with a person rather than with ousia not only makes possible a biblical doctrine of God (= the Father, in the Bible), but also resolves problems such as those inherent in the homoousion concerning, for example, the relation of the Son to the Father. In making the Father the “ground” of God’s being—or the ultimate reason for existence—theology accepted an abstract kind of subordination of the Son to the Father without being obliged to downgrade the Logos into something created. But this was possible only because the Son’s otherness was founded on the same substance. So, whenever the question of the ontological relationship between God and the world is raised, the idea of hypostasis, from now on ontological in an ultimate sense, must be completed with that of substance if we do not wish to fall back into ontological monism. The identification of God with the Father risks losing its biblical content unless our doctrine of God includes not just the three persons, but also the unique ousia.

4. The “Apophatic” Approach

In the development of apophatic theology, the Platonic/Origenist understanding of truth was recovered only to be denied at its very heart, in its epistemological and ontological claims. While for Origen the highest way of indicating and expressing truth is by means of the prefix οὐτο- (“itself”: e.g. οὐτοσάληθεν, οὐτο δικαιοσύνη, etc.), for the apophatic theologians the preferred expression is the prefix ὑπερ- (“beyond,” “above”: e.g. ὑπερολήθεια, ὑπερουσία etc.). This implies a radical reorientation in regard to knowledge and a removal of truth from its Greek base. For Greek thought was satisfied with indicating truth through the term auto- and furthermore it would never have proceeded beyond

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66 The Cappadocians arrived at this through their thesis that no nature exists “in the nude” but always has its “mode of existence” (τρόπος ὑπάρχειν). See e.g. Basil, Ep. 38:2, PG 45: 337.

67 It is interesting to take up G.L. Prestige’s criticism (op. cit. p. 233) of St Basil’s idea that in God there is a coincidence between nature and person. This, he says, makes it hard to defend the unity of the Godhead, because it implies a shift of the meaning of substance from the sense of primal substance into that of secondary substance. But this shows precisely why the application of this distinction becomes questionable in the case of the Greek Fathers.

the *nous* which, for the Greeks was permanently attached to truth as to its ultimate ontological ground.68

The message of apophatic theology was precisely that the closed Greek ontology had to be broken and transcended, since we are unable to use the concepts of the human mind or of creation, for signifying God—the truth. The absolute otherness of God’s being which is found at the heart of biblical theology is affirmed in such a manner that the biblical approach to God contrasts acutely with that of the Greeks.69

Apophaticism rejects the Greek view of truth, emphasizing that what we know about being—about creation, that is—must not be ontologically identified with God. God has “a simple, unknowable existence, inaccessible to all things and completely unexplainable, for He is beyond affirmation and negation.”70 And therefore truth lies beyond the choice between affirmation and negation.71 Neoplatonic imagery of a “hierarchy” used

68It is true that philosophers of the Platonic, Neoplatonic and Gnostic schools spoke of a “departure” (ἐκμέταλλος) of beings, some of them using the prefix ἐκμεταλλοῦσα in their vocabulary. But the significant thing is that for these philosophers, this “departure” was not a movement beyond the *nous*, but always a movement away from other things to enable the *nous* to arrive at its pure state. (It is in this sense that we must understand also the well-known phrase ἐκμεταλλοῦσα τῆς οὐδετός).

In the Greek philosophical tradition, at this point, also including Origen and his followers, the *nous* always remains capable of knowing God (cf. above). Apophatic theology parted radically from this position, shown by the fact that truth, for it, resides not in the *nous* but beyond it. (See P. Dionysius, De myst. theol. 1:3, PG 3:1001A. Cf. I. Hausherr, “Ignorance infinie,” Orientalia Christiana Periodica (1938), p. 357; also for the texts R. Roques, “Contemplation, extase et ténèbre selon le Ps. Denys,” in Dict. Spir. (1952), col. 1898.

69The lively opposition between this apophaticism and the Greek approach to God appears clearly in an examination of the idea of God in Plato. In Plato, we arrive at the idea of God by firstly considering the “soul,” especially as it becomes “generation,” providing “a continual flow of being,” and then by considering the “order inherent in the movement of the stars”—that is, “the intelligence that establishes the whole in order” (Laws 506D).

70Maximus, Myst., Pref.

71The deeper meaning of this idea rests in denying truth from a fallen situation where choice imposes itself between the “true” and the “false” (cf. below, section III, 1-2). This is essential for maintaining the identification of truth with God Himself, since God exists beyond the possibility of choosing between the “true” and the “false.” In a profound passage (Amb., PG 91:1290C) Maximus makes precisely this remark about truth: The Logos is ὃπερ ἀληθείαν because there exists nothing which may be examined beside

in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor, namely the ideas of ekstasis and of the distinction between essence and energy in God.

The idea of ekstasis signifies that God is love, and as such He creates an immanent relationship of love outside Himself. The emphasis placed on the words “outside Himself” is particularly important, since it signifies that love as ekstasis gives rise not to an emanation in the neoplatonic sense, but to an *otherness* of being which is seen as responding and returning to its original cause.71 In Maximus this idea receives a more complete and definite treatment, because his approach is not ultimately related to cosmology, as in Dionysius, but to the trinitarian being of God.72 Likewise, the distinction between essence and energy in God serves to indicate the relationship between God and the world as ontological otherness bridged by love, but not by “nature” or by “essence.”73 Him and compared with Him, whereas the “truth” of which we have experienced is opposed to “falsehood.”


73Dionysius the Areopagite, *De div. nom. 4:14*, also Maximus, Amb. 23: “God moves inasmuch as He implants an immanent relationship of love and love in those capable of receiving it; He moves in attracting naturally the desire of those who are moved towards Him.”


75The roots of this distinction are to be found in Gregory of Nazianzus (Or. 38:7). Its development leads to the theology of St Gregory Palamas. Cf. V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (1957). The intention behind this distinction was to safeguard the otherness between Creator and creation: see P. Sherwood, *op. cit.* p. 32 and J. Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*, (1982) pp. 191 ff.
This distinction, moreover, joined to the idea of ekstasis, represents the first attempt in the history of Christian thought to reconcile on a philosophical basis the biblical idea of God's otherness with the Greeks' concern for the unity of existence. This is a philosophically worked out development of what was implicit in the eucharistic and trinitarian approaches which we have studied above. The importance of all this will become better apparent when we consider the relationship between truth and human existence.

Thus, the apophatic theology of this period by no means implies a theological agnosticism, if carefully studied in its essential aims. The principal object of this theology is to remove the question of truth and knowledge from the domain of Greek theories of ontology in order to situate it within that of love and communion. That apophatic theology founds itself on love is something so evident as to be the necessary key to its understanding and assessment. The perspectives offered by an approach to being through love, as arrived at by the mystical and ascetic theologians of the period, led by another route to the same conclusion that the eucharistic and trinitarian approaches of the previous period reached: it is only through an identification with communion that truth can be reconciled with ontology. That this implies neither agnosticism nor a flight outside matter and history emerges from the thought of Maximus the Confessor. The great achievement of this thinker was to attain the most developed and complete reconciliation between the Greek, Jewish and Christian concepts of truth. It is in this father's theology that the question we asked in our introduction seems to find its most all-encompassing answer.

To equate "apophatic" with "negative" can lead to error. See Dionysius' repeated expressions ὅσα καὶ Ἐλεοῦν (De div. nom. 3:2, PG 3:659A) μη κατὰ στέρησιν (Ep. 1, PG 3:1065A) etc., through which he seeks to indicate the positive content of theology, which is theology καὶ ὅποτο υπαρχούν (De div. nom. 312). It is a theology that transcends the opposition "positive versus negative" or "knowledge versus ignorance," etc.

Note the importance of the prex συν- in P. Dionysius' use of ekstasis (De div. nom. 3:1-2, PG 3:681, 684). It signifies communion within which each partner's distinctness is maintained. Cf. R. Roques, "Contemplation," (n. 68 above), col. 1899 ff.

5. The Christological Approach

We have seen that in the theology of the first three centuries, the approach to the idea of truth through the logos failed in two ways in its attempt to link the biblical concept of truth with that of Greek thought: it did not reconcile the Greek concept of being with the ontological otherness of God's being, and it did not fully identify the ontological content of truth with Christology in its historical aspect. The idea of logos helped to explain the unity of God and creation, but not the difference that there is between the two. Thus patristic theology was led to abandon this idea, and the problem remained unanswered: how can the truth of created and historical existence be an ontological truth while fully maintaining the ontological otherness of God's being in relation to creation and history? How, in other words, can ultimate truth be linked up ontologically with creation and history in such a way that creation may keep its own, distinct being, while God remains the ultimate truth of being?

The solution to this fundamental problem, as we have seen, was not completely absent from Greek patristic thought before St. Maximus, but lacked development and, above all, explanation in philosophical terms. We have tried to show that the beginnings of a solution to the question were found in the eucharistic theology of Ignatius and Irenaeus, with whom we find for the first time the identification of being with life; and that this solution was then made deeper by the fourth century trinitarian theologians, through the identification they made between life, communion and the being of God Himself. But if truth is in the last resort identifiable with being only in and through communion, what prevents us from returning to the Greek ontology of the logos, and uniting God with the world precisely by virtue of the identification of being with communion? In fact, it was because of the idea of participation that Origen made wide use of the idea of the logos to link God with the world. This led to the question: in what way does "participation" differ from "communion"?

The answer to this crucial question was given in the fourth
and as decay? It seems that St Maximus the Confessor was the first in the history of Christian thought to work out an answer to this question.

The way by which the Greek Fathers distinguished themselves in their approach to history is that they considered the latter in close connection with ontology. In contrast with the approach to this problem found in the West since St. Augustine, the problem of the relationship between truth and history is tackled not from the viewpoint of time in relation to eternity, but from that of being and life in relation to death and decay. And the crucial point of this approach lies in the idea of movement of being: Can there be truth in the movement of being, when in history this movement is associated with death and decay?

Maximus had inherited from Origenism a description of creation as a triad—becoming-rest-motion (γένεσις-στάσις-κίνησις)—in which the ultimate characteristic of movement (placed after rest) is understood to offer an indication of the sinful nature of creation which, according to Origen’s mythology of the Fall, was patterned after eternal rest or stillness. This view of things is consciously wrecked by Maximus, who places rest after motion (γένεσις-κίνησις-στάσις). This change has a twofold result. On the one hand it makes history into something provisional, and therefore impossible to take within the existence of God; while on the other, it makes history meaningful because it possesses a πέρας, that is to say an end in the positive sense of this word (“fulfilment”).

This takes the concept of history back to its Old Testament basis, with the difference however that history is now viewed ontologically. The truth of history is identical with that of creation itself, both being oriented towards the future. Per-

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80Cf. St Cyril of Alexandria’s distinction between “communion κατὰ φύσιν (Christ’s communion with God), and “communion κατὰ μετοχήν” (our participation in the incarnation). For the texts see Houssiau, op. cit. p. 477.
fection is not an original state to which creation is hidden to return, but a περιοπτης which summons from ahead.86 The truth of time is not as it were an ontologically inexplicable intermediary between beginning and end, the domain of a psychological anamnesis of the past and an equally psychological expectation of the end. The truth of history lies in the future, and this is to be understood in an ontological sense: history is true, despite change and decay, not just because it is a movement towards an end, but mainly because it is a movement from the end, since it is the end that gives it meaning. If the consummation of historical existence is not an existence without decay and death (such is the significance of placing the στάσις after the movement), then it is inevitable that being should come to cease to be, and we should have to conclude that history leads to non-entity and non-truth. The truth of history is identified thus with the truth of being simply because history is the movement of being towards and from its end which gives it meaning.

But if the meaning of history is understood in this way, how do we find the proper and decisive place owing to Christology in our conception of truth? The problem becomes complex when a connection with ontology is sought: how can the “end” of history be identical, as truth, with history’s own process (the incarnation) and also with the permanence of being?

The importance and unique character of Maximus’ theology rest in his success in developing a christological synthesis within which history and creation become organically interrelated. Helped by his courageous salvaging of the logos concept from its long period of disuse due to the dangers accompanying it, Maximus arrived at this christological synthesis: Christ is the logos of creation and one must find in him all the logoi of created beings.87 The apolo-

86 See esp. Quest. ad Thal. 60. Here Maximus essentially recovers Irenæus’ theme about Adam’s childhood, on which basis he develops a theology of history. Compare this with the Augustinian concept of man having been created perfect.


88 See e.g. Amb. 23.

89 Amb. θελητής and προφορικώς are synonymous in the thought of Maximus. See e.g. Quest. ad Thal. 60.

90 A discussion of the texts will be found in G. Florovsky, “Car Deus
Christ, is the truth, for He represents the ultimate, unceasing will of the ecstatic love of God, who intends to lead created being into communion with His own life, to know Him and itself within this communion-event.

All this removes truth from its Platonic unchangingness and, equally, from the necessity implicit in the Aristotelian “entelechy.” History is neither banished in a platonic manner, nor transformed into a movement inherent in being or “nature” itself.\(^9\) The truth of history lies simultaneously in the substratum of created existence (since all beings are the willed realizations of God’s love); in the fulfilment or the future of history (since God’s love, in His will and its expressions—namely, created existence—is identifiable with the final communion of creation with the life of God); and in the incarnate Christ (since on God’s part the personification of this loving will is the incarnate Christ). Whereby Christ becomes the “principle” and “end” of all things, the One who not only moves history from within its own unfolding, but who also moves existence even from within the multiplicity of created things, towards the true being which is true life and true communion.

So truth is located simultaneously at the heart of history, at the ground of creation, and at the end of history: all this in one synthesis which allows us to say “Christ is the truth” for Jews and Greeks at the same time. It is perhaps the first time in the whole history of philosophy that such a thing could be expressed, because as far as we know, there is no other case where philosophical language has succeeded in uniting the beginning and the end of existence without creating in this way a vicious circle. Maximus succeeded in nothing less than the miracle of reconciling a circle with a straight line. The way whereby he worked out a relationship between ontology and love, and developed an ontology of love out of the idea of *ekstasis*, may have immense value even in the theology and philosophy of our own days.


\(^9\) The idea of history as *Heilsgeschichte*, developed by O. Cullmann, leads in fact back to Aristotle, as is shown by J. McIntyre, *The Christian Doctrine of History*, (1957) pp. 42 ff.

6. The Approach through the “Eikon”

If Christ makes history into truth and truth into part of the unfolding of history, and if this is simply because Christ is the “end” of history, the truth of history seems to remain paradoxical: determined by its end while the end is a part of its unfolding. How can this be expressed in theological terms? It will suffice to quote here a passage of Maximus. “The things of the Old Testament are shadow (σκιά); those of the New Testament are image (εἰκών); and those of the future state are truth (ἀληθεία).

At first sight, this is a curious assertion which makes the incarnation a less true reality than the second coming. Accustomed to an idea of reality determined by rationalism and historicism, we tend to consider as “truths” and “facts” the things which experience verifies or which correspond to certain norms and concepts “grasped” by us as true. But in the present case, the use of the term εἰκών does not signify this kind of factual truth, nor any lack of reality. For all the Greek Fathers except those of the Origenist school, εἰκών always means something real and as true as ἀληθεία. The long fight over the place of icons in the Church during the eighth and ninth centuries was centered precisely on the question of ascertaining whether it is in any way possible to present truth in the form of an icon, and the demarcation line between the two parties lay precisely in the acceptance or rejection of the truth of the incarnation in its relationship to history and creation.\(^10\) Those who fought against the icons took their arguments from the school of Origen, whose conception of history has been already discussed here; while those who defended the icons insisted precisely upon the fact that the incarnation makes it not merely possible, but quite unavoidable, to understand truth in the manner of an icon.\(^11\) But if the εἰκών, or truth of history, is no less true than

\(^{10}\) Maximus, *Sch. in eccl. hier.*, 3, 32.


\(^{12}\) For the sources, see J. Meyendorff, *ibid*.
that of the eschaton, in what sense is the word "truth" applied to the "future state"?

The idea of εἰκόν in the Greek Fathers is often understood along Platonic lines. The passage of Maximus quoted above shows clearly that this is wrong. In the Platonic way of thinking, the image must not have its reality in the future; it is always the past which is decisive, making truth a matter of ἀνάπτυξις, a connecting of the soul to the pre-existing world of ideas. The authentic Greek patristic tradition never accepted the Platonic notion—adopted by Origen and St Augustine among others—in which perfection belongs to the original state of things. The Greek patristic tradition also showed no tendency to understand the εἰκόν in a retrospective psychological sense, and at the Council in Trullo explicitly rejected symbolism in iconography. In this crucial passage, Maximus shows once more that truth in Greek patristic thought is very different from that of Platonism. We must search elsewhere for the roots of the iconological language of the Fathers.

Of course this is a very complex problem, and cannot properly be dealt with here. Suffice it to say by way of suggestion, that the iconological language of the Greek Fathers makes increased sense if seen in the light of primitive apocalyptic theology, such as first developed within the primitive Syro-palestinian tradition and penetrated throughout the eucharistic liturgies of the East. This tradition presents truth not as a product of the mind, but as a "visit" and a "dwelling" (cf. Jn. 1:14) of an eschatological reality entering history to open it up in a communion-event. This creates a vision of truth not as Platonic or mystical contemplation understands it but as picturing a new set of relationships, a new "world" adopted by the community as its final destiny.

So, through its apocalyptic roots, iconological language liberates truth from our "conception," "definition," "comprehension," of it and protects it from being manipulated and objectified. It also makes it relational, in the sense that the truth of one being is able to be "conceived" only in and through the mirror of another. To use a remarkable explanation of the idea of εἰκόν given by Athanasius, when he

refers it to God, the Son is the εἰκόν of the Father precisely because it is in Him that the Father sees Himself as "truth."*4 Iconological language emerges after truth becomes identified with communion. Εἰκόν is the final truth of being communicated in and through an event of communion (liturgical or sacramental), anticipating the "end" of history from within its unfolding.

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In summarizing this attempt at a synthesis of Greek patristic thought concerning truth, we can say that the Greek Fathers' main success in this area rests in the identification of truth with communion. Here we must clearly emphasize the word identification, because this synthesis must not be confused with other associations of truth with communion which have arisen during the history of Christian theology. If communion is conceived as something additional to being, then we no longer have the same picture. The crucial point lies in the fact that being is constituted as communion; only then can truth and communion be mutually identified.

This identification forms theology's hardest problem, as is to be observed in the application of truth to human existence. Our state of fallen existence is characterized precisely by the fact that in our approach to truth, being is constituted before communion. Salvation through the truth thus depends in the last resort upon the identification of truth with communion. The next part of our study will be dedicated to this problem. The Greek patristic synthesis which we have attempted to present in this section will serve as a background to the two following sections.

III. Truth and Salvation: The Existential Implications of Truth as Communion

1. Truth and Fallen Existence: the Rupture between Being and Communion

For the Greek Fathers the fall of man—and for that matter,

*4Athanasius, Contra Arianos 1:20-21.
sin—is not to be understood as bringing about something new (there is no creative power in evil), but as revealing and actualizing the limitations and potential dangers inherent in creaturehood, if creation is left to itself. For since the fall results from the claim of created man to be the ultimate point of reference in existence (to be God), it is, in the final analysis, the state of existence whereby the created world tends to posit its being ultimately with reference to itself and not to an uncreated being, God. Idolatry, i.e. turning created existence into an ultimate point of reference, is the form that the fall takes, but what lies behind it is the fact that man refuses to refer created being to communion with God. In other words, viewed from the point of view of ontology, the fall consists in the refusal to make being dependent on communion, in a rupture between truth and communion.

This rupture between being and communion results automatically in the truth of being acquiring priority over the truth of communion. This is natural for created existence. It is inevitably the case when you have a created being as the ultimate point of reference, because “created” means “given”: man may wish to make communion ultimate but the fact of existence is a “datum” with which he is presented, and thus he can never escape from the fact that being precedes relationship. The “substance” or ousia of things becomes the ultimate content of truth, if truth is to relate to being. The only alternative to this would be to make communion constitutive of being, but in this case a denial of the fall—or a redemption from it—would be implied.

Given the fact that communion is no longer constitutive of being in a fallen state of existence, and that the being of things must be recognized before a relationship can take place, every single being acquires an ontological status, so to say, on its own merit. Thus the world consists of objects, of things whose ontological status one has to recognize before one can relate to them. The truth of these “objects” becomes, therefore, a provocation for the knower; the known and the knower exist as two opposite partners; the res and the intel-

lectus must somehow reach an adaequatio, the subject and the object constitute a pair whose presence determines epistemology.

Inherent in all this is the decisive role of the notion of individuality in ontology. This, too, must be ultimately explained by reference to the rupture between being and communion. Since the being of things is ultimate and prior to communion, and everything that exists posits its own being as something “given” to man, the world ultimately consists of a fragmented existence in which beings are particular before they can relate to each other: you first are and then relate. This ultimacy of the individual in ontology is connected, as we shall see, with the problem of creation par excellence, which is death, but it also results in the challenge that truth represents for the freedom of man. For he is asked to submit to, i.e. compulsorily to acknowledge, the truth of being of whatever is other than himself, whether fellowman or thing. The authority of truth becomes in this way authoritarian and repulsive, but because, as we have noted, it is so firmly grounded upon the nature of created existence, upon the truth of being, any attempt to ignore or reject it amounts to absurdity. Ever since Kierkegaard, modern existentialist thought has not ceased to underline the impasse which created existence reaches whenever truth and freedom have to come to terms with each other. Again, everything seems to go back to the rupture between being and communion, which implies the priority of the former over the latter.

Another consequence of this situation is displayed in the relationship between truth and love. In associating truth with

95a Cartesian philosophy provides a good example of this. When Kant defines the adaequatio as “agreement with the laws of the intellect” (Critique of Pure Reason, B, 350) he introduces the transcendental dimension of truth. However, this does not rescue the concept of truth from what is described here as the fallen condition of existence, since according to Kant it is the integrated unity of human experience which determines in the last resort what truth is (ibid., B, 197).
96a According to Kierkegaard (see e.g. Existentie I, II) truth is the act of an individual, and its basis is existence; but “doing the truth” is an existential paradox which makes faith and Christianity as a whole incompatible with reason.
97a See below, notes 103 and 105.
the nature or substance of things and with the kind of understanding which is inherent in this individualism of existence, man restricts himself to reaching a relationship between communion and love only after obtaining a knowledge of the "object" of his love. The "other," whether in the form of a "person" or a "thing," is present as an object of knowledge before any relationship of communion can take place. Knowledge precedes love, and truth precedes communion. One can love only what one knows, since love comes out of knowledge, (except that this happens in our fallen condition, and ought not to be turned into an element of our metaphysical anthropology or, even less, of our approach to trinitarian theology, as in the case of Thomas Aquinas). This dichotomy between love and knowledge implies a separation not just between person and nature, but also between thought and action in the very heart of human existence. And since the possibility of knowledge appears to precede the act of communion (love) and to be independent of it, it becomes possible for man to dissociate his thought from his action and thus to falsify truth. Man thus becomes a hypocrite, and it is indeed only man, i.e. a person, that is capable of hypocrisy.

The consequences of this appear clearly when one considers the problem of the relationship between truth and action or praxis. "Doing the truth," which is a biblical theme, becomes impossible for man precisely because faith and praxis in his fallen existence are able to coincide only for "a moment," and this "moment of existence" simply reveals what "existence" implies but does not attain, Kierkegaard's discovery of the authentic moment of existence struck the greatest blow against the West's subject-object structuring of truth, but led only to an identification of truth with doubt. In this situation an alternative has been offered to man, if he wishes to identify truth with praxis, to arrive at a Marxist identification of truth with human activity in the form of the development of man in his society.

We could continue to list the consequences of the indi-

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98See Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol. Ia Iae 4. This derives from Augustine (De Trin. 10).
99According to Marx (see e.g. his Second Thesis on Feuerbach) truth arises from praxis in its evolution with society.

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visualization of being in our fallen existence in relation to truth, but the most tragic of them must be seen in the fact of death. There is no plainer falsification of truth on the ontological level than a "dying being"; this is a contradiction in the absurdest terms. The problem of death is connected with truth in existence precisely through the truth's identification with nature itself, accompanied by the individualization and fragmentation of this nature. When we are told that Adam died because he fell by making himself into God, we are being correctly told that making oneself God—i.e. the ultimate reference-point of existence—is something on the level of ontology, not psychology. Death intervenes not as the result of punishment for an act of disobedience but as a result of this individualization of nature to which the whole cosmos is subjected. In other words, there is an intrinsic connection between death and the individualization into which we are born through the present form of procreation, and it is this which shows precisely what it means to have a life which is not the "true life" (ζωὴ θανατικὴ).

To be saved from this fall, therefore, means essentially that truth should be fully applied to existence, thereby making life something true, i.e. undying. For this reason the Fourth Gospel identifies eternal life, i.e. life without death, with truth and knowledge. But it can be accomplished only if the individualization of nature becomes transformed into communion—that is, if communion becomes identical with being. Truth, once again, must be communion if it is to be life.

2. *Truth and the Person*

The most immediate area for passing beyond the state of fallen existence just described is the reality of the person. The significance of the person rests in the fact that he represents two things simultaneously which are at first sight in contradiction: particularity and communion. Being a person is fundamentally different from being an individual or a "personality," for a person cannot be imagined in himself but only within his relationships. Taking our categories from our
fallen state of existence, we usually identify a person with the "self" (individual) and with all it possesses in its qualities and experiences (the personality). But modern philosophers recall with good reason that this is not what being a person means. What is the relationship between personal existence and truth, in its particularity and in its communion?

The essential thing about a person lies precisely in his being a revelation of truth, not as "substance" or "nature" but as a "mode of existence." This profound perception of the Cappadocian Fathers shows that true knowledge is not a knowledge of the essence or the nature of things, but of how they are connected within the communion-event. We saw above that the theme of ekstasis was a key idea in the Greek patristic concept of truth, but in its application to the idea of "person" it needs to be completed by another theme, that of hypostasis. While ekstasis signifies that a person is a revelation of truth by the fact of being in communion; hypostasis signifies that in and through his communion a person affirms his own identity and his particularity; he "supports his own nature" (ἐντὸς-στάσεως) in a particular and unique way. The person is the horizon within which the truth of existence is revealed, not as simple nature subject to individualization and recombination but as a unique image of the whole and the "catholicity" of a being. In this way, if one sees a being as a person, one sees in him the whole of human nature. Thus to destroy a human person is to commit an act of murder against all humanity: in the final analysis, a denial of the truth of man's being. The mystery of being a person lies in the fact that here otherness and communion are not in contradiction but coincide. Truth as communion does not lead to the dissolving of the diversity of beings into one vast ocean of being, but to the affirmation of otherness in and through love. The difference between this truth and that of "nature in itself" lies in the following: while the latter is subject to fragmentation, individualization, conceptualization, compre-

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hension, etc., the person is not. So in the context of personhood, otherness is incompatible with division.

This identification of otherness with unity is incompatible with fallen existence, into which we are born as individuals with a clear tendency to seize, dominate and possess being. This individualized and individualizing Adam in us is our original sin, and because of it the "other," i.e. beings existing outside ourselves, in the end becomes our enemy and "our original sin" (Sartre). A human being left to himself cannot be a person. And the ekstasis of beings towards humanity or towards creation alone leads to "being-into-death." For this reason, all attempts to define truth as "being-into-life" require automatically the idea of being beyond created existence.

3. **Truth and the Savior**

When Christ says He is the truth and at the same time the life of the world, He introduces into truth a content carrying ontological implications. If the truth saves the world it is because it is life. The christological mystery, as declared by the Chalcedonian definition, signifies that salvation as truth and life is possible only in and through a person who is ontologically true, i.e. something which creation cannot offer, as we have seen. The only way for a true person to exist is for being and communion to coincide. The triune God offers in Himself the only possibility for such an identification of being with communion; He is the revelation of true personhood.

Christology is founded precisely upon the assertion that only the Trinity can offer to created being the genuine base

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100 On this point, see Ch. Yannaras, *The Ontological Content of the Theological Concept of the Person* (1970, in Greek). The distinction which he makes between *ousia* and *par-ousia* is particularly illuminating for the subject.

101 Cf. supra, section II, § 3 and ch. I of this book.
for personhood and hence salvation. This means that Christ has to be God in order to be savior, but it also means something more: He must be not an individual but a true person. It is impossible, within our experience of individualized existence to find any analogy whatsoever with an entity who is fully and ontologically personal. Our experience of personhood through communion and love gives an idea of this kind of existence, but without offering full ontological content. True life, without death, is impossible for us as long as our being is ontologically determined by creaturehood. Thus, with the aid of love as an analogy, we shall be able to reach an understanding of the Christology of the cross (a person who loved us so much as to die for us); but without an ability to follow it into the resurrection (a person who conquered death) Christology brings with it nothing ontological. Christ is the truth precisely because in Himself He shows not just being, but the persistence, the survival of being; through the resurrection, Christology shows that created existence can be so true that not even human freedom can suppress it, as was actually attempted on the cross. Truth and being are existentially identified only in Christ's resurrection, where freedom is no longer fallen, i.e. no longer a threat to being.

Christology, therefore, removes the problem of truth from the realm of the individual and of "nature" to the level of the person. One must see in Christ a person in whom the

Dostoevsky unveils the ontological implications of freedom in presenting the attempt to terminate existence by self-annihilation as an expression of human freedom of self-affirmation. As it is put by Kirilov in The Possessed, man can prove that he is God—i.e. the ultimate reference-point of existence—only if he can put an end to his existence by killing himself. The fact that existence continues despite man's capacity to kill himself is the ontological proof that man is subject to individualization and not the final ground of being, despite the threat he represents for being in having the possibility of destroying beings by death. We should note the importance of all this for the ontological implications of the cross and resurrection of Christ.

A defence of the use of the term substance in Christology will be found in D. M. MacKinnon, "Substance in Christology," pp. 279-300. The purpose of this defence is to show the immediate and direct character of God's presence in Christology and to answer the fundamental question: How can a particular act be that of one who is related to the Father, identical to the Father, if it is not within the nature of His relationship? One cannot but positively appreciate these aims, in the context of Western thinking which tends to separate being or ousia from relationship and personhood. What we are trying to show

division of "natures" is changed into an otherness through communion. This shift of Christology away from our individualized existence seems to many to lead to a picture of a Christ who is not "human"; nevertheless, what we have just said shows that, unless in Christology this "de-individualization" of Christ takes place, its existential implications will no longer have any ontological importance.

The fact that an individualization of Christ creates insurmountable problems in Christology, in view of the existential implications of the assertion that Christ is the truth, can be seen clearly in relation to ecclesiology. For if Christ's being is established after the manner of an individual, i.e. as an entity conceivable in itself, the inevitable question arises: How can man, and creation in general, be connected with this individual existentially, i.e. not just psychologically or morally, but ontologically? This whole problem is linked with the relationship between Christology and pneumatology, and we must look at it before we are able to see how the Church can take up her position in presenting Christ as truth and communion.

here on the basis of Greek patriarchic thought (cf. supra, section II, § 3) that being and relationship must be mutually identified and that it is only within the "mode of existence" that "nature" or "substance" is truth.

The patriarchic idea of hypostatic union, such as developed principally by Cyril of Alexandria, makes the person (hypostasis), and not the natures, the ultimate ground of Christ's being. Here there is a subtle but significant distinction to be made between this view and that suggested by the idea of communio idemantum, which seems to assign, or at least to assume, an ontological status in each nature taken in itself.

All christologies wishing to take the human person as the basis of Christ's identity may offer a soteriology of the ethical or psychological type, but remain irrelevant for ontology. The problem of death as a threat to personal being cannot be resolved if the hypostasis of the Savior is subject to the individualism and the ontological necessity of the biological hypostasis (see Chapter I).

The problem also involves logical and experiential difficulties which Christology cannot resolve for man today as long as it pictures Christ as an individual. How can an individual who lived in Palestine so many years ago have a relationship with me here and now? To introduce the Holy Spirit as a deus ex machina to resolve this problem creates extra ones which it does not resolve, and in any case does not seem persuasive at the existential or the ontological level. The only obvious alternative in the context of this individualistic type of Christology is to understand our relationship with Christ as an imitatio Christi, or in terms of substitutional theories of soteriology. Any
IV. Truth and the Church: Ecclesiological Consequences of the Greek Patristic Synthesis

1. The Body of Christ formed in the Spirit

The christological starting point of our understanding of truth, or rather the identification of our concept of truth with Christ, raises the question as to what kind of Christology we have in mind when making this identification. It is possible to envisage at least two kinds of Christology here. Firstly, we may understand Christ as an individual, seen objectively and historically, presenting Himself thereby for us as the truth. With this way of understanding Christ, the distance between Him and us is bridged by the aid of certain means, which serve as vehicles for truth to communicate itself to us: for example, His spoken words incorporated within the Scriptures and perhaps tradition—transmitted, interpreted, or even expounded through magisterium—all being realized with the assistance or under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, it is possible to envisage a type of Christology in which Christ, although a particular person, cannot be conceived in Himself as an individual. When we make the assertion that He is the truth, we are meaning His whole personal existence, in this second type of Christology; that is, we mean His relationship with His body, the Church, ourselves. In other words, when we now say “Christ” we mean a person and not an individual; we mean a relational reality existing “for me” or “for us.” Here the Holy Spirit is not one who aids us in bridging the distance between Christ and ourselves, but he is the person of the Trinity who actually realizes in history attempt to understand the relationship as ontological necessarily leads to the abandonment of an individualistic conception of Christ (cf. the biblical idea of “corporate personality”).

110Cf. the Christology of D. Bonhoeffer (Gesammelte Schriften III 1960, pp. 166, 242) where this is used as a key expression. This view of Bonhoeffer’s is very important in that it steers clear of Reformation theories of soteriology and theology based more on Christ’s activity than his person. The pneumatological dimension, however, is lacking throughout all Bonhoeffer’s work, and this makes the idea of “pro-me” into a scheme without ontological content.

111Cf. Chapter VI below.

