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THE NINTH THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS
BETWEEN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH OF FINLAND AND THE RUSSIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH



DOCUMENTS OF
THE EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN
CHURCH OF
FINLAND

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AND THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

HELSINKI 1993
Church Council for Foreign Affairs
Church Council

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FOREWORD

Eino Murtomäke

The Ninth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held in Järvenpää, Finland, in May 1992. The general subject of the discussions was "The Apostolic Faith and Teaching Today". As before, the discussions were divided into two parts. In one of these, the subject was approached from the point of view of principle and dogma, and, in the other one, from the practical and socio-ethical point of view. The topics were, respectively, "The Apostolic Faith in the Biblical and Doctrinal Perspective" and "The Apostolic Teaching and Witness in the Life of the Church Today". Both of these topics were treated in four presentations, which are all included in this document.

The discussions of Järvenpää can be considered historic with regard to the point of time, because these were the first discussions since the disintegration of the socialist system of the Soviet Union. This great change in the political situation did not, however, have any significant impact on the general character of these theological discussions which the two churches have been conducting for more than twenty years. Accordingly, the delegations were mainly composed of the same members as before. This was one indicator of the fact that these discussions have never relied on "political trends" but have aimed at a genuine inter-church dialogue. Thus, in his opening speech, Metropolitan Vladimir, Head of the Delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, could justifiably say as follows: "The Russian Orthodox Church has never, not even in the years of the hardest persecution, ceased to fulfil its duty commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ - that is, to proclaim His word of truth. The icon-lamp of the Orthodox faith has never been extinguished on the soil permeated by martyrs' blood."

However, the changed situation was reflected, to a certain extent, in the general atmosphere of the discussions. Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this was the unconstrained atmosphere which allowed the members of the delegation to present also their individual emphases. Furthermore, both within the framework of the actual negotiations and outside them, the members of the delegations had the opportunity to discuss openly the present problems of their churches, which were of inter-church relevance as well. Among the issues of inter-church relevance was, for example, the question of the evangelization campaigns which some Christian organizations of the West have arranged in

Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church has found these campaigns somewhat problematic.

Another way in which the changed situation influenced the discussions was that the question of peace was left out of the agenda: in fact, this was the case in the previous discussions already. Instead, the reflection on 'the Apostolic Teaching and Witness in the Life of the Church Today' was given more space.

Naturally, this volume is not an overall presentation of the discussions held in Järvenpää. However, the most important documents of the discussions are included in it. Thus, we hope that this book might serve the interconfessional cooperation, as well as discussions in many other fora, especially now that the ecumenical commitment may be weakening in many areas because of the emphases on national interests.

Helsinki, 13th June 1993

COMMUNIQUE

on the Ninth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church

The Ninth Theological Discussions between the delegations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held at the Institute for Advanced Training of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in Järvenpää, Finland, 19th-28th May 1992.

The previous theological discussions between the delegations of these two churches were held as follows: 1) Sinappi, Turku, Finland, 1970; 2) Zagorsk, USSR, 1971; 3) Järvenpää, Finland, 1974; 4) Kiev, USSR, 1977; 5) Turku, Finland, 1980; 6) Leningrad, USSR, 1983; 7) Mikkeli, Finland, 1986; 8) the Orthodox Convent of Uspenski, Pyhittä, Kuusma, USSR & Leningrad, USSR, 1989.

The delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland consisted of the following members: the Most Rev. Dr. John Vikström, Archbishop of Turku and Finland, Hon.D.Th. of the St Petersburg Theological Academy (Head of the delegation); the Right Rev. Dr. Kalevi Toivainen, Bishop of Mikkeli; the Right Rev. Dr. Eero Huovinen, Bishop of Helsinki; the Rev. Dr. Voitto Huotari, Dean of Mikkeli; the Rev. Dr. Risto Cannel, General Secretary of the Church Council for Foreign Affairs; Prof. Jukka Thuren, the Abo Academy University; Prof. Eino Murtomäki, University of Helsinki; the Rev. Dr. Juhana Pitkälä, Director of the Institute for Advanced Training; the Rev. Dr. Simo Peura, Assistant for Ecumenics, University of Helsinki; and the Rev. Pirjo Työrinmäki, Lic. Th., Assistant Secretary for Theology, Church Office for Foreign Affairs.

The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church was composed of the following members: Metropolitan Vladimir of Rostov and Novocherkassk, Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate (Head of the delegation); Archbishop Mikhail of Vologda and Veliky Ustyug, Professor at the St Petersburg Theological Academy, Hon.D.Th. of the Abo Academy University; Prof. Dean Vladimir Sorokin, Rector of the St Petersburg Theological Academy and Seminary; Archimandrite Yannuary (Ivliev), Docent at the St Petersburg Theological Academy and Seminary; Archpriest Nikolai Gundyaev, Dean of the Cathedral of the Holy Transfiguration, St Petersburg, Professor at the St Petersburg Theological Academy; Dean Vladimir Mustafin, Professor at the St

Petersburg Theological Academy and Seminary; Prof. A.I. Osipov, Moscow Theological Academy; Prof. Konstantin Skurat, Moscow Theological Academy; and V.A. Chukalov, senior staff member of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Head of the DECR Section for Relations with Protestant Churches.

