



What is Orthodoxy?

The term “Orthodoxy” does not denote “religion” in its actual sense. Religions manipulate people with anthropomorphic deities, in order to satisfy passions and vices with a self-seeking determinism. In religions, people strive to create gods and to approach gods which they themselves create; in other words, they make an idol out of God.

In Orthodoxy we have the opposite move. God becomes incarnate in order to meet with mankind and to create a personal and salvific relationship with people. It is a course and a relationship between God and man, which has no prerequisites and necessity; rather, it is an act and a move of sacrificial love.

Orthodoxy is the experience of the Saints and the therapeutic regimen for spiritual ailments of man, for the purpose of his deification (“theosis”) through revealed God – that is, through the Son and Logos, the second Person of the Holy Trinity – the Lord Jesus Christ. Orthodoxy partakes in the Truth of Christ, and that truth is conveyed to us by the Church throughout the ages, through the Holy Fathers and through the Ecumenical Councils which safeguard the Truth from every heretical cacodoxy.

Worship, which by some may be characterized as religious praxis, is the means and not the purpose of each faithful person who struggles. In Orthodoxy, faith entails a relationship and not a transaction; the faithful participates psychosomatically (spiritually and physically), by partaking of the Body and the Blood of Christ during each Divine Liturgy, which is officiated by an Orthodox clergyman. Every Mystery (Sacrament) in the Orthodox Church places man on a course to salvation, but not in a magical manner.

God does not extort; He respects man's freedom, which is why, without man's acquiescence and synergy (collaboration), no-one can be saved. Orthodoxy heals (by means of the Sacrament-Mystery of Repentance and Confession) and it deifies man by making him a partaker of communion with the Saints and with the incarnated, sacrificial love of the God-Man Christ; and all this is through the adventure of free will, whereby God extends His hand to mankind and man's journey begins thereafter. Whether man accepts this salvific invitation depends entirely on him (which is why his decision is also an act of responsibility), while for Orthodox theology, it is a crucifixional form of acceptance.

What, therefore, is meant by the term “Church”?

With the term “Church”, we imply the Sacred, God-human organism which has Jesus Christ as Her Master, King and Head, and includes the entirety of people who have accepted the Christian faith with the Sacrament-Mystery of Holy Baptism and Chrismation, with salvation as their objective. The term “Church” (Ecclesia) is derived from the ancient Greek verb that signifies the congregating of people. The Church begins on earth and reaches Heaven, to be preserved there for all eternity. “Church” means “Christ, prolonged through the ages”. Christ Himself has assured us that the Church is His beloved Bride - “His Body”! He is Her Head, and





the faithful are the remaining members of His Body, in a functional and harmonious relationship of unity, equality and love. No-one is superior to the others, because the Lord has no need for representatives (as claimed by the Papacy), given that He is forever present in the Church. The Church is the Ark of love and of life; man incorporates himself in Her through Holy Baptism, in order to be saved and become united to God, because the Church originates from God and is directed towards Him. However, we should not overlook the fact that Christ founded ONE Church, whose faithful agree fully with Her dogmas.

The completion of man

When afar from Christ, man is neither completely nor fully a person; he is merely a segment of his nature; he is crippled, inasmuch as a section of himself is missing... he is in a state of alienation, as we shall indicate below.

Man becomes whole and perfected and proves that he has rediscovered his authentic nature, only when he becomes deified through his adoption as an in-Christ son. The union of perfect human nature with divine nature took place in the Person of Christ; however the complete person can become a reality when he/she attains the same kind of union, in Christ, through the Sacraments-Mysteries of the Orthodox Church, with the culminating Sacrament of Sacraments, that is, Christ Himself Who offers His Body and His Blood during Holy Communion.

We would like to repeat that a person is a person, only through God-human nature: if he is not a man-God (=in the likeness of the God-man Christ), then he is not even a man. Man is a non-human existence when he himself determines what he is, independently of his relationship with God (which is engraved in his very nature); there is no such thing as an immiscible human nature: man is either a man-God or he isn't a man. The salvation/healing of overall human nature and its deification (theosis) were realized in the Person of the incarnated God-Logos and they are bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon every baptized person who is joined to Christ, in the Church. However, both salvation and deification are – for the baptized one – only possibilities, unless he assimilates these bestowals with his entire being. This is where the role of spiritual living and asceticism plays a part. In the Orthodox Church, asceticism does not have a narrow meaning – which the West often ascribes to it; rather, it denotes everything that every Christian should observe in order to benefit optimally from salvation as offered through Christ. Tradition has understood salvation (as realized by Christ), as the therapy for ailing human nature and its restoration to its primeval state. It is respectively normal for asceticism (by means of which man becomes familiarized with divine Grace) to be regarded equally by Tradition as a process of therapy and the return to the person's original, healthy state. Therapy is achieved through the Sacrament (Mystery) of Sacred Confession, whereby one creates a relationship with Christ, via the Sacred Priesthood of the Confessor-Priest.