112The unity of the divine activity ad extra is emphasized very strongly by the Fathers. See e.g. Athanasius, Ad Serap. 1:20; Basil, De Spirit. 19:49; Cyril of Alexandria, In Jo. 10 etc. This is also true of the Western Fathers. Cf. Y. Congar, “Pneumatologie ou ‘Christonomosism’ dans la tradition Latine?” in Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta (Melanges G. Phillips, 1970), pp. 41-63.
the Spirit, and is nothing else than the expression and realization of the will of the Father.

Thus the mystery of the Church has its birth in the entire economy of the Trinity and in a pneumatologically constituted Christology. The Spirit as “power” or “giver of life” opens up our existence to become relational, so that he may at the same time be “communion” (κοινωνία, cf. II Cor. 13:13). For this reason the mystery of the Church is essentially none other than that of the “One” who is simultaneously “many”—not “One” who exists first of all as “One” and then as “many,” but “One” and “many” at the same time.\textsuperscript{118}

In the context of a Christology constructed in this pneumatological manner, truth and communion once more become identical. This happens on the historical and anthropological levels alike. While the Christ-truth, as existence in the Spirit, cannot be imagined individualistically, truth itself is inevitably and constantly realized in the Spirit, i.e., in a pentecostal event. In the description of Pentecost in Acts 2, the significance of the event seems related as much to history as to anthropology: through the outpouring of the Spirit, the “last days” enter into history, while the unity of humanity is affirmed as a diversity of charisms. Its deep significance seems to lie in the fact that this takes place in Christ, viewed both historically and also anthropologically, as a here-and-now reality. The objectivization and individualization of historical existence which implies distance, decay and death is transformed into existence in communion, and hence eternal life for mankind and all creation. In a like manner, the individualization of human existence which results in division and separation is now transformed into existence in communion where the oneness of persons (“on each of them separately,” Acts 2:3) is identical with communion within a body.\textsuperscript{119}

Christ’s existence, as described above, is thus made historical and personal through the same movement of the Spirit of God which made Christ Himself into a historical being. The

118This is discussed at greater length in J.D. Zizioulas, “Die Pneumatologische Dimension der Kirche,” in Communio (1973).

119Cf. above, section III, 1.
The application of Christ’s existence to ours then amounts to nothing other than a realization of the communion of the Church. This community is born as the Body of Christ and lives out of the same communion which we find in Christ’s historical existence. His ‘true life’ is identical with the eternal life of the Triune God; the community itself thus becomes “the pillar of truth” in an existential sense. All this, having its ἀληθής in the eschaton, is given to it sacramentally as an “eikon,”117 so that it may realize in itself the truth of Christ in the form of faith, hope and love, as a foretaste of eternal life, making it aspire towards the transfiguration of the world within this communion which the Church herself experiences.

But this experience of truth in the Church’s existence is realized to its maximum, in the course of her historical life, in the eucharist. The eucharistic community is the Body of Christ par excellence simply because it incarnates and realizes our communion within the very life and communion of the Trinity, in a way that preserves the eschatological character of truth while making it an integral part of history. So if we wish to see how Christ the truth is united to the Church we can only begin by considering the holy eucharist.

2. The Eucharist as the Locus of Truth

How does the eucharist reveal Christ as the truth? What does the statement that Christ is the truth mean for the life and structure of the Church, in the light of its eucharistic experience? Here we will make the following observations:

(a) The eucharist reveals the Christ-truth as a “visitation” and as the “tabernacle” (Jn. 1:14) of God in history and Jesus’ biological conception). Given this, it was now impossible for the Church to speak of Christ other than in terms of communion, i.e. identifying Him with the “communion of the saints.” The pneumatological and eschatological approaches to Christ equally imply His community. The raised Christ is unimaginable as an individual; He is the “first-born of many brothers,” establishing His historical identity in and through the communion-event which is the Church.

117 Cf. supra, section II, § 6.

creation, so that God can be beheld in the glory of His truth and partaken of within His communion of life. The Church has therefore no other reality or experience of truth as communion so perfect as the eucharist. In the eucharistic assembly God’s Word reaches man and creation not from outside, as in the Old Testament, but as “flesh”—from inside our own existence, as part of creation. For this reason, the Word of God does not dwell in the human mind as rational knowledge or in the human soul as a mystical inner experience, but as communion within a community. And it is most important to note that in this way of understanding Christ as truth, Christ Himself becomes revealed as truth not in a community, but as a community. So truth is not just something “expressed” or “heard,” a propositional or a logical truth; but something which is, i.e. an ontological truth: the community itself becoming the truth.

Because the Christ-truth is not only revealed but also realized, in our existence, as communion within a community, truth is not imposed upon us but springs up from our midst. It is not authority in the sense of auctoritas but is grace and love, embracing us in its being which is bound to us existentially. Yet this truth is not the product of a sociological or group experience; it comes clearly from another world, and as such is not produced by ourselves.

(b) This kind of truth does not come to us simply as the result of a historical transmission. The problem here becomes very delicate, and needs careful consideration.

It is certain that Christianity is founded on historical fact, and the Church Fathers were those Christians of their era who thought most along historical lines, if we compare them with the heretics whom they fought against. (Firesy, for the Fathers, is “innovation”). Nevertheless history understood in the light of eucharistic experience is not the same as history as normally understood; it is conditioned by the anamnetic and epieletic character of the eucharist which, out of distance and decay, transfigures time into communion and life. Thus history ceases to be a succession of events moving from past to present linearly, but acquires the dimension of the future, which is also a vertical dimension transforming history into
charismatic—pentecostal events. Within history thus pictured, truth does not come to us solely by way of delegation (Christ—the apostles—the bishops, in a linear development). It comes as a pentecostal event which takes linear history up into a charismatic present-moment. The ordination of a bishop takes place exclusively during the eucharist (and in the Eastern liturgy, the feast of Pentecost is celebrated at each episcopal ordination) for this reason.

This illuminates our understanding of the Church’s "infallibility" and its expression through certain ministries. Already Irenaeus speaks of bishops as possessing a certain charisma veritatis; the primitive Church developed the idea of apostolic succession though the bishops just as it did conciliarity, also through the bishops. Why was the bishop from the earliest days associated with veritas? In the approach presented here, this association cannot be understood as a delegation of the truth to official ministers. The fact that every bishop receives the charisma veritatis only within the eucharistic community, and as a Pentecost-event, shows that the apostolic succession has to pass to the community through communion. The bishop in his function is the apostles' successor inasmuch as he is the image of Christ within the community: the primitive church was unable to see the two aspects (Christ-apostles) separately. Similarly, the councils were expressions of the truth simply because the bishops were the heads of their communities, which is why diocesan bishops alone can take part in councils. The communities' unity in identity is the foundation of conciliar infallibility.

(c) Similar observations could be made about the formulation of truth in the Church. If truth as communion is not to be separated from the ontology of life, then dogmas are principally soteriological declarations; their object is to free the original εἰκόν of Christ, the truth, from the distortions of certain heresies, so as to help the Church community to

\[118\] This is particularly clear in Hippolytus, *Trad. Apost.* 3 (prayer of ordination of a bishop).

\[119\] Cf. W. Elert, *Der Anfang der alt-kirchlichen Christologie* (1957), where the important point is made concerning the role of the Christusbild as contrasted with that of the Christusbegriff in the development of classical Christology.

maintain the correct vision of the Christ-truth and to live in and by this presence of truth in history. The final intention of all this is to lead to communion with the life of God, to make truth into communion and life. This is why the ancient councils ended their definitions with anathemas, as if the main aim of the council were not so much definition as anathema. Excommunication had from then on a pastoral basis, that of protecting the community from distortions of the εἰκόν of truth, so as to not endanger the truth's soteriological content. If communion was no longer possible after a council's definition and anathema, it was because the eucharist requires a common vision (εἰκόν) of Christ. The councils' aim was eucharistic communion, and in producing or adopting creeds the intention was not to provide material for theological reflection, but to orientate correctly the eucharistic communities. Thus it may be said that the credal definitions carry no relationship with truth in themselves, but only in their being doxological acclamations of the worshiping community.

However, the "definitions" do have a certain reality of their own. What relationship with truth do these forms bear, in the light of the eucharistic vision of truth? We have here another delicate problem to consider. Throughout this account, we have insisted that truth is not "comprehensible" and thus cannot be objectified and defined. How are dogmas to be seen if not as "formulations" or "definitions" of the truth, making this truth a captive to the bonds of historical and cultural forms?

If we start our reflection from the understanding of dogmas in their soteriological and doxological character mentioned above, then these dogmas represent a form of acceptance, sanctification, and also transcendence of history and culture. It is a form similar to that of the eucharist itself, borrowing its basic elements from creation and the ordinary life of the people, and transcending them in communion. What happens in a dogmatic formulation, as it passes through the charismatic process of a council, is that certain historical and cultural elements become elements of communion, and thus acquire a sacred character and a permanence in the life of the Church. Here, history and culture are accepted but at
the same time eschatologized, so that truth shall not be subjugated through being incarnated in history and culture. To illustrate this, we can again return to certain terms and concepts which the Church borrowed from Greek culture for dogmatic purposes. Take, for example, the term καθολικός or πρόσωπον or ὑπόστασις. Historically and culturally, they are Greek words. Would Aristotle have understood their meaning, had he been given the Nicene Creed to read? He would have if the words were history and culture solely. If not, as one has the right to suspect, then something crucial must have happened to these historical and cultural elements through the fact of their being associated with the thought-structure and life of the Church. It is in this sense that we would understand faithfulness to dogmas. Not because they rationalize and set forth certain truths or the truth, but because they have become expressions and signs of communion within the Church community. Communion, being relational, is inescapably of an incarnational nature, which is why it actualizes truth hic et nunc by accepting history and culture. At the same time, there is a prophetic and critical element in truth as communion. This comes about through the acceptance, not the rejection, of historical forms. Christ, the truth, is judge of the world, by the very fact of having taken it upon Himself.

This means that any breaking of the bond between dogma and community amounts to a breaking of the bond between truth and communion. Dogmas, like ministries, cannot survive as truth outside the communion-event created by the Spirit. It is not possible for a concept or formula to incorporate the truth within itself, unless the spirit gives life to it in communion. Academic theology may concern itself with doctrine, but it is the communion of the Church which makes theology into truth. This type of approach to the dogmas maintains the vigilance which the Greek patristic synthesis held against conceptualizing truth, yet without leading to any rejection of the truth’s historicity.

120 This explains the fact that the primitive Church expressed its faith officially through councils of bishops, i.e. of the presidents of eucharistic communities, and not through theologians.

(d) The eucharist shows that truth is not just something concerning humanity alone, but has profound cosmic dimensions. The Christ of the eucharist is revealed as the life and recapitulation of all creation. One of the basic difficulties inherent in the Greek conception of truth is that it implies that truth can be grasped and formulated by human reason. But, as the eucharistic reveals, this human “reason” must be understood as the element which unifies creation, and refers it to God through the hands of man, so that God may be “all in all.” This eucharistic or priestly function of man reconnects created nature to infinite existence, and thus liberates it from slavery to necessity by letting it develop its potentialities to the maximum. If as we have insisted in this account, communion is the only way for truth to exist as life, the nature which possesses neither personhood nor communion “groans and is in travail” in awaiting the salvation of man, who can set it within the communion-event offered in Christ. Man’s responsibility is to make a eucharistic reality out of nature, i.e. to make nature, too, capable of communion. If man does this, then truth takes up its meaning for the whole cosmos, Christ becomes a cosmic Christ, and the world as a whole dwells in truth, which is none other than communion with its Creator. Truth thereby becomes the life of all that is.

The implications of this go beyond theological truth, in the narrow sense of “theological,” and extend to the truth of the natural sciences. Science and theology for a long time seemed to be in search of different sorts of truth, as if there were not one truth in existence as a whole. This resulted from making truth subject to the dichotomy between the transcendent and the immanent, and in the final analysis from the fact that the “theological” truth and the “scientific” truth were both disconnected from the idea of communion, and were considered in terms of a subject-object framework which was simply the methodology of analytical research. The revolution that Einstein effected in science, however, has meant a radical re-orientation of the scientific search for truth. The final consequences are still to be realized.

but one thing seems clear, which is that the Greek conception of being has been critically affected by the idea of relationship: for the natural sciences in the post-Einstein period, existence has become relational. This essentially leads scientific truth back to the final position of the Greek Fathers on the philosophical level, and makes it possible to speak of a unique truth in the world, approachable scientifically or theologically. If theology creatively uses the Greek patristic synthesis concerning truth and communion and applies it courageously to the sphere of the Church, the split between the Church and science can be overcome. The scientist who is a Church member will be able to recognize that he is carrying out a para-eucharistic work, and this may lead to the freeing of nature from its subjection beneath the hands of modern technological man. The eucharistic conception of truth can thus liberate man from his lust to dominate nature, making him aware that the Christ-truth exists for the life of the whole cosmos, and that the deification which Christ brings, the communion with the divine life (II Peter 1:4), extends to “all creation” and not just to humanity.

(e) Finally, a eucharistic concept of truth shows how truth becomes freedom (Jn. 8:32). As we remarked in connection with the relation between truth and the fallen condition of existence, freedom normally means in this context a choice between different possibilities or between negation and affirmation, good and evil. The possibility of choice is based on the individualizations and divisions within being, which are born

122Einstein showed that certain aspects of reality are intrinsically relational, rather than absolute, as a Greek might have expected. These comprise certain attributes of a thing—position, velocity, etc.—which now are definable only in relation to other things. However, two reservations need to be made: (a) the basic ontology of the thing is unaffected by all this, since it still retains an “identity” in absolute terms; and (b) the subject-object distinction also remains unchanged. A further step towards the kind of rapprochement between science and theology envisaged here may perhaps be found in quantum mechanics. In this branch of physics, it is shown that the observer is involved in his measurement in an essential way. Subject and object are now related, thus bridging the hitherto ineradicable gap between the two. However it must be added that the philosophical interpretation of quantum mechanics is still a matter of some dispute (P. J. Buxey).
123Cf. T.F. Torrance, op. cit.

Truth and Communion out of man’s insistence on referring all of being ultimately to himself. The overcoming of these divisions is the precise meaning of what we call the “catholicity” of existence within Christ and His Body, the catholic Church. It is this sort of catholicity of existence which the eucharistic community exhibits in its own structure. And the freedom given by the Christ-truth to creation is precisely this freedom from division and individualization, creating the possibility of otherness within communion.

But if this is truth’s foundation as freedom within the Church, then clearly a new concept of freedom is being born, determined not by choice but by the movement of a constant affirmation, a continual “Amen.” The people of God gathered together in the eucharist realize their freedom under the form of affirmation alone: it is not the “yes” and the “no” together which God offers in Christ, but only the “yes,” which equates to the eucharistic “Amen” (II Cor. 1:19, 20). So it is clear that the eucharist contains an idea of truth which is not of this world, and which seems unrealistic and inappli-

125A more detailed discussion of this point will be found in Chapter IV below.
126In the light of Greek patristic thought as we have attempted to present it in this study, freedom is situated higher than what we call “moral freedom.” The possibility of choice which defines moral freedom arises from the individualization of being, inherent in the fall (see above, Section III, 1) and is in fact a limitation of freedom because it rests on possibilities that are given and, consequently, constraining. In placing God’s being above the level of will (Athanasius) or above affirmation and negation (Maximus)—see above, Section II, 3-4—the Greek Fathers were wishing to situate freedom itself above the limitations inherent in choice and in the “given.” God is truly free because He is confronted with nothing “given” before Him, so that He exists above all affirmation and negation. But this must not remain a negative statement. God is truly free in a positive sense, because “eternally” (i.e. without being confronted with anything “given,” as any being would be who had a beginning). He affirms His existence by a communion-event. He is the Father because He eternally has a Son through whom He affirms Himself as Father, and so on. So the being of God appears truly free as regards “given” things, and through an otherness which is not individualization. A freedom of this kind is offered to man in Christ as the eschatological “glory” of the “children of God.” The Spirit allows a “foretaste” to be had of this as he leads the community of the Church in history, and in this sense the eucharistic communion, which is the Church’s eschatological event par excellence, is an affirmation, an “Amen,” and reveals a state of existence free from the possibility of denial, and even free as regards that denial of being and life which is death. A freedom resting on affirmation through communion is
cable to life. But as we have emphasized above in connection with Christology, you do not do justice to truth's ontological content by implying that our fallen state of existence is all there is. The individualization of existence by the fall makes us seek out security in objects or various "things," but the truth of communion does not offer this kind of security: rather, it frees us from slavery to objective "things" by placing all things and ourselves within a communion-event. It is there that the Spirit is simultaneously freedom (II Cor. 3:17) and communion (I Cor. 13:13).

Man is free only within communion. If the Church wishes to be the place of freedom, she must continually place all the "objects" she possesses, whatever they may be (Scripture, sacraments, ministries, etc.) within the communion-event to make them "true" and to make her members free in regard to them as objects, as well as in them and through them as channels of communion. Christians must learn not to lean on objective "truths" as securities for truth, but to live in an epicletic way, i.e. leaning on the communion-event in which the structure of the Church involves them. Truth liberates by placing beings in communion.

3. Christ, the Spirit and the Church

I. Introduction

One of the fundamental criticisms that Orthodox theologians expressed in connection with the ecclesiology of Vatican II concerned the place which the council gave to Pneumatology in its ecclesiology. In general, it was felt that in comparison with Christology, Pneumatology did not play an important role in the council's teaching on the Church. More particularly, it was observed that the Holy Spirit was brought into ecclesiology after the edifice of the Church was constructed with Christological material alone. This, of course, had important consequences for the teaching of the council on such matters as the sacraments, ministry and ecclesial institutions in general.

This criticism may be on the whole a valid one, but when we come to the point of asking what its positive aspect is, namely what the Orthodox would in fact like to see the council do with Pneumatology in its ecclesiology, then we are confronted with problems. In one of his articles Fr Congar quotes two Orthodox observers to the council, whose names he politely refrains from mentioning, as having said to him that "if we must propose a schema De Ecclesia, two chapters would suffice: one on the Holy Spirit and another on Christian man." This quotation is in itself a clear indication that Orthodox theology needs to do a great deal of reflection on the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology, and that

the actual state of Orthodox theology in this respect is by no means satisfactory.

A quick look at the history of modern Orthodox theology concerning this subject leads us back to the critique of Western thought by Khomiakov in the previous century and the famous idea of sobornost which resulted from it. Khomiakov was not explicit on the problem we are discussing here, but his views can make sense only if a strong dose of Pneumatology is injected into ecclesiology. In fact this dose—which, by the way, had already been generously given to ecclesiology by Khomiakov’s Roman Catholic contemporary Johannes Mühler through his work Die Einheit—was so strong as to make of the Church a “charismatic society” rather than the “body of Christ.” This led later Orthodox theologians, notably the late Fr Georges Florovsky, to reiterate with particular emphasis that the doctrine of the Church is “a chapter of Christology.” By so doing Florovsky indirectly raised the problem of the synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology, without however offering any solution to it. In fact there are reasons to believe that far from suggesting a synthesis, he leaned towards a Christological approach in his ecclesiology.

The Orthodox theologian who was destined to exercise the greatest influence on this subject in our time was Vladimir Lossky. His views are well known, but two points need to be mentioned in particular. The first is that there is a distinct


“economy of the Holy Spirit” alongside with that of the Son. The other is that the content of Pneumatology, as contrasted with that of Christology, should be defined in ecclesiological terms as concerning the “personalization” of the mystery of Christ, its appropriation by the faithful, what could be called the “subjective” aspect of the Church (the other one, the “objective,” being proper to Christology). Thus, with the help of the scheme “nature versus person,” Lossky would develop the view that both Christology and Pneumatology are necessary components of ecclesiology, and would see in the sacramental structure of the Church the “objective” Christological aspect which has to be constantly accompanied by the “personal” or “subjective” aspect. The latter is related to the freedom and integrity of each person, his inner “spiritual life,” deification etc. This seems to offer material for a synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology in ecclesiology. And yet its actual schematization makes Lossky’s position extremely problematic, as we shall see later. For the same reasons his first point, too, concerning a distinct “economy of the Spirit,” becomes questionable and in fact renders the synthesis so difficult that it must be abandoned.

Lossky did not draw conclusions from the implications of his views for the actual structure and institutions of the Church. The problem how to relate the institutional with the charismatic, the Christological with the Pneumatological aspects of ecclesiology, still awaits its treatment by Orthodox theology.

Two other Orthodox theologians of our time who have insisted on the importance of Pneumatology in ecclesiology have recognized the difficulties inherent in any dissociation of Pneumatology from Christology. Nikos Nissiotis and Fr Boris Bobrinskoy have stressed that the work of the Holy Spirit and that of Christ belong together and should never be seen in separation. This is an important corrective of the views expressed by Khomiakov and to a large extent also Lossky, although the priority given to Pneumatology is still


6See ibid; also his In the Image and Likeness of God, 1974, esp. ch. 9.
preserved in both Nissiotis and Bobrinskoy. The question, however, remains still open as to how Pneumatology and Christology can be brought together into a full and organic synthesis. It is probably one of the most important questions facing Orthodox theology in our time.

As this brief historical survey suggests, Orthodox theology has no ready-made answers to offer to the problems at hand. It is often assumed that Orthodoxy can be helpful in the ecumenical discussions by contributing its Pneumatology to them. This may be true to some extent, especially if the Orthodox contribution is taken as a corrective to Western excesses in ecclesiology. But when it comes to the point of doing justice to the basic components of the Orthodox tradition itself or—and this is more important—to the point of facing our actual ecumenical problems with positive propositions, it becomes clear that Orthodox theology needs to work closely together with Western theology if it is to be really helpful to itself and to others. This brief study will reflect problems and concerns relating to Orthodoxy itself, which is by no means immune from the post-Vatican II problematique. A proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology in ecclesiology concerns Orthodoxy as much as the West.

II. *The Problem of the Synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology*

What would a proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology have to include? This question must be asked before any attempt is made to tackle the problem of ecclesial institutions. We shall discuss it only in those aspects which concern ecclesiology.

Few people if any would question the statement that


8Y. Congar, "Pneumatologie ou 'Christomonisme' dans la tradition latine" in *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta*, Mélange G. Phillips, 1970, pp. 41-63. In his important article work *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, 1980 (recently in English translation: *I believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1983) Father Congar shows clearly and convincingly the central place that Pneumatology has occupied in Western theology throughout the centuries. It is a work of particular significance and deserves special attention at the present time when the theological dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches is taking place. Another important recent study showing the place of Pneumatology in Western thought is that of Father Louis Bouyer, *Le Consolateur*, 1980. The importance of the problem of Pneumatology is made explicit also in an article by the Roman Catholic theologian, W. Kasper, "Esprit-Christ-Eglise" in *L'expérience de l'Esprit*, Mélange E. Schillebeeckx, 1976, pp. 47-69.


10John 7:39.
biological conception (Matthew and Luke). Both of these views could co-exist happily in one and the same Biblical writing, as is evident from a study of Luke (Gospel and Acts), John’s Gospel, etc. On the liturgical level these two approaches became quite distinct very early with the development of two traditions concerning the relationship between baptism and confirmation (or chrismation). It is well known that in Syria and Palestine confirmation preceded baptism liturgically at least until the fourth century, while in other parts, the practice of the Church which finally prevailed everywhere was observed, namely the performance of confirmation after baptism. Given the fact that confirmation was normally regarded as the rite of the “giving of the Spirit,” one could argue that in cases where confirmation preceded baptism we had a priority of Pneumatology over Christology, while in the other case we had the reverse. And yet there is also evidence suggesting that baptism itself was inconceivable in the early Church without the giving of the Spirit, which leads to the conclusion that the two rites were united in one synthesis both liturgically and theologically, regardless of the priority of any of the two aspects over the other.

It seems, therefore, that the question of priority between Christology and Pneumatology does not necessarily constitute a problem, and the Church could see no problem in this diversity of approach either liturgically or theologically for a long time. Thus there is no reason why things should be different today, as some Orthodox seem to suggest. The problem arose only when these two aspects were in fact separated from each other both liturgically and theologically. It was at this point in history that East and West started to follow their separate ways leading finally to total estrangement and division. Not only baptism and confirmation were

12See G. Lampe, The Seal of the Spirit, 1951. Lampe’s controversy with G. Dic on this matter (the latter insisted that the Spirit is given in confirmation only), proves to be pointless given this variety in liturgical use. In any case, baptism and confirmation formed a liturgical unity in the early Church and for that reason the Holy Spirit was involved in the entire process of Christian initiation.

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separated liturgically in the West, but Christology tended little by little to dominate Pneumatology, the Filioque being only part of the new development. The East while keeping the liturgical unity between baptism and chrismation, thus maintaining the original synthesis on the liturgical level, did not finally manage to overcome the temptation of a reactionary attitude towards the West in its theology. The atmosphere of mutual polemic and suspicion contributed a great deal to this situation and obscured the entire issue. What we must and can see clearly now, however, is that so long as the unity between Christology and Pneumatology remains unbreakable, the question of priority can remain a “theologoumenon.” For various reasons which have to do with the idiosyncrasy of the West (concern with history, ethics etc.), a certain priority will always be given by it to Christology over Pneumatology. Indeed, there are reasons to suppose that this could be spiritually expedient, especially in our time. Equally, for the East Pneumatology will always occupy an important place given the fact that a liturgical meta-historical approach to Christian existence seems to mark the Eastern ethos. Different concerns lead to different emphases and priorities. As long as the essential content of both Christology and Pneumatology is present, the synthesis is there in its fulness. But in what does this “content” consist? From what exactly does ecclesiology suffer if the content of Christology or Pneumatology is deficient?

It is difficult to make distinctions when a unity is involved. Our task at this point is somewhat delicate and involves the risk of separating where we should be only distinguishing. We must bear in mind that according to patristic tradition, both Eastern and Western, the activity of God ad extra is one and indivisible: Wherever the Son is there is also the Father and the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit is there is also the Father and the Son. And yet the contribution of each of these divine persons to the economy bears its own distinctive characteristics which are directly relevant for ecclesiology in which

they have to be reflected. Let us mention some of these concerning the Son and the Spirit in particular.

The most obvious thing to mention is that only the Son is incarnate. Both the Father and the Spirit are involved in history, but only the Son becomes history. In fact, as we shall see later, if we introduce time and history into either the Father or the Spirit we automatically deny them their particulars in the economy. To be involved in history is not the same as to become history. The economy, therefore, in so far as it assumed history and has a history, is only one and that is the Christ event. Even "events" such as Pentecost which seem to have an exclusively pneumatological character at first sight should be attached to the Christ event in order to qualify as part of the history of salvation; otherwise they cease to be pneumatological in the proper sense.

Now if becoming history is the particularity of the Son in the economy, what is the contribution of the Spirit? Well, precisely the opposite: it is to liberate the Son and the economy from the bondage of history. If the Son dies on the cross, thus succumbing to the bondage of historical existence, it is the Spirit that raises him from the dead. The Spirit is the beyond history, and when he acts in history he does so in order to bring into history the last days, the eschaton. Hence the first fundamental particularity of Pneumatology is its eschatological character. The Spirit makes of Christ an eschatological being, the "last Adam."

Another important contribution of the Holy Spirit to the Christ event is that, because of the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the economy, Christ is not just an individual, not "one" but "many." This "corporate personality" of Christ is impossible to conceive without Pneumatology. It is not insignificant that the Spirit has always, since the time of Paul,

14In the Fourth Gospel, for example, Pentecost is seen as the return of Jesus through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. See R. E. Brown, The Gospel according to John, 1970, p. 1139. Similarly in the Fathers, e.g. in Cyril of Alexandria, In Jo. X, 2 and XI, 2 (PG. 74, 433-436; 435-436).
15Romans 8:11.

been associated with the notion of communion (κοινωνία). Pneumatology contributes to Christology this dimension of communion. And it is because of this function of Pneumatology that it is possible to speak of Christ as having a "body," i.e. to speak of ecclesiology, of the Church as the Body of Christ.

Now there have been also other functions attached to the particular work of the Spirit in Christian theology, e.g. inspiration and sanctification. The Orthodox tradition has attached particular significance to the latter, namely the idea of sanctification, perhaps because of the strong Origenist influence that has always existed in the East. This is evident in Monasticism as a form of what is normally called "spirituality." But monasticism—and the notions of "sanctification" and "spirituality" that lie behind it—has never become a decisive aspect of ecclesiology in the East. Ecclesiology in the Orthodox tradition has always been determined by the liturgy, the eucharist; and for this reason it is the first two aspects of Pneumatology, namely eschatology and communion that have determined Orthodox ecclesiology. Both eschatology and communion constitute fundamental elements of the Orthodox understanding of the eucharist. The fact that these two things are, as we have just seen, also fundamental aspects of Pneumatology shows that if we want to understand Orthodox ecclesiology properly, and its relation to Pneumatology, it is mainly to these two aspects of Pneumatology that we must turn, namely to eschatology and communion.

Now, all this needs to be qualified with another fundamental point. It is not enough, to speak of eschatology and communion as necessary aspects of Pneumatology and ecclesiology; it is necessary to make these aspects of Pneumatology

18In saying this I do not wish to undermine the importance of personal sanctification, especially as this is understood by Monasticism. Orthodox Monasticism is, in any case, tied up with eschatology so closely that it becomes in this way deeply related with ecclesiology. What I wish to underline, however, is that no "spirituality" is healthy and truly Christian unless it is constantly dependent on the event of ecclesial communion. The eschatological community for excellence is to be found in the eucharist, which is thus the heart of all ecclesiology.
constitutive of ecclesiology. What I mean by “constitutive” is that these aspects of Pneumatology must qualify the very ontology of the Church. The Spirit is not something that “animates” a Church which already somehow exists. The Spirit makes the Church be. Pneumatology does not refer to the well-being but to the very being of the Church. It is not about a dynamism which is added to the essence of the Church. It is the very essence of the Church. The Church is constituted in and through eschatology and communion. Pneumatology is an ontological category in ecclesiology.

III. Implications of the Synthesis for Ecclesiology

All this sounds somewhat theoretical. If we try to apply this to the concrete existence of the Church, some of the peculiarities of Orthodox ecclesiology will become easier to explain.

1. The importance of the local Church in ecclesiology. This has been brought out with particular force in our time mainly since the work of N. Afanasiev and his “eucharistic ecclesiology.” But it has not yet been justified in terms of Pneumatology. Let me make a first attempt here by referring to what I have just said about the constitutive character of Pneumatology in both christology and ecclesiology.

The Church is the Body of Christ, which means that she is instituted through the one Christological event: she is one because Christ is one and she owes her being to this one Christ. If Pneumatology is not ontologically constitutive of Christology, this can mean that there is first one Church and then many Churches. K. Rahner, for example, has argued that the “essence” of the Church lies in the universal Church; it is the “existence” of the Church that makes it local. 20 However, if Pneumatology is made constitutive of both Christology and ecclesiology, it is not possible to speak in these terms. The Spirit is in this case the one who actually brings about, constitutes ontologically, the Body of Christ. The Pentecostal event is an ecclesiologically constitutive event. The one Christ event takes the form of events (plural), which are as primary ontologically as the one Christ event itself. The local Churches are as primary in ecclesiology as the universal Church. No priority of the universal over the local Church is conceivable in such an ecclesiology.

Ever since Afanasiev this idea has become current in Orthodox theology. But there is a danger in it which Afanasiev did not see and which many Orthodox theologians fail to see too. Because of the lack of a proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology in Orthodox ecclesiology, it is often too easily assumed that eucharistic ecclesiology leads to the priority of the local Church over the universal, 21 to a kind of “congregationalism.” But as I have tried to argue in another study of mine, 22 Afanasiev was wrong in drawing such conclusions, because the nature of the eucharist points not in the direction of the priority of the local Church but in that of the simultaneity of both local and universal. There is only one eucharist, which is always offered in the name of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” The dilemma “local or universal” is transcended in the eucharist, and so is any dichotomy between Christology and Pneumatology.

To make this even more concrete, let us turn to the question of how in fact this simultaneity works in ecclesiology. This leads us directly to the question of the ecclesial institutions: what ecclesial structures and institutions exist which help the Church to maintain the right balance between local and universal? And how must these structures and institutions be interpreted so as to do justice to the proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology which we have been advocating here?

2. The significance of conciliarity. That Orthodoxy does not have a Pope is in fact true. But that it has councils instead is wrong. The council is not present in Orthodox theology as a substitute for the Roman Catholic Pope, and this for the simple reason that the council cannot play the role of the Pope or replace his ministry. The true nature of conciliarity in Orthodox theology can be understood only in the light of


21Cf. below ch. 5, n. 111.

22See ch. 4 below.
what I have called here the constitutive role of pneumatology in ecclesiology, and of the fact that pneumatology implies the notion of communion.

The theological raison d'être of conciliarity—or of the institution of the synod—is to be found in the idea that communion (which, as we have seen, is a characteristic of pneumatology) is an ontological category in ecclesiology. At this point the relevance of trinitarian theology for ecclesiology becomes clear. There seems to be an exact correspondence between the trinitarian theology, as it was developed particularly by the Cappadocian Fathers—especially St Basil—and Orthodox ecclesiology. Let me say a few words on this point, because I think that this is essential and not so widely appreciated.

One of the striking peculiarities of St. Basil’s teaching on God, compared with that of St Athanasius and certainly with that of the Western Fathers, is that he seems to be rather unhappy with the notion of substance as an ontological category and tends to replace it—significantly enough for our subject here—with that of koinônia. Instead of speaking of the unity of God in terms of His one nature, he prefers to speak of it in terms of the communion of persons: communion is for Basil an ontological category. The nature of God is communion.23 This does not mean that the persons have an ontological priority over the one substance of God, but that the one substance of God coincides with the communion of the three persons.