The observers invited by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were the following: Bishop Paul Verschuren, the Roman Catholic Church in Finland, and Mr. Arto Anturi, M.Th., the Council of Free Christians, both representatives of the Finnish Ecumenical Council; Metropolitan Tikhon of Helsinki, the Orthodox Church in Finland; the Rev. Bengt Christensen, Church of Denmark; the Rev. Toomas Paul, Vicar, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia; the Rev. Vladimir Kinner, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria; Dean Frank Lotichius, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia; and the Rev. Dr. Matti Myllykoski, researcher at the Finnish Academy.

As advisers of the delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland acted the Rev. Dr. Lorenz Grönvik, Director of the Department for Theology/Church Office for Foreign Affairs, the Rev. Dr. Hannu T. Kampunni, Secretary to the Archbishop, and the Rev. Kosti Laitinen, Dean of Hamina. The information service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was represented by the Rev. Heikki Jäskeläinen, Head of the Press and Information Department of the Division for Communication.

The Rev. Matti Kotiranta, the Rev. Matti Peiponen, Ms. Minna Vallaho, Secretary, and Ms. Eija Alajarva, Secretary, acted as secretaries of the Finnish delegation for the discussions; the secretaries of the Russian delegation were the Rev. Viktor Lytkin and the Rev. Nikolai Voskoboinikov.

Ms. Helena Pavlinsky, Ms. Marina Latshinoff and Ms. Anu Rovamo acted as interpreters for the discussions, and the Rev. Jaakko Kausela as translator.

The Ninth Theological Discussions were opened at the Institute for Advanced Training on Tuesday 19th May. After the Lutheran Communion Service that was celebrated at Mikael Agricola's Chapel, the Most Rev. John Vikström opened the discussions and gave a speech which included the following: "We are no longer just neighbours, we are friends seeking together a way towards the goal Christ has given... Over the years a new generation of participants from both churches has joined the discussions; in the future they will take over the responsibility for our common journey to continue... It is not only the participants who have changed, however, but also the conditions in which our churches live. During these years Finnish society has changed and is going through that process also for the time being. The State of Finland, celebrating her 75th anniversary this year, finds herself in one of the most serious crises of her history, this crisis being economic as well as spiritual... More and more

people are looking for a firm foundation of values for their lives... In this situation the message of the Church is listened to most attentively."

The response of Metropolitan Vladimir, Head of the Delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, included the following: "Naturally you know that in our country, which used to be united and enormous in area, life is changing abruptly. Being familiar with the economic situation of contemporary Russia, you understand that ordinary people who used to be under the pressure of the communist propaganda now worriedly seek their daily bread - but not only that, as one might expect. Even more strongly are they driven by their spiritual thirst: they struggle to find the light of the Truth and the meaning of life. And here a vast field of spiritual work opens out before our Church. The Russian Orthodox Church has never, not even in the years of the hardest persecution, ceased to fulfil its duty commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ - that is, to proclaim His word of truth. The icon-lamp of the Orthodox faith has never been extinguished on the soil permeated by martyrs' blood."

Metropolitan Vladimir read out a letter of greeting from His Holiness Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, in which it was pointed out that the theme of the discussions, "Confessing the Apostolic Faith Today", is of special importance for the time being. A telegram from Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, Head of the Department for External Church Relations, was also read out to the participants.

His Holiness Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, Head of the Department for External Church Relations, were both sent a telegram of greeting by the participants of the discussions.

The observers of the discussions also presented their greetings during the meeting.

Throughout the discussions the delegations took turns in officiating daily Matins and Vespers, which were held on alternate turns in accordance with the Lutheran and the Orthodox tradition. On Tuesday 19th May, Lutheran Communion Service was officiated at Agricola's Chapel by the Right Rev. Huovinen, Bishop of Helsinki. On Friday 22nd May, the Commemoration Day of St. Nicholas according to the old calendar, Orthodox worship of prayer was held at Agricola's Chapel by the Russian delegation. On Sunday 24th May the participants visited Hamina. The Lutheran Communion Service, which took place at the Church of Hamina, was celebrated by the Rev. Kosti Laitinen, Dean of Hamina, and the sermon was given by the Right Rev. Kalevi Toivainen, Bishop of Mikkeli. Orthodox worship of prayer was held at the Orthodox Church of St. Peter and St. Paul's in Hamina. On Wednesday 27th May, the delegations attended Vigil celebrated by Metropolitan Vladimir, Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Mikhail at the Uspenski Cathedral in Helsinki. On 28th

May, the final day of the discussions, Liturgy was celebrated by Archbishop Mikhail at the Church of the Icon of God's Mother of Kazan in Järvenpää.

On Tuesday 19th May, the town of Järvenpää gave a reception in honour of the delegations at Järvenpää House. The occasion was hosted by Mr. Aarne Sukander, Chairman of the Town Council, Mr. Pekka Salmi, Chairman of the Municipal Government and Mr. Pentti Ikkälä, Chief Secretary. On Sunday 24th May, the Diocesan Chapter of Mikkeli provided lunch in honour of the guests at the parish house of Eastern Cross, Hanhita. The lunch was hosted by the Right Rev. Kalevi Toivainen. On that day the delegations also visited the Diocesan Chapter of Porvoo as well as the Porvoo Cathedral, guided by the Right Rev. Erik Vikström, Bishop of Porvoo. After that the Ministry of Education provided dinner for the delegations on the S/S J.L. Runeberg; the occasion was hosted by Jaakko Numminen, Chief Secretary, Håkan Mattila, Director of Administration, and Antti Vuorinen, Junior Ministerial Secretary. On Wednesday 27th May, the participants visited the Right Rev. Eero Huovinen's residence and took part in an evening gathering at the crypt of the Uspenski Cathedral arranged by the Orthodox Parish of Helsinki. On Thursday 28th May the delegations attended a reception given by Yuri Deriabina, Ambassador of the Russian Federation, at the Russian Embassy in Helsinki.

The agenda of the discussions included four topics: 1) The Apostolic Teaching in the New Testament and the Early Church 2) Confessing the Apostolic Faith Today 3) Expressing the Apostolic Faith in the Life of the Church 4) Witnessing the Apostolic Faith to the World.

Archbishop Mikhail and Prof. Jukka Thurén made presentations on the first topic, "The Apostolic Teaching in the New Testament and the Early Church"; comments were given by the Right Rev. Eero Huovinen and Prof. Dean Vladimir Sorokin. Prof. Dean Vladimir Mustafin and Dr. Juhana Pihkala made presentations on the second topic, "Confessing the Apostolic Faith Today"; comments were given by the Rev. Dean Kosti Laitinen and Archimandrite Yannuary. On the third topic, "Expressing the Apostolic Faith in the Life of the Church", presentations were made by Prof. Konstantin Skurat and Prof. Simo Peura, and comments were given by Prof. Eino Murtomäki and Prof. Dean Gundyraev. On the fourth topic presentations were made by Prof. A.I. Osipov, whose subject was "The Way of Reason in Searching for the Truth (Witnessing the Apostolic Faith to the World)", and the Rev. Dean Voito Huotari, whose subject was "Witness and Service of the Church in Secular

Society". Comments were given by the Right Rev. Kalevi Toivainen and Prof. A.I. Osipov.

These presentations were lively discussed in both the plenary sessions and the working groups.

The results of these Ninth Discussions are included in the two summaries appended to this Communiqué; they deal with the topics mentioned above.

The documents of the discussions were signed on Thursday 28th May in a solemn act of subscription, where the Most Rev. John Vikström and Metropolitan Vladimir both gave a speech.

The parties involved state that the Ninth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church held in Järvenpää were carried out at the time of great changes in Europe. The good relations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church - which are good due to the doctrinal discussions, among other reasons - mean important resources in facing the changes occurring on our continent.

The parties involved unanimously agreed that the theological discussions are to be continued.

The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed its thanks to the Nordic churches for the humanitarian aid sent to northwestern parts of Russia in 1991-1992.

The delegations involved in Järvenpää discussions completed their work filled with thankfulness to God, expressing together their hope that the Holy Spirit would lead the disciples of Christ into ever-growing knowing of His mercy and into mutual love.

Järvenpää, 28th May 1992

John Vikström

Archbishop of Turku and Finland

Vladimir

Metropolitan of Rostov and Novocherkassk

SUMMARY ON APOSTOLIC FAITH IN BIBLICAL AND DOCTRINAL PERSPECTIVE

Appendix 1 to the Communique

1. It is our common conviction that the truth of the Christian faith is one. In spite of the fact that our churches have different traditions, we strive to express and realize the fullness of the truth in our lives. We are searching for a consensus between our traditions, and such a consensus is the ultimate goal of our theological discussions. The apostolic legacy of the undivided Church is the basis and criterion in this search of ours.
2. The apostolic faith, which is expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, lives in the tradition of the Church. The reliability and value of this tradition becomes apparent in the light of the Scriptures.
3. We unanimously agree that the Church of Jesus Christ is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Both the Orthodox church and the Lutheran church receive the apostolic gospel of Jesus Christ and seek to follow it unwaveringly.
4. The divine origin of the apostolic teaching lies in the fact that God, the Father Almighty, has sent his Son, who chose his apostles, taught them and sent them out into the world, thus establishing his Church. In this mighty act of God, his love is revealed to us. The apostolicity of the Church and the firm authority of its doctrine are based on this divine mission.
5. Christ, risen and ascended to heaven, sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles to guide them "into all the truth" (John 16:7,13). They taught people by word of mouth and in writing, as well as by their own example. The New Testament canon was compiled out of the writings of the apostles and their followers.
6. Despite the fact that scholars have presented different views on the historical origin of certain texts in the New Testament, the Christian Church recognizes with devotion the whole New Testament as inspired by God and submits itself to its apostolic authority. The Scriptures are the basis and criterion of Christian theology, and they evaluate the accordance of that theology with the divine revelation.
7. The aim of Christ's coming to the world and the apostolic gospel of him is the salvation of fallen mankind. For this to happen, the Church must continue to proclaim the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-7) and to teach Christians to obey everything He has commanded them (Matt. 28:20).
8. Jesus Christ, the founder and Head of the Church (Col. 1:18), has promised to be with his Church always (Matt. 28:20). It has been entrusted to

the Church, which is to be obedient to the gospel of Christ, to preserve the apostolic faith and to teach its content. This is possible only through the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church "into all the truth" (John 16:13).

9. In today's world there are many religious organizations and Christian movements which do not recognize the value of the apostolic doctrine, nor what it obliges. This is our common concern. We want to hold to the precious apostolic legacy given to the Church.