In ecclesiology all this can be applied to the relationship between local and universal Church. There is one Church, as

23See, for example, Basil, De Sp. s. 18, (PG 32, 194C); “The unity (of God) is in the koinonia tes theotetos.” Cf. ibid., 153A and 156A. A careful study of Basil shows that for him the meaning of homoeostasis is better expressed in terms such as oikeiôsis or symphôsis or êkôrûsis koinônia, i.e. by the employment of the term koinonia (De Sp. S. 68; Ep. 52, 3; C. Eun. II, 12 etc.). Cf. on this A. Jevtic, “Between the ‘Niceans’ and the ‘Easterners’. The Catholic Confession of Saint Basil” in St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 24 (1980), 244. For further discussion cf. my “The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective” in Credo in Spiritum Sanctum (Atti del congresso teologico internazionale di pneumatologia, Roma 22-26, marzo 1982), ed. by José Saraiva Martins, Vatican City, 1983, vol. I, pp. 29-54.

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there is one God. But the expression of this one Church is the communion of the many local Churches. Communion and oneness coincide in ecclesiology.

Now, when we look at the institutional aspect of ecclesiology, it follows that the institution that is supposed to express the unity of the Church must be an institution which expresses communion. Since there is no institution which derives its existence or its authority from anything that precedes the event of communion, but from the event of communion itself (this is what it means to make communion ontologically constitutive), the institution of universal unity cannot be self-sufficient or self-explicable or prior to the event of communion; it is dependent on it. Equally, however, there is no communion which can be prior to the oneness of the Church: the institution which expresses this communion must be accompanied by an indication that there is a ministry safeguarding the oneness which the communion aims at expressing.

We can now become more concrete and try to interpret our view of synodality in the light of these theological principles.

The canonical institution of the synod is often misunderstood in Orthodox theology. Sometimes the synod is called “the highest authority in the Church,” as if Orthodoxy were the “democratic” opposite of the “monarchical” Rome. Many Orthodox think of the council in terms of late Medieval Western Konziliarismus. The true significance of the synod in Orthodox tradition, however, seems to me to be given in the canon 34 of the so-called Apostolic Canons; and its meaning is based on two fundamental principles put forth by this canon. The first principle is that in every province there must be one head—an institution of unity. There is no possibility of rotation or of collective ministry to replace this one head. The local bishops-Churches can do nothing without the presence of the “one.” On the other hand the same canon provides a second fundamental principle, namely that the “one” cannot do anything without the “many.”24 There is no
ministry or institution of unity which is not expressed in the form of communion. There is no “one” which is not at the same time “many”—is this not the same as the pneumatologically conditioned Christology, which we mentioned earlier? Pneumatology, by being constitutive of both Christology and ecclesiology, makes it impossible to think of Christ as an individual, i.e. of Christ without his Body, the “many,” or to think of the Church as one without simultaneously thinking of her as “many.”

To conclude this point, Orthodox theology is wrongly understood if we simply think of the Church as a confederation of local Churches. The Orthodox view of the Church, in my understanding at least, requires an institution which expresses the oneness of the Church and not simply its multiplicity. But the multiplicity is not to be subjected to the oneness; it is constitutive of the oneness. The two, oneness and multiplicity, must coincide in an institution which possesses a twofold ministry: the ministry of the πρῶτος (the first one) and the ministry of the “many” (the heads of the local Churches).

3. The Bishop and the community. We can now turn to a consideration of the institutions on the level of the local Church itself, always bearing in mind the same theological principles. Here again communion is ontologically constitutive. But as has been already observed in connection with the universal Church, the proper relationship between the “one” and the “many” must be maintained. In the case of the local Church the “one” is represented through the ministry of the bishop, while the “many” are represented through the other ministries and the laity. There is a fundamental principle in Orthodox ecclesiology going back to the early centuries and reflecting the proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology which I have been advocating here. This principle is that the “one”—the bishop—cannot exist without the diocese and the territory subject to it. But let him (i.e. the first one) not do anything without the consent of all the other (bishops); for it is by this means that there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified through Christ in the Holy Spirit.” The original text in F. X. Funk, Didascalia et Constitutions apostolorum, 1905, pp. 572-574.

“many”—the community—and the “many” cannot exist without the “one.”

First, the principle that the “one” is inconceivable without the “many.” In practical canonical terms this is expressed in various ways: (a) there is no ordination to the episcopate outside the community.28 Since ordination is an act which is ontologically constitutive of episcopacy, to condition the ordination of the bishop by the presence of the community is to make the community constitutive of the Church. There is no Church without the community, as there is no Church without the Body, or the “one” without the “many.” (b) There is no episcopacy without a community attached to it.29 Here a detail must be stressed because it points to a peculiarity of Orthodoxy compared with Roman Catholic theology: the mention of the name of the community takes place in the prayer of ordination of a bishop. Since in the Orthodox Church there is no missio canonica or a distinction between potestas ordinis and potestas iurisdictionis, the fact that the community is mentioned in the prayer of ordination means that the community forms part of the ontology of episcopacy: there is no bishop, not even for a moment or theoretically, who is not conditioned by some community. The “many” condition ontologically the “one.”

But again this is not the whole story. The opposite is also true, namely that the “many” cannot exist without the “one.” This in concrete terms is expressed in the following ways: (a) There is no baptism, which is the constitutive act of the community, i.e. the ontological basis of the laity, without the bishop. The “many” cannot be “many” without the “one.” (b) There is no ordination of any kind without the presence of the bishop; the bishop is a condition for the existence of the community and its charismatic life.

4. The “iconic” character of the ecclesial institutions. This mutual interdependence between the “one” and the “many,” this twofold structure of the Church is placed under one further condition for its existence: both the ordination of the bishop, which requires the community, and the ordination of

28See chs. 5 and 6 below.
29Ibid.
the laity (baptism) or of any other minister, which requires the presence of the bishop, both of these have to be attached to the eucharist. This seems to me to imply that it is not enough to place the ecclesial institutions in the context of the proper synthesis between the "one" and the "many." This is only one of the components of Pneumatology. The other one, which has been mentioned earlier, is eschatology, and to my mind this aspect is expressed through the fact that both baptism and ordination have to take place in the context of the eucharist. The eucharist, in the Orthodox understanding at least, is an eschatological event. In it, not only the "one" and the "many" co-exist and condition each other, but something more is indicated: the ecclesial institutions are reflections of the Kingdom. First, they are reflections: the nature of the ecclesial institutions is "iconic," i.e. their ontology does not lie in the institution itself, but only in relation to something else, to God or Christ. Secondly they are reflections of the Kingdom: all ecclesial institutions must have some justification by reference to something ultimate and not simply to historical expedience. There are, to be sure, ministries which are meant to serve temporal historical needs. But these cannot claim ecclesial status in a fundamental structural sense. History is never a sufficient justification for the existence of a certain ecclesial institution, be it with reference to tradition, apostolic succession, scriptural foundation or actual historical needs. The Holy Spirit points beyond history—not, of course, against it, though it can and must often point against history as it actually is, through a prophetic function of the ministry. The ecclesial institutions by being eschatologically conditioned become sacramental in the sense of being placed in the dialectic between history and eschatology, between the already and the not yet. They lose therefore their self-sufficiency, their individualistic ontology, and exist epistemically, i.e. they depend for their efficacy constantly on prayer, the prayer of the community. It is not in history that the ecclesial institutions find their certainty (their validity) but in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit. This is what makes them "sacramental," which in the language of Orthodox theology may be called "iconic."

IV. Conclusions

Let me now conclude by summarizing the main points which I have tried to make and by placing what I have said in the light of the actual situation of Orthodoxy in our time. I have been discussing Christology, Pneumatology and ecclesial institutions in Orthodox theology—not in Orthodox practice. What I have said however, is not just theory; it derives from historical experience, even if this historical experience tends to be a somewhat remote memory from the past. My points have been the following:

1. Orthodox theology has not yet worked out the proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology. Without this synthesis it is impossible to understand the Orthodox tradition itself or to be of any real help in the ecumenical discussion of our time.

2. The important thing about this synthesis is that Pneumatology must be made constitutive of Christology and ecclesiology, i.e. condition the very being of Christ and the Church, and that this can happen only if two particular ingredients of Pneumatology are introduced into the ontology of Christ and the Church. These ingredients are: eschatology and communion.

3. If the Church is constituted through these two aspects of Pneumatology, all pyramidal notions disappear in ecclesiology: the "one" and the "many" co-exist as two aspects of the same being. On the universal level this means that the local Churches constitute one Church through a ministry or an institution which composes simultaneously a primum and a synod of which he is a primum. On the local level, this means that the head of the local Church, the bishop, is conditioned by the existence of his community and the rest of the ministries, particularly the presbyterium. There is no ministry which does not need the other ministries; no ministry possesses the fullness, the plentitude of grace and power without a relationship with the other ministries.

4. Equally, a pneumatological conditioning of the being of
the Church is important for the opening-up of ecclesial institutions to their eschatological perspective. Too much historicity is often attached to the ecclesial institutions. Orthodoxy often suffers from meta-historicism; the West usually suffers from a historization of its ecclesial institutions. The liturgical ethos of Orthodoxy will probably never make it possible for her to be fully involved in history, although it has not prevented such eruptions of liberation movements as those of the Greek war of independence in the last century. But the justification of any permanent ecclesiastical institution certainly needs an eschatological perspective; history is not enough.

5. Finally, if Pneumatology is made constitutive of ecclesiology, the notion of institution itself will be deeply affected. In a christological perspective alone we can speak of the Church as in-stituted (by Christ), but in a pneumatological perspective we have to speak of it as con-stituted (by the Spirit). Christ in-stitutes and the Spirit con-stitutes. The difference between these two prepositions: in—and con—can be enormous ecclesiologically. The “institution” is something presented to us as a fact, more or less a fait accompli. As such, it is a provocation to our freedom. The “con-stitution” is something that involves us in its very being, something we accept freely, because we take part in its very emergence. Authority in the first case is something imposed on us, whereas in the latter it is something that springs from amongst us. If Pneumatology is assigned a constitutive role in ecclesiology, the entire issue of Ant und Geist, or of “institutionalism,” is affected. The notion of communion must be made to apply to the very ontology of the ecclesial institutions, not to their dynamism and efficacy alone.

And now, how about the present, actual situation: how much of this in fact exists, and how much of it can still exist or be made to exist? The fact that Orthodoxy has not experienced situations similar to those of the Western Churches, such as the problem of clericalism, anti-institutionalism, Pentecostalism, etc. may be taken as an indication that for the most part Pneumatology has saved the life of Orthodoxy up to now. There is no sign of anti-establishment tendencies in the Orthodox Church, although in Greece at the moment such signs can be observed here and there. But the actual situation in Orthodoxy both theologically and canonically no longer does full justice to the tradition of which my exposé has been a reflection. The synodal institutions no longer reflect the true balance between the “one” and the “many,” sometimes because the “one” does not operate or even exist, and sometimes because the “one” or the “ones” ignore the “many.” The same is true about local Church life: the community has almost disappeared and the number of titular bishops is increasing rapidly. The only level on which the proper balance between the “one” and the “many” is still maintained is the liturgical: is it the liturgy that still saves Orthodoxy? Perhaps this is the case. But for how long? As Orthodoxy shares Western culture more and more, it will eventually share the problems of the Western Churches too. The problem of ecclesial institutions will thus soon become, existentially speaking, an ecumenical problem.

But what can be done? Vatican II has given hope and promise to many people that something can be done. I am not an expert on the theology of the council, but I feel that one of the directions in which it has pointed can be particularly important, namely the introduction of the notion of communion into ecclesiology. This, combined with the rediscovery of the importance of the λογός of God and the local Church, can help even the Orthodox themselves to be faithful to their identity. But much more needs to be done, for Vatican II has not completed its work. What an Orthodox sharing the views of this exposé would like to be done—perhaps by a “Vatican III”—is to push the notion of communion to its ontological conclusions. We need an ontology of communion. We need to make communion condition the very being of the Church, not the well-being but the being of it. On the theological level this would mean assigning a constitutive role to Pneumatology, not one dependent on Christology. This Vatican II has not done, but its notion of communion can do. Perhaps this will transform the ecclesial institutions automatically. It will remove any pyramidal structure that may still remain in the Church. And it may even place the stumbling block of ecclesial unity, the ministry of the
Pope, in a more positive light. So much and perhaps much more depends on the proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology in ecclesiology.

4.

Eucharist and Catholicity

The lines that follow represent an attempt to see the concept of the catholicity of the Church in the light of the eucharistic community. It is not an accident that in adopting the term "catholic" from Aristotelian language\(^1\) the early Christians did not conceptualize it, but instead of speaking of "catholicity," as we do today,\(^2\) they spoke of a "catholic Church" or even—and this is more significant—of "catholic Churches" in the plural.\(^3\) This means that we cannot speak of "catholicity" and ignore the concrete local Church.

\(^1\)The Aristotelian use of the term κόσμος as contrasted with the κοινός or κοινῆ ἑκκλησία survived at the time of the primitive Church mainly under the form of the adjective κοινῳκὴ (see e.g. Polybius, VI, 5, 3; Dionysius Halicarn., Comp., 12; Philo, Vitae Noeit., II, 32, etc.).

\(^2\)Such conceptualizations have occurred not only in western theology, but also within that of the Orthodox Church, as we see, for example, in the well-known idea of sobornost, which appeared in nineteenth-century Russian theology, mainly through the works of Khomiakov. This idea is a conceptualization made on the basis of a translation of κοινωνία by sobornost in the Slavonic Creed and under the influence of eighteenth-century philosophical trends. It would be very interesting to study the exact meaning of this Slavonic term at the time of its first appearance, because it is possible that at that time the word meant precisely the concrete gathering together, i.e. a συνόδος not in the technical sense of the councils but in that of συνεργεία ἐπί τὸ αὐτό as we find it in Paul (1 Cor. 11:20 f.) and Ignatius (Eph., 5, 2-3), and as it was explicitly used even in the time of Chrysostom when συνόδος could simply mean the eucharistic gathering (see Chrysostom, De Propb. obic., 2, 5, PG 56:182; cf. below, note 22). If that is the case, then it is interesting to note that not only ideas such as the identification of "catholic" with "universal" as it developed in the West, but even that of sobornost as it developed in the East did nothing but obscure the original concrete meaning of the κοινωνία ἐκκλησία.

\(^3\)During the first three centuries at least, the term "catholic Church" was
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Already in the book of the Didache in the later first or early second century the idea was clearly expressed that in the celebration of the eucharist the Church experiences that which is promised for the Parousia, namely the eschatological unity of all in Christ: "Just as this loaf was scattered all over the mountains and having been brought together was made one, so let your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth in your Kingdom." This conviction was not irrelevant in the application of the term "catholic Church" to the local community. It was a clear indication that, although the catholicity applied almost exclusively to the local Church, Ignatius in his well-known passage in Smyrna, it, where the term appears for the first time in our sources, seems to contrast the local episcopal community with the "catholic Church" in a way that has led many scholars (Zahn, Lighthouse, Barden, etc.) to identify the letter with the "universal Church." But there is not a single indication in the text that would suggest this identification. It is clear from Ignatian ecclesiology as a whole that not only does a "universal Church" not exist in Ignatius' mind but, on the contrary, an identification of the whole Church and the whole Church with the local episcopal community constitutes a key idea in his thought (cf. below at note 36). In the Martyrion Polycarpi the expression ἡ ἐκκλησία ἡ καθόλος καὶ μαρτυρικὴ καὶ ἀμώμητος has led scholars to similar conclusions in a way which seems to overlook the fact that, if one translated καθόλος in this way one would be confronted with an impossible theology which would read something like: "The universal Church which is in the universe." That is in this case there is no such contrast between "local" and "universal" as shown by the fact that it speaks of Polycarp as being the bishop "of the catholic Church which is in Smyrna" (16, 2) precisely because the local Church is the "dwelling place" (τοποθέτης) of the whole Church (κοινωνία). In the same way Tertullian can use the term "catholic Church" in the plural (Persec. hort., 26, 4, PL 2, 38; see comments by Lubinšćik-Bratulić in the edition "Sources Chrestianes" 40, 1979, p. 126, n. 4), while Cyril can write: "on the unity of the catholic Church" leaving in mind probably the Church of Carthage (see Th. Camilleri, "Saint Cyril et le monastisme" in Lehrs 2 [1957], p. 425), and M. Bouyer, St. Cyril: The Legend—The Unity of the Catholic Church [Ancient Christian Writers 25, 1957], pp. 74, 75). And the Roman conciles in the middle of the third century can speak of "one bishop in the catholic Church" (Cyprian, Ep. 40 [186], 2:4: Euchologia, Hist. Ecc., VI, 41, 11). It was probably only in the fourth century and out of the struggle of such theologies as Cyprian of Milevis (Adv. Firm., 2, 1) and Augustine (Conf., XI, 21; De Civ., 6, 16, etc.) against the schismatics of the Donatists that the term "catholic" came to be identified with "universal." Cf. P. Ruffin, Le Catholique du Saint Augure (1925), p. 212. During the same century in the East catholicity receives a synthetic definition, in which "universal" is one of the elements that constitute catholicity. (See Cyril of Jerusalem, Cathec., 28, 23, PG 35:1044.)

"[Didache, 9: 4, CT 48: 5] For the fact that there are eucharistic texts see J. P. Audet, La Didache: Instruction des Apôtres (1946), p. 407.

1. The "One" and the "Many" in the Eucharistic Consciousness of the Early Church

In his first letter to the Corinthians (10:16-17) and in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper Paul writes: The cup of blessing which we bless is it not a communion (κοινωνία) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a communion of the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." This is the only time of the Church is ultimately an eschatological reality, its nature is revealed and realistically apprehended here and now in the eucharist. The eucharist understood primarily not as a thing and an objectified means of grace but as an act and a synthesis of the local Church, a "catholic" act of a "catholic" Church, can, therefore, be of importance in any attempt to understand the catholicity of the Church.

In the following lines we shall first briefly study the eucharistic community as it developed in the early Church with attention fixed on those aspects which were related to catholicity. We shall then try to draw from this study some general conclusions concerning our discussions about catholicity today.

This aspect of the eucharist has been forgotten for a long time. It has been emphasized in the West by such scholars as O. Cardo, G. Dix, etc. for the eucharistic implications of the eucharist; see also H. Peters, "Die christlichen Bedeutungen des eucharistischen Tischgesangs (1960), p. 176; J. M. R. Tillard, L'Eucharistie, Pèque de l'âme (Oxford Sociology, no. 44, 1965); J. J. von Almen, Rein was le repas du Seigneur (1965), pp. 171; and the works of M. A. Allison, A. Schmemann and J. Meyendorff (the latter's Orthodoxy and Catholicity, 1966).

Gkl. 3:28 Cf. II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 2:15 etc.
of Man.” But what is significant for us here is that this idea was from the beginning connected with the eucharistic consciousness of the Church. Paul in writing those words to the Corinthians, was simply echoing a conviction apparently widely spread in the primitive Church.

Thus with regard to the tradition of the Servant of God the texts of the Last Supper, in spite of their differences on many points, agree on the connection of the Supper with the “many” or “you” “for” or “in the place of” (αὐτός, τεσσάρες) whom the one offers himself. This relation of the eucharist to the tradition of the Servant of God in whom the many are represented established itself in the liturgical life of the Church already in the first century. In the most ancient liturgical prayer of the Roman Church, which is found in I Clement, we come across the idea of the Servant of God many times in connection with the eucharist. The same is true about the Didache, where this idea finds its place in an even more explicit manner.

Similar observations can be made about the connection of the eucharist with the “Son of Man” tradition. If the sixth chapter of the Fourth Gospel refers to the eucharist, it is significant that the prevailing figure of the Son of Man is connected there with the eucharist. He is the one who gives “the food which remains to eternal life.” Unlike the manna which God gave to Israel through Moses, this bread is “the true bread” which, having come down from heaven, is nothing else but “the Son of Man” himself. It is significant that Christ appears here as the Son of Man, and not in another capacity, as he identifies himself with “the true bread.”


Hence the eating of this bread is called specifically the eating of “the flesh of the Son of Man” who takes into himself every one who eats this bread, thus fulfilling his role as the corporate Son of Man.

It is precisely this idea that prevails in chapters 13–17 of the same Gospel, where the eucharistic presuppositions of the Last Supper are so deeply connected with the eschatological unity of all in Christ, finding their climax in the prayer that “they all may be one.” It is impossible to see all this outside a eucharistic context in which the idea of the unity of the “many” in the “one” prevails. Because of this the Fourth Gospel not only allows itself to be taken as a eucharistic liturgy, but it is also characterized by such otherwise inexplicable expressions as the strange exchange of first person singular with first person plural in 3:11–13—“Truly, truly I say unto you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.” It should be noted that it is again a Son of Man text that contains such a philological phenomenon which can only be understood in an ecclesiological sense.

All this shows the early and deep connection of the idea of the unity of the “many” in the “one” with the eucharistic experience of the Church. It would fall outside the scope of this study to discuss here whether or not this connection offers an explanation of the ecclesiological image of “the Body of Christ.” But it is certainly true that neither the identification of the Church with the Body of Christ nor the ultimate unity

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13John 6:53.
14John 6:56.
15John 17.
18For such an explanation see A. D. J. Rawlinson, “Corpus Christi,” in Mysterium Christi (ed. G. A. Bell and A. Deissmann, 1930), p. 225 ff.
of the "many" in the "one" can be understood apart from
the eucharistic word "this is my Body." 19

The ecclesiologica! consequences of this can be clearly seen
in the sources of the first three centuries. The first of these
consequences is that the local eucharistic community receives
the name ἐκκλησία or even ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ already
in the letters of St Paul. A careful study of I Cor. 11 reveals
that the term ἐκκλησία is used in a dynamic sense: "when
you come together into, i.e. when you become, ἐκκλησίας."
(v. 18.) This implies clearly what in the following verses be-
comes explicit, namely that the eucharistic terms "coming
together," "coming together ἐπὶ τὸ σείτο;," "Lord's Supper,"
etc., are identified with the ecclesiologica! terms "ἐκκλησίας" or
"ἐκκλησία of God." The other consequence which, I
think, is of great importance for later developments of the
idea of catholicity is that this local community is called
ὅλη ἡ ἐκκλησία, i.e. the whole Church, already by Paul
again.20 Now, whether this idea had anything to do with
the idea of the "catholic Church" to appear a few generations
later will not occupy us here, interesting as it is from a his-
torical point of view.21 What remains a fact, in any case, is
that, in the literature of the first three centuries at least, the
local Church, starting again with Paul, was called the
ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ or the "whole Church" or even the
κοινωνία ἐκκλησίας and this not unrelated to the concrete
eucharistic community.22 As the ecclesiology of Ignatius of

19Cf. C. T. Craig, The One Church in the Light of the New Testament
20Rom. 16:23.
21This is discussed in my book The Unity of the Church in the Eucharist
and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries (1965—in Greek).
22It is not accidental that the term "catholic" came to be applied to the
cathedral, i.e. the main church where the bishop would celebrate and the
etire episcopal community would be present (Council in Trullo, canon
59). The terms ecclesia major, ecclesia senior and ecclesia catholica
became synonymous expressions by which the cathedral was distinguished
from the parishes from the fourth century on (such evidence appears for
example in the Euchereae Peregrinationes, ed. by H. Péret, in Sources chre-
tennes 21, 1948; and in the lectioonaries of the Church of Jerusalem,
ed. by M. Tarchisvilli in 1959, etc.). It is probably from this use of the
word "catholic" that the term καθολικῶν came to be applied to the main
church in a Byzantine monastery, since this was the place where all the

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Antiocb makes clear, even the context in which the term κοινω-
νία ἐκκλησίας appears is a eucharistic one, in which Ignatius'
main concern was the unity of the eucharistic community.23
Instead of trying, therefore, to find the meaning of the
"catholic Church" in this Ignatian text in a contrast between
"local" and "universal," we would be more faithful to the
sources if we saw it in the light of the entire Ignatian ec-
clesiology, according to which the eucharistic community is
"exactly the same as" (this is the meaning I would give to
διστόρ which connects the two in the Ignatian text) the
whole Church united in Christ.24

Catholicity, therefore, in this context, does not mean any-
thing else but the wholeness and fulness and totality of
the body of Christ "exactly as" (διστόρ) it is portrayed in
the eucharistic community.

II. The Composition and Structure of the Eucharistic
Community as Reflections of Catholicity

With such a view of the eucharistic community in the back-
ground it would have been impossible for the composition
and the structure of this community to be different from
what it actually was in the first centuries. A different com-
position and structure would mean a different ecclesiology.
It is, therefore, important for us in order to understand this
ecclesiology, especially as it concerns the aspect of "catholic-
ity," to bear in mind this composition and structure.

monks would gather for the celebration of the eucharist. The significance
of these usages for the connection between the eucharistic community and
the "catholic Church" in the early centuries hardly needs to be emphasized.
23Cf. Smyr., 8: "... Let that be deemed a valid eucharist which is under
the leadership of the bishop or one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever
the bishop appears let there the multitude of the people be, just as wherever
Jesus Christ is there (is) the catholic Church."
24Any contrast between the "local" and the "universal" in this text would
mean that the "universal" Church is united around Christ whereas the
"local" is united not around Christ but around the bishop. This kind of
theology is foreign to Ignatius who, on the contrary, sees no difference
between the unity in Christ and the unity in the bishop (e.g. Epb., 5, 1;
Magn., 3, 1-2; cf. Poly., incer.), and this not by way of metaphor but in a
mystical sense of real identification.
As a combination of the existing fragmentary liturgical evidence of the first centuries allows us to know, the "whole Church" would "dwell in a certain city" would "come together," mainly on a Sunday to "break bread." This synaxis would be the only one in that particular place in the sense that it would include the "whole Church." This fact, which is not usually noted by historians, is of paramount ecclesiastical significance, for it immediately draws the line of demarcation between the Christian and the non-Christian pattern of unity at the time of the early Church.

Coming together in brotherly love was certainly not a Christian innovation. In the Roman Empire it was so common to form "associations" that there was need for special laws concerning such associations signed under the name of collegia. The brotherly love which prevailed among the members of the collegia was so strong and organized that each one of them would contribute monthly to a common fund and would address the other members by the title "brethren." Apart from the pagans, the Jews who lived in the Roman Empire were also organized in special communities under their own ethnarchy and their brotherly love was so strong that in cases of special groups, like the Essenes, it was based on principles of common property. To speak, therefore, of the unity of the early Christians in terms of brotherly love would be to miss the unique point of this unity and perhaps even to expose it to a comparison from which it would certainly not gain much, especially in the light of such evidence as that provided by texts like Gal. 5:5, I Cor. 11:21, etc.!

Certainly there was a basic difference in faith that distinguished Christians from their environment. But there was also a certain distinctiveness in the manner of their gathering together, which should not pass unnoticed. This distinctiveness lay in the composition of these gatherings. Whereas the Jews based the unity of their gatherings on race (or, in the later years, on a broader religious community based on this race) and the pagans with their collegia on profession, the Christians declared that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek," "male or female," "adult or child," "rich or poor," "master or slave," etc. To be sure the Christians themselves soon came to believe that they constituted a third race, but this was only to show that in fact it was a "non-racial race," a people who, while claiming to be the true Israel, declared at the same time that they did not care about the difference between a Greek and a Jew once these were members of the Christian Church.

This attitude which transcended not only social but also natural divisions (such as age, race, etc.) was portrayed in the eucharistic community par excellence. It is very significant that, unlike what the Churches do today in an age marked by a tragic loss of the primitive ecclesiology, there was never a celebration of the eucharist specially for children or for

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25Rom. 16:23.
26Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; I Thess. 1:1; Acts 11:22 etc.
28The observance of Sunday was almost identical with the eucharistic synaxis. Cf. W. Rostorf, Sunday—The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church (1968), pp. 177 ff., and 238 ff.
30The existence of the "Churches in the household" does not present a problem in this respect, even if these Churches are understood as eucharistic assemblies, for there are strong reasons to believe that—significantly enough—there was no more than one such "Church in the household" in each city. These reasons are presented in my The Unity of the Church... pp. 64 ff.
32Cf. F. X. Kraus, "Fraternitas," in Realencyclopaedie der christlichen Alterthümer I (1880), col. 540.
understood as the living "image of Christ." Around his throne were seated the presbyters, while by him stood the deacons helping him in the celebration, and in front of him the "people of God," that order of the Church which was constituted by virtue of the rite of initiation (baptism-chris-}

mation) and considered the sine qua non condition for the eucharistic community to exist and express the Church's unity.

A fundamental function of this "one bishop" was to express in himself the "multitude" of the faithful in that place. He was the one who would offer the eucharist to God in the name of the Church, thus bringing up to the throne of God the whole Body of Christ. He was the one in whom the "many" united would become "one," being brought back to him who had made them, thanks to their redemption from Satan by the one who took them upon himself. Thus the bishop would become the one through whose hands the whole community would have to pass in its being offered up to God in Christ, i.e. in the highest moment of the Church's unity.

The decisive pre-eminence of the bishop in the idea of a "catholic Church" was thus developing from within the heart of the eucharistic community. Not only the multiplicity of the people but also the plurality of orders ought to cease to be a division and be transcended into a diversity like the one given by the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts without destroying the unity. This was the function of ordination. Ordination means order and therefore creates orders. This was nothing strange to the primitive eucharistic gatherings,


See Justin, Apol., 65, 67, and previous note.

1 Clem., 40, 5; 41, 7. The idea that the "layman" is not a "non-ordained" person but "one who through baptism and ordination belongs to his own order in the Church is fundamental in the correct understanding of the eucharistic synaxis and its ecclesiological implications.

"Ignatius, Epb., 1, 3; Trad., 1, 1: the "multitude" of Tralles could be seen in the person of their bishop.
which were structured by such orders. But a distribution of gifts and ministries, and the creation of orders could mean a destruction of unity, as it can in the natural world. By restricting all such ordinations to the eucharistic community and making it an exclusive right of the bishop, not as an individual but as the head of this eucharistic community, to ordain, the early Church saved the catholic character of its entire structure. The bishop with his exclusive right of ordination and with the indispensable restriction of ordaining only in the eucharistic context took it upon himself to express the catholicity of his Church. But it was the eucharistic community and the place he occupied in its structure that justified this.

III. The Eucharistic Community and the "Catholic Church in the World"

But there was a paradox in the way the eucharistic community lent itself to the formation of the "catholic Church" in the first centuries. The paradox lay in the fact that although the eucharistic community, being a local entity, led inevitably to the idea of a catholic local Church, it led at the same time to a transcendence of the antithesis between local and universal, thus making it possible to apply the term "catholic" both to the local and the universal realms at the same time. This was possible for reasons that are rooted both in the very nature and in the structure of the eucharistic community.

The nature of the eucharistic community was determined by its being "eucharistic," i.e., by the fact that it consisted in the communion of the Body of Christ in its totality and in its inclusiveness of all. What each eucharistic community, therefore, was meant to reveal, was not part of Christ but the whole Christ and not a partial or local unity but the full ecclesiastical unity of all in Christ. It was a concretization and localization of the general, a real presence of the κοσμός ἐκκλησιῶν in the κοσμός ἐκκλησιῶν in the true Aristotelian sense. As it is indicated in the passage of the Didache we mentioned earlier, the local eucharistic assembly understood itself as the revelation of the eschatological unity of all in Christ. This meant that no mutual exclusion between the local and the universal was possible in a eucharistic context, but the one was automatically involved in the other.

This principle found expression in the structure of the eucharistic community through the fact that the head of this community was related to the other eucharistic communities in the world by his very ordination. The fact that in each episcopal ordination at least two or three bishops from the neighboring Churches ought to take part tied the episcopal office and with it the local eucharistic community in which the ordination to it took place with the rest of the eucharistic communities in the world in a fundamental way. This fact not only made it possible for each bishop to allow a visiting fellow-bishop to preside over his eucharistic community but must have been also one of the basic factors in the appearance of episcopal conciliarity.

The exact place that the "synod" or "council" occupied in the context of the catholicity of the early Church represents one of the most obscure and difficult problems. Were these councils intended, when they first appeared, to form a structure of a "universal catholicity" above the local Churches? Cyprian, one of the persons most involved in such conciliar activity, certainly did not think so. For him the authority of a council was moral and each bishop remained always directly responsible to God. The relationship of the κοσμός ἐκκλησιῶν and Callias to the κοσμός ἐκκλησιῶν (Interp., 7, 17). Thus the κοσμός ἐκκλησιῶν is not understood as a part of the κοσμός ἐκκλησιῶν but as its concrete expression. In this way of thinking the dilemma between "local" and "universal" appears to make no sense.

See above, note 4

56 Hippolytus, Apost. Trad., 2; Council of Arles, c. 20; I Nicaea, c. 4 and 6 etc.

57 This is a fundamental point which N. Afanasiev has failed in his eucharistic ecclesiology to see and appreciate, as one may gather from the views expressed, for example, in his article "Una Sancta," irenikon 56 (1953), pp. 456-75, and elsewhere.

58 This we know, for example, from Polycarp's visit to Rome on the occasion of the paschal controversy (Eusebius, Eccl. Hist., V, 24, 14-17). Cf. Syriac Didascalia, 12 (ed. Connolly, p. 122).
sible to God for his own community. But the very fact of the gradual acceptance of the "council" as a norm in the life of the Church proves that its roots must have been very deep.

On another occasion too I tried to show that the phenomenon of early councils cannot be understood apart from a primitive conciliarity which preceded the councils and which again was not unrelated to the eucharistic community. It was not an insignificant thing that most, if not all, of the earliest councils were ultimately concerned with the problem of eucharistic communion nor that the final admission of supra-local conciliar structures with authority over the local bishop was provoked by the pressing need to solve the problem of eucharistic admission among the local Churches. All this meant that behind these developments stood a concept of "catholicity" deeply rooted in the idea of the eucharistic community. The various local Churches had to wrestle—perhaps unconsciously—with the problem of the relationship between the "catholic Church" in the episcopal community and the catholic Church in the world. The moment they would admit a supra-local structure over the local eucharistic community, be it a synod or another office, the eucharistic community would cease to be in itself and by virtue of its eucharistic nature a "catholic Church." The moment, on the other hand, that they would allow each eucharistic community to close itself to the other communities either entirely (i.e. by creating a schism) or partially (i.e. by not allowing certain

Cyprian, Ep., 55 (52), 21. The significant passage is: "Manente concordia vinculo et perseverante catholicæ ecclesiæ individuo sacramentum, actum suum disposit et dirigat unusquisque episcopus rationem propositi sui Domino redditurus." This makes it difficult to attribute to Cyprian the beginning of a "universalist ecclesiology" as N. Afanasiev has done (cf. his "La doctrine de la primauté à la lumière de l'ecclésiologie," Itima 2 (1957), pp. 401-20).