10. In the whole content of the apostolic legacy we want to emphasize especially the following:

- a. In Jesus Christ God became man. Salvation is accomplished by Christ, who took the form of a slave and suffered death on the cross because of human sin. By his death and resurrection Christ overcame the powers of sin, death and Satan. Christ, God and man, who suffered, died, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, is our only salvation.
- b. In Christ we encounter the Triune God. It is in his Son that God the Father reveals his infinite and incomprehensible love to us, and it is through the revelation and illumination by the Holy Spirit that we can learn to know the Son of God.
- c. Salvation is not only an event of the past but also present reality in the Church and in the lives of the faithful. The saving presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit is realized in proclaiming the gospel, in administering the sacraments and in worship. It is in and through them that God unites us with himself and gives us his gifts. He creates in us the true apostolic faith, in which we participate in the Triune God and the salvation that is in him. This faith is effective as love (Gal. 5:6, 1 John 4:19).

SUMMARY ON APOSTOLIC TEACHING AND WITNESS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH TODAY

Appendix 2 to the Communique

1. In the New Testament usage the word "to confess" (homologeîn) means as follows: man witnesses with all his being, in both word and deed, that Jesus Christ is his Saviour and the Lord of his life.
2. The apostolic faith is expressed most genuinely where Christ is proclaimed, the sacraments are received and the Scriptures as well as the creeds of the undivided Christendom are remained faithful to.
3. People become confessors of the apostolic faith when they are incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church, by baptism administered in the name of the Holy Trine God and by true faith. The real presence of Christ, received in the sacrament of baptism, thus makes salvation possible.
4. Because of significant social and political changes as well as the diversity of the contemporary world, the apostolic witness of the churches faces new tasks. The churches are thus required to examine more and more attentively and critically their own relation with the society they are involved in.
5. In this world, which is both uniting and polarizing at the same time, Christians search for communion so as to be able to give the apostolic witness and to confess Christ together so that the world may believe (John 17:21).
6. The apostolic doctrine is the only reliable foundation for the unity of mankind and the brotherhood of man. Therefore the Church, as the body of Christ, is called to promote communion between nations. It must work for the unity of mankind and reject nationalism, which, along with the hostility it gives rise to, separates nations from each other.
7. When Christians confess the apostolic faith in their lives today, they must both preserve the foundation of this faith (Eph. 2:20-21) and take the requirements of the present into consideration. Only then will the world experience the gospel as the guiding and liberating word of truth and grace.
8. Witnessing the apostolic faith to the world is rooted in the gospel, the spiritual life of the Church and its members' true fight of the faith. The Church is constantly being called to "go" out into the world, to open to the life of the world and to be effective in all areas of life.
9. In the present world situation the differences between rich and poor countries have accumulated. The apostolic teaching calls Christians to a simple life-style. The apostolic message requires them to be merciful and just to those suffering from poverty and unjust social structures.

10. In this world of change, God's word and the apostolic faith set the Church a prophetic task. They call Christians to criticize the injustices of society and, furthermore, to point in a constructive spirit to those values which are in accordance with God's will.

11. The apostolic service of the Church necessarily presupposes that Christ is proclaimed, in accordance with his command: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). In fulfilling this command, Christians must avoid proselytism, i.e. efforts to convert Christians from one denomination to another. Action of this kind hinders them from achieving the unity of faith, confuses the spiritual life of the faithful and makes the truth revealed by God an object of ridicule to non-believers.

12. Today's world is significantly affected by the development of various forms of science and by different kinds of philosophies. These have accomplished various positive things in many areas of life. On the other hand, Christians are convinced that science and philosophy can also lead to destructive results if guided by values of life differing from those included in the apostolic faith. Science and philosophy cannot be free from ethical responsibility.

APOSTOLIC TEACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Archbishop Mikhail (Muduygin)

The act of sending is one of the major notions which accompany the process of God's influence upon humanity created by Him. As we know from the Bible, this influence may be a direct one (the appearance of God to the forefathers, Cain, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and others), or directly addressed to a man through a word (to Abraham, Samuel, David and others), and, moreover, through the persons whom God sends entrusting them to fulfil His will, thus influencing certain people or even many people through them, and sometimes the whole nations or even humanity as a whole. The greatest and unprecedented by its scale, significance and results was the sending of the Son of God, when "God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him" (Jn.4:9). Christ Himself repeatedly pointed at this unique act of sending, and we can find the major part of relevant testimonies in the Gospel according to John(3:17; 13:20; 15:21).

The next great act of sending was the sending by the Son of God of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father (Jn.15:26). This sending was promised by Christ in his last talk with his disciples (Jn.16:5) and occurred on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4). Though this event was the single and unique one in its unique distinctiveness, its consequences turned out to be lasting and intransigent: according to the Lord Jesus' promise, the Church established on that day has been living and acting and always being a bearer of the Holy Spirit and the field of His action. If every Christian should live being concerned with the words expressed in Psalm 51, "Cast me not away from thy presence", then for the Church as a whole this prayer should be considered as being fulfilled from the very moment of the formation of the Church.

The act of sending performed in the mysterious depths of the Divine Holy Trinity in accordance with God's Providence, has found its continuation in the apostleship, i.e. in the sending of the disciples of Christ. If the sending of the Son of God into the world by the Heavenly Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Son from the Father were the acts of Divine activity (for in both cases, speaking about the Person who sends and the Person who is sent, we speak about different persons of the Holy Trinity), then as to the sending of the disciples of Christ, it is God who sends them to the apostleship, but those who are sent are people. The disciples of Christ, who were apostles till the event of Pentecost, from that moment on have become apostles and comprehended themselves as such (those who were "sent" or "ambassadors").

It should be noted that all three mentioned acts of sending: of the Son of God into the world, of the Holy Spirit for inspiring the disciples of Christ and for uniting them into One Church, as well as the sending of the disciples of Christ for preaching (Mt.28:19; Mk.16:15) had one and the same purpose, namely, the salvation of people perishing in sin. Hence it may be concluded that they had one foundation, namely, God's love for the world, since "He desires all men to be saved" (1 Tim.2:4) and "...so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn.3:16), and He also "has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts" (Gal.4:6), through whom He adopts us as His sons.

Any act of sending as an action includes the following structural elements: a person who sends, a person who is sent, a place of his destination, a purpose of sending or, in other words, its goal. The act of sending (apostleship) of the disciples of Christ fully corresponds to this structure. Apostles, the closest twelve and an uncertain number of others who were not so close to Christ as the twelve, have been sent by Christ directly or through other apostles (an example: Ananias of Damascus/Acts 9:10-11; and, probably, St. Luke the Evangelist and his friend Cleopas, participants in the trip to Emmaus/Lk.24:13-18). The apostleship of St. Paul was of a special character as his calling was obviously of the supernatural character of vision which he was honoured on his way to Damascus where he was received, baptized and established in his faith by Ananias (Acts 9).

The act of sending as such is preceded by election and calling. The election was performed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself through the action of the Holy Spirit. The election of each of the apostles determines the unilateral nature of sending: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (Jn.15:16). Here, as well as in other narrations of the apostles' election, there is no room for their initiative: both the election and sending for preaching belongs completely to Christ. If we turn ourselves to an Old Testament analogy, then we shall see that the election and sending of the apostles is not similar with the election of the Prophet Isaiah who himself called to the Lord: "Here am I! Send me" (Is.6:8). The election and sending of the apostles rather resemble a mysterious voice heard by the boy Samuel in the temple at night (1 Sam.3:10). The process of election and calling is exposed with particular details in the story about the very first meeting of Christ with Nathanael (Jn.1:45-51). It is remarkable that even here, in the first steps of Jesus in the fulfilment of his great and holy mission, already operating is a mechanism of calling to Him through other disciples who have been called earlier. In this case the calling is performed through Philip who has just become a disciple through the direct calling from the Lord Jesus Himself (Jn.1:43-44).

When we speak about the sending as such, we should recall the farewell words of the Saviour as the brightest expression of the sending. These words came down to us in the exposition of St. Matthew the Evangelist: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt.28:19-20), and also in the exposition of St. Mark the Evangelist: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk.16:15).

This, so to say, "general" sending was preceded not only by the election and calling of the disciples (only some of them were mentioned in this regard), but also by their sending to preach during the lifetime of the Saviour (a kind of the missionary practice). It is possible that this was the kind of sending of the twelve and seventy disciples who were given authority "over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity" (Mt.10:1; Lk.10:1-20).

Along with the collective sending which involved all disciples of Christ and all His followers to this or that extent which we shall expose later, we find examples of the individual sending in the Gospel.

This individual sending involves each of the closest apostles to this or that extent. Thus, at the calling of Simon Peter and Andrew they were promised their future sending (Mk.1:17; Lk.5:10). An individual sending of Apostle Peter should be considered a special case. It happened after his apostasy and after the Resurrection of Christ. It was the thrice-repeated command to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ given to Peter at the Sea of Tiberias. Other apostles were entrusted with the guiding and exhorting activities in the future Church as well, but Peter was entrusted to take care for his brethren in this great cause which they were called to serve with their lives: "When you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Lk.22:32). This high commission was preceded by the assurance that its fulfilment which demands the unabated strength and faith was the subject of a special prayerful intercession of the Son of God before the Heavenly Father. The Lord said: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail" (Lk.22:32).

The activities of Apostle Peter in the period of the initial formation and establishment of the Church so crucial for its further destinies was the fulfilment of this highest mission, while the recognition of these activities by the Church was expressed in the intercession of Peter at the Apostles' Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), and later in the appropriation of the title of 'the first of the apostles' to Peter which has become firmly established.

The sending of Apostle Paul has the common Source with other apostles since he was elected, called and sent by Christ Himself, but all this had the supernatural character in this case. While we speak about the Divine initiative regarding all the apostles, we say that it was revealed with a particular distinction on the way to Damascus: an adversary and persecutor of the new teaching not only lost his hostile attitude during just one hour, but also changed into its ardent adherent. Since that hour he has given all his strength and all his life for the service to the One Whom he earlier had hated, chased and persecuted. A special character of Paul's calling has become a foundation for his comprehension of his apostleship which is expressed in his numerous extant

recollection of this event which has turned over his life (Acts 22:3-16; 26:9-20; Gal.1:3). Paul was doubted by many, and he had to insist on his rights as an apostle with polemical sharpness (Gal.2:8; 2 Cor.11:21-23; 12:11-13; 1 Cor.9:1-5). It is possible that these doubts served as a breeding-ground for the distance which to a certain extent existed in the relations between the two great apostles (Gal.2:11-16; 1 Cor.9:5; 2 Cor.11:22-23; 2Pet.3:16).