This is for the first time reflected in canon 5 of I Nicæa. This clause is concerned with ecommunications which took place in various local Churches. Its deeper meaning lies in the idea that conciliarity is born out of the Church's belief that eucharistic communion in a certain community is a matter that concerns all communities in the world.

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individual faithful from one community to communicate in another or by accepting to communion faithful excluded from it by their own community they would betray the very eucharistic nature of their catholicity and the catholic character of the eucharist. The council was, therefore, an inevitable answer to this dilemma, and its genesis must be seen in the light of this situation.

Placed in this background, the councils represent in their appearance the most official negation of the division between local and universal, a negation which must be taken in all its implications. The eucharistic mentality which led to this solution would not allow any structure which would deny the fact that each eucharistic community revealed in a certain place the whole Christ and the ultimate eschatological unity of all in him. But the same mentality would not allow any provincialism that would fail to see the same reality in the other eucharistic communities. The whole Christ, the catholic Church, was present and incarnate in each eucharistic community. Each eucharistic community was, therefore, in full unity with the rest by virtue of an external superimposed structure but of the whole Christ represented in each of them. The bishops as heads of these communities coming together in synods only expressed what Ignatius, in spite of—or perhaps because of—his eucharistic ecclesiology wrote once: "the bishops who are in the extremes of the earth are in the mind of Christ." Thanks to a eucharistic vision of the "catholic Church" the problem of the relationship between the "one catholic Church in the world" and the "catholic Churches" in the various local places was resolved apart from any consideration of the local Church as being incomplete.

See again canon 5 of I Nicæa where the problem lies in the historical background.

Ignatius, Ep., 3, 2.

The idea that the local Church is a representative of the entire Church and therefore a full Church was a fundamental one in the consciousness of the early Church. Cf. B. Botte, "La collégialité dans le Nouveau Testament et chez les Pères apostoliques" in Le Concile et les Conciles (ed. B. Botte, et al., 1969), p. 14 f., and J. Hamer, L'Eglise est une communion (1962), p. 36: "it is not in adding together the local communities that the whole community which constitutes the Church is born, but each community, however small, represents the whole Church."

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or any scheme of priority of the one over the other, and in the sense of a unity in identity.66

IV. Some General Conclusions

In the light of this brief study of the "catholic" character of the eucharistic community as it developed in the early Church, the following thoughts may be of some relevance to the present-day ecumenical discussion on the catholicity of the Church.

(1) The primary content of "catholicity" is not a moral but a Christological one. The Church is catholic, not because she is obedient to Christ, i.e., because she does certain things or behaves in a certain way. She is catholic first of all because she is the Body of Christ. Her catholicity depends not on herself but on Him. She is catholic because she is where Christ is. We cannot understand catholicity as an ecclesiological notion unless we understand it as a Christological reality.67

To derive this assertion from a study of the eucharistic community means ceasing to understand it in the context of the problem of whether catholicity is a given reality or a

66The fundamental and crucial problem of the relationship between the "local" and the "universal" catholic Church must be solved apart from any notion of a unity in collectivity, and in the direction of a unity in identity. Schematically speaking, in the first case the various local Churches form parts which are added to one another in order to make up a whole, whereas in the latter, the local Churches are full circles which cannot be added to one another but coincide with one another and finally with the Body of Christ and the original apostolic Church. It is for this reason that any "structure of the unity of the Church in the Churches" (cf. the suggestion of Professor J.-J. von Allmen, op. cit., p. 52) renders itself extremely difficult, once it is a structure. (It is not an accident that the ancient Church never realized such a structure in her life in spite of her conciliar activity.) The problem deserves a fuller discussion. With regard to the sources of the first three centuries, cf. the discussion in my book The Unity of the Church . . ., pp. 65-148.

67Christology as the starting point in ecclesiology in general has been stressed by G. Florovsky, "Christ and His Church, Suggestions and Comments," in 1654-1954, L'Eglise et les Eglises II (1954), p. 164, and should not be understood as a negation of the pneumatological or the triadological aspect of the Church. For a clarification of this approach see Y. N. Leleuver, Perspectives russes sur l'Eglise: Un théologien contemporain, Georges Florovsky (1968).

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Demand. This problem, which is often presented in the form of a dilemma, is strange to the eucharistic vision of catholicity because in such a vision whatever is given is revealed in an existential way, i.e. in the form of a presence here and now, a presence so fully incarnate in history that the ontological and the ethical cease to claim priority over each other. For example, to illustrate this from our brief study of the eucharistic community, it is not possible to ask the question whether this community was composed in such a "catholic" way because she was conscious of a certain demand for that, or whether her being composed in such a way led to the consciousness of such a demand or such a concept of "catholicity." History is, in this respect, very instructive because there is perhaps nothing hidden so obscurely in the roots of Church history as the eucharistic structure of the first communities. To ask whether a certain belief preceded this structure, or if this structure led to this or that belief, would be asking a historically impossible question.

When, therefore, we say here that catholicity is not a moral but a Christological reality, we are not choosing between a "given" fact and a "demand," for the entire scheme of "given" versus "obtained" is far from being the context of discussion in a eucharistic vision of catholicity. The Christological character of catholicity lies in the fact that the Church is catholic not as a community which aims at a certain ethical achievement (being open, serving the world, etc.) but as a community which experiences and reveals the unity of all creation insofar as this unity constitutes a reality in the person of Christ. To be sure, this experience and this revelation involve a certain catholic ethos. But there is no autonomous catholicity, no catholic ethos that can be understood in itself.68

It is Christ's unity and it is His catholicity that the Church reveals in her being catholic. This means that her catholicity is neither an objective gift to be possessed nor an objective order to be fulfilled, but rather a presence, a presence which unites into a single existential reality both what is given and what is demanded, the presence of Him who sums up in Him-

68Sociological views of catholicity must be only derived views and not vice versa.
self the community and the entire creation by His being existentially involved in both of them. The Church is catholic only by virtue of her being where this presence is (Ignatius), i.e. by virtue of her being inseparably united with Christ and constituting His very presence in history.

(2) To reveal Christ's whole Body in history means to meet the demonic powers of division which operate in history. A Christological catholicity which is seen in the context of this encounter with the anti-catholic powers of the world cannot be a static but a dynamic catholicity. This can happen only if we recognize in the catholicity of the Church a pneumatological dimension.

In the celebration of the eucharist, the Church very early realized that in order for the eucharistic community to become or reveal in it itself the wholeness of the Body of Christ (a wholeness that would include not only humanity but the entire creation), the descent of the Holy Spirit upon this creation would be necessary. The offering up of the gifts and the whole community to the throne of God, the realization of the unity of the Body of Christ, was therefore preceded by the invocation of the Holy Spirit. “Send down thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon the gifts placed before thee.” For the world to become even symbolically a real sign of the consummation of all in Christ would be an impossibility without the Holy Spirit. The eucharistic community shows by its very existence that the realization of the Church's catholicity in history is the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to bear in mind that the Body of Christ, both in the Christological (incarnational) and in the ecclesiological sense, became a historical reality through the Holy Spirit.

This view of the eucharist has been a fundamental one in the eastern liturgies ever since Irenaeus' teaching, on which see A. W. Ziegler, "Das Brot von unseren Feldern. Ein Beitrag zur Eucharistielehre des hl. Irenaeus," in Pro mundi vita: Festschrift zum Eucharistischen Weltkongress 1960 (1960), pp. 21-43.

The liturgy of St John Chrysostom (prayer of consecration). The same prayer in the liturgy of St Basil makes it even clearer that the Holy Spirit is invoked not just for the consecration of the gifts but also for the realization of the unity of the community: “And to unite us all, as many as are partakers in the one bread and cup, one with another, in the communion of the one Holy Spirit.”

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Spirit. For creation to lend itself to the Logos of God in order to bring about the incarnation would have been impossible without the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This is a fundamental scriptural assertion, and the same is true about the realization of the community of the Church on the day of Pentecost. To see these events retrospectively through the eyes of the Church means to place them in their pneumatological context, for that which made them a reality is the Holy Spirit, is that which makes them an existential reality, here and now, again. In this sense the eucharistic anamnesis becomes not a mere mental operation but an existential realization, a representation of the Body of Christ, thus revealing to us that the Church's existence as the Body of Christ and, therefore, her catholicity constitute a reality which depends constantly upon the Holy Spirit.

This means not only that human attempts at “togetherness,” “openness,” etc., cannot constitute the catholicity of the Church, but that no plan for a progressive movement towards catholicity can be achieved on a purely historical and sociological level. The eucharistic community constitutes a sign of the fact that the eschaton can only break through history but never be identified with it. Its call to catholicity is a call not to a progressive conquest of the world but to a “kenotic” experience of the fight with the anticatholic demonic powers and a continuous dependence upon the Lord and His Spirit. A Catholic Church in the world, cognizant as she may of


73 Acts 1-2. Ever since, baptism and confirmation were inseparably united in the early Church and understood as the very operation of the Spirit in Christ's baptism and anointing (Luke 4:18) so that each baptized and chrismated Christian would become himself Christ. (Tertullian, De Bapt., 7:8; Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autol., 1, 12, and especially Cyril of Jerusalem: Cat., 21, 1, PG 53:1089).

74 This idea forms part of the emerging consensus on the Eucharist in the Ecumenical Movement today. See "The Eucharist in Ecumenical Thought" (a Faith and Order document) in Study Encounter, vol. IV, no. 3 (1968).
Christ's victory over Satan, lives in humility and service and above all in constant prayer and worship.

(3) The way the catholicity of the Church is revealed in the eucharistic community shows that the ultimate essence of catholicity lies in the transcendence of all divisions in Christ. This should be understood absolutely and without any reservations. It covers all areas and all dimensions of existence whether human or cosmic, historical or eschatological, spiritual or material, social or individual, etc. The dichotomies in which life has been placed and conceived, unfortunately to a great extent by Christian tradition itself, represent a betrayal of the catholic outlook so essential to the Church of Christ. One thinks in this respect, for example, of the dichotomy between the "sacred" and the "secular," or between body and soul. The eucharistic community with its understanding of the eucharist as a meal, with its basic elements being material and not merely spiritual, with its long litanies and supplications in which man's everyday material and physical needs find their place etc., constitutes a sign of a "catholic" view of existence in which no dualistic dichotomies can be accepted. Man and the world form a unity in harmony and so do the various dimensions in man's own existence. An ecclesiastical catholicity in the light of the eucharistic community suggests and presupposes a catholic anthropology and a catholic view of existence in general.

In such a catholic outlook the entire problem of the relationship of the Church to the world receives a different perspective. The separation and juxtaposition of the two can have no essential meaning because there is no point where the limits of the Church can be objectively and finally drawn. There is a constant interrelation between the Church and the world, the world being God's creation and never ceasing to belong to Him and the Church being the community which through the descent of the Holy Spirit transcends in herself the world and offers it to God in the eucharist. ⁷⁷

⁷⁸Cf. again the ecumenical consensus in "The Eucharist in Ecumenical Thought" (note 74 above).
⁷⁹This transcendence which is possible only "in the Spirit" presupposes a

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(4) But how can this view of catholicy be reconciled with the fact that the eucharistic community itself is divided into orders, i.e. into categories and classes of people? History shows that there is a real problem here, because the divisions which have occurred on this basis are so deep that the Church is still suffering from them. ⁷⁸ How can the situation which results from ordination into ministries and orders, into clergy and laity, be transcended in the way all divisions are transcended in the eucharistic community?

The fact that all ordinations were at a very early time incorporated in the eucharistic liturgy is, I think, of great importance in this respect. The first important implication of this fact is that there is no ministry which can be conceived as existing parallel to that of Christ but only as identical with it. In her being the Body of Christ, the Church exists as a manifestation of Christ's own ministry and as a reflection of this very ministry in the world. It is not an accident that the early Church applied to Christ all forms of ministries that existed. He was the apostle, ⁷⁹ the prophet, ⁸⁰ the priest, ⁸¹ the bishop, ⁸² the deacon, ⁸³ etc. A Christologically understood ministry transcends all categories of priority and separation that may be created by the act of ordination and "setting apart."

Another fundamental implication is that no ministry in the Church can be understood outside the context of the community. This should not be explained in terms of representativeness and delegation of authority, for these terms being baptismal purification of man and his world and in this sense it is important to bear in mind the "paschal" character of the eucharist (cf. J. M. R. Tillard, op. cit., p. 164) and the intimate relationship between baptism and eucharist (see J.-J. von Allmen, op. cit., p. 37 f.).

⁷⁸We have in mind the whole issue of clericalism and anti-clericalism which has been a real problem, especially in the West. The East, by having kept for centuries a eucharistic vision of ecclesiology, did not experience this problem. It was only recently that, due to a replacement of this vision by later ecclesiological ideas, the problem appeared threatening in some Orthodox areas.
⁷⁹Heb. 5:1.
⁸¹Heb. 5:6; 8:4; 10:21 2:17.
basically juridical finally lead to a separation of the ordained person from the community: to act on behalf of the community means to stand outside it because it means to act in its place. But what is precisely denied by this communal dimension we want to point out here, is that there is no ministry that can stand outside or above the community.

To affirm that the ministry belongs to the community means, in the last analysis, to place the entire matter of ordination outside the dilemma of choosing between ontological and functional. It has been for a long time an object of discussion whether ordination bestows something indelible upon the ordained person, something that constitutes his individual possession (permanently or temporarily) or simply empowers him with an authority to function for a certain purpose. In the light of the eucharistic community this dilemma makes no sense and is misleading, for the terms of reference there, as we have had occasion to stress earlier here, are basically existential. There is no charisma that can be possessed individually and yet there is no charisma which can be conceived or operated by individuals. How can this statement be understood?

Here, I think, we must seek illumination from a fundamental distinction between the individual and the personal. The distinction has already been made more than once in philosophy but it has seldom been applied to theological problems such as those presented by ecclesiology. And yet the paradox of the incorporation of the “many” into the “one” on which the eucharistic community, as we have seen, and perhaps the entire mystery of the Church are based can only be understood and explained in the categories of personal existence. The individual represents a category that presupposes separation and division. “Individuality makes its appearance by its differentiation from other individualities.”

The person represents a category that presupposes unity with other persons. The eucharistic community, and the Church in general, as a communion (koinonia) can only be understood in the categories of personal existence.

Ordination to the ministry in the context of the eucharistic communion implies that the “seal of the Holy Spirit” which is given cannot exist outside the receiver’s existential relationship with the community. It is not a mere function to be exercised outside a deep bond with this community. It is a bond of love, such as every gift of the Spirit is, and its indelible character can only be compared with that which is possessed or given by love. Outside this existential bond with the community it is destined to die, just as the Spirit who gives this charisma once, and constantly sustains it, does not live outside this community because He is the bond of love. It is in this sense that the Spirit is exclusively possessed by the Church and that all ministry is a gift of this Spirit.

All this means a transcendence of the divisions created by the variety of ministries and the distinctiveness of orders in the Church. It is in this context that the Bishop’s exclusive right to ordination must be viewed. If he came to possess such a right it was because of his capacity as the head of the eucharistic community—hence his inability to ordain outside this community—and in relation to his role as the one who offers the entire community in the eucharist to God. His exclusive right to ordain, in fact his whole existence as bishop, makes no sense apart from his role as the one through whom all divisions, including those of orders, are transcended. His

69Ibid.
80The Orthodox service of ordination to the priesthood is in many parts identical with that of matrimony. This does not only suggest an understanding of the ministry as a bond between the ordained, Christ and the community, but it indicates at the same time the direction in which theology should move in its attempts to understand the character of ordination.
81G. Cyprian, Ep., 69 (65), 11; 75, 4, etc. In this sense the idea that there is no salvation outside the Church appears to be more than a negative statement. A fundamental truth behind it is that there is no possibility for an individualistic understanding of salvation: nexit christianus, nullus christianus.
primary function is always to make the catholicity of the Church reveal itself in a certain place. For this he must himself be existentially related to a community. There is no ministry in the catholic Church that can exist in abso lute.

(3) The implications of such a view of the ministry and especially of the episcopate for the understanding of apostolic succession are clear. To speak of apostolic succession as a chain of episcopal ordinations going back to the apostolic times, without implying the indispensable bond of these ordinations with the community in whose eucharistic synaxis they have taken place, would amount to a conception of the ministry in abso lute. But if it is not a mere accident that the early Church knew of no episcopal ordination either outside the eucharistic context or without specific mention of the place to which the bishop would be attached, we must conclude that there is no apostolic succession which does not go through the concrete community.

To assert that apostolic succession goes through the concrete episcopal community means to free one's mind from the bondage of historicity and place the entire matter in a wider church-historical perspective. It would be impossible and irrelevant to discuss here the problems that are related to the appearance of the idea of apostolic succession in the early Church. It is certainly true that this idea was from the beginning related to attempts at reconstructing episcopal lists, which means that the concern at that time was to prove the survival of orthodox teaching by means of strictly historical reconstruction. But why episcopal lists? The bishops were

98 Already in the sub-apostolic times the bishop appears to be attached to the inhabitants of a certain city (Ignatius, Magn., 15; Polyc. Igerm.). Later on, the existing evidence from acts of councils indicates that the bishop's name was attached to the name of a city (Patrum Nic. nominum, ed. by Gelzer, p. 61). What is most significant is that in the service of episcopal ordination the name of the area to which the bishop is assigned has entered the prayer of ordination: the divine grace...ordains this or that person to be a bishop of this or that diocese. Even when the institution of the so-called "titular" bishops—who are essentially bishops without a flock—was introduced, provision was made that the name of the diocese, even from among those which no longer existed, would be attached to the name of the bishop in his ordination. This, of course, amounts to a contradiction between theory and practice in ecclesiology, but it nevertheless reveals that the Church has never admitted in her consciousness an episcopate in abso lute.

91 In Ignatius (e.g. Philad., 1, 2) the bishop was not necessarily the teacher. In Justin (Apol., I, 67) the bishop seems to be giving the sermon in the eucharistic synaxis, but it was mainly from the time of the Martyrium Polycarpi (16, 2) and afterwards that the stress on the bishop's teaching appears clearly. Cf. G. Dix, "Ministry in the Early Church," in The Apostolic Ministry (ed. K. E. Kirk, 1957), p. 204 f.

92 Sources like the Shepherd of Hermas (Vis. 3, 4), Tertullian (De Prescr., 2), Origen (In Esukel, 2, 2, PG 13, 682 C), etc., indicate that the presbyters had teaching as one of their functions. The same is evident from the prayers of ordination to the presbyterate (Hippolytus, Apost. Trad., 8, ed. G. Dix, p. 15), and from the existence of famous presbyters known as teachers (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, etc.).

93 Clem., 44, 2-4.

94 Hippolytus, Philor., 9, 12, 21 (PG 15, 3386): The "catholic Church" was not a "school" (didakkaleion).
of communities whose entire life and thought they were supposed by their office to express. Their apostolic succession, therefore, should be viewed neither as a chain of individual acts of ordination nor as a transmission of truths but as a sign and an expression of the continuity of the Church's historical life in its entirety, as it was realized in each community.

Such an understanding of apostolic succession explains why in its first appearance this concept was so concretely conceived that the reference was made not to "apostolic succession" in general but to apostolic "successions" (plural), exactly as in the language of that time the catholicity of the Church was understood in the form of "catholic Churches" (plural). The fundamental implication of this fact is that each episcopal community reflects in itself not only the "whole Church" but also the whole succession of the apostles. Indeed, it is quite significant that each bishop was at that time thought to be successor not of a particular apostle, but of all the apostles. This made each episcopal Church fully apostolic and each bishop an occupant of the cathedra Petri. This means that apostolic succession can never be a result of adding up the various episcopal successions. The apostolic college in its succession was not divided into parts so that each bishop would be ascribed to one part and all bishops together to the whole of this college. Episcopal collegiality, therefore, does not represent a collective unity, but a unity in identity, an organic unity. It is the identity of each community with the Body of Christ expressed in historical

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terms through the continuity of the apostolic presence in the locus apostolicus of each episcopal community.

Apostolic succession represents a sign of the historical dimension of the catholicity of the Church. It serves to combine the historical with the charismatic and transcend the divisions caused by time. In an understanding of the apostolic succession stemming from the eucharistic community, where the past and the future are through the Holy Spirit perceived in one and the same reality of the present, history and time are fully accepted and eternal life is not opposed to them but enters into them and transcends them as they affect man's destiny and salvation. Thus the Church is revealed to be in time what she is eschatologically, namely a catholic Church which stands in history as a transcendence of all divisions into the unity of all in Christ through the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father.

It is noteworthy that for some ancient authors (e.g., Tertullian, De Praecl., 20, 2-5) apostolic succession is one "of apostolic churches rather than of apostolic bishops," as it is pointed out by R. P. C. Hanson, Tradition in the Early Church (1962), p. 158.

Hegesippus quoted by Eusebius, Eccl. Hist., I, 22, 3-5: "in each succession and in each city..."


It is noteworthy how Tertullian (De Praecl., 36, 2) refers to the various Churches in connection with their apostolicity; in all the places he mentions (Achaia, Macedonia, Asia, Italy, Rome) "the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places in which their own authentic writings are still read, etc."


Cf. the liturgy of St John Chrysostom at the prayer of the anaphora: "Commemorating this command of our Savior and all that was endured for our sake, the cross, the grave, the resurrection after three days, the ascension into Heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second and glorious coming again, thine own of thine own we offer to thee in all and for all."
Many factors have contributed to the theological consciousness of the Orthodox Churches with regard to the Church’s continuity with her apostolic origins. Among these there are two which lie at the very basis of our subject. On the one hand, Orthodoxy is known for its devotion to tradition. This makes history acquire decisiveness in the consciousness of the Orthodox Churches, which is thus oriented towards the past with respect and devotion. On the other hand, Orthodoxy is known for the centrality and importance which it attributes to worship in its life and theology, and this leads it to a “theophanic” and in a sense “meta-historical” view of the Church. Deep in these two aspects of Orthodox consciousness lie the seeds of a duality which could be easily turned into a dichotomy.

In the following lines an attempt will be made to see how this duality of the traditional or historical and the theophanic or meta-historical elements affect the consciousness of the Church’s continuity with the apostles. This attempt will be made especially in view of the fact that the implications of


2Thus it is a common phenomenon in ecumenical circles to regard the Orthodox both as “traditionalists” and as detached from the problems of history and preoccupied with the “triumphalism” of their liturgy.
this duality are quite relevant to non-Orthodox Churches as well, and are therefore related to many of the problems that both the Eastern and the Western Churches are facing today. This is so because this duality is deeply rooted in the beginning of the Church and requires constantly a creative synthesis by theology so that it may not become a dichotomy.

I. *The Two Approaches, "Historical" and "Eschatological," to Apostolic Continuity*

1. In the early Biblical and patristic sources that we possess, we can distinguish two basic approaches to the idea of the Church's continuity with the apostles. Each of these two approaches is based on a corresponding image of the apostolate and bears specific implications for the theology and the structure of the Church.

It is of course true that the concept of the apostolate in the New Testament is a complex one, and it is extremely difficult to disentangle the various elements of which it is composed. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish clearly two images used for the description of the nature and role of the apostles. On the one hand, the apostles are conceived as persons entrusted with a mission to fulfill. As such they are sent and thus dispersed in the world. This implies that they are understood as individual, possessing a message and authority in a way that reminds one of the Jewish institution of the *shaliach*. Because the angle from which the apostolate is viewed in this approach is that of mission, the term "apostle" is thus applicable to all missionaries who possess the authority and the charisma of preaching the Gospel. There are, of course, conditions attached to the use of the term "apostle" and it is still unclear how these conditions affect the notion of "apostle" in the New Testament. But the point that interests us here is that in an approach inspired by the idea of mission, the apostles represent a link between Christ and the Church and form part of a historical process with a decisive and perhaps *normative* role to play. Thus the idea of mission and that of historical process go together in the New Testament and lead to a scheme of continuity in a linear movement: God sends Christ—Christ sends the apostles—the apostles transmit the message of Christ by establishing Churches and ministers. We may, therefore, call this approach "historical."

2. On the other hand, the apostles are conceived as persons with an *eschatological function*. In this case the imagery

6Hence the application of the term "apostle" to a group broader than the Twelve. Paul's apostolate constitutes part of this problem. On these and related questions see R. Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 246ff.

6It is not, for example, clear whether the apostolate is related to "the historical Jesus" (Acts 1:22) or just to the Risen Christ (Gal. 1:1; II Cor. 10:13, etc.) or even to neither of the two (Rom. 16:7; Acts 14:14, etc.). The bibliography on these problems is enormous. See R. Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*

6This scheme is offered basically in the New Testament: John 20:21; Luke 10:16, etc. Christ Himself is an "apostle" (Heb. 3:1). See also John 17:7ff; Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 10:13-17; I John 1:1-13; II Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5, etc. It is on the basis of this "historical" or "missionary" scheme that transmission of apostolic authority to others for the continuation of this mission is mentioned already in the New Testament (Acts 20:17-35; I Tim. 5:22; 4:4; II Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:4; 2:1-15, etc.). Cf. Ph. Menoud, *L'Eglise et son ministère selon le N. T.* (1949); J. Colson, "La succession apostolique au niveau du 1er siècle," *Verbum Caro* (1961), 138-72.

and schemes used to describe the apostles are quite different from the ones used in the case I have called "historical." This difference applies to the apostles themselves as well as to their relation to Christ and the Church. Thus instead of being understood as individuals dispersed throughout the world for mission, the apostles are understood as a college. The difference is considerable and corresponds to that between mission and eschatology. Mission requires sending to the ends of the earth, whereas the eschaton implies the convocation of the dispersed people of God from the ends of the earth to one place.  

The apostles in their eschatological function are inconceivable as individuals; they form an indivisible college. For this reason they are basically and primarily represented by the college of the Twelve whenever their eschatological function is mentioned. In this case the apostles' relation both to Christ and to the Church is expressed in a way different from that of the historical approach. Here the apostles are not those who follow Christ but who surround Him.  


Didache 9:4; 10:5. Cf. Matt. 25:32; John 11:52 etc. In stressing the difference between the "missionary" and the "eschatological" images of the apostolate, I do not wish to deny the eschatological character of the apostolic mission as it appears especially in Paul (see on this work mentioned in previous note, esp. Pannenberg and Congar). But I maintain the view that there is a difference between eschatology conceived as orientation, and eschatology conceived as a state of existence which reveals itself here and now. As orientation, eschatology appears to be the result of historical process as the climax of mission (e.g. in the above mentioned authors), whereas as a state of existence it confronts history already now with a presence from beyond history. In the latter case an "iconic" and liturgical approach to eschatology is necessary more than it is in the former. It is the understanding of eschatology as this kind of presence of the Kingdom here and now that requires convocation of the dispersed people of God and of the apostles. As such this image presupposes the end of mission. This proleptic experience of the presence of the eschaton here and now—and not simply the orientation towards this end—was there from the beginning (Acts 2:17) and was realised mainly in the eucharist (Didache). It is with this kind of eschatology that I wish to relate my subject here.  


14This image, based on the Last Supper (note again the eschatological context), became the standard form of reference to the apostles in the eschatological discourse since the Apocalypse and Ignatius of Antioch.  

15Apoc. 21:14. In Ephesians (2:20) we have the use of the image of the "apostles" as foundations of the Church in a historical sense. But in this case the reference to the "apostles" is probably not to the Twelve or the apostolic college, but to missionaries.  

For the present state of research on this subject see R. Schnackenburg, op. cit., pp. 68ff.  

On Paul see the work of J. Munds, Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte (1954). Cf. the thesis concerning Paul's dependence on the Twelve by P. Gaechter, "Schranken im Apostolat des Paulus," in Petrus und seine Zeit (1958), pp. 338-450. On the importance of the Twelve for overcoming the tension ("dualism") between "institutional" and "charismatic" Apostolate, see J. L. Leuba, L'institution et l'événement (1950), pp. 47ff. The rise of the position of James is very instructive for the argument of this paper concerning the eschatological approach to apostolicity in terms of permanent Church structures. With the disappearance of the Twelve from the Jerusalem Church (dispersion for mission?) the scheme "apostles and presbyters" is replaced with that of "James and the presbyters" (Acts 21:18). The significance of this scheme lies in the eschatological nature of the Jerusalem Church as the center of the earth, where all mission converges in its final consummation (Rom. 15:19). Paul must be reconciled with "James and the presbyters" precisely because the latter represent the eschatological court of the Church. Thus we have from the beginning a structure emerging from the eschatological state of the Church's convocation. It is more than significant to notice how this model is transferred to the eucharist and through that to the episcopacy after the fall of Jerusalem. It is not possible to discuss this here (cf. n. 87 below; also my book The Unity of the Church in the Eucharist and the Bishop in the First Two Centuries [1965—in Greek]). But it is interesting to note the relation of this development to the eschatological approach to apostolicity.

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And they do not stand as a link between Christ and the Church in a historical process but are the foundations of the Church in a presence of the Kingdom of God here and now.  

These two approaches to the idea of apostolic continuity should not, of course, be oversimplified, for, as I said earlier, the New Testament picture of the concept of apostolate is a complex one. One has to account, for example, for the place of Paul or the other "apostles" in the eschatological image which is based primarily on the Twelve. But the fact that Paul himself—and Luke on his behalf—had to find a way of relating his apostleship to that of the Twelve and the Jerusalem Church, indicates that the two approaches I have mentioned here were clearly reflected in the consciousness of the primitive Church.

3. The survival of these two approaches in post-apostolic context, became the standard form of reference to the apostles in the eschatological discourse since the Apocalypse and Ignatius of Antioch.
times is very instructive for our subject. With the gradual disappearance of the apostles, the Church had to face the problem of apostolic continuity and work out a way of solving it. The existing sources indicate that both the historical and the eschatological approaches to continuity were preserved at that time.

The historical approach is clearly expressed by I Clement. The scheme "God sends Christ—Christ sends the apostles" becomes the basis for the notion of continuity in terms of historical process: "The apostles have announced to us the good news from Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was sent by God. Thus Christ comes from God and the apostles from Christ. This double mission, therefore, with its order comes from the will of God." 17 This is precisely the New Testament scheme as I expounded it earlier on, and on its basis I Clement elaborates its theory of continuity: "Following the instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ, fully convinced by His resurrection and firm in their faith in the word of God, the apostles went with the assurance of the Holy Spirit to announce everywhere the good news of the coming of the Kingdom of heaven. In the various villages and cities they proclaimed the word and thus made their premises and . . . established ἐπισκόπους καὶ διστάσεως for the future believers." 18 This is an elaborate theory of continuity based on the historical approach. Hence this text has been widely used in connection with the idea of apostolic succession.

Things are different, however, in the case of another source of the same period, namely the letters of St Ignatius of Antioch. Here we have an example of the eschatological approach to apostolic continuity, as I described it earlier. Ignatius' image of the Church is borrowed not from history but from the eschatological state of the Church's convocation "in the same place" 19 to partake of the eternal life of God as it is offered to the world at the eucharistic table. Here the image is very much like the one we find in the Apocalypse. 20

and the implications for the relation of the Church to the apostles are clearly different from those we find in I Clement: the apostles are a united college and they surround Christ in His Kingdom. For this reason it is the college of presbyters surrounding the bishop, who sits "in the place of God" or is the image of Christ, 21 that Ignatius sees the image of the apostles. 22 Continuity here is guaranteed and expressed not by way of succession from generation to generation and from individual to individual, but in and through the convocation of the Church in one place, i.e. through its eucharistic structure. It is a continuity of communities and Churches that constitutes and expresses apostolic succession in this approach. If apostolic succession is understood simply in terms of history, the evidence of St Ignatius becomes embarrassing—and it has been so precisely insofar as the eschatological approach to continuity has almost disappeared from our considerations. 23

The subsequent history of these two approaches to apostolic continuity is extremely interesting, but does not concern us here. References to it will be made later on in this study by way of historical illustrations of some theological points. What has been said so far is enough to make clear the point that in the very beginnings of the Church's consciousness of continuity with the apostles—and this applies both to the Eastern and to the Western Churches—there are hidden the seeds of

19This expression is used by Ignatius frequently and usually in connection with the eucharist, e.g. Eph. 5:3-5, 13:1; Polyc. 4:2; Magn. 7:12 etc.
20Apoc. 4-5.

21I Clement, Magn. 6:1, 3:1-2; Tert. 5:1. The idea that the bishop is the image of Christ survived at least until the fourth century (e.g. in Pseudo-Clem. Ep. 3:62). Cf. O. Perler, "L'Evêque, représentant du Christ ..." in L'Epvêque et l'Eglise universelle, ed. Y. Congar and B. Dupuy, Usque Sanctam 39 (1962), pp. 51-66.
22Ignatius, Magn. 6:1. The image we get in Ignatius corresponds to that of Christ surrounded by the apostles in the eschatological—and eucharistic—convocation of the people of God (cf. above n. 11).
23The conviction underlying this article is that we are not allowed to form our view of apostolic continuity without taking Ignatius into account. Ignatius is by no means an exception in the early Church with regard to his view of apostolic continuity. He is preceded by such sources as the book of the Apocalypse (chs. 4-5) and followed by a long tradition represented by the Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum (ch. 9), the Constitutions Apost. (II, 24) etc. The iconological and eschatological approach of this tradition survived to a large extent in Byzantium and the Orthodox Churches. Disregarding all this tradition would mean depriving our view of apostolic continuity of an essential part of the most primitive approach to our subject.
two approaches to this continuity, of an "historical" and an "eschatological" approach.

4. If we now try to penetrate deeply into the theological and ecclesiological nature of these two approaches as they relate to the notion of apostolic continuity, the following points can be made.

The first observation has to do with the notion of continuity itself. What does continuity mean in each of these approaches? In the historical approach the main components of continuity are the following: In the first place continuity means succession or survival in time, i.e. from the past to the present into the future. This succession or survival of the Church’s apostolic origins can take place in different ways. It can take place by way of transmission of certain powers, authority, etc. It can also take place by way of normativity, i.e. in the form of an example to be copied. In any case the historical approach creates the basis of a retrospective continuity with the past. The anamnetic function of the Church is employed here in a psychological way, and this leads to the creation of a consciousness of continuity with the past. The Church recalls a time called "apostolic"; whether she relates to it through various media or by way of copying as faithfully as possible this normative period, the fact remains that in this approach her apostolicity comes from the side of the past. On the other hand the eschatological approach implies no sense of transmission or normativity. Here apostolicity comes to the Church from the side of the future. It is the anticipation of the end, the final nature of the Church that reveals her apostolic character. This anticipation should not be misunderstood as psychological; it is not a feeling of expectation and hope that is offered through it, but a real presence of the eschaton here and now. "Now is the judgment of the world," and now, this simple moment of the Johannine δικαίον, all of history is consummated. The finality or ultimacy of things is what the eschatological approach to apostolicity brings forth. It is the Risen Christ that is related to apostolicity, i.e. the final and ultimate destiny of all that exists.

All this affects the notion of continuity in a deeper way: it affects especially Christology and Pneumatology in their relation to the apostolic origins of the Church.

In the historical approach, Christology is inevitably the primary thing that provides the structure of continuity. The Holy Spirit is the one that is transmitted and He is transmitted by Christ. He is the divine power which enables the apostles in their mission. He is also the one who creates the response to this mission. He is the animator of a basically pre-conceived structure. In such an approach Pneumatology indicates an agency, the Spirit is the agent of Christ and is dependent on Him. Here Christology indicates a self-defined event and so does the notion of the apostolate. In this his-

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59On the importance of the Resurrection for the eschatological approach to apostolicity see W. Pannenberg, op. cit., p. 158f. It must be noted that in the Johannine concept of "now" (δικαίον) the finality of the risen Christ does not evolve from a historical process but comes to us as a visib and a tabernacle from outside (cf. John 1:14).
60For such a view see e.g. Y. Congar, "Pneumatologie et théologie de l'histoire," Archivio di Filosofia (1971), p. 63.
61The ecclesiology of Vatican II gives the impression that Pneumatology is used after the structure of the Church is established with the help of Christology Cf. ch. III above.
62The connection between what we call here the "historical" approach and this type of Pneumatology can be illustrated by the issue of Filioque. It is interesting that both the East and the West admit the dependence of the Holy Spirit upon the Son on the level of historical mission. The differences arise only when the metaphysical or iconological approach to the divine mystery becomes predominant. The problem can be traced back to the fourth century: St Basil in his De Spiritu Sancto replaces the formula of the Alexandrian theologians "from the Father—through the Son—in the Spirit" with that of "The Father with the Son and with the Spirit" precisely because his presentation is taken from the realm of worship and not from historical revelation. It is worth looking at the Filioque problem from the angle of the fate of the iconological approach to God—and to reality in general—in Western thought.
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she faithfully transmits the apostolic kerygma; in the second case she is apostolic when she applies it to a particular historical context and then judges this context in a prophetic way through the vision of the eschatia which she is supposed to maintain. Therefore, if the Church is to be truly apostolic, she must be both historically and eschatologically oriented; she must both transmit history and judge history by placing it in the light of the eschatia.

II. Towards a Synthesis of the "Historical" and the "Eschatological" Approach

All that has been said thus far leads to the necessity of a theological synthesis between the historical and the eschatological approaches to the Church’s continuity with the apostles. If one studies the history of theology in the West, one sees how problematic this synthesis has been. Individualistic and psychological notions of continuity have determined Western theology in various forms. Thus whenever historical continuity was found to be problematic (e.g. when the problem of the quest for the historical Jesus arose), the alternative was a more or less Neoplatonic dismissal of history, a resort into the eschatology of the meaning of events. In the East, on the other hand, the eschatological approach very often took the same form of the search for meaning at the expense of history, while a satisfaction with the vision of the eschatological image of the Church as it is expressed in her worship

"This is particularly true with regard to the sacraments, the ministry (problem of "character") etc.

"Es. R. Bultmann’s school clearly has tended in this direction. The current problem of reconciling the "charismatic" with the "institutional" aspects of the Church illustrates this further.

One can see this is the East as early as Origen. His emphasis on the eschatological meaning of the Gospel at the expense of the historical is well known. See e.g. In Jo. 1:24, 6:6 etc. Cf. G. Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius and the Iconoclastic Controversy," Church History 19, (1950) 77-96. Origen’s views on apostolic succession are deeply influenced by this approach: apostolic succession is essentially a continuity of the teaching of Christ (De Princ. 4:9; In Luk. 34 etc.), a succession of Gnostics in the Spirit (De Orat. 28:9, cf. Comm. Rom. 7:5) rather than a succession through

A historical approach to continuity, the Holy Spirit vivifies pre-existing and self-defined events and relates them to different times and circumstances.

In the eschatological approach, however, things are again different. Here the Spirit is the one who brings the eschatia into history. He confronts the process of history with its consummation, with its transformation and transfiguration. By bringing the eschatia into history, the Spirit does not vivify a pre-existing structure; He creates one; He changes linear historicity into a presence. It is no longer possible to understand history simply as "past," i.e. to apply to it the psychological and experiential notion of anamnesis in the sense of the retrospective faculty of the human soul. When the eschatia visit us, the Church’s anamnesis acquires the eucharistic parable which no historical consciousness can ever comprehend, i.e. the memory of the future, as we find it in the anaphora of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom: "Remembering the cross, the resurrection, the ascension and the second coming, Thine own of Thine own we offer Thee." Unless the Church lets Pneumatology so condition Christology that the sequence of "yesterday-today-tomorrow" is transcended, she will not do full justice to Pneumatology; she will enslave the Spirit in a linear Heilsgeschichte. Yet the Spirit is "the Lord" who transcends linear history and turns historical continuity into a presence.

All this shows how profoundly all of theology ties up with the notion of apostolic continuity. In the historical approach the apostles are significant for the Church because they are connected with a crucial historical event of the past. In the eschatological approach the apostles unveil and present to us not the words of the kerygma of Christ but the reality and the content of the event of Christ. In the historical approach the apostles are the creators of history whereas in the eschatological approach they are the judges of history. Correspondingly, in the first case the Church is apostolic when

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has tended to paralyze missionary activity to an alarming degree.  How can the synthesis be achieved?

Speaking as I do here from the viewpoint of Orthodox tradition, I see a possibility of synthesis along the following lines.

1. The event of Christ must be regarded as constituted pneumatologically. I stress the word “constituted” because my intention is to say that Christ is not Christ unless He is an existence in the Spirit, which means an eschatological existence. Such a pneumatological constitution of Christology implies, from the viewpoint of ontology, the understanding of Christ not in terms of individuality which affirms itself by distancing itself from other individualities, but in terms of personhood which implies a particularity established in and through communion.  The implications of this for the notion of continuity are clear. In a pneumatologically constituted Christology an event can never be defined by itself, but only as a relational reality. It is this that allows the Biblical notion of “corporate personality” to be applied to Christ.  Christ without His body is not Christ but an individual of the worst type. Our continuity, therefore, with the Christ event is not determined by sequence or response based on distance; it is rather a continuity in terms of inclusiveness: we are in Christ, and this is what makes Him be before us, our “first-born brother” in the Pauline sense.  This is paradoxical but fundamental historical institutions. The tendency to stress the “charismatic” at the expense of the “institutional” continuity of the Church reappeared in Orthodoxy through various pietistic movements and tendencies in modern times.

2. Obviously this affects the notion of apostolicity in a decisive way. If Christ Himself is the eschatological man and our continuity with Him is not determined by the time sequence which implies distance, but by a concept of time determined by an event of communion, the apostles themselves cannot be enclosed in a self-defined event, in a closed past. Their uniqueness is not to be defined in terms of individualized temporal existence, even if this existence graciously,

for understanding the new existence created in Christ. Christ’s priority over us is not a priority like the one created by our individualized existence and characterised by temporal sequence; it is a priority of inclusiveness: the including one being prior to the included. This is so precisely because the included is already in the including. God as the Spirit, i.e. as communion, is precisely the all-embracing existence which is participated without participating.  In the same Spirit of God, Christ contains us in Himself, by His very constitution as Christ in the Spirit. He thus in the Spirit contains by definition the eschaton, our final destiny, ourselves as we shall be; He is the eschatological Man—yet, let me repeat, not as an individual but as Church, i.e. because of our being included in Him. It is in this sense that historical existence becomes in Christ and in the Spirit a continuity which comes to us from the future and not through the channels of a divided time sequence like the one we experience in our fallen state of existence. Thus when the eschaton enter into history in the Spirit, time is redeemed from fragmentation, and history acquires a different sense.

27 It is noteworthy that it is the function of the Holy Spirit to open up being so that it may become relational. Without Pneumatology, ontology becomes substantialistic and individualistic. The Spirit was understood as “communion” both by the Greek (e.g. St Basil) and the Latin (e.g. St Augustine) Fathers—especially by the latter. But the importance of Pneumatology for ontology has never been a decisive one in Western thought.


29 Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15-18 etc. In a linear type of “Heilsgeschichte” the “before” indicates a part of history—a period preceding another one—just as it happens with historical consciousness as it is known especially in modern times. But if the historical consciousness is decisively determined by eschatology, the “before” is comprehensible only in terms of the “last”, the final. Such is the Pauline understanding of the “first-born”: Christ is “before” us (our πρωτότοκος brother and our ἐνθύμησθε precisely in His being the “last” (ἐνθύμησθε) Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the realization and consummation of history. It is obvious that all this makes no sense in terms of linear “Heilsgeschichte.”

40 Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:16-18; II Thes. 2:13 etc.

41 Cf. the notion of κοινωνία in the Greek Fathers as discussed by A. Housiaux, “Incarnation et communion selon les Pères grecs,” Irénikon 45 (1972), 457-68.
as it were, gives us something of this event which it exclusively possesses. It has done a lot of damage to the notion of apostolicity to think of it in terms of historical prerogatives, be it in the form of the Petrine keys or in that of the apostolic kerygma. For the keys are those of the Kingdom, and the kerygma is not an objectifiable norm but the Risen Christ, i.e. a living person; in both cases historical prerogatives are eschatologized. The apostles continue to speak and proclaim Christ in the Church only because the Church is by her very existence the living presence of the Word of God as person. Thus the Church, in listening to the word of the apostles, listens as it were to her own voice, to the voice which comes from her very eschatological nature, echoing her own eschatological destiny. This makes the history of the Church identical with that of the world and of creation as a whole. Thus to recall that the Church is founded on the apostles in an eschatological sense makes the Church acquire her ultimate existential significance as the sign of a redeemed and saved creation. This makes the Church, in the words of St Paul, "the judge of the world," i.e. makes her acquire a prerogative strictly applied to the apostles and especially to the Twelve in their eschatological function.

3. If the Christ event and history in general are pneuma-

42 The power to "bind and loose" which is given to St Peter (Matt. 16:18-19) is incomprehensible without eschatology, since the nature of this power is eschatological: it concerns eternal finality. If this eschatological nature of the power given to Peter in Matt. 16:18 is taken in consideration, granting of this power to all the Apostles in John 20:23 or even to the entire community in Matt. 18:18 does not lead to irreconcilable alternatives. The fact that the primitive Church could accept all of these three possibilities at once (two of them appear even in the same Gospel!) points to the fact that primitive eschatology implied inevitably the image of the convoked Church and of the apostolic college (cf. above n. 11). If this perspective is recovered, any application of this authority would require the context of the convoked Church. In fact there is good historical reason to believe that the early Church applied this power to "bind and loose" from the beginning precisely in and through her invocation in the eucharistic gatherings.

(The evidence on this point is considerable. Cf. my article "The Development of Conciliar Structures to the Time of the First Ecumenical Council" in Councils and the Ecumenical Movement [= World Council Studies 5, 1968] pp. 34-51, esp. 34-39). Cf. below on the implications of this approach for the Petrine role in the Church, and esp. n. 115.

42I Cor. 6:2. Cf. previous note.

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tologically conditioned, the fears that may be created by such an identification of the Church with the Kingdom disappear. Such fears, which were to some extent behind the reaction of the Reformation against the medieval Church, are justified only if this identification is derived simply from what we have called here the historical approach to apostolicity (which seems to have been the approach of the medieval Church). But in a pneumatological conditioning of history by eschatology this identification does not present any dangers. The reason is that it takes place epicletically. The epicletical aspect of continuity represents a fundamental point in what I am trying to say here, and its implications must be stressed. In an epicletical context, history ceases to be in itself a guarantee for security. The epiclesis means ecclesiologically that the Church asks to receive from God what she has already received historically in Christ as if she had not received it at all, i.e. as if history did not count in itself. This includes her continuity with the apostles in all its forms. Just as in the eucharist the words of instinction cannot be a guarantee in themselves without the Spirit, although what the Spirit does is nothing but prove true the words of Christ. "This is my body," i.e. affirm history, so in her apostolicity, too, the Church needs the Pentecostal scene to be set again and again, each time she wants to affirm her apostolicity. The apostles had received the Spirit from the risen Christ and were baptized in Him in the Pentecost and yet when they elected the seven44 they invoked Him again.45 Any one who thinks in terms of historical continuity must seriously ask the question: What meaning does this repeated invocation of the Spirit have, if the historical approach to apostolic continuity is purely and simply to be accepted? The epicletic life of the Church shows only one thing: That there is no security for her to be found in any historical guarantee as such—be it ministry or word or sacrament or even the historical Christ Himself. Her constant dependence on the Spirit proves that

45 That every ordination—especially that of a bishop—requires the Pentecostal event as its context is indicated in Orthodox liturgical tradition by the fact that in every episcopal ordination the feast of Pentecost is celebrated.
her history is to be constantly eschatological. At the same time the fact that the Spirit points to Christ shows equally well that history is not to be denied. "The Spirit blows where He wills," but we know that He wills to blow towards Christ. Eschatology and history are thus not incompatible with each other.

4. The epicletic conditioning, therefore, of the Church's continuity with the apostles points to the possibility of a synthesis of the historical with the eschatological notion of continuity in a way which overcomes any Neoplatonic form of dualism. To be sure, there is a tension between the "already" and the "not yet" also in the existence "in the Spirit." But this tension is not dualistic in any sense that would imply an incompatibility between time and eternity, history and eschatology in a Neoplatonic fashion. The incarnation of God in Christ makes it possible to say against Neoplatonic dualism that history is a real bearer of the ultimate, of the very life of God. History as existence in space and time offers in Christ the possibility for communion with the eschaton. The tension therefore between history and Kingdom is not one of ontological dualism. The way we can describe it is as longing for a change of form, for transfiguration. In the expression of St. Paul, we are anxious to exchange the present form for the eschatological one not because the present one is less real or less "ontological" in its nature—it is the very same body we have now that will be resurrected, according to Paul—but because the presence and activity of the Antichrist in history makes the present form of the Church's existence fragile and a cause of suffering. The arrabona of the Kingdom which is the presence of the Spirit in history, signifies precisely the synthesis of the historical with the eschatological. This arrabona does not imply—as it is often presented by New Testament theologians—the absence of the eschatological from the historical, i.e. a hope and an expectation on the basis of a word

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of promise. On the contrary, it signifies a real presence of the eschatological on the basis of the fact that God is present in the historical and risen Christ. The ecclesiological significance of this can be illustrated by the ideas of the book of the Apocalypse, in which the Church lives in an intense epicletic atmosphere containing a synthesis of two elements: on the one hand, the assurance of Christ's presence on the eucharistic table and, on the other, the Church's cry: "Come Lord, come." When the Church lives epicletically, she cannot but long for what she already is. The synthesis of the historical with the eschatological in this epicletic conditioning of history constitutes what we may properly—and not in the distorted sense—call the sacramental nature of the Church.

5. This leads to a consideration of the practical question: How can the Church in fact unite the two approaches into one synthesis? Is there any way in the Church's life in which the synthesis of the historical with the eschatological approaches is realized?

The early Church seems to offer the answer to this question by pointing towards the eucharist. There is, indeed, no other experience in the Church's life in which the synthesis of the historical with the eschatological can be realized more fully than in the eucharist. The eucharist is, on the one hand, a "tradition" (παράδοσις) and a "remembrance" (διάμνησις). As such it activates the historical consciousness of the Church in a retrospective way. At the same time, however, the eucharist is the eschatological moment of the Church par excellence, a remembrance of the Kingdom, as it sets the scene for the convocation of the dispersed people of God from the ends of the earth in one place, uniting the "many" in

52John 16:14.
53II Cor. 5:1-3. Cf. I Cor. 15:53-54.
54II Thes. 2:7-9; II Cor. 4:7 etc.
55II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14.
56Luke 22:19; I Cor. 11:24-25.
57Didache 9:4, 10:5. Cf. the description of the eucharist as a σύνεσις ἐν τῷ σώματι by Paul and Ignatius (cf. n. 11 above). It is also noteworthy that the celebration of the eucharist came to be associated very early with Sunday (Apost. 1:10, on the evidence of the early sources see W. Runcorn, Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church [1968] pp. 177f. and 239f.). The significance of the celebration of the eucharist on Sunday lies in the fact that Sunday is the eschatological day par excellence. If the eucharist was
the "one" and offering the taste of the eternal life of God here and now. In and through the same experience, therefore, at one and the same moment, the Church unites in the eucharist the two dimensions, past and future, simultaneously as one indivisible reality. This happens "sacramentally," i.e. in and through historical and material forms, while the existential tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is preserved. In the consciousness of the ancient Church this is further emphasized through the use of the epiclesis in the eucharist: the "words of institution" and the entire anamnetic dimension of the Church are placed at the disposal of the Spirit, as if they could not constitute in themselves a sufficient assurance of God's presence in history. This makes the eucharist the moment in which the Church realizes that her roots are to be found simultaneously in the past and in the future, in history and in the eschaton.

The result of the recognition of this unique function of the eucharist in the Early Church was to make the eucharist the milieu and the context in which the basic concrete manifestation of apostolic continuity would take place. This centrality of the eucharist has been preserved in the liturgical and canonical tradition of the Orthodox Churches, but Orthodox theology has very often disregarded it, thus making the synthesis between "historical" and "eschatological" problematic.

III. Concrete Consequences for the Life of the Church

With these observations in mind we may now look at some concrete implications of this synthesis for the life and structure of the Church. The relation of the Church to the apostles has traditionally included the following main elements:

1. Continuity through the apostolic kerygma. The kerygmatic nature of the apostolic function can be understood in both historical and eschatological terms, but it is the synthesis of these two "in the Spirit" that offers the theological perspective for the application of the notion of continuity to the apostolic kerygma. In the New Testament itself we can find an idea of paradosis or logia which are historically transmitted from place to place and time to time. And yet, it is the Spirit that vivifies the words, and it is only in the Spirit that the kerygma of Christ can make sense. The apostolic kerygma needs to be constantly placed in the Spirit in order to be life and not just words. It cannot be an objectified norm in itself, something that judges the community of the Church from above or from outside. It is in the context of the koinonia of the Spirit, which implies the concrete continuity of the Church, that the kerygma of the apostles can be "continued" in a living way.

In the course of the second century and mainly through St Irenaeus and his defence against Gnosticism, the apostolic kerygma, as Irenaeus approaches it in his Epideixis, implies some kind of objectification in the sense of an historically transmitted norm. Thus this historical approach to apostolic continuity threatens in a way to overcome the eschatological

The term kerygma is used here in the broad sense which includes both the act of proclamation of important news to the public (original sense; cf. Luke 1:1-2; Acts 10:42; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Peter 5:2) and the content of the kerygma, the didache, together with its interpretation through doctrine, dogma, etc., as it came to be understood especially from the second century onwards with Irenaeus' Epideixis.

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62 1 Cor. 12:3.
64 Apart from Irenaeus' Epideixis as a whole, see his Haer. III 3:1; IV 26:2; 58:8 etc.
one. This danger, however, is overcome in Irenaeus’ theology thanks to two factors which survive so strongly in his theology: Pneumatology and the centrality of the eucharist. The Church is to be found only where the Spirit is and the apostolic tradition comes to the Church not just through history but as a charisma. At the same time, true and orthodox doctrine is to be synthesized with the eucharist: “our doctrine agrees with the eucharist and our eucharist with our doctrine.” This synthesis safeguarded the apostolic kerygma from objectification in its transmission through history.

Although the needs of the Church at that time made it imperative to objectify, in a certain sense, the word of God, to create the Scriptural canon, etc., and thus strengthen the historical approach to the idea of apostolic continuity, the eschatological perspective was not lost. But how could the eschatological perspective be preserved under such circumstances?

In the first place, already in the theology of the Greek Fathers, especially St Athanasius and St Cyril of Alexandria, the idea of the Logos of God as person qualified decisively the idea of the Logos of God as word—spoken or written. In a eucharistic approach to this idea, which characterized both of these Fathers and the Church of that time as a whole, this meant that the spoken or written word of God,

64Irenaeus, Hær. III 24:1.
65Ibid. IV 26:2.
66Ibid. IV 18:5.
68The problem which the use of the term logos as “word” for Christ created in the early Church show how dangerous the application of Christology of the notion of the “word” as spoken or written can be. As a reaction against Sabellianism and Arianism, the Fathers were forced to deny entirely any association of these two senses of logos and thus replace definitively the connotation of spoken or written word with that of pron. exclusively. See e.g., Busechius, Dem. evang. 5:5 and especially Athanasius Contra Ar. 2:35 and Cyril of Alexandria, De recta fide ad Thod. 6. The symbol of Sirmium (351) even anthropizes those who call the logos of God ἐναρθήκος or προφορικός.
69It is interesting to note how the Christological controversies of the early Church related to the eucharist. See e.g. H. Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” Journal of Theological Studies 2 (1951), 143-64.

as it is historically formulated and transmitted, becomes life and divine presence only in the context of the eschatological community of the eucharist. By developing the “liturgy of the word” as an integral part of the eucharistic liturgy, the Church did nothing but eschatologize the historical, i.e., make the apostolic kerygma come to the Church not simply from the side of the past but simultaneously from the side of the future. Only when the preached word becomes identical with the eucharistic flesh does the synthesis of the historical with the eschatological continuity of the kerygma take place. Then the Johannine mentality of the “word made flesh” unites with the Irenean view that orthodox doctrine and eucharist form an indivisible unity.

Orthodox theology has not fully drawn its conclusions from this. There is a prevailing view among the so-called “conservative” Orthodox theologians that the doctrines of the Church constitute something “untouchable.” This turns dogmas into petrified relics from the past and widens the chasm between the historical and the eschatological perspectives of the continuity of the apostolic kerygma. A study of the early Church and an appreciation of the eucharistic basis of doctrine, however, show that it is better to understand dogmas as doxological statements of the community, as the “faith transmitted to the saints,” constantly received and re-received by the consciousness of “the community of the saints” in new

70In the Orthodox Liturgy this is indicated by the fact that the readings from the Bible are placed in the doxological context of the Triasion which is sung before them. This is clearly meant to indicate that the word of God comes to the Church not simply from the past as a book and a fixed canon, but mainly from the eschatological reality of the Kingdom, from the throne of God which is at that moment of the Liturgy occupied by the bishop. This is why the reading is traditionally sung and not just read didactically. (Some Orthodox priests today, apparently not realizing this, do not sing the Gospel readings but read them like prose in order to make them more understandable and thus edifying!)

71H. Schlink, Der kommende Christus und die kirchliche Traditionen (1961) has worked out a remarkable appreciation of the doxological nature of doctrine. The contrast between the “kerygmatic” and the “doxological” kinds of theological statements, which is found in this book, points precisely to the necessity of a synthesis between the “historical” and the “eschatological” approaches to apostolic continuity.

72Jude 3.
forms of experience and with a constant openness to the future.

2. Continuity through the apostolic ministry. Perhaps no other aspect of apostolic continuity has suffered so much from the lack of the synthesis we are discussing here, as that of continuity through the ministry. Already in I Clement the missionary or historical scheme of continuity implies the idea of apostolic succession through an instituted ministry. Irenaeus once more makes the ministry a norm of some kind for the Church’s continuity with the apostles.²⁴

(a) The question that this raises in the first place is the more general one concerning the place that any form of ministry may have in a proper synthesis of the historical with the eschatological perspective of continuity. The most serious problem which the absence of such a synthesis creates is whether any ministry is necessary at all for apostolic continuity, i.e. whether in fact the eschatological and the historical aspects of continuity are not finally irreconcilable. The dilemma: "institutional" versus "charismatic" which is so widespread today is a genuine product of the lack of such a synthesis.

One of the greatest and historically most inexplicable misfortunes for the Church came when, I do not know how, the most charismatic of all acts, namely ordination into the ministry, came to be regarded as a non- or even anti-charismatic notion. One can suspect on this point a hidden interference of Neoplatonism in Christian theology, perhaps quite early in history.²⁵ But the historical question does not concern us directly here. The point I wish to make is this: If ordination is a charismatic event, then it must take place in an eschatological context. It is not enough to think of ordination as an historical transmission of apostolicity. Ordination must also be a movement coming from the side of the eschatological context.

²⁴See above n. 17 and 18.
²⁵Irenaeus, Haer. III 3:1-4; IV 26:2. Also Tertullian, De Praescr. 52 and Hippolytus, Philos. 1, proem.

This is, for example, noticeable in Origen’s distinction between the actual fact and its meaning, which leads to a contrast between charisms and ministry—a consequence which is already present in Origen’s thought, as his views on apostolic succession show. See above n. 35.

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finality, from the convoked and not just from the dispersed people of God. Hence all ordinances would have to take place in an epicletic context and, more than that, in the context of the community of the Church gathered ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, with the apostles not as individual originators of ministry but as a presiding college. It is for this reason that not only all charismatic manifestations in the primitive Pauline Churches took place during the eucharistic gatherings,²⁶ but also, as is implied in the Didache²⁷ and clearly evidenced by Hippolytus’ Apostolic Tradition,²⁸ ordination to the ministry in the early Church took place in the same context. The significance of placing ordination in the eucharistic context lies in that in this way the so-called “institutional” does not constitute a self-defined norm. If the epiclesis of the Spirit is constantly required in the context of the eschatological community for ordination, it follows that it is not the institution as such that signifies and actualizes the continuity with the apostles. The fact that each ordination has to take place within the eucharistic context—and not in the private study of a bishop—shows clearly that the historical or institutional continuity must be conditioned by the eschatological community gathered together. This implies that in fact all the orders of the Church are partakers of the apostolic continuity which is realized through an act of ordination. Whereas the historical scheme of continuity can lead to a sacramentalism in ordination by limiting apostolic continuity to the so-called ordained ministry, the eschatological approach leads to the conclusion that, for apostolic continuity to take place, the order of the baptized layman is indispensable. The Church, therefore, relates to the apostles not only through ordination but also through baptism.²⁹

²⁶See 1 Cor. 14.
²⁷Didache 15 (on ordination) is joined with 14 (on the Sunday eucharist) with the word "therefore."
²⁸Hippolytus, Apost. Trad. 2.
²⁹Cf. B.-D. Dupuy, op. cit. p. 348: “C’est le peuple fidèle en son entier qui porte conjointement avec les ministres la succession apostolique.” It is usually forgotten that baptism itself is an ordination in that it comprises two elements: (a) laying on of hands with invocation of the Spirit (hence confirmation is inseparable from baptism), and (b) assignment to a particular ordo (τάγματα or τάξεις in Greek) in the Church. On the latter—which is
(b) With these remarks in mind we may now consider the meaning that episcopal apostolic succession can have for Orthodox theology. In the case of what we have called here an historical approach to continuity, the bishop can be singled out from the Church as an individual possessing the plenitude of apostolicity which he then transmits to others through ordination. Thus one can talk of an “essential” ministry from which the rest of the ministry is derived. It is interesting that when a group of Anglican theologians published such a thesis some years ago, the idea which was found suitable to support this thesis (from the New Testament) was that of apostolicity in terms of sbaliach. This supports further my argument that the missionary scheme leads to an individualization of the apostolate. As A. Ehrhardt has argued, however, the sbaliach idea is of no value for the purpose of establishing episcopal succession in the early Church. Instead, he puts forth the thesis that the first episcopal lists were inspired by the lists of Jewish highpriests and notes that Eusebius’ lists of succession begin not with a particular apostle but with James. If this thesis is accepted, the indication is clear that what we have called here the eschatological model of the Jerusalem Church structure has been decisive in the rise of episcopal apostolic succession. We can describe then episcopal succession as a continuity of the Church not with an individual apostle but with the apostolic college as a whole and the community of the Church in its eschatological setting.

Now, if in addition to Ehrhardt’s argument we take into account other pieces of evidence from the early Church, we may illustrate this thesis even further.

In spite of the obscurity which surrounds the origins and early development of the episcopal office, it seems possible to discern two different ways of understanding the bishop’s function at that time. On the one hand he was understood as a “co-presbyter,” i.e. as one—presumably the first one—of the college of the presbyterium. On the other hand he was looked upon as the type of James the brother of Christ i.e. as the image of Christ—an idea found in Ignatius and other documents of that time. This resulted naturally into the double image we encounter for the first time clearly in Hippolytus: the bishop as alter Christus and alter apostolus.

It is worthwhile stopping for a moment at the evidence of Hippolytus, for, in my view, he seems to be the first one to offer a synthesis of the images of episcopate which I have just mentioned. This Hippolytan synthesis acquires special importance for our subject, as it seems to correspond to the synthesis of the historical and the eschatological perspectives

84 The performance of every episcopal ordination within the context of the Pentecostal event (cf. above n. 45) implies the existence of the eschatological community here and now with the Twelve as its head. Cf. Acts 1-2 where the Pentecostal event is related to both of these elements: 2:17; eschatological event; 1:13-23: the indivisible college of the Twelve) and finally the eucharist (3:42).

85 This is clearly indicated by the use of the term presbyter or the bishop by Ireneus (Haer. IV 26:2). This should be taken as a survival of an old usage in the West, as it can be inferred from I Clement 44, I Peter 5:1, etc.

86 This is the case in the early succession lists as they appear in the canon of Eusebius-Jerome. See A. Ehrhardt, op. cit., pp. 35f.

87 See above n. 21. The way I interpret and classify the historical evidence with regard to the eschatological image of succession implies the following scheme: “James with the presbyters” (Acts) = “Christ with the presbyters” (Apostle) = “bishop (image of Christ) with the presbyters” (Ignatius, Didascalia, Constitutions etc.) = “bishop as successor of James” (Eusebius-Jerome succession lists). Obviously this article is not the place for a detailed demonstration of this (this appears in another forthcoming publication). It suffices to show here that the eschatological model of the Jerusalem Church was transferred to the eucharistic structure of each local Church and influenced decisively the idea of apostolic continuity. It is most unfortunate that the classical notion of apostolic succession has been formed without taking this development into account.

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of apostolic continuity. An analysis of the views of episcopacy implied in the Apostolic Tradition leads to the following observations:

(i) The bishop is simultaneously the image of Christ and the image of the apostles. This combination of the two images is decisive for the history of the concept of apostolic succession in terms of the synthesis between the historical and the eschatological perspectives.

(ii) The presbyterium is understood as a college and is related to the functions of counseling and governing. This means that the christological image is reserved for the bishop, who alone like Christ can give the ministry, while the presbyters surround and accompany him in this “giving.” The implication of this is that apostolic continuity is realized through the bishop, not as an individual, but in his being surrounded by the college of the presbyterium. This is a way of preserving the balance between the alter Christus and the alter apostolus images of episcopacy.

(iii) Furthermore, all this presupposes the convocation of the entire community καὶ τὸ κοίτῳ for all the functions of episcopacy (e.g. ordination) which relate to the continuation of the apostolic ministry. The context must be that of the synthesis between history and eschatology provided by the eucharist. It is for this reason that the eucharist is the indispensable context of ordination.

The conclusion which emerges from this Hippolytan syn-

thesis is to be noted and underlined most emphatically. Apostolic succession through episcopacy is essentially a suc-
cession of Church structure. The concrete implications of this are clear: in adhering to episcopal succession the Church does not isolate episcopacy from the rest of the Church orders (including the laity) but, on the contrary, she makes it abso-
lutely dependent on them, just as they are absolutely depend-
ent on it. It is a false idea of succession to break down this interdependence of orders, for without the complete structure of the community the eschatological perspective, i.e. the con-
vocation of the dispersed people of God, disappears entirely.

We are then left with the purely historical approach to con-
tinuity accompanied with notions of sacramentalism, juridical potestas and all the problems they entail. In a full synthesis of the historical with the eschatological perspectives, episco-
pal succession becomes indispensable only because through it, it becomes clear that it is the entire community of the Church that embodies apostolic continuity.

That the bishop is to be understood as part of the structure of the community and not as an individual is to be seen in the way his ordination and power of jurisdiction are conditioned liturgically and canonically up to now, at least in the East. Thus: (i) no bishop can be ordained without reference to the name of his community in the very prayer of ordination. This applies today even to the ordination of titular bishops. This is especially significant for the East,

88Hippolytus, Apost. Trad. 3 (prayer for the ordination of a bishop).
89Ibid. 8 (prayer for the ordination of a presbyter).
90Such is the argument of Hippolytus concerning the laying on of hands by the presbyters on the candidate for ordination into the order of the presbyters: “Presbyter enim solius habet potestatem ut accepit, dare autem non habet potestatem. Quapropter dierum non ordinat; super presbyteri vero ordinationes consignat episcopo ordinante” (ibid. 8; text in B. Botte, Hippolyte de Rome, La Tradition Apostolique [= Sources chrétiennes 11, 1946] p. 40).
91Cf. the problem concerning the blessing of the eucharist by the presbyters in the same text, and Botte’s interpretation (ibid., p. 30), to which N. Afanasiev (Tracieza Gospodnja [1952], p. 3) objects by referring to Hippolytus’ argument quoted in the previous note.
92This is indicated by the provision of the Apost. Trad. that the ordination should take place during the eucharistic gathering. Cf. the acclamation “xristo” in the Orthodox services of ordination. For an early source of this practice see I Clem. 45:3.