In the beginning of our consideration of the inner, spiritual state of the apostles, called by Jesus we must note the speed and ingenuousness of their positive reaction to His call. The Evangelists underline the fact that the brothers, Peter and Andrew, as well as to other brothers, James and John, sons of Zebedee, never expressed any signs of hesitation, left their nets, "the boat and their father, and followed Him." (Mt.4:18-22; Mk.1:16-20). They demonstrated strong resolution in committing the step which radically changed their way of life as the future disciples of Christ, which determined their destiny. This resoluteness till the end of their earthly pilgrimage can be explained only by the inevitable and powerful influence of the Person of the Godman, from His first steps in the public activity in the world, Who expressed unquestionable authority in His words and actions, the authority which was higher than the one of the recognized, professional teachers and leaders of the people (Mk.1:22). The disciples themselves, obviously, recognized to some extent, the sacrificial character of the radical turn in their life under the influence of the call from their Divine Teacher: "What about us? We have left everything to follow you. How shall we fare?" (Mt.19:27). They asked Jesus in the hope that they would be given some "reward", about which they heard in general from their Teacher (Mt.5:12).

Compliance was the general reaction of all the disciples to the calling and the mission. It is expressed in the immediate reaction to the call and the absence of any hesitations, doubts or objections. It is true, that Luke and Matthew inform us about the callings, accompanied by some difficulties. The Saviour asks (even commands) to follow Him, but two persons, who were addressed with this call, ask to postpone the departure, one, referring to the need to bury his father (Lk.9:59-60; Mt.8:21-22), the other - mentioning the necessity to say some parting words to the family (Lk.9:61-62). And their requests were rejected, and the rejection was especially harsh in the case of the most substantial request, connected with the fulfilment of one's duty as a son. One may suppose, that for the firm resolution to follow Christ and to overcome everything in the fulfilment of His sacred duty, those, who were called, had to disconnect their personal links, the links with their families, in the first place, which greatly limited their spiritual freedom. And here, probably, there is an expression of the reservations, characteristic of the Saviour, with regard to the family links, with their diverting and limiting influence, mentioned by Him not for once (Mt.10:36-37; 12:47-50; Mk.3:31-35; Lk.8:19-21; Mk.6:2-4; Mt.13:54-58; Jn.7:5).

There is also one case, when the initiative of one of Christ's listeners was tested, if not rejected. We refer to the readiness, expressed in the words: "I will follow you wherever you go" (Lk. 9:57). It seems, that, as in the case of the ardent promises of Peter (Jn. 13:37-38) the Lord, "who knew human hearts and the instability of the most kind human intentions, was aware how difficult it was for a human being to endure homelessness, loneliness and poverty (Lk. 10:57-58). One can presume with assurance that Our Lord Jesus Christ, before calling this or that person, knew beforehand the inner spiritual state of the person He addressed to, or the person whom He called for His mission. There were various people among them, but the Lord knew whom to select and whom to call. He stated this unequivocal character of His selective initiative in the words, addressed to the disciples: "You did not choose me; I chose you, I appointed you to go on and bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn. 15:16). Here we see the fullness of the selection and of the calling with the Saviour referring not only to Himself as to the One Who makes the choice and Who sends forth, but also with the reference to the aim of the choice and the mission. Of course, any good deed may be called the fruit, and in this respect the choice and the calling refer to any Christian (Rom. 8:30). However, the reference is made with regard to the Apostles primarily, as the people whose fruit encompassed many, to whom Christ sent His chosen ones (Rom. 1:13).

The salvation of these people, who were to become Christians, was the only aim of the mission of the Apostles. This idea transcends the framework of the destiny of the disciples as persons, connected with Him by time, place, nationality, and language, as conditions of their communion. Not only the disciples, called directly by Christ Himself, but all the following generations of Christians, all Church of Christ during two millennia of its existence, were called for the one mission of the salvation. And that is why each Christian of any period in the Christian era, and primarily the called and the ordained servants, are the continuers of the deeds of the Apostles.

In reality, however, the Christians are always facing the temptation to prefer the side effects, accompanying the main activity of the Church, which are only its elements. These include the aesthetic elements, as in the artistic decoration of the church buildings and services, or ethics component when Christianity is considered to be a certain set moralistic directives, lacking the spirit of life. The Christian art, as well as Christian word must serve as means of influence upon the soul for the sake of salvation. And the Christian morality must be the fruit of faith, as "we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the life of good deeds which God designed for us" (Eph. 2:10).

The content of the apostolic good news was identical to the Gospel of Christ Himself. This identity was conditioned by the graceful influence of the Holy Spirit, bringing the real truth to preachers (Jn. 16:13). In the preparation of the disciples for the critical situations, connected with persecutions, harassment, etc. the Lord advised them not to worry about the preliminary preparations for the forthcoming dialogues and public presentations, promising

them to give "such words and wisdom as no opponent can resist or refute" (Lk. 21:14-15), "for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit" (Mk. 13:11).

This very identity, based on the permanent action of the Holy Spirit was meant by Jesus Christ, when He assured the disciples: "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me" (Lk. 10:16). This identity through Jesus Christ goes back to God the Father, to the Primary Source of truth: "And whoever rejects me rejects the One who sent me" (Lk. 10:16).

While starting to analyze the methods used by the apostles in carrying out their apostolate one should notice that their preaching, as the one of their Teacher, was originally oral. As we already noted, their preaching started within Palestine during His earthly life, but soon after they were separated from Him it was transferred beyond Palestine. The epistolary work of the apostles and especially the historical facts in the Book of Acts permit to affirm that in the beginning the preaching was addressed to Jews residing in Palestine as well as those living beyond Palestine, i.e. the Jews in the diaspora. The comparative easiness of the transfer of the Message through the borders of Palestine is explained in a large measure by frequent visits of Jerusalem by Jews spread by that time literally all over the whole Roman empire and even beyond it (e.g. in Ethiopia in the West and in Persia and India in the East).

It is well known that Lord Jesus preached in Aramaic understood by the general public, and the "gift of tongues" received by the apostles on the day of the Pentecost contributed to the success of the apostles' preaching.

But the decision of the Apostolic Council briefly presented in Ch. XV of the Book of Acts exerted a decisive influence upon the success of the preaching. The bold refusal to follow the prescriptions of Moses' law led to the liberation from the bonds of Pharisaical legalism, from the traditions of the old men kept and imposed by the Israeli teachers in order to keep, strengthen and broaden their influence in which they were spiritually and materially interested. This turning-point which created prerequisites necessary to transform Christianity from a Judaic sect into a world religion, broadened boundlessly the field of apostolic activities, liberated the followers of Christ from their national limitedness and gave the foundation and the stimulus to affirm that all Christians are "all sons of God through faith", that all those baptized into Christ have put on Christ" and that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26-28; cf. Col. 3:11).

Under the influence of the liberating spirit of the preaching of the Gospel the psychology of the preachers themselves was changing, and we must notice that only thanks to this their message could exert a liberating influence on the broad layers of the Jewish and then also pagan population finding its way to Christ with the help of the apostles.

While during the earthly life of Christ even the attempt of foreigners - probably proselytes, i.e. circumcised - to see Him provoked such doubts among

His disciples that only after a thorough discussion they decided to allow this (Jn.12:20-22), after the Jerusalem Council the same disciples go without hesitations to Asia Minor, Greece and then to Rome bringing to Christ "all nations" in fulfilling His commandment (Mt.28,19-20). It is true that it was not easy for them to survive this turning-point: in order to enter the house of centurion Cornelius Peter was to receive a vision appealing him not to consider unclean what God has cleansed (Act.10,15;11,9). The act of Peter - the baptism of uncircumcised in Caesarea - struck so much the Jewish Christians that they hurried reproaches at him and accused him of an unacceptable fellowship with the uncircumcised (Act.11,1-3); only when Peter presented his vision in details and with conviction, so that all his apostle's authority was at stake, they "silenced" and made the conclusion: "To the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life." (Act.11,18).

The variety of the national and confessional panorama of the audience of the apostles forced them to adapt themselves to this situation on a large scale. St. Paul speaks about this very eloquently: "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law - though not being myself under the law - that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law - not being without law toward God, but under the law of Christ - that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9,19-22).

The greatest example of adaptation to the level of reception of the message by the listeners is granted by Christ Himself Who addressed His popular parables which it was easy to receive, to the general public and Who revealed the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (Mt. 13:11-13) to His closest disciples who were constantly under His educational influence.

Of course the adaptation of the apostles and especially their Divine Teacher did not incorporate the substance of the truth taught: its identity was kept in the continuity of the piety, it is kept today in the Church of Christ in a measure providing the salutary character of the message. The keeping of the identity in a changing audience is guaranteed first of all by the promise of the Saviour to be always with His Church (Mt.28,20) as its Head and Saviour (Eph.1,22-23) and His certitude that the Holy Spirit will instruct His disciples for any truth.

However there are also historically fixed external Church events providing the identity and succession existentially necessary to the Church. Among them - the creation the new-testamental literature and the adoption of the canonical list of the books of the New Testament as the Revelation inspired by God. With all the scientific differences in issues of the authenticity of various texts and even books of the New Testament the Christian theology unanimously recognizes their undoubted apostolic origin and - which is even more important - their

God's inspiration. While keeping the Orthodox position one can say that the recognition of their God's inspiration as one of the main criteria of the Christian belonging of any religious association, of each individual.

Moreover the Church believes that any imprecisions and even errors unavoidable in the multiplication of the biblical (Old and New Testament) text through copying them by hand (as this took place before the creation of the printing), in translating them into numerous languages of various nations and tribes, do not deprive the sacred text of its salutary influence upon the human souls; of course this cannot be attributed to any commentaries to the sacred text whatever high the authority of the author of this or that commentary or interpretation may be. This certitude is based upon the trust of the Church to its Head and Lord, upon its apostolicity fixed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed constantly accepted by the Church. The apostolicity of the Church is the second factor which guarantees its own identity, the identity of the kerygma proclaimed by the Church.

It seems that reliable guarantees of constancy and stability of the good news over against the constantly changing milieu to which it is addressed, should result in the courageous determination of the bearers of the apostolic mission in working out corresponding methodology of presenting the Gospel in a coherent manner, so that modern man could comprehend it. But the historical experience testifies to the opposite. In the Christian Churches of different confessions there continue to prevail the archaic forms of proclamation which make the comprehension of the good news difficult, if not impossible at all. This refers primarily to the language in which the divine service is conducted and the Holy Scriptures is read. A very telling example in this regard is presented by the Roman Catholic Church where for many centuries until the mid-1960's, the exclusive language of the divine services had been Latin unknown to many; only Vatican II of 1962-65 declared this wrong to be put an end to. Meanwhile this continues to be a practice in the Armenian Church where of all lexical material reproduced in the churches there are hardly more than ten words to coincide with modern Armenian language whereas all the rest of them (the only exception being the sermon) serve merely to shake the air. The Russian Orthodox Church is in a slightly better position in this regard, since the Slavonic language of her services, the same as in the Bulgarian and in the Serbian Churches, has much in common with modern Russian language. But here too, the lack of knowledge of the Slavonic language tells badly upon the audience. Proclaiming the word of God in the language known to be of a foreign sound to the listener, the Church does not help but impedes the way to God for the people, while counteracting Christ in his intention described in the following his words: "When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (Jn.12:32).

How can one explain this perpetuated tendency of the Church for keeping the shrine away from the uninitiated, the tendency of putting the new wine, i.e.

the ever young and new word of God, into the old and worn-out, and hardened wineskin, unfit for use (Mt. 9:17)?

Putting aside the intention to monopolise the shrine, especially characteristic of the priests of heathen religious cults, in order that it may be used to serve their own egoistic purposes, it should be noted that the wide masses of believers in all religious communities also have the tendency to conceal it from the uninitiated behind more or less high fences, which not only block the access to it but make any audio-visual perception of it impossible; the idea of Deity's been far away, and of the revelation offered by the Deity to remain unfathomable, while evoking awesome feeling towards the Deity, should likewise along with fear and trembling evoke the natural feeling of curiosity, which grows the more, the more difficult it is to be satisfied.

All this has been radically changed by coming into our world of the Son of God who became and still is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). As is known, and as we all believe, all who receive Christ through their faith receive "the power to become children of God" (Jn. 1:12), and no longer are servants but friends to Christ (Jn. 15:15), having "through him... access ... to the Father", and becoming members of his household (Eph. 2:18-19).

The most bright symbol of "being faraway", "of being concealed" and of "being inaccessible", the symbol which is not of the heathen cult but of the Old Testamental veneration of the True God, is the "holy of holies" in the Jerusalem Temple, where "only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:7).

But this exclusive use of the holy of holies for prayer and the access to God living there by his grace, were removed by the entering of Jesus Christ, as the high priest of the good things to come (Heb. 9:11) into the eternal glory of God, when ascending "he sat down at the right hand of God" (Mk. 16:19). For, according to the Apostle, "if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. 9:13-14), or, in the words of the same Apostle Paul, to be fellow-workers for God (1 Cor. 3:9).

The very coming of the Son of God into the world, his incarnation, in the very essence testifies against any attempt to draw the people from God, for "great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). This wonderfully manifested love of God forbids us to think and the more so to erect any partitions concealing what God has been revealing to us for our salvation.

The apostolicity of the Church as her characteristic feature manifests itself through the grace of succession at the ordination and through the activity which is the continuation of the work started by the apostles of Christ. The hierarchical

succession has in its basis the ecclesiastical pragmatism, consisting in the necessity to select persons to give themselves totally up to the church ministry, which for the most part is identical to that of the apostles. As is known, this ministry includes edification, the administration of the sacraments and governing functions, and the fulfilment of all these functions call for more or less spiritual training, that is up-bringing and education; besides, to be meaningful and valid a judgement about the ability of this or that member of the Church to become her minister is to come from other ministers of the Church, who have already an experience in this ministry, who are senior in the position and age. All this takes place within the hierarchical ecclesiastical structure; here we have both succession and gradual going up the hierarchical stages, and so, also bodies enabling to work out, to pass, to announce and to implement decisions of the ministers of the Church by means of conciliar election, or, which is more often the case - by the election calling and personal installation of junior by senior.

Both methods are of apostolic origin. Thus, if Matthew was elected and accepted within the twelve apostles by voting (Acts 1) Timothy and Titus were not only called and consecrated by Apostle Paul but themselves were instructed by Paul to install presbyters, which, by the way testifies to the hierarchical structure being established from the very beginning (Tit. 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:22). The pragmatic approach to the hierarchical structure has deep, fargiving reasons to be found in the instructions by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who on many occasions pointed to the servicehood of any governing activity, of any principality, of any presbyterianism in the Church: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mt. 20:25-28).

Of course those warnings of Christ were never forgotten in the Church; it is not accidental that even the Roman primates known as patterns of the unique Church principle (Nicholas I, Gregory VII, Innocent III) signed the documents of all-Church significance as "servi servorum Dei". Nevertheless the temptation of love of power is not weaker in Church life than in any other field of public life.

All this provoked (and provokes now) numerous conflicts which - although being solved through more peaceful means than in the secular world - violated nevertheless the peaceful course of Church life. We can see the foundations of these negative phenomena in the offended tone of the words of St. Paul addressed to the "superlative apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5) who were probably neglecting him (2 Cor. 12:11) so that he was to look for protection of his flock (in particular in Corinth), to justify himself and to stress the ascetic deeds that he performed (2 Cor. 11:10