93For the sources see “L’évêque d’après les prières d’ordination,” in L’Épiscopat et l’Eglise universelle (above n. 21), pp. 729-780. The prohibition of ordinations in abulato (canon 15 of I Nicæa; canon 6 of Chalcedon etc.) is related to the same principle.

94The existence of titular bishops in the Orthodox Churches points to a grave anomaly. If a bishop is ordained for a certain community, he must be free to exercise fully his ministry in this community. Only if he is separated from his flock because of historical circumstances can he be regarded as a canonical bishop in spite of his absence from his community. But the ordination of bishops with the intention of using them as bishops with a dependent authority (assistant bishops etc.) is a violation of basic ecclesiastical principles under the influence of a false notion of sacramentalism as a transmission of episcopacy from one individual to another. Cf. the problem of episcopi sagentes. See Y. Congar, L’Eglise sera ..., p. 295: “Ce que la succession apostolique n’est pas...” and the strong but justify-

which has never understood the power of jurisdiction as being independent of the prayer of ordination.\textsuperscript{95} (ii) This is underlined by a significant canonical provision surviving up to today in the East, although without consciousness of its meaning, namely that only bishops who are heads of actual communities can participate in a council. It is evident from this that the \textit{charisma veritatis} of the bishop is not an individual possession transmitted through ordination but is tied up with the entire community.\textsuperscript{96} In episcopal succession, therefore, we have essentially succession of communities. All this helps us answer the historical question which is full of important implications for ecclesiology: Why did the Church choose the bishop as the instrument of apostolic succession? Why were there, for example, no lists of presbyteral successions? If the concern of the Church was historically to transmit the apostolic doctrine, the natural thing would have been to see this transmission through the presbyters, who were in fact charged precisely with the task of teaching the faith at that time.\textsuperscript{97} Indeed, every form of historical transmission of apostolic functions could be realized through other ministries outside the bishop.\textsuperscript{98} It is only when apostolic continuity is understood as a continuity of \textit{structure} and as a succession of \textit{communities} that the episcopal character of apostolic succession acquires its uniqueness. But the element of "structure" and "community" emerges only when the eschatological perspective, as we have described it here, influences our understanding of apostolic continuity in a decisive way.

\textsuperscript{95}See below at n. 110.

\textsuperscript{96}Cf. the remarkable work of V. Fuchs, \textit{Der Ordinationsstatus von seiner Entstehung bis auf Innozenz III} (1930), passim, esp. pp. 61ff.

\textsuperscript{97}The evidence is abundant, although usually unnoticed by historians. E.g., \textit{Shepherd of Hermas, \textit{Visa.} 3:4; Tertullian, De Praesert. 2; Origen, in \textit{Exeget.} 2:2 and \textit{Hippolytus, Apost. Trad. 8} (as reconstructed by G. Dix, \textit{The Treasute on the Apostolic Tradition of Saint Hippolytus of Rome} [1937], p. 13). This is further supported by the existence of famous presbyters known as teachers (Clement of Alexandria, Origen etc.). For further evidence and a detailed discussion cf. my book \textit{The Unity ...}, pp. 160ff. All this shows that the Church of the first centuries did not understand apostolic succession as a succession of teaching. She in fact detested the idea that the Church could be conceived as a "school." See Hippolytus, \textit{Philos.} 9:12:21.

\textsuperscript{98}Why not, for example, recognize a succession of charismata etc? This question is posed especially today.

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(c) If we arrive at the importance of the episcopal succession via the idea of continuity of \textit{structure}, we can appreciate the traditional assignment to the bishop of the role of the sole ordainer.\textsuperscript{99} Because of his place in the structure of the community, especially in its eucharistic form, the bishop is the one through whom all charismatic manifestations of the Church must pass, so that they may be manifestations not of individualism but of the \textit{koinonia} of the Spirit and of the community created by it. Extraordinary or (as they are called today) "charismatic" ministries have their place in the Church and must be encouraged. But it is only if they are parts of the structure of the community that they are not in danger of becoming the kind of individualistic manifestations which St. Paul fought so vigorously in Corinth. All these extraordinary ministries, therefore, become integral parts of the apostolic continuity in the synthesis I am expounding here, if they go through the bishop, in whom the entire structure converges and the "many" become "one" in a particular existential milieu.

(d) We can now consider the question of the Church's relation with the apostles on another level, broader than that of the local community. One of the natural consequences of the historical approach to apostolic continuity is that through it the\textit{ founding of churches} acquires special significance. This, as we have noticed, forms an integral part of the theory of continuity elaborated by \textit{I Clement} and is tied up with the idea of mission and of transmission of the apostolic kerygma. This leads naturally to the importance of the Churches which can claim apostolic foundation and origin. If an apostle preached or even died in a particular Church, this Church could claim special authority with regard to apostolic continuity.

The argument of the special authority of apostolic sees was used very frequently in the course of the second century.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{99}See Hippolytus (n. 90 above). Even after the bishop lost his exclusive right to offer the eucharist (on this right see Hippolytus, \textit{Apost. Trad. 3} cf. 8), his exclusive right to ordain was not questioned. E.g., Jerome, \textit{Ep. 146 (PL 22: 1194)} and John Chrysostom, \textit{In I Tim. 11} (PG 62: 553).

\textsuperscript{100}E.g. Tertullian, \textit{De Praesert.} 20:4-7, 9; 32; 36:1; \textit{Socrop.} 9; Irenaeus, \textit{Haer.} I 10:1-2 etc.
and afterwards. The point that interests us here is that this argument can make sense only if the apostles are understood as individuals, dispersed in the world as missionaries—which is precisely what the historical approach is about, as I have expounded it here. But what happens when the eschatological perspective enters into the picture and the apostles are understood as a college surrounding Christ?

The first theologian I know of who altered decisively the Ignatian scheme as well as the Hippolytian synthesis so as to respond to this problem seems to have been St Cyprian. With Cyprian the eschatological image of the apostolic college surrounding Christ—an image which was applied to the structure of the local Church by Ignatius and Hippolytus (the bishop surrounded by the presbyterium)—is changed to become an image of the apostolic college surrounding its head, St Peter. Thus for him each episcopal throne is not, as it is for Ignatius, the “place of God” or Christ, but the cathedra Petri. The significance of this alteration is that we can now talk of unus episcopus dispersed over the earth with Peter as its head. This leads to the concept of episcopal collegiality, as it has been expounded today in Roman Catholic theology.

The implications of this Cyprianic view are so important that they require serious reflection. How could this view be understood in a synthesis of the historical with the eschatological perspectives of apostolic continuity?

In the first place it must be noted that for St Cyprian each episcopal throne is a cathedra Petri. This is significant because it implies that the Ignatian view of the indivisibility of the apostolic college in its eschatological nature, as it is manifested in the eucharist, is preserved fully for each episcopal Church. It is, therefore, wrong to read universalistic ideas directly responsible to God for his community. Thus Cyprian, Ep. 53 (52): 21. For a discussion of the implications of this principle see E. Lame, “Pluralisme et Unité,” Iridine 14 (1969), 178ff.

As it was done, for example, by N. Afanasiev, “La doctrine de la primauté à la lumière de l’écclésiologie,” Iridine 2 (1957), 401-20.

100Ep. 3:3 (Hartel, 471): “apostolus, id est episcopus.”

This seems to me to be a crucial moment in the history of the concept of apostolic succession and of episcopacy in general. It is at this point that I suggest that we should begin our reconsideration of these concepts.

The roots of the synodal institution are to be found precisely in the ordination of each bishop. Hence every bishop (with a community) has
ordination which is significant in this respect: on the one hand, as I have already said, the bishop is attached to a particular community; on the other hand, he is ordained by at least two other bishops. He is thus linked simultaneously with the apostolic college as it is expressed in his own Church and in other Churches. This simultaneity of the two dimensions, local and universal, protects the idea of apostolic college from a historization which would make impossible the “theophanic” revelation and existential realization of the eschatological structure of the Church in each local eucharistic community.

The Petrine role, therefore, in apostolic succession through episcopacy is not irrelevant to, but can be integrated in the synthesis which I am expounding here. This would require a theological appreciation of the proper relation between the apostolic college in its local and in its universal manifestations. Such a relation can only be one of identity, so that neither of these manifestations may have priority over the other. This would, I think, do justice to the intention of the right to participate in the synodal activity of the Church by virtue of his ordination. The practice which has prevailed in some Orthodox Churches in modern times to be governed by “permanent synods” based on a selection of certain bishops and the exclusion of others constitutes a direct violation of this important ecclesiological principle.

111 Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* 2; Council of Arles c. 20; I Nicea, cc. 4 and 6 etc. For a full discussion of the sources see L. Mortari, *Consacrare episcopale e Collegialità. La testimonianza della Chiesa antica* (1969).

112 J. Meyendorff, *Orthodoxie et Catholicité* (1965), p. 147, and other Orthodox theologians tend to give priority to the bishop’s place in his own local Church and make this the basis for episcopal collegiality on a broader level. I think this approach, although aiming at emphasizing the right point that the bishop should be related to a particular Church, helps perpetuate the false dilemma “local versus universal”—a dilemma transcended by the very nature of the Eucharist (cf. chapter 4 above). Only through a simultaneity of these two dimensions—a simultaneity inherent in episcopal ordination itself—can we arrive at the proper perspective. Cf. next note.


St Cyprian and in spite of the defects of the Cyprianic view itself may offer significant ecumenical possibilities today.

One of the points that become clear in any case, when we place the universal dimensions of apostolic continuity in the light of the synthesis I am expounding here, is that we cannot argue from the standpoint of special apostolic sees without destroying this synthesis. Special apostolic character can and must be recognized in all those Churches which happen to have historical links with one or more of the great apostles. But this is not to be confused with the deeper and fundamental notion of apostolic continuity which passes through the very nature and structure of each Church and relates not just to the historical but also to the eschatological perspective of apostolic continuity. In the Orthodox Churches such sees have been honored and given primacy (e.g. as patriarchates and otherwise), but they have never been distinguished from the rest of the episcopal sees from the point of view of the essential apostolic continuity in which both the historical and the question is open. However other Roman Catholic theologians insist that the priority of the universal college over the local Church is to be rejected and replaced by a synthesis of the two. Thus, H.-M. Legrand, “Nature de l’Eglise particulière et rôle de l’évêque dans l’Eglise,” in *La Charge pastoral des évêques ... Décès “Christus Dominus”* (1969), pp. 118f. and especially Y. Congar, *Ministères ...*, pp. 125-140. Needless to say, the question is of great importance to the Orthodox. Cf. E. Lanne, “To What Extent is Roman Primacy unacceptable to the Eastern Church?” *Concilium* 47 (April 1971), 62-67, esp. p. 65, pp. 112f.

114 The main defect, in my view, is that the christological discussion of episcopacy (cf. Ignatius, Hippolytus etc.) disappears and is replaced by an apostolic college from which, in fact, Christ is absent. This not only destroys the view of the Church as the image of the Kingdom—a view so essential to both eucharist and eschatology—but it also leads to the search for a “vicarius Christi” outside or above the apostolic—and the episcopal—college. On the problems that this has created in medieval eclesiology see Y. Congar, *Ministères ...*, pp. 112f.

115 Cf. J.-J. von Allmen, “l’T.Eglise locale parmi les autres Eglises locales,” *Irenikon* 43 (1970), 512-37. I should like to note especially his observation (p. 529f.) that the words of Christ to Peter concerning his particular task in the Church are situated in Luke—and perhaps in the rest of the Gospels—in the context of the Last Supper. This point has many important implications for placing the Petrine task in a perspective similar to the one of the present study and perhaps making it ultimately acceptable to those who hold a eucharistic as well as a historical approach to the continuity of the Church. But this requires further elaboration.
eschatological perspectives merge into a synthesis.\footnote{The principle of the essential equality of all bishops—and local Churches—seems precisely from the eschatological image of the apostolic college as an indivisible whole, which is realized and expressed in its totality through each bishop in each Church. Hence the importance of this principle in the early Church (e.g. Cyprian: n. 106 above) and in Orthodox Canon Law. This should not be obscured by any historical cases pointing to the contrary. On this principle in the context of Vatican II see H.-M. Legrand, op. cit. p. 122, where a distinction is made between an ecclesiologically justifiable “égalité fondamentale entre toutes les Eglises particulières” and “une hiérarchie réelle” for the sake of “le bien commun.”} This observation may serve to illustrate further how deeply this synthesis is rooted in the consciousness of the Orthodox Church.

IV. Conclusions for the Ecumenical Debate

The classical concept of apostolic succession has been formed in an one-sided way. It has virtually ignored the fundamental Biblical image of the apostles as an indivisible college surrounding Christ in His Kingdom. As a consequence of this, it has ignored entirely a long tradition, well established in the early Church, especially in Syria and Palestine (Ignatius of Antioch, Didascalia, Apostolic Constitutions, Eusebius’ succession lists, etc.), which applied this image of the apostolate to the notion of apostolic continuity.

As a result of this, the classical concept of apostolic succession has presented continuity in terms of historical process. Ideas of transmission, normativeness, etc. have become keynotes in this concept. Continuity with the apostles became inconceivable apart from the notion of a linear history. The problems that this one-sided approach has created hardly need to be mentioned. They are still with us today in the ecumenical dialogue.

My attempt in this brief study has been to do some justice to the traditionally overlooked approach which I have called “eschatological”—with the necessary qualifications to which I have referred. I have done this because I believe that no research into the theological consciousness of the Orthodox Churches can be done properly without this approach which,

although practically absent from theological manuals, nevertheless survives vividly in the iconological and liturgical approaches to the mystery of the Church. I have, therefore, done this in the first place because Orthodox theology needs badly to be reminded of it. At the same time, I hope that the ecumenical dialogue as a whole can profit something from doing justice to this traditionally ignored approach.

At first sight the eschatological image of the apostles, to which I have referred in this study, seems to have little to do with continuity: can we talk about the eschatological realities in terms of continuity? The answer is of course negative. The Kingdom comes to us as a visit and a presence; it does not come “by observation” (Luke 17:20). The synthesis, therefore, between the “historical” and the “eschatological” perspectives of apostolicity cannot remove the tension between history and the eschaton. Nevertheless “presence” and “continuity” can be related in a synthesis. In fact they have been related in the early Church. The synthesis of the two perspectives is not just a theoretical construction; it is a practical possibility.

What makes this synthesis possible is that the Kingdom of God is always present with a structure. Those who operate with the dilemma “institution or event” may revolt against such a thesis, but they must think twice before they do so. The reason is twofold. In the first place there is no Kingdom of God outside the work of the Holy Spirit, who is by definition communion. This means that the Kingdom of God is a community and this implies a structure, for it implies both a convocation and a basic line of demarcation, a judgment (Matt. 25). In the second place there is no Kingdom of God which is not centered on Christ surrounded by the apostles. And this implies again a structure, a specificity of relations, a situation in which the relations within the community are definable, and they are definable not arbitrarily but in accordance with the eschatological nature of the community. All this means that any reference to the presence of the eschata in history (Acts 2:17) implies automatically a communion structured in a certain manner (Acts 1:12-26 and 2:42). This is
already a synthesis between the historical and the eschatological realities.

How can this structure which emerges from the eschaton be translated into concrete historical terms? And how can this translation take place without turning the Kingdom into sheer history? It is at this point that institutions appear to be threatening the nature of the Church.

The way the Church faced this problem from the beginning is, and I think will always be, the only way to face it. Our Lord, before He left His disciples, offered them a sort of "diagram" of the Kingdom when He gathered them together in the Upper Room. It was not one "sacrament" out of "two" or "seven" that He offered them, nor simply a memorial of Himself, but a real image of the Kingdom. At least this is how the Church saw it from the beginning. In the eucharist, therefore, the Church found the structure of the Kingdom, and it was this structure that she transferred to her own structure. In the eucharist the "many" become "one" (I Cor. 10:17), the people of God become the Church by being called from their dispersion (ek-klesia) to one place (ἐν τῷ συνῷ). Through her communion in the eternal life of the Trinity, the Church becomes "the body of Christ," that body in which death has been conquered and by virtue of which the eschatological unity of all is offered as a promise to the entire world. The historical Jesus and the eschatological Christ in this way become one reality, and thus a real synthesis of history with eschatology takes place.

It is not, therefore, an accident that the eucharist provided the early Church from the beginning with (a) the basic concept and framework of her structure, and (b) the context for the perpetuation of this structure in history. This leads to a real synthesis between the historical and the eschatological dimensions of the Church's existence without the danger of "institutionalization." For the eucharist is perhaps the only reality in the Church which is at once an institution and an event; it is the uniquely privileged moment of the Church's existence in which the Kingdom comes epically, i.e., without emerging as an expression of the historical process, although it is manifested through historical forms. In this context the Church relates to the apostles simultaneously by looking backward and forward, to the past and to the future—always, however, by letting the eschaton determine history and its structures.

If this synthesis is applied to the problems faced by the Churches today, some fundamental reconsiderations will inevitably emerge. In the first place, the Churches will have to reconsider any notions that they may have of a derived ministry. Continuity of apostolic ministry will cease to be identical with canalization. The same would apply to the continuity of faith or doctrine. Tradition is not just passed on from one generation to another; it is constantly re-enacted and re-received in the Spirit. This will bring out the importance of the Church as a community—the community which results from the communion of the Spirit—and of the basic structure of this community—the structure which emerges from the vision of the eschatological community as the complex of the specific relations (ministries) in and through which the Spirit constitutes this community.

Thus the structure which provides the historical form of the Church's continuity with the apostles will be determined not just by history but also—or rather ultimately—by the eschatological vision of the Church. The historical heritage of the past—on which the Churches have insisted for so long—as well as the historical needs of the present (concern with social problems, etc.)—which seem to preoccupy the ecumenical movement in our days—will both have to be judged by this ultimate, final judgment provided by the vision of the eschaton, without which no real unity of the Church can exist.

For a long time now the Churches have been using criteria of unity by singling out various norms (this or that ministry, this or that doctrine, etc.). And yet every such norm taken in itself cannot but be a false criterion. The Church relates to the apostles in and through the presence of the eschatological community in history. This is not a denial of history, for it is through historical forms that this presence takes place. But the ultimate criterion for unity is to be found in
the question to what extent the actual form of the Church's ministry and message today—or at any given time—reflect the presence of this eschatological community.

6. Ministry and Communion

1. The Theological Perspective

Discussions about ministry and ordination have usually been dominated by a certain problematic inherent in scholastic theology. Some of the characteristics of this theology are worthy to be mentioned, for they form basic components of the theological perspective in which the ministry is usually placed. In the first place, both ministry and ordination are approached as autonomous subjects: they are treated quite apart from Christology or Trinitarian theology. Secondly, Christology itself is treated as an autonomous subject and not as an integral part of both Trinitarian theology and ecclesiology. This gives rise both to Christomonistic tendencies in understanding the person and ministry of Christ, and—what is more significant for us here—to great difficulties in relating the Church's ministry to that of Christ. Finally, and because of all this, ministry and ordination are not basically approached from the angle of the concrete ecclesial community but of the individual person (his "ontology" or his "function").

The theological perspective in which the Church at the time of the Greek Fathers would place her ministry does not leave any room for approaching it as an autonomous subject. This is to be seen in the way this ministry is to be related to the ministry and person of Christ. Here the follow-

\footnote{For an examination of these characteristics see Y. Congar, \textit{L'Eglise de s. Augustin à l'époque moderne} (Histoire des Dogmes III/3, 1970), especially pp. 175 ff.}
ing principles, typical of the Greek patristic tradition, may be mentioned briefly:

(a) There is no ministry in the Church other than Christ’s ministry. This assertion, which seems to go back to the New Testament Church, is understood by the Fathers so realistically that not only the dilemma of choosing between an *opus operantis* and an *ex opere operato* is avoided but also any other question implying a *distance* between the Church’s and Christ’s ministry becomes irrelevant and misleading. This *identification* of the Church’s ministry with that of Christ has gone beyond the theology of the Fathers and entered the liturgical life of the ancient Church in a decisive way: in the eucharist, Christ is not only the one who is offered and who receives but also the one who *offers.* This identification lends itself to “mystical-monophysitic” interpretations, but the fact that it is to be found in theologians such as St John Chrysostom, who shares the Antiathene “down-to-earth” mentality, indicates that it is along lines other than those of monophysitic mysticism that we should try to understand its meaning.

(b) The identification of the Church’s ministry with that of Christ is possible only if we let our Christology be *conditioned pneumatically.* This can happen if we see the

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mystery of Christ as being *initiated* by the Father who actually sends the Son in order to fulfill and realize the eternal design of the Holy Trinity to draw man and creation to participation in God’s very life. In this understanding of Christology, Christ cannot be isolated from the Holy Spirit in whom he was born of the Virgin; in whom he became able to minister on earth, in whom finally, and most significantly for our subject, he can now minister to this pre-eternal plan of God for creation in or rather as the Church. What, therefore, the Spirit does through the ministry is to constitute the Body of Christ *here and now* by realizing Christ’s ministry as the Church’s ministry.

The implications of this include the following: (i) the ministry of the Church does not represent an “interim” period in the stages of *Heilsgeschichte*, but it exists as an expression of the *totality* of the Economy. We cannot, therefore, understand the nature of the ministry by seeing it simply in terms of a *past* (Christ’s ministry in Palestine) or a *present* (ministry as service to the needs of today) but of the *future* as well, namely as sustaining for creation the hope of the *eschata*, of sharing God’s very life, by offering a *taste* of that here and now; (ii) the identification of the Church’s ministry with that of Christ is to be seen in existential *soteriological* terms which have profound anthropological and cosmicological implications. If soteriology means, as it was the case in the patristic period, not so much a juridical reality by means of which forgiveness is granted for an act of disobedience, but rather a realization of *theosis*, as communion of man—and through him of creation—in the very life of the Trinity, then this identification acquires existential importance: the Church’s ministry realizes here and now the very saving work of Christ, accused the Greeks that for the sake of Pneumatics they minimized the dignity of Christ. See Y. Congar, op. cit., p. 267.

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*Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35.*


which involves the very personal life and presence of the one who saves.  

(c) But by establishing this approach to the relation between the ministry of Christ and that of the Church we have done something fundamental to our Pneumatological understanding of the ministry: instead of first establishing in our minds the scheme “Christ—ministry” and then trying to fill this with the work of the Holy Spirit, we have made the Spirit constitutive of the very relation between Christ and the ministry. The implications of this for our theology of the ministry are of paramount importance, as will be seen throughout this study. At the moment, as we try to set the general theological perspective, this means that there is a fundamental interdependence between the ministry and the concrete community of the Church as the latter is brought about by the koinonia of the Spirit. Methodologically, this means that we possess no other way of knowing what the nature of the ministry is apart from the concrete community and that, equally, we cannot establish first our idea of the concrete community and then look at the ministry. The paradox which emerges from an attentive study of I Corinthians 12 is precisely that Paul there offers a “definition” of the Body of Christ, the Church, only in terms of ministry (membership of the Body equals charismata and vice-versa). Our understanding of the ministry, therefore, can only depart from the community created by the Spirit.

If we bear this in mind, we can understand better certain liturgical and practical elements in ordination, which theologians tend to bypass in constructing their views on the ministry. Thus, according to the ancient tradition common to both East and West, (1) all ordinations must be related to a concrete community.

9This accounts for the fact that in the East, we find neither the notion of “created grace” which was developed by medieval Western theologians nor an abstraction of Christ’s “acts” or “influence” from his person, as it developed later in Protestant theology. Cf. the criticism of the latter in D. Bonhoeffer’s “Christology” (Gesamte Schriften, Vol. III, 1960), pp. 166-242, especially pp. 176 ff. God’s direct personal involvement in salvation represented a basic issue in the controversies of the fourteenth century between Gregory Palamas and Barlaam, and it forms part of the Greek patristic view of grace as direct participation and communion. Cf. J. Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought (1969), pp. 83 ff.

10The prohibition of ordinations in absciso by the canons of the early Church (e.g. canon 6 of Chalcedon) should not be regarded as a mere “canonical” matter without deep ecclesiastical implications.


12For example, the interesting resemblance between the rite of ordination and that of matrimony in the actual liturgical service of the Orthodox Church must be related to the same idea of the bond which ordination creates between the ordained and the Church.

13This organic connection between eucharist and ministry is not simply a demand of theology but also of history, at least for the first three centuries, as it seems to result from a study of the sources. Cf. J. D. Zizioulas, The Unity of the Church in the Eucharist and the Bishop during The First Three Centuries (in Greek—1965), especially pages 29-148.

14In Orthodox spirituality, too, the understanding of the eucharist as a “community,” a gathering of all to 00:00, tends to be overshadowed by individual piety. The works of O. Casel and G. Dix in the West have contributed decisively to the rediscovery of this fundamental aspect of the eucharist. Cf. also W. Eelert, Abendmahlt und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsächlich des Ostens (1954).
and in the existential form of a concrete community created by the Spirit. Thus the eucharistic assembly becomes, theologically speaking, the natural milieu for the birth of ministry understood in this broader soteriological perspective. We shall now try to see what this means with regard to specific aspects of ministry and ordination.

II. The Relational Character of the Ministry

In discussions of the subject of the ministry, the questions very often raised have to do with the way the ministry originates and is transmitted in the Church. These questions imply an understanding of ordination as a transmission of potestas either with or without a transmission or bestowal of a certain charisma or grace. In the former case, grace is again objectified and understood as something that can be possessed by an individual and transmitted.15

The response to which such questions may lead theology are inevitably characterized by the notion of causality. Traditionally, theology has been divided mainly into the following two lines which form two options of a dilemma also lying behind contemporary theological discussions. The dilemma consists in the choice between (i) a transmission of the ministerial potestas or grace through the ordaining minister as part of the linear historical line of apostolic succession, and (ii) an understanding of the community as possessing and transmitting the charismatic life, or delegating authority, to the ordained person. Historically the first option represents the line usually taken by the so-called "catholic" theology of the ministry, whereas the second one is related to the idea of the "priesthood of all believers" as it is traditionally understood in Protestantism. The revival of Biblical studies in our days, with its critical approach to the sources and its stress on the absence of the "bishop" from the writings of the New Testament, has inevitably pushed theology towards the choice of the second option of this dilemma.16 But the sources give answers only to questions we put to them, and this makes it imperative to check whether the dilemma we impose on these sources is as inevitable as traditionally theology has made us believe.

Whichever pole of the above mentioned dilemma we may choose, we still work in it with the notion of causality, and it is this very notion that becomes questionable in the light of the theological perspective of the present study. Thus the question to be raised fundamentally is this: is there anything that may be understood as preceding and causing ordination in the Church? Is there a depository or a source of ministry? Is there a generic principle of the ministry (be it the power of the ordaining bishop or a "priestly" nature of the community)? How does the ministry come about?

(a) In the first place, it must be stated emphatically, that there is no such a thing as "non-ordained" persons in the

15This objectification of grace may be traced back to the Augustinian distinction between grace as such and its efficacy or fruits, the former being something that can be "possessed" and "transmitted" regardless of the latter (e.g. Ep. 98, PL 33:363. Cf. note 28 below). In the Middle Ages and the Council of Trent the sacraments were understood as "instrumental causes," "containing" grace and representing an "instrumental production" of grace. See R. Schulte, "Sacraments: I. The Sacraments in general," in Sacramentum Mundii, V (1970), pp. 379 ff. After Vatican II, the theology of the sacraments is placed in the context of "life" in general or the Church as sacrament. See ibid., pp. 380 ff. In the writings of K. Rahner the notion of causality, although maintained and used, is removed from the Aristotelian idea of cause and effect with the help of a theology of symbolism. (See his The Church and the Sacraments [1965], especially pp. 34 f. 58 and 96.) This approach resembles very much the theology of symbolism of the Greek Fathers (E.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, G. Dionysius Areop. and Maximus the Confessor) provided that it is put in the context of Pneumatology which would protect us from turning an "intrinsic symbolism" into a law operating almost by necessity. It is for this reason that the notion of causality, being, in some way or other, always connected with the idea of necessity, becomes difficult to apply to a pneumatologically conditioned ecclesiology. With regard to the idea of potestas it seems that this has disappeared from the new site of ordinations of the Roman Catholic Church, according to A. Houssion, "La signification théologique du nouveau rituel des ordinations," in Milhauges G. Philisp (1970), pp. 271, 279.

Church. Baptism and especially confirmation (or chrismation) as an inseparable aspect of the mystery of Christian initiation involves a "laying on of hands" ("chrismation" in this respect is another form of the same thing). The East has kept these two aspects (baptism—confirmation) not only inseparably linked with one another but also with what follows, namely the eucharist. The theological significance of this lies in the fact that it reveals the nature of baptism and confirmation as being essentially an ordination, while it helps us understand better what ordination itself means. As we can see already in Hippolytus’ Apostolic Tradition, the immediate and inevitable result of baptism and confirmation was that the newly baptized would take his particular “place” in the eucharistic assembly, i.e. that he would become a layman. That this implies ordination is clear from the fact that the baptized person does not simply become a “Christian,” as we tend to think, but he becomes a member of a particular “ordo” in the eucharistic community. Once this is forgotten, it is easy to speak of the laity as “non-ordained” and thus arrive at the possibility—witnessed to by the history of the Church in a dramatic way—of either making the layman an unnecessary element in the eucharistic community (hence the “private mass” and the entire issue of clericalism) or of making him the basis of all “orders,” as if he were not himself a specifically defined order but a generic source or principle (hence the prevailing view of “the priesthood of all believers” in all its variations).

The theological implication of all this is that ordination, i.e. assignment to a particular “ordo” in the community, appears to be paradoxically enough not something that follows a pre-existing community but an act constitutive of the community. Being used to individualism in ontology, we find it hard to think of a community which does not first exist for details cf. J. D. Zizioulas, “Some Reflections on Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist,” in Sobornost 5 (1969), 644-652.

Apost. Trad. 21 (ed. Botte, p. 54).

For confirmation. Cf. I Clem. 40.3—41.7: no confusion of “orders” or transgression from one “order” to another is permissible. This implies that the “layman” is also an “order” (τάκγιας or τόκης).

Ministry and Communion itself and then produce or sustain or possess ministry. In this way of thinking, we find it natural to speak of the community first as a unity and then as a diversity of ministries. But in a pneumatologically conditioned ontology the fact is that the Holy Spirit unites only by dividing (I Cor. 12:11). The conclusion of this is that ordination, as it is seen in the case of baptism, is the act that creates the community which thus becomes understood as the existential “locus” of the convergence of the charismata (I Cor. 12).

(b) Following these remarks, which illustrate how in a pneumatologically understood ecclesiology ordination does not represent an act of progression and causality, we can understand better the “one-sided” and almost “monophysitic” view expressed for example in the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, that in ordination the bishop ordains “not by his own movement (gesture) but by the divine movement.” This view has nothing to do with the

Thus the expression: “the ministry of the Church” is not to be understood in the sense of a possessive genitive. The being of the Church does not precede her actions or ministries. Charismatic life (i.e. concrete manifestation) is a byproduct of and not derivative from the Church’s being. The question whether “essence” precedes “existence” or not should not be introduced into ecclesiology; it is rather along the lines of a simultaneity of the two that we must understand the Church. Cf. K. Rahner’s view that “the Church is the visible outward expression of grace not in the sense that the subsequently announces as it were the presence of something already there . . .” (our underlining); also his insistence that the Church as a local event is not to be understood as something subsequent to the universal Church (Episcopus und Primat [1962], p. 26 and 34). Yet in spite of this Rahner seems to hold the idea of an “essence” or “potentiality” of the Church leading to an “actuality” or “event” and hence to the subordination of the local to the universal Church (ibid.). Cf. Part IV and note 105 below.

This stress on the existential and charismatic nature of the Church should not be taken to imply an undermining of the historical nature of the Church. But the acceptance on the other hand of the historical nature of the Church should not imply an ecclesiological ontology according to which the Church’s being is presupposed as the intrinsic source of her actions. Such an implication results from the view that the Church’s historical existence (e.g. apostolic succession) is something else than her constant charismatic reconstitution. On the contrary, the view we are presenting here is that the two, i.e. historical existence (succession, etc.) and charismatic event, coincide with each other. It is in this sense that we should try to understand, for example, apostolic succession (see Part IV below). In this way the existential-charismatic approach to ecclesiology does not threaten the historical basis of the Church, but implies it.

Bref. Hier. 5, 5, PG 5:513: “τον θελων ειράρχην ονκ αυτοκοινήτως
monophysitic tendencies usually attributed to this writer by scholars, but it is simply typical of the epiclesic approach of the Greek Fathers. The liturgical formula of ordination itself reveals the same approach in (i) making God the subject of the verb "ordain" ("The divine grace ... ordains"), and (ii) requiring that the eucharistic assembly sing the "Kyrie eleison" during the moment of ordination. The meaning of all this is that ordination depends essentially on prayer and not simply on an objective transmission of grace. This is to be conceived not in the usual understanding of prayer as assisting us in something we do, but as attributing the very action to God Himself.22

In the light of these remarks, we can understand the proper meaning of two other parts of the procedure of ordination, namely election by the people and acclamation of approval (in the East by crying "axios") by the congregation. The fact that the early Church could dispense with the part of the election by the laity 24 (a practice which was perhaps not to be found in all regions, anyway) shows that in spite of its importance this part could not be made a condition for ordination, as if the charisma depended on the decision of the people outside the eucharistic community. The case, however, was different with the approval of the people within the eucharistic assembly. The "axios," as another form of the liturgical "amen" 25 of the congregation, signified the participation of the entire community in ordination, just like the singing of the "Kyrie eleison" to which we have already referred. To be sure, this is not a satisfactory interpretation for those who are looking for a "democratic" view of the

Church. But a "democracy" which makes the community a condition for divine action conditions the very charismatic nature of the ministry.

This immediacy of divine action in ordination is what safeguards the charismatic nature of the ministry. The same immediacy expresses also the identification of the Church's ministry with that of Christ—a basic theological component of the perspective we discussed in the first part of this study. All this could have become sheer monophysitism had it not been for the fact that it is all expressed in a "eucharistic" way, i.e. in and through the concrete local community, which, however, is to be understood as something constituted by the very event it constitutes. The organic link of ordination with this community is thus a key for all theology of the ministry: it points to divine action, fully incarnating itself in creation yet without depending ontologically on it.26 Without the community, or rather the eucharistic community, creatively being (be it man or nature or even community of men) tends to become a condition for divine grace. In the eucharistic community, creatively being achieves its full affiliation, not by becoming a condition for God's grace but by being defined in giving itself up to God's love. It is this that makes the ministry belong to the "new," and not to the old, creation, i.e. to a creatively being which affirms itself not by becoming a condition for God's love (this is the "old" sinful being) but by ceasing to be such a condition.27 And it is this that makes the Church differ essentially from a human "democracy."

If ordination is approached in this way, ministry ceases to be understood in terms of what it gives to the ordained and


23A basic theological implication in what is said here is that in allowing for a creatively "being" we must in no way make it a condition for God's life and love. Adam's sin consists in man's self-affirmation independently of God. An understanding of human nature in itself, i.e. apart from its communion with God, makes man a "partner" of God on equal terms and as such it sanctions his fallen state, by transforming him into a necessary condition in God's exercise of His grace. The sacraments and the ministry in particular represent theological areas in which this problem reveals itself in a crucial way.
becomes describable only in terms of the particular relationship into which it places the ordained. If ordination is understood as constitutive of the community and if the community being the koinonia of the Spirit is by its nature a relational entity, ministry as a whole can be describable as a complexity of relationships within the Church and in its relation to the world. In fact, without the notion of "relationship" the ministry loses its character both as a charisma of the Spirit, i.e. part of His koinonia, and as service (diakonia).

In employing the term "relationship" in order to describe the nature of the ministry, we do not take it in the sense of an abstract and logical relatio but as having a deeply ontological and soteriological meaning. In Greek patrastic tradition, this would include two aspects with regard to the ministry: (i) A relational reality which unites the community itself in and by dividing it into ministries. St Maximus the Confessor coins the remarkable term "co-divided" (συνδιακομισμένη) in order to indicate this character of ordination. And (ii) an act by which the Church and, through her, mankind and creation are brought into the reconciling and saving relationship with God which has been realized in Christ. In this sense, ministry is understood as "ambassadorship" (πρεσβεία) mainly in the tradition of the Antiochene Fathers.

Thus it is the ministry that more than anything else renders the Church a relational reality, i.e. a mystery of love, reflecting here and now the very life of the trinitarian God. Because this reality is realized within the world and historical existence which still bears the Cross in its heart and has to contend with the presence and work of the Devil, this relational nature of the Church is constantly revealed by way of a double

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movement: (i) as a baptismal movement which renders the Church a community existentially "dead to the world" and hence separated from it, and (ii) as a eucharistic movement which relates the world to God by "referring" it to God as anaphora and by bringing to it the blessings of God's life and the taste of the Kingdom to come. It is this double movement of the Church's relational nature that makes the ministry realize its relational character as a movement of the Church both ad intra and ad extra.

If we look at the history of the birth and establishment of the various orders and ministries we shall see how quickly the Church concentrated ordination almost exclusively on her ministries ad intra. This development begins so early—certainly it is already there with St Ignatius of Antioch—and it is to be evaluated in a positive and not in a negative way. For the main theological implication of this is connected with the fact that ordination is related to the eucharistic community, and for this reason the ministries or "orders" that are suggested by the structure of this community become the decisive ones for all ministries. By reserving ordination to these ministries, the Church has at least preserved the correct visible point of reference for its ministry.

Thus the particular ministries of (i) the laity, (ii) the deacons, (iii) the presbyters and (iv) the bishop, clearly evidenced with St Ignatius, became the indispensable ministries of the Church in her relation ad intra during the entire history of the Church until and perhaps including the Reformation.

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38It must be made clear that our view of "relationship," on which we base our approach here, is not to be reduced to something that has no ontological content, like e.g. in the scholastic oppositio relationis. For St Augustine, too, relational context is indispensable for the sacramental grace. Grace according to him appears only in coniunct and unius (cf. Y. Congar, op. cit. pp. 11-24), though with the help of a distinction, unfamiliar to the Eastern tradition, he would restrict this condition to the fruits of grace and not to the grace itself. Cf. note 15 above.


41This "anaphoric" quality of the Church, expressed per excellence in the eucharist, is the main manifestation of the priestly character of the Church and her ministry. Thus the latter must be related to the eucharist in order to find its fulfillment.

42Ibid. 3, 1: "χορήγησε τούτων (i.e. bishop, presbyters, deacons) έκκλησία ὑπὸ κολαστίου."  

43Cf. J.-J. Von Allmen, Le saint ministre selon la conviction et la volonté des Réformés du XVIe siècle (1588), especially pp. 213 ff. The issue is not whether we have the name of "bishop" but the reality of his office. For an application of this principle to the problem of the ministry in the primitive Church, see G. Konidaris, "Warum die Kirche von Antiochia den proosten prætberer als ho Episkopoi bezeichnete," Münchener theologische Zeitschrift, 1961, pp. 269-284.
in the fact that theology rather soon lost the proper perspective which is suggested by the organic link of these ministries with the structure of the eucharistic assembly, and thus, given other historical and theological factors, the view of these orders as relational realities making sense only in their interdependence in the community was replaced by an approach to them as individual offices, with all the well-known consequences for the history of the Church and of theology.

If the relational character of these orders is recaptured in the light of the eucharistic community to which they naturally belong, perhaps many of the existing problems will disappear. This will affect mainly two areas in the theology of the ministry:

(a) The area of the ecclesiological justification of each one of the basic orders. By regarding them as parts of a relational whole we can affirm and justify their distinctiveness and specificity, and hence their indissociability. The laity will thus become the laos who is gathered from the world to realize in the community of the Church the eschatological unity and salvation of the world in Christ. The deacons, whose existence causes so much embarrassment to the theology of the ministry precisely because their eucharistic role has been lost, will regain their profound significance as bearers of the world (in the form of the gifts and petitions of the faithful) to the head of the eucharistic community in order to bring them back again to the world (in the form of the Holy Communion) as a sign of the new creation which is realized in the communion with God’s life. The presbyters will become again the synedrion of the community portraying

The most important historical factor is the appearance of the parish as a eucharistic gathering distinct from the episcopal eucharistic assembly. This development led to the dissociation of the presbyter from the bishop as well as to the disintegration of the originally collegial presbyterium, itself, and hence to the idea that a eucharistic community does not necessarily involve all orders. Cf. J. D. Zizioulas, The Unity . . . , pp. 151-188 and ch. VIII below.

Such theological factors are to be found, for example, in the development of an individualistic approach to the eucharist, the association of the ministry with an individually possessed potestas, etc.


(b) With regard to the authority which is implied in the ministry, a recovery of the relational nature of the ministry in the light of the eucharistic community will prove pointless the fight against “institution”—an issue about which one hears so much today—since it will make “institution” not only meaningful but also relational. Authority being tied up with a ministry understood as an objectified office and as potestas naturally becomes oppressive and provokes revolutionary reactions. On the other hand, in a relational view of the ministry, authority establishes itself as a demand of the relationship itself. Thus the Church becomes hierarchical in the sense in which the Holy Trinity itself is hierarchical: by reason of the specificity of relationship. The ministry, viewed in this way, creates degree of honor, respect and true authority precisely in the way we see this in trinitarian theology. Being a reflection of the very love of God in the world,
the Church reflects precisely this kind of authority through and in her ministry. Hierarchy and authority are thus born out of relationship and not of power (auctoritas or potestas)—be it an “ontological” or a “moral” kind of power.

This leads us to a consideration of the Church’s ministry ad extra. In a relational notion of the ministry, such as it is revealed in the light of the eucharistic community, the Church’s “ontology” becomes conditioned existentially through her ministry. This happens precisely in the Church’s missionary existence in the world, and it means more specifically the following things:

(a) The ministry relates the Church to the world in an existential way, so that any separation between the Church and the world in the form of a dichotomy becomes impossible. As it is revealed in the eucharistic nature of the Church, the world is assumed by the community and referred back to the Creator. In a eucharistic approach it is by being assumed that the world is judged, and not otherwise.

(b) The mission of the Church in the world is, therefore, inconceivable in terms of an attitude vis-à-vis the world. The relational character of the ministry implies that the only acceptable method of mission for the Church is the incarnational one: the Church relates to the world through and in her ministry by being involved existentially in the world. The nature of mission is not to be found in the Church’s addressing the world but in its being fully in compasion with it.

40Cf. note 31 above.

41Cf. the view that “the Church is in the world” expressed in the constitution Gaudium et spes. That such a view excludes the conception of the Church as a society vis-à-vis other societies in the world is stressed by G. Thils, Une “Loi fondamentale de l’Eglise”? (1971), p. 15.

Thus the so-called “ministry of the word” is not to be understood in terms of the Church’s “addressing” the world, but in terms of her being involved in the world with compasion, since the Word of God is not to be isolated from his incarnation. This means that, for example, preaching as such cannot be understood as a ministry in itself. The Word of God permeates the entire ministry: every minister in some way or other proclamans (cf. Paul’s understanding of the eucharist as “proclamation” in I Cor. 11:26, and Ignatius in Eph., 19, 1); equally, however, the Word of God itself is permeated by the ministry. This is the result of the fact that for the Church the Word of God is no longer simply a prophetic utterance, as it was in the Old Testament, but “flesh” (John 1:14).

(c) But precisely all this shows that the ministry of the Church ad extra must be an organic part of the concrete local community and not of a vague “mission” of the “Church” in general. The significance of this for our understanding of the ad extra ministry is fundamental: no form of such a ministry can exist without being organically related to the concrete eucharistic community. It is, therefore, precisely this relational nature of the Church that makes it imperative that all ministries ad extra spring from the eucharistic community and thus go necessarily through the hands of its president (bishop). They thus become themselves eucharistic or para-eucharistic forms of ministry.

(d) Finally, all this means that the Church must always have a variety of such ministries ad extra, according to the needs of the time and the place in which she exists. Such ministries will always be necessary to a Church that has not become unrelated to the world, but they cannot acquire permanent forms, being always dependent upon the needs of the particular place and time in which the Church finds herself. From this point of view the ministries ad extra differ from those ad intra, in that the latter are essentially permanent, dictated by the Church’s eucharistic structure as the community gathers together in its baptismal distinctiveness from the world.

III. The “Sacramental” Character of the Ministry

Discussions about the ministry have for many centuries centered on the question whether ordination confers upon the ordained person something “ontological” or simply “functional.” In the broader context of a sacramental theology understood mainly in terms of “natural” versus “supernatural” and of grace as something “given,” “transmitted,” and

40In this particular sense the distinction between “permanent” and “movable” ministers can be a valid one. But it would be a mistake to call only the “moving” ministers “charismatic,” as it was done by Harnack and many historians after him. A ministry, whether “permanent” or not, which is not charismatic is not a ministry of the Church. Cf. note 37 above.
"possessed,"44 the question was what ordination does to the ordained individual. Here again the same ontology of objectification is implied: man is defined as an individual; he either "possesses" something or he does not—in the latter case, he simply functions or serves.

If, however, we bear in mind the relational character of the ministry which we discussed in the previous part of this study, our understanding of ordination will be also affected from the anthropological point of view. Just as the Church becomes through the ministry a relational entity both in itself and in its relation to the world, so also the ordained man becomes, through his ordination, a relational entity. In this context, looking at the ordained person as an individual defeats the very end of ordination. For ordination, to use a most valuable distinction offered by modern philosophy,45 aims precisely at making man not an individual but a person, i.e. an ek-static being, that can be looked upon not from the angle of his "limits" but of his overcoming his "selfhood" and becoming a related being. This shows that the very question of whether ordination is to be understood in "ontological" or in "functional" terms46 is not only misleading but absolutely impossible to raise in the context of our theological perspective in this study. In the light of the koinonia of the Holy Spirit, ordination relates the ordained man so profoundly and so existentially to the community that in his new state after ordination he cannot be any longer, as a minister, conceived in himself. In this state, existence is determined by communion which qualifies and defines both "ontology" and "function." Thus it becomes impossible in this state to say that one simply "functions" without implying that his being is deeply and decisively affected by what he does. In the same way, it becomes impossible to imply in this state that one 47

44Cf. note 15 above.
46Thus N. Afnasiev ("L'Eglise de Dieu dans le Christ," in La Pensée Orthodoxe, 13 ([1968], 19) and N. Nikitines ("The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for Church Life and Theology," in The Orthodox Ethos, ed by A. J. Philippou [1964], p. 64) speak of ordination in terms of "functional," while others of "ontological" (e.g. P. Tremblais, Dogmatique, III (1968), p. 329 f.).

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"possesses" anything as an individual. Could one even isolate and objectify the state created by love and speak of something given by it? Or could one say that in a state of love one simply "functions"?47 Ordination and ministry as communion are precisely and only describable in terms of love. This is what St Paul seems to do when he is faced with an impasse in trying to explain the mystery of the Church's charismatic nature.48

If we free ourselves from the dilemma "ontological" versus "functional," what categories can we use to indicate the new state into which ordination brings the ordained person? In view of what we have said earlier, any categories we may employ must belong to the type of relational language, i.e. they must allow for the ordained individual to be conceived and spoken of not in himself but as a relational being. The categories used by the Greek Fathers seem to be precisely of this kind. We may look at them briefly.49

(a) We have already mentioned the Antiochene understanding of the ministry in terms of "ambassadorship" (πρεσβείας).50 This term points clearly beyond any objectification of the charisma of ordination. As Theodore of Mopsuestia puts it, the grace received by the minister in his ordination is "for those who need it," i.e. as a gift for the 48These are crucial questions pointing to the fact that it is quite inadequate to speak of ordination or ministry as a choice between "ontological" or "functional," and thus to the need of working out some new way of expressing the effect of ordination upon the ordained. This may underline the importance of the ontology of the person discussed in chapter 1 of this book.
49Cor. 13, with its famous hymn to love is usually abused and misused for homiletical purposes, as if its meaning could be understood apart from what is said by Paul in chapter 12. A right exegesis of this "hymn" demands placing it in the context of Paul's attempt to express his theology of the charismata in the previous chapter. His reference to love in chapter 13, therefore, represents Paul's attempt to clarify the paradox of the Church's unity in and through the "divisions" of the charismata. The conclusion that follows such an exegetical approach is that only in terms of love can one understand the mystery of charismatic life and therefore of ministry.
51See note 30 above.
52"The grace of the Spirit is conferred upon him (the priest) for this service . . ." Liber ad Baptizandos II, 6 (ed. and transl. by A. Mingana,
others. This does not imply that the minister himself is not in need of that grace. The point is that he needs it precisely because he does not "possess" it but gets it himself as a member of the community. This category of "ambassadorship," a favorite term of St John Chrysostom especially, is so loaded with soteriological and existential connotations that leaves no room either for objectification of the charisma or for its reduction to the level of mere "function."

(b) Another kind of language which may be easily misunderstood in an "ontologicist" way is that used mainly by theologians of the Cappadocian and the Alexandrian traditions. Thus Gregory of Nyssa speaks of ordination as "transfiguration" (μεταμορφωσις) and Cyril of Alexandria as "transmutation" (μετατομησις) of the ordained. Yet in both of these cases these terms are used in the sense always of participation: the priest receives the grace "as part of" the eucharistic community and the change that takes place is described in terms of honor, glory, dignity etc., i.e. 

Woodbrooke Studies, VI (1933), p. 120). It must be noted that Theodore, in accordance with the extreme Antiochene tendency to keep separate the divine from the human nature, understands the priest as an "intermediary" (ibid., p. 119) between man and God. He thus seems to follow a line different from the Alexandrian tradition, and even from that of Chrysostom, who would attribute all sacramental action to Christ or to God Himself. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that Theodore, too, conceives the priesthood in strictly relational terms, as it is seen from his comments on the congregation's reply "And unto thy spirit" to the priest's blessing: "They (the congregation) require him (the priest) with an identical prayer so that it may be made manifest to the priest and also to all of them that it is not only they that are in need of the benediction and the prayers of the priest, but that he also is in need of the prayer of all of them... indeed all of us are one body of Christ, our Lord, and all of us are members one of another, and the priest only fills the role of a member that is higher than the other members of the body, such as the eye or the tongue" (ibid., p. 90 f.).

See note 30 above.

32In Bapt Christi, PG 46:581D-584A. Cf. note 49 above.

33In Job, 12, 1 (ed. P. E. Pusey, vol. 3, 131 f.).

34Gregory of Nyssa, loc. cit.; the ordained priest is singled out of the community to become its ("leader" and "president"). It should be noted that the term "president" (προεδρος, cf. Justin, I Apol. 67) is a relational term.

35Gregory of Nyssa (ibid.) sees this change in the priest's becoming σεμνος and τιμος by way of inner change προς το βαλλεταιν. Cyril of Alex. understands this change in terms of Paul's words: "not I, but the grace of God which is in me" (1 Cor. 15:10), which he goes on to explain in terms of an anthropology of theosis, typical to the Alexandrian tradition, which implies no "natural" change although it affects man in his being. As St Maximus the Confessor, in his remarkable perception of the dynamism of being, puts it, ordination to the ministry is to be seen as part of the broader christological movement between the Creator and creation—a movement which affects being, yet not statically but precisely as a movement and in the framework of a "cosmic liturgy."

(c) Another kind of language used in early patristic literature in connection with the ministry is what we may call a typological one. This language is again significantly pointing in the same direction of a relational understanding of the minister. We encounter this kind of language as early as St Ignatius of Antioch in his way of speaking of the various orders in the Church in terms of topos or topos: e.g. the bishop is the "type" or "in the place" of God, etc. It is significant to note that this kind of language becomes possible only when one has in view the concrete eucharistic community. Ordination thus becomes what we tried to describe in the previous part of this paper, an assignment to a particular place in the community, and the ordained is defined after his ordination precisely by his "place" in the community which in its eucharistic nature portrays the very Kingdom of God here and now. It is for this reason that this typological language terms of "communion" in Christ's own (divine) nature through participation (μετατομησις) in the Holy Spirit. This amounts, for Cyril, to an elevation of the ordained to a "glory" above human nature, i.e. to the "dignity" which he calls "divine nature alone" (In Job. 12, 1, ibid., pp. 132, 133 and 140).

37Without a proper idea of theosis and the "change" in ordination, as described e.g. by Cyril of Alexandria (see previous note), cannot be understood. In the tradition of the Greek Fathers, "deification" of human nature does not mean "divinization" in a sense of a "natural" change. It is to be understood in terms of an elevation of human nature to the glory and life of God by "participation" (μετατομης). Without this idea of participation and communion the language employed by the Greek Fathers in connection with the ministry can be easily misunderstood. Cf. ch. II § 5

38Cyril of Alexandria, Sermon, 2, PG 91:669A.

39Ignatius, Magn. 6, 1; 3, 1-2; Tral. 5, 1. There is no doubt that Ignatius had the image of the eucharistic community in mind when speaking of the bishop as being the "type" of God or sitting "in the place of God."

This is why Ignatius would regard the local Church united around the
of Ignatius could find its way so easily into the early liturgical documents, such as the Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum and the Apostolic Constitutions.61

In order to understand this better, we must combine it with the more obviously soteriological notion of δικτή (= in the place of) used for the relation between, e.g., bishops or priests and Christ by Chrysostom.62 This way of speaking lends itself unfortunately to the idea of “vicar” in a juridical sense, i.e. as a representation of someone who is absent. But its correct meaning is to be found only in the idea of representation by participation, as implied in the Biblical image of the “corporate personality”63 (e.g. in the “Servant of God” or the “Son of Man”) and used so significantly in the narratives of the Lord’s Supper in the Gospels.64 Thus the ordained person becomes a “mediator” between man and God not by presupposing or establishing a distance between these two but by relating himself to both in the context of the community of which he himself is part. It is in this way that the gradual application of the term priest was extended from the person of Christ, for whom alone it is used in the New Testament,65 to the bishop, for whom again alone it was used until about the fourth century. In being the head of the bishop as identical with the whole or “catholic” Church united in Christ (Συμφ. 8). The word δικτή which connects the local with the “catholic” Church in this well-known passage, does not imply a contrast, as many scholars have taken it to imply, but an identity between the two, local and “catholic.” Ignatius sees no difference between unity in Christ and unity in the bishop. Thus Eph. 5, 1; Magn. 3, 1-2; cf. Polyc. incor. Cf. IV above.

61Didascalia 9 (ed. and transl. R. H. Connolly [1929], p. 86 f.). For the Const. Apest. (II, FG 1:668) the bishop is “God on earth after God,” the presbyters “a type of the apostles” etc. On this typology cf. Ignatius, Magn. 5, 6 and previous note.

62E.g. In II Cor. 11, FG 61:477, Chrysostom’s understanding of the ministry as being exercised δικτή δικτή (Christ) και τοὺς πάντας, reminds one of Ignatius (notes 59-61 above). That this δικτή does not introduce distance but identity is explained by Chrysostom himself: “Christ Himself appeals, Christ’s Father Himself through us” (ibid., 478).


65Heb. 5:6, 8:4, 10:21, 2:17.

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eucharistic community and offering in his hands the eucharist—a task of the episcopate par excellence in the first four centuries—the bishop, and later on the presbyter precisely and significantly enough when he started offering the eucharist himself, acquired the title of priest. But, as the history of the extension of the term “priest” to the presbyter shows,67 it is the particular place in the eucharistic community and no other reason that accounted for the use of the term “priest” in both cases. The fundamental implication of this is that there is no priesthood as a general and vague term, as it was to become later on in theology under the name of sacerdotium—a term which acquired almost the meaning of a generic principle pre-existing and transmitted in ordination from the ordainer to the ordained or from “all believers” to a particular one. The true and historically original meaning of the term is this: as Christ (the only priest) becomes in the Holy Spirit a community (His body, the Church), His priesthood is realized and portrayed in historical existence here and now as a eucharistic community in which His “image” is the head of this community68 offering with and on behalf of the community the eucharistic gifts. Thus the community itself becomes priestly in the sense of I Peter 2:5,9, yet—and this must be stressed in view of what we said in the previous part of this paper—neither in the sense that the priestly character of the community precedes the ordained sacerdos, nor in the sense that it derives from him, but of the togetherness and simultaneous gathering εἰς τὸ συνέκτοι of all the orders of the community. By understanding priesthood in this way we can see both how the order of the priest becomes relational (= a
place in the community) and at the same time strictly specific and personal (no eucharistic community without this particular order and no confusion of orders). 69

In stressing the relational character of the minister we must in no way imply that ordination means nothing for the ordained person himself. Of course—and this is basic in the perspective of this study—any isolation of the ordained person from the rest of the members of the Body amounts to his death: so fundamental is the relational character of Church membership, that individuals disappear as such and become sharers of the eternal and true life only as members one of another. The eschatological fate, therefore, of any Christian is deeply dependent on his relational existence in the community of the saints. And if the resurrection of the Christians is not the resurrection of individuals but of a community, a body (I Thess. 4), the same is true about the eschatological fate of the charismata: they will all be in the end determined by love, i.e. by their relational existence in the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12-13). If, therefore, it is at all possible to speak of the ordained person in himself, it is again only in the light of his position in the Body that we can do so.

The question whether the ministry is only of the “cultus praestentis ecclesiae” 70 or not, was never raised in the East. This was so precisely because of the relational and the “typological” approach we discussed earlier here: what happens in the community of the Church, especially in its eucharistic structure, has no meaning in itself apart from its being a reflection—not in a Platonic but a real sense 71—of the community of the Kingdom of God. This mentality is so fundamental that there is no room for the slightest distinction between the worshipping eucharistic community on earth and the actual worship in front of God’s throne. 72 What does this imply for the ordained person himself? The answer to this question involves two extremely delicate observations which, due to our being philosophically conditioned by an ontology of objectification, become very difficult to express without the risk of being misunderstood.

The first remark to be made is that because of the relational nature of ordination, no ordained person realizes his ordo in himself but in the community. Thus if he is isolated from the community he ceases to be an ordained person (no anathematized or excommunicated 73 minister can be regarded as a minister). 74 The fact that in the case of his rehabilitation this person is not re-ordained does not imply a recognition that he was still a minister during his excommunication 75—such an ontology would be inconceivable, as the case of an anathematized person would clearly show. The between the intelligible prototype and its concrete sensible antitype presupposes that the latter exists really only in so far as it reflects the former. But for the Fathers (e.g. Ignatius of Antioch) the local Church is in itself a reality in which the “catholic” Church is fully present and real.

70John Chrysostom, In Heb. 14, FG 63:111-112: “the Church (in its eucharistic gathering) is heavenly and nothing else but heaven.” Also, Maximus the Confessor, Myst. 1, PG 91:664D-668C. The eucharistic liturgy actually in use in the Orthodox Church repeatedly makes this point. The same view is portrayed in the architecture and iconography of the Byzantine churches. Cf. Y. Congar, L’Eglise . . ., pp. 68 ff.

71We use “excommunication” here not in the sense of a mere disciplinary action but in that of a real cutting off of someone from the life of the community.

72It would be inconceivable in this approach to think, for example, of Arius as being still in any way a priest!


With regard to re-ordination it is noteworthy that Apostolic Canon 68, although forbidding it, states that this cannot apply to the rehabilitation of a heretic.
practice of avoiding re-ordination is rather to be seen from the angle of the community again and not the individual: the community having once ordained someone recognizes his position in re-admitting him, and thus does not repeat the service of ordination. That avoiding re-ordination is not to be regarded as a matter of ontological "possession" of the charisma is to be seen in the fact that the Church may degrade a rehabilitated minister, as was the case in the early Church—something that would be unacceptable to a theology that looks at the minister as an individual regardless of his place in the community.

The second remark to be made is a more positive one. Precisely because of the identification of the eucharistic community, into which one is ordained, with the worshipping community before the throne of God, ordination is not something of a temporal nature but of eschatological decisiveness. The eschatological character of ordination is expressed in the Greek patristic tradition with the term "perfection" (τελειοση). This has again nothing to do with a "natural" or moral perfection as such. It is to be understood rather in the light of the "typological" language of St Ignatius, which we have already mentioned, and especially that of "term" or "end" (πέρας) used by St Maximus the Confessor in connection with ordination. In the understanding of St Maximus, the Ignatian liturgical typology becomes, as it is usual with this Church Father, dynamic: ordination (baptism being included) realizes the movement of creation towards its eschatological end; the eucharistic altar expresses here and now the eschatological nature, the πέρας, of the community and, through and in it, of creation.

It is this sense of eschatological significance and decisiveness that allows for the application of the term "seal" (σφραγίς) to ordination. Did the East use this term in the same sense as St Augustine did? It is difficult to answer this question, especially in view of the fact that a whole sacerdotal ontologism in the West is based itself on St Augustine's notion of "seal." What seems to be true about the Greek Fathers is that they certainly used this term to indicate chrismation as ordination in an eschatological sense: the baptized person, after his baptism in the water, is "sealed with the Holy Spirit," "for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). This eschatological finality makes this a σφραγίς ἀκατόλυτος or ἀνεπικείμενος in this sense very much like the Augustinian notion of a sign by which God will recognize His own in the last days. But the term σφραγίς would never acquire in the Greek Fathers a strictly ontological meaning in the sense of πρᾶγμα; it would be understood rather as σχέσις, which is usually contrasted by them with πρᾶγμα. If, for example, we study carefully the application of σφραγίς or character to the person of Christ (cf. Heb. 1:3) by the Greek Fathers, we shall notice clearly this distinction: e.g. for St Basil, the Son in the "character" and σφραγίς of the Father, but the names "Father" and "Son," at least for the Cappadocian theology, are not names of πρᾶγμα but of σχέσις. It would take us very far to explain here what σχέσις means for the Greek Fathers. In order to avoid misunderstanding, however, it should be stated that this notion is not to be taken in the sense of a logical

78E.g. canon 8 of 1 Nicea states that a rehabilitated bishop may be placed in the rank of the presbyter, and canon 10 of Neocesarea that a deacon may become a subdeacon.
76Maximus Conf., Myst. 2, PG 91:669A-D.
75Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. Myst. 3, PG 33:1088 f.
76Cyril of Jerusalem, Procath. 16, PG 33:360.
78On the notion of σφραγίς in the patristic period cf. J. Gallot, La nature du caractère sacramentel (1957), especially pp. 35 ff.
79Basil, De Spir. sanct. 64, PG 32:185 C.
80Thus, Gregory Naz. Or. 29, 16, PG 36:96: "οὐδε ὁσίως ἐνόημα ὁ πατὴρ ὁμοίως ἐνεργείας σχέσεως ἔδω." Also for Maximus the Confessor σχέσις and πρᾶγμα are to be clearly distinguished (Pyr., PG 91:340D-341A). The insistence upon the distinction between a strictly ontological (πρᾶγμα or σφραγίς) and a relational (σχέσις) approach to reality characterizes Greek patristic thought in general. It would take us too far to examine here what σχέσις means for the Greek Fathers. In case, however, that this may be misunderstood as meaning a simply logical relation, it must be noted that σχέσις does not exclude but, on the contrary, includes in itself or carries with it the notion of "being"; it is precisely, as the Cappadocians put it, a mode of being (πρᾶγμα ὑπάρξεως), yet not in the sense of
abstraction, but means a particular existential state of being (a "mode of existence") in which being both is itself and at the same time cannot be spoken of in itself, but only as it relates to." If we apply this to ministry, the σφραγίς of ordination becomes a matter of σχεσίς, yet not without significance for the being of the ordained person. In this sense no ordained person can appear before God in the last days pretending, as it were, that he had never been ordained. If love will survive as the eschatological quintessence of the charismata (I Cor. 13), ordination will emerge even more clear and decisive, precisely because it is relational.\(^{88}\)

IV. Ministry and Unity

The ministry is what makes the ecclesial community and the ordained person relational not only to each other and the world but also with regard to the other communities that exist or have existed in the world. The sin of individualism which is overcome in the koinonia of the Spirit is not less serious if applied to a community than it is when applied to individual christians. Just as unus christianus nullus christianus, to remember an old Latin saying, in the same way a eucharistic community which deliberately lives in isolation from the rest of the communities is not an ecclesial community. This is what renders the Church "catholic" not only on the level of "here and now" but also on that of "everywhere and always."\(^{87}\) The ministry of the Church must reflect this catholicity by being a unifying ministry both in time and in objectified "being" that can be understood in itself, but of "being" as is relates to. The implications of this distinction are of fundamental significance for theology and especially for the doctrine of grace and the ministry. The thesis of the present study, as the reader will have realized, depends very much on this. Cf. ch. I.

\(^{87}\)This means that the sacramental character of the ministry in its implications for the ordained is not to be determined by either "ontologism" or "functionalism" but by the notion of koinonia, i.e. communion and love, and by its eschatological decisiveness. Cf. J.D. Zizioulas, "Ordination et Communauté," Latins 15 (1971), 5-12.

\(^{88}\)Cf. Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, prayer of the anaphora: "Again we offer unto Thee this reasonable service for those who have fallen asleep in the faith . . . for the world, for the holy, catholic and apostolic Church."

\(^{89}\)Cf. K. Rahner, Episcopus und Primas, where it is stressed that the Church as an "event" acquires necessarily a local character. The insistence of Eastern theology on the priority of the local Church must be seen in the light of the pneumatological approach of this theology to the mystery of the Church. A pneumatological approach inevitably brings forth the existential aspect of the Church. The proper relation between the pneumatological and the christological approaches to ecclesiology seems to constitute a crucial problem in the relation between the "Eastern" and the "Western" views of the Church. The theology of the institutions of the Church will have to take into account both of these approaches, the right aim being, in our view, to establish the meaning of these institutions in the simulaneity and mutual interpenetration (cf. notes 20 and 21 above) of Christology and Pneumatology. Cf. ch. III above.
importance of the head of each local community, the bishop.\textsuperscript{90} The role of the bishop as the visible center of the unity of the eucharistic community is precisely what has made him so vital for the unity of the Churches both in space and time. This has happened under two forms: apostolic succession and conciliarity.

Apostolic succession has again become a problem in theology because of an approach to the ministry in terms of causality and objectified ontology. The bishop having acquired the status of an office, regardless of his position in the community, became in the theology of apostolic succession an individual who is linked with the apostles through a chain of individual ordinations, and who is thus transmitting to the other ministers below him grace and authority out of what he has received and possesses. This view was found by the Reformation tradition to involve a formalization and institutionalization of the ministry which was incompatible with the freedom of the Spirit. Thus either the “baby was thrown away with the bath-water” and the issue became one of “having” or “not having” apostolic succession, or else it was given meaning by making apostolic succession a matter of faithfulness to the truth.\textsuperscript{92}

In the light of the Greek Fathers and of the perspective of this study, our approach to this issue must be again through the local community and the relational character of the ministry. On this basis the following observations could be made:

(a) The bishop succeeds the apostles not in himself, i.e. as an individual, but as the head of his community. That this is the understanding of the early Church is to be seen in the following facts: (i) Every episcopal ordination was conditioned by the naming of the community to which the bishop was assigned, and could not be in absoluto. The important thing is that this naming of the community appears in the very prayer of ordination,\textsuperscript{93} which means that the bishop is not first made a bishop in a general sense and then assigned to a community, but that this assignment is inherent in the ordination itself. It is for this reason that the East could never distinguish the right of administration or jurisdiction from ordination itself.\textsuperscript{89} (ii) Apostolic succession was from the beginning related to attempts at reconstructing episcopal lists. The fact that these lists were exclusively episcopal and never, for example, presbyteral is significant in that they point to the bishop’s capacity as the head of his community and not as depositum of truth in himself. It is interesting to note that for the first three centuries, when these lists were diligently composed, the presbyters were regarded as the teachers of the people\textsuperscript{94} while the bishop could even be a “silent” person in the community.\textsuperscript{89} It is of course true that from the middle


\textsuperscript{91}For a discussion of these problems cf. the symposium of Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox theologians: \textit{Katholizität} (Beiheft zu \textit{Kerygma und Dogma 2}, 1971).

\textsuperscript{92}We should like to stress this point particularly because its implications are important in connection with note 89 above. It is noteworthy that even when the institution of the so-called “unipersonal bishops”—the pope, individually without a flock—was introduced, provision was made that the name of the diocese, even from among those which no longer existed, would be mentioned in the prayer of ordination. This, of course, amounts to a contradiction between theory and practice in ecclesiology, but it nevertheless reveals that the Church has never admitted in her consciousness an episcopate which is not conditioned by a community in its very roots (prayer of ordination). If this is taken seriously into account, it becomes clear that a bishop is not first ordained as bishop of the universal Church and then “assigned” to a place within it, but he is a bishop of the universal Church only in and by becoming a bishop of a concrete community. Hence the perplexity of the Orthodox with regard to the “missio canonica.” On this point, cf. P. Duprey, “The synodal structure of the Church in Eastern Orthodox Theology,” \textit{One in Christ?} (1971), 175 n. 60 and 176 f.

\textsuperscript{93}With regard to Roman Catholic theology, cf. K. Rahner, \textit{Church and Sacraments}, p. 103, n. 11. A certain departure from this distinction between sacramental order and jurisdiction is indicated in the new rite of ordination of the Roman Catholic Church, according to A. Housiaux, \textit{op. cit.} p. 270.

\textsuperscript{89}On the origination of this distinction in the West see G. Alberti, \textit{Lo Sviluppo della dottrina sui poteri nella Chiesa Universale} (1964), pp. 69 ff.

\textsuperscript{94}See, for example, the prayer of ordination in Hippolytus \textit{Apost. Trad. 7.} (ed. Botte, p. 20 f.). For more sources cf. J. D. Zizioulas in \textit{Katholizität und Apostolizität} (see note 88 above), pp. 49 ff.

of the second century onwards the emphasis on the didactic function of the bishop becomes stronger, but it was nevertheless felt always deeply that the Church is not a "school" and that the successors of the apostles were not perpetuators of ideas like the heads of philosophical schools or teachers in the same sense that the presbyters were. Being ordained to be the heads of their eucharistic communities, they were successors of the apostles precisely as spokesmen of these communities.

All this means that apostolic succession is essentially a matter of charismatic identification of the various communities in time. The retrospective dimension which is inevitably implied in this (identity with the original apostolic Church) is not, therefore, to be isolated either from the existential (the community here and now) or from the prospective one (the future communities and the "last days" themselves). Linear historicism, like objectified ontology, becomes conditioned by the Spirit. The anamnetic faculty of the eucharistic community involves precisely a "remembrance" not only of the past but also of the future in the present.

Similar observations must be made with regard to conciliarity, i.e. the unity of the Church in space. Here again our starting point is the local community, for the same existentially significant ecclesiological reasons. As we tried to show on another occasion, the phenomenon of the "councils" cannot be historically understood apart from a primitive conciliarity which existed on the local level and which was not unrelated to the eucharistic community. Most of the early councils, if not all of them, were concerned with eucharistic communion, mainly in the form of the problem of admitting persons excommunicated by one Church to communion in another or with the restoration of a broken eucharistic fellowship. All this shows that no local Church could be a Church unless it was open to communion with the rest of the Churches. Schism between two or more Churches was as intolerable as divisions within one community, and conciliarity was concerned with that more than anything else.

The fact that in this case again it was the bishop that became essentially the sole participant in the councils should be seen in the light of his position in the community and not in terms of individual authority. That this was so is to be seen in the following significant facts: (i) A tradition that survives up to now in the Eastern Orthodox Church—though unconsciously as to its rationale—provides that only the diocesan bishops are allowed to vote in a synod. This condition speaks loudly for the fact that a bishop is not a member of a council in himself but as the head of a community. To deprive of this right someone who is in all respects a "bishop" except in not heading a community, would be absurd had it not been for the interpretation we are giving here, namely that a bishop participates in a council only as the head of his community. (ii) No decision of a council is authoritative in itself unless it is received by the communities. The question of "reception" of a council is extremely broad and complicated and it would fall beyond our present scope to discuss it here in detail. It must be noted, however, that in an "individualistic" under-

98 This is seen, for example, in the Martyrium Polycarpi 16, 2, in Irenaeus, etc.
99 Hippolytus, Philos. 9, 12, 21, PG 15:3586: the "catholic Church" is not a "school" (didaskaleion).
90 Cf. Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, prayer of the anaphora: "Conmemorating this command of our Savior and all that was endured for our sake, the cross, the grave, the resurrection after three days, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second and glorious coming again, thine own of thine own we offer to Thee..."
92 Cf. the paschal controversies in the second century, as described by Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. V, 16, 10 and 28, 9, 9.
93 All doctrinal decisions of the ancient Church ended with anathemas, i.e. excommunications from the eucharist. Eucharistic communion was the ultimate aim of doctrine, and not doctrine itself.
94 The case of bishops who have been deprived of their communities by force, being in a certain sense under persecution, could not apply to this rule, which refers only to the "retired" and the so-called "titular" and "assistant" bishops.
standing of apostolic succession and the episcopate in general, "reception" as a condition for conciliarity can make no logical sense: if the bishops decide on the grounds that they possess this authority as individuals then their decisions do not in any sense depend on reception by the people, unless that is to say, the other extreme is followed and the theory is adopted that the bishops in council have an authority delegated by their flocks and are therefore accountable to them. In this latter case ordination as a charismatic thing (Irenaeus' charisma veritatis) would have nothing to do with conciliarity. Reception, on the other hand, organically related to conciliarity is inevitable when we think in terms of conciliarity as identity of the communities expressed in charismatic terms. It is thus not a juridical thing but a matter of charismatic recognition. It is for this reason that a true council becomes such only a posteriori; it is not an institution but an event in which the entire community participates and which shows whether or not its bishop has acted according to his charisma veritatis. From the point of view of the ministry of episcopate, this shows again how relational remains always what is given or rather realized in ordination.\footnote{We should like to emphasize the distinction between forms of ministry requiring ordination and institutions which are not based directly on ordination. Those among the Orthodox who speak of the synod as the "highest authority" in the Church must explain how there could be an authority which is not rooted in ordination. Only if we accept a distinction between Arnt and Geist, or between potestas ordinis and iriudicitio, can we speak of an authority which does not necessarily stem directly from ordination. But neither of these distinctions can be easily accepted by Eastern Orthodox theology. If there have been cases in the history of the Orthodox Church which make it difficult to avoid operating with these distinctions (see e.g. P. Duprey, op. cit., p. 175), this does not mean that we should get our theological norms from these cases or that we should not at least try to understand these particular historical cases in the light of the main stream of the tradition. A study of this tradition as a whole shows that, at least in the East, a distinction was always made between "the dignity of honor or tevto" and that of "the power of the Spirit," i.e. of authority based on ordination. (This formulation of the distinction is made by Athanasius the Greek in a text of the year 1355 which is regarded as significant for the theology of communion by Y. Congar, L'Eglise... , p. 265). In the same spirit the Byzantine canonists interpreted the famous canon 34 of the "Apostolic Canons" (cf. P. Duprey, op. cit., p. 154 f.). This is not the case for a discussion of the proper theological significance of the synodical system. Such a significance is not to be denied, but it should be properly integrated into the theology of ordination. Needless to say that this subject is of extreme importance in the theological discussions between Roman Catholics and Orthodox.}
The first and fundamental consequence of the method of looking at the community first and then at the criteria is that the recognition of ministries becomes in fact a recognition of communities in an existential sense. Thus one's primary question in facing another ministry would be a question concerning the entire structure of the community to which it belongs. When we say “structure” we do not mean a certain institution as such but the way in which a community relates itself to God, to the world and to the other communities. Baptism, for example, is to be seen as a prerequisite for recognition of a ministry because it determines the entire structure of the community and the way it relates both to God and the world. Thus it is obvious, at least from the point of view of the theological perspective we are using in this study, that a fundamentally different way of a community’s relating to God and the world amounts to making this community “unrecognizable” by other communities, not juridically but existentially. This is due to the fact that Church structure and the ministry are not simply matters of convenient and efficient arrangements, but “modes of being,” ways of relating between God, the Church and the world. The various forms of ministry may differ at times and at places provided that they do not introduce or imply a fundamentally different way of the Church’s relating herself to God and the world. This means that a difference in ministerial form as such cannot determine the recognition of a ministry; the history of the Church has plenty of such examples to offer. At the same time, however, this means that not every form of ministry would do for the expression of the Church’s right relation with God and the world. Plurality and diversity of ministerial forms cannot be made a necessary implication of the existential and eschatological conditioning of the past structures, a conditioning on which we have insisted in this study. Just as the baptismal structure of the community is not basically changed by this conditioning, so in the same way the eucharistic structure must be understood as implying something permanent, its permanence being dictated precisely by its

existential and eschatological nature. Similarly, it is not possible to avoid structures that express in a relational existential and eschatological way the identity of each community with those of the past, especially with the original apostolic communities, and with those of the present, implying a constant openness to the future. To take an example, the real issue between the episcopally and the non-episcopally structured communities of today would become in this approach whether or not episcopacy is essential to the Church’s proper relation with God and the world, i.e. whether or not a community with episcopacy can feel an existential identity with a community which has no episcopacy. It is in this sense that recognizing a ministry is a matter of recognizing a community.

If we follow this line, it is evident that the issue of “validity” of orders cannot be approached from the angle of “economy” (οικονομία), as it has often been done by Orthodox theologians. The entire idea of “economy” is itself extremely obscure and its actual application in history so complex that it becomes extremely difficult to use it as a principle in deciding for the “validity” of orders. But more important than that is the fact that “validity” is not something to be graciously, as it were, granted by one who “has” to one who “has not.” Such an approach to the ministry will make it again an objectified thing and would imply the unacceptable principle that the Church may recognize a sacramental reality which does not in fact exist. If, according to our approach in this study, recognition is not a juridical but an existential matter, and if the ministry is not a matter of “arrangement” but of the fundamental relational nature of the Church, then

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106 As it seems to be the case with W. Pannenberg, op. cit., p. 106 f.
107 The study of J. J. von Allmen, Le saint ministre..., passim and especially pp. 213 ff. is most illuminating on this point.
recognizing a ministry falls outside the scope of any dispensational approach. "Economy" is indeed a vital tool in pastoral care, especially for a Church such as the Orthodox that has to deal with canons of a past age, not adjusted to the present. But the recognition of orders is a matter not of strict canonical arrangements but of ecclesiology in its fullest sense.

It is not our purpose in this study to offer practical suggestions as to how the problem of "validity" of orders can be solved. Others might draw better than we could any practical implications that may exist in the approach to the ministry we have tried to establish here.\textsuperscript{112} What is sufficient for the object of this study is to indicate where the problem should be placed and what theological issues it involves. From this point of view our inquiry in this study shows that a reconsideration of the approach to the problem of the ministry may be necessary. Instead of trying to recognize each other's "orders" as such, the divided communities of our time should rather try to recognize each other as ecclesial communities relating to God and the world through their ministries in the way that is implied in the mystery of Christ and the Spirit. This is not a matter of "confessional" agreements, but of a more existential rapprochement to which divided Christendom is called.

\textsuperscript{112}Cf. for example, the remarks offered by Y. Congar, "Quelques problèmes touchant les ministères," in Nouvelle revue théologique 93 (1971), 785 f.; and G. Tavard, "The Function of the Minister in the Eucharistic celebration," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 4 (1967), 639-649, which appear to be of interest from the viewpoint of the present study.

7.

The Local Church
In a Perspective of Communion

I. The Historical and Ecclesiological Background

The basic ecclesiological principle applying to the notion of the local Church in the Orthodox tradition is that of the identification of the Church with the eucharistic community. Orthodox ecclesiology is based on the idea that wherever there is the eucharist there is the Church in its fulness as the Body of Christ. The concept of the local Church derives basically from the fact that the eucharist is celebrated at a given place and comprises by virtue of its catholicity all the members of the Church dwelling in that place. The local Church, therefore, derives its meaning from a combination of two basic ecclesiological principles:

(a) \textit{The catholic nature of the eucharist}. This means that each eucharistic assembly should include all the members of the Church of a particular place, with no distinction whatsoever with regard to ages, professions, sexes, races, languages, etc.

(b) \textit{The geographical nature of the eucharist}, which means that the eucharistic assembly—and through it the Church—is always a community of some place (e.g. the Church of Thessalonika, of Corinth, etc. in the Pauline letters).\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}The preposition "in" is also used in the Pauline letters in connection with the local Church. The significance of this way of speaking lies in the idea that the Church "dwell" in a geographical place as a "visitor" (πάροικος).
The combination of the above two ecclesiological principles results in the canonical provision that there should be only one eucharistic assembly in each place. But the geographical principle gives rise inevitably to the question of what we mean by a "place": how are we to define the limits of a particular place which should be the basis of only one eucharistic assembly and thus of one Church? This question receives particular significance when the complexities of the early historical developments are taken into account. Since the Orthodox tradition was formed, both ecclesiologically and canonically, on the basis of these early historical developments, we must examine them briefly.

Already in New Testament times there seems to be a tendency to identify ἐκκλησίας or even the ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Θεοῦ with the assembly of the Christians of a particular city. From a study especially of the Pauline letters we are led to the conclusion that almost without exception the word ἐκκλησία is used in the singular when applied to a city, whereas its use in the plural is always connected with geographic areas larger than the city. If this is not to be regarded as a mere accident, it becomes significant to ask: why does Paul never use the term Church in plural when referring to a city? Given the concreteness with which the word ἐκκλησία is used in Paul's writings, where it normally means the actual assembly of the faithful (see e.g. I Cor. 10-14), the conclusion is almost inevitable that there was only one such assembly which was named ἐκκλησία. In other words, we must conclude that the earliest form of local Church we know of is that of the Church of a city, and that the concrete form of this city Church is the assembly that comprises all the Christians of that geographical area. Christianity seems to have appeared first as a city Church and if we read rightly the existing sources, it must have remained such until at least the middle of the second century.²

This is closely connected with the eschatological nature of the eucharist to which we shall refer again.

²If Justin's evidence in his I Apology (ch. 65) means that the Christians of the villages outside Rome would go to the city for the Sunday eucharistic assembly, it would appear that in spite of practical difficulties even in a Church as large as that of Rome in the second century the principle which is

The first complication with regard to the principle: one Church—one eucharist—one city, arises historically with the concept of the κοινὸν ἐκκλησία (household Church). If this term meant in fact the formation of an ἐκκλησία on the basis of the unit of the family, then we are confronted with a definition of the local Church in a non-geographic sense; we are in fact faced with a sociological conception of "locality." I have tried elsewhere³ to examine this problem and I can only repeat here my conclusion that the term κοινὸν ἐκκλησία in the New Testament does not point to a family-centered gathering but rather to the assembly of all the faithful of a city who meet as guests of a particular house (see Rom. 16:23, cf. the archeological evidence of churches named after house-owners in Rome, etc.). One could even claim that there seems to have been no more than one such "household Church" in each city at that time.⁴ If these conclusions are right, we can explain why there is no evidence of any major difficulty in connection with the organization of the early Church stemming from the "household churches." Not only the fact but even the name of the household Church disappears very soon, leaving behind no trace of a situation which would suggest an alternative to the identification of the early local Church with the Church of a city.

Far more serious in its implications and consequences for the concept of the local Church has been another development in early Church organization, namely the emergence of the parish, both in its rural and in its urban form. The details of the historical developments with regard to this problem do not concern us here.⁵ What is of crucial importance, however, for the understanding of the local Church in the Ortho-

³In my book The Unity of the Church in the Eucharist and the Bishop in the First Three Centuries (1965—in Greek).

⁴The existing evidence is rather obscure but it is noteworthy that there is not a single case where the term "household Church" would appear more than once with reference to the same city in the same text.

⁵For a detailed discussion of this complex historical problem, cf. my above mentioned book.
dox tradition is the question whether the parish could be called in fact a "local Church." The complication arises out of two basic considerations:

(i) *The ecclesiological principle of the identification of the Church with the eucharist,* or rather with the eucharistic community. Since the parish is precisely a eucharistic community, it becomes almost imperative to call the parish an ἐκκλησία.

(ii) *The episcopal ministry.* The office of the bishop in the early Church is essentially that of the president of the eucharistic assembly. All the liturgical and canonical elements in the ordination of the bishop presuppose the primitive situation whereby there was in each eucharistic assembly—and by extension in each city Church—one bishop (all bishops’ names in the early Church, beginning with the times of Ignatius of Antioch, bear connection with a particular city), who was surrounded by the college of the presbyters (he was in fact one of the presbyters himself) and was called "presbyter" for a long time (cf. Irenaeus). What the emergence of the parish did was to destroy this structure, a destruction which affected not only the episcopal office but also that of the presbyter. For it meant that from then on the eucharist did not require the presence of the presbyters as a *college*—an essential aspect of the original significance of the presbyterium—in order to exist as local Church. An *individual* presbyter was thus enough to create and lead a eucharistic gathering—a parish. Could that gathering be called "Church"?

The answer to this question has been historically a negative one with regard to the Orthodox Church. I personally regard this as a fortunate thing for the following reason: the creation of the parish as a presbytero-centric unity, not in the original and ecclesiologically correct form which we might describe as "presbyterium-centered," but in the sense of an *individual* presbyter acting as head of a eucharistic community, damaged ecclesiology seriously in two respects. On the one hand, it destroyed the image of the Church as a community in which all orders are necessary as constitutive elements. The parish as it finally prevailed in history made redundant both the deacon and the bishop. (Later, with the private mass, it made redundant even the laity.) On the other hand, and as a result of that, it led to an understanding of the bishop as an administrator rather than a eucharistic president, and the presbyter as a "mass-specialist," a "priest"—thus leading to the medieval ecclesiological decadence in the West, and to the well-known reactions of the Reformation, as well as to a grave confusion in the ecclesiological and canonical life of the Eastern Churches themselves.

It is for these reasons that we should regard the proper ecclesiological status of the parish as one of the most fundamental problems in ecclesiology—both in the West and in the East. The Orthodox Church, in my understanding at least, has opted for the view that the concept of the local Church is guaranteed by the bishop and not by the presbyter: the local Church as an entity with full ecclesiological status is the *episcopal diocese* and not the parish. By so doing the Orthodox Church has unconsciously brought about a rupture in its own eucharistic ecclesiology. For it is no longer possible to equate every eucharistic celebration with the local Church. But at the same time by so opting it has allowed for the hope to exist for the restoration of the communal nature of the local Church, according to which the local Church can be called ἐκκλησία only when it is truly catholic, i.e. when it includes (a) the laymen of all cultural, linguistic, social and other identities living in that place, and (b) all the other orders of the Church as parts of the same community. Thus one can hope that one day the bishop will find his proper place which is the eucharist, and the rupture in eucharistic ecclesiology caused by the problem "parish-diocese" will be healed in the right way.6

6In practical terms the only proper solution would be the creation of small episcopal dioceses. This would be an excellent thing from many points of view. For example: (a) it would enable bishops really to know their flocks and be known by them, which would automatically improve the pastoral quality of episcopacy; (b) it would reduce the load of administration which the bishops have at present, thus enabling them to function primarily as presidents of the eucharist which is their *ministry par excellence*; (c) it would make it possible for the *collegial* character of the presbyterium to reappear in the extremely significant ecclesiological sense it had in the ancient times (cf. the *synkletron* of the ancient cathedrals), which would strengthen the much weakened importance of the presbyter, especially in the Orthodox Church; (d) it would make it unnecessary to maintain the scandalously uncanonical institution of the
With the development of the metropolitan system and gradually of that of the patriarchates in the ancient Church the center of "local" unity was shifted from the episcopal diocese to larger geographical units comprising the dioceses of a province under the headship of the bishop of the metropolis of that province. This development, which survives only nominally today in Orthodoxy (certain bishops are called "metropolitans" but in fact the metropolis as an entity does not exist any longer, having disappeared together with the ancient Roman or Byzantine province), has not essentially altered the view of the local Church as identical with the episcopal diocese. The metropolitan system having developed in close connection with the synodal practice in the ancient Church represented an "occasional" or "casual" sort of Church "localization," coinciding with the meetings of the synods. As the principle of the essential equality of all bishops became a basic feature in Orthodox canon law, neither the metropolitans nor the patriarchs ever reached the position of heads of particular ecclesial units representing structures above or besides the episcopal diocese. Permanent synods do exist in the Orthodox Churches, but they are never understood as separate ecclesial "bodies" which could be called "local Churches." With the development of the famous theory of the pentarchy in Byzantium, a system emerged in Orthodoxy whereby the entire οἰκουμένη comprised five divisions (patriarchates). But in spite of efforts made by some modern Orthodox to give to the patriarchates the name of "local Church," the principle of the equality of all bishops from the point of view of ecclesiological status has made it again impossible to create a special ecclesial entity out of the patriarchate.

an assistant bishop, which is a modern western invasion into the Orthodox tradition. The existence of small episcopal dioceses is clearly evidenced by ancient tradition (when Gregory the Wonderworker became bishop of Neocesarea he had only seventeen faithful in his diocese!).

I maintain the view that the ecclesial status of any unit in the Orthodox Church other than the episcopal diocese does not derive from the unit itself but from the episcopal diocese or dioceses involved. This applies not only—as we have seen—to units smaller than the diocese (e.g. the parish), but also to larger ones. Thus, a metropolis, an archdiocese or a patriarchate cannot be called a Church in itself, but only by extension, i.e. by virtue of the fact

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Finally, in this historical survey we must mention the idea of autocephaly by which the Orthodox Church is mainly known today. The principle of autocephaly is based on the modern concept of the nation, as it was developed mainly in the last century. According to this principle, the Orthodox Church in each nation is governed by its own synod without interference from any other Church and has its own head (patriarch, archbishop or metropolitan). In the present state of theological confusion in which Orthodoxy finds itself, it is customary to call these autocephalous churches "local Churches" and thus very often allow for the possibility to have the episcopal diocese so absorbed by the entity called "autocephalous Church" as to bypass it entirely through either a permanent synod or the head of the autocephalous Church, neither of which is always truly representative of all the dioceses—local Churches of that particular area.

II. Questions Concerning the Theology of the Local Church Today

1. Ecclesiality and Locality

The term "local Church" comprises two aspects corresponding to the words of the term, neither of which should be taken without the other. The first aspect is that of locality; the other is that of ecclesiality. If these aspects are taken together, the question that must be constantly raised is the following twofold one: what makes a Church "local" and what makes a local body "Church"? For not every gathering that it is based on one or more episcopal dioceses—local Churches which are the only ones on account of the episcopal eucharist properly called Churches. This also means that a metropolitan, patriarch etc. owes his ecclesiological status to the fact that he is the head of a particular local Church.

8In order to avoid turning the autocephalous Church into a unity deriving its ecclesiality from itself and not from the episcopal dioceses it involves (cf. previous note), it is necessary for the head of each autocephalous Church to be surrounded by a synod of bishops belonging to that area. However, this synod should be representative of all the episcopal dioceses of the area. Wherever circumstances permit it, all bishops either simultaneously or by way of rotation should be members of such a synod.
of Christians is automatically "Church" and not every Church is necessarily "local." If we apply the perspective of eucharistic ecclesiology to this question, we are led to the following remarks:

(a) The Church is local when the saving event of Christ takes root in a particular local situation with all its natural, social, cultural and other characteristics which make up the life and thought of the people living in that place. Just as it happens in the eucharist where the people offer to God as the Body of Christ all that is "His own" (the fruits of the earth together with the products of their everyday labor), the same must apply to the Church's life, if it is to be truly local: it must absorb and use all the characteristics of a given local situation and not impose an alien culture on it.

(b) But this absorption and use of local culture may make a Church local but not necessarily Church. For the saving event of Christ does not purely and simply affirm human culture; it is also critical of it. What aspects of culture are to be excluded from absorption and use by the local church, if it is to be not just local, but also "Church"? The answer to this question depends on the theology one holds in general and on one's priorities as to what is essential or not in the Christian faith. If the eucharistic perspective is allowed to play a decisive role in this case, the criteria of ecclesiality can be reduced to no more than the following one.

The eucharist is the moment in the Church's life where the anticipation of the eschaton takes place. The anamnesis of Christ is realized not as a mere re-enactment of a past event but as an anamnesis of the future, as an eschatological event. In the eucharist the Church becomes a reflection of the eschatological community of Christ, the Messiah, an image of the Trinitarian life of God. In terms of human existence this

This is indicated by the fact that the eucharist is preceded by baptism. The world cannot become Church without some kind of purification.

Cf. the thesis of J. Jeremias in his The Eucharistic Words of Jesus with regard to the New Testament. The ancient liturgies (e.g. those of John Chrysostom, Basil etc.) preserve exactly the same interpretation of "anamnesis" when they speak of "remembering" in the eucharist not only the past events of salvation history but also the second coming. This remembering of the future is an essential aspect of the eucharist.

mainly means one thing: the transcendence of all divisions, both natural and social, which keep the existence of the world in a state of disintegration, fragmentation, decomposition and hence of death. All cultures in one way or other share in this fallen and disintegrated world, and therefore all of them include elements which need to be transcended. If the Church in its localization fails to present an image of the Kingdom in this respect, it is not a Church. Equally, if the eucharistic gathering is not such an image, it is not the eucharist in a true sense.

With such existential criteria in mind we can be more specific by asking the question: what concrete form should a local Church take in order to be both "local" and "Church"? Here the following structural elements become essential.

(a) If in a given locality there is more than one cultural element—as is the case, for example, in many of our modern pluralistic societies—the Church should make efforts to reach these elements through its missionary activity by making full use of such cultural elements in the preaching of the Gospel. In these efforts it may be necessary to form groups and assemblies of people sharing the same cultural elements for a further deepening of the understanding of the Gospel. The same can be true in cases where pastoral and not simply missionary purposes prevail. In order to meet the needs of people who work in places other than the ones they live in, similar assemblies can be formed to relate the Gospel to particular professional and intellectual or social conditions.

(b) These groups or assemblies formed on the basis of a particular culture, class, profession or age should learn to regard themselves not as Churches, and be taught to seek the experience of the Church only in gatherings where all ages, sexes, professions, cultures etc. meet, for this is what the Gospel promises us to be the Kingdom of God: a place where all the natural and cultural divisions are transcended. Insofar as the eucharist is regarded to be such—and only such—an
eschatologically inspired gathering, its celebration must be reserved for this kind of experience alone. And insofar as the Church reflects in her nature this eschatological destiny portrayed in the eucharist, only such gatherings should be named “Church.” Other gatherings are not unrelated to the Church or eucharist; they are extensions of the reality of the Church. But they lack the element of catholicity which is suggested by the eschatological nature of both Church and eucharist and could not be called Churches.

(c) This kind of approach to the ecclesiality of the local Church puts the geographical aspect of locality in an advantageous position compared with other aspects of “locality,” such as culture or profession. For the geographic “place” can serve as the common ground for the meeting of the various cultural and other elements ἐπὶ τὸ συνότο, “in the same place”—an expression so significantly used for both Church and eucharist in the New Testament as an expression of geographical locality. In this kind of approach the geographical aspect of locality appears to be an indispensable element in the concept of the local Church.

(d) A ministry of such a local unity is necessary if this transcendence of natural and cultural divisions is to take place. Whether one calls this ministry episcopacy or otherwise is irrelevant for the theology of the local Church. What appears to be necessary in view of what we have just said is that the ministry should be tied up with (i) the eucharistic assembly as its head, and (ii) a particular geographic area. It is only if these two conditions are kept that the office of the bishop can make sense to ecclesiology.12 Other ministries of local unity such as the presbyterium and the deacons become essential elements, depending on the “typology” of the eschatological community one regards as fundamental to one’s theology.13 But certainly the gathering of the ἱερός in its en-

12These two conditions were faithfully kept in the ancient Church. They have been seriously obscured if not at times disregarded in later developments and practice in the Orthodox Churches themselves.

13It was, for example, an indispensable part of the ecclesiological consciousness of the early Church to have a ministry portraying the apostles surrounding Christ and “judging the twelve tribes” of the New Israel. This gave rise to the ministry of the presbyters (cf. Ignatius of Antioch etc.). To the extent that this consciousness survives in the Church, the institution of the presbyters acquires its indispensability in the structure of the local Church.

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tirety—i.e., in all its “local” aspects—is an indispensable form of local Church structure. For it is this that proves the Church to be “catholic.” Without some form of “congregationality” there is no local catholicity.

2. Locality and Universality

From what has just been said it follows that the “catholicity” of the Church is not to be juxtaposed to locality: it is rather an indispensable aspect of the local Church, the ultimate criterion of ecclesiality for any local body. Universality, however, is a different notion and can certainly be contrasted with locality. How does the concept of universality affect our understanding of the local Church?

It is in the nature of the eucharist to transcend not only divisions occurring within a local situation but also the very division which is inherent in the concept of geography: the division of the world into local places. Just as a eucharist which is not a transcendence of divisions within a certain locality is a false eucharist, equally a eucharist which takes place in conscious and intentional isolation and separation from other local communities in the world is not a true eucharist.14 From that it follows inevitably that a local Church, in order to be not just local but also Church, must be in full communion with the rest of the local Churches in the world.

For a local Church to be in full communion with the rest of local Churches the following elements are involved:

(a) That the problems and concerns of all local Churches should be the objects of prayer and active care by a particular local Church. If a local Church falls into indifference as to what is going on in the rest of the world, it is certainly not a Church.

(b) That a certain common basis of the vision and understanding of the Gospel and the eschatological nature of the Church exist between a local Church and the rest of the local
Churches. This requires a constant vigilance concerning the true faith in all local Churches by every single local Church.

(c) That certain structures be provided which will facilitate this communion. On this point some further explanations become necessary.

If the locality of the Church is not to be absorbed and in fact negated by the element of universality, the utmost care must be taken so that the structures of ministries which are aimed at facilitating communion among the local Churches do not become a superstructure over the local Church. It is extremely significant that in the entire course of church history there has never been an attempt at establishing a super-local eucharist or a super-local bishop. All eucharists and all bishops are local in character—at least in their primary sense. In a eucharistic view of the Church this means that the local Church, as defined earlier here, is the only form of ecclesial existence which can be properly called Church. All structures aiming at facilitating the universality of the Church create a network of communion of Churches, not a new form of Church. This is not only supported by history, but rests also upon sound theological and existential ground. Any structural universalization of the Church to the point of creating an ecclesial entity called “universal Church” as something parallel to or above that of the local Church would inevitably introduce into the concept of the Church cultural and other dimensions which are foreign to a particular local context. Culture cannot be a monolithically universal phenomenon without some kind of demonic imposition of one culture over the rest of cultures. Nor is it possible to dream of a universal “Christian culture” without denying the dialectic between history and eschatology which is so central, among other things, to the eucharist itself. Thus, if there is a transcendence of cultural divisions on a universal level—which indeed must

The Local Church in a Perspective of Communion

be constantly aimed at by the Church—it can only take place via the local situations expressed in and through the particular local Churches and not through universalistic structures which imply a universal Church. For a universal Church as an entity besides the local Church would be either a culturally disincarnated Church—since there is no such a thing as universal culture—or alternatively it would be culturally incarnated in a demonic way, if it either blesses or directly or indirectly imposes on the world a particular culture.

In conclusion, all church structures aiming at facilitating communion between local Churches (e.g. synods, councils of all forms etc.) do possess ecclesiological significance and must be always viewed in the light of ecclesiology. But they cannot be regarded as forms of Church without the serious dangers I have just referred to.

3. The Local Church in a Context of Division

Our actual situation in the Church is more seriously complicated by the fact that the local Church has to be conceived in a context of confessional division. The concept of the Church as a confessional entity (Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran etc.) is historically a late phenomenon and has come to complicate the ecclesiological situation to an alarming degree. For in addition to a cultural pluralism we are now faced with a confessional pluralism on the local level. Can we draw a parallel and apply what we said about cultural transcendence also to confessional pluralism? Can we say that as the eucharist brings together Jew and Greek, male and female, black and white, it should also bring together Anglican and Lutheran and Orthodox etc. in a certain local area? In fact this is what the practice of intercommunion implies. The objections to this practice by the Orthodox are well-known and I do not wish to repeat the same arguments here. I should simply like to raise two questions bearing on the nature of the local Church.

(a) Has a confessional body per se the right to be regarded as Church? If the condition of ecclesiality is to be
inseparably linked with that of locality, the answer is definitely negative. A Church must incarnate people, not ideas or beliefs. A confessional Church is the most disincarnate entity there is; this is precisely why its content is usually borrowed from one or other of the existing cultures and is not a locality which critically embraces all cultures.

(b) Can a local Church be regarded as truly local and truly Church if it is in a state of confessional division? This is an extremely difficult question. If the notion of the local Church with all the implications we have mentioned here is to be taken into account—if in other words the Church is a true Church only if it is a local event incarnating Christ and manifesting the Kingdom in a particular place—we must be prepared to question the ecclesial status of confessional churches as such, and begin to work on the basis of the nature of the local Church. This cannot be done overnight, for confessionalism is rooted deep in our history. But we must be ready to admit that as long as confessionalism prevails no real progress towards ecclesial unity can be made. Taking the reality of the local Church and its theology more seriously than we have done so far may prove to be of extreme importance to the ecumenical movement.

List of Sources

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BEING AS COMMUNION

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by

JOHN D. ZIZIOULAS

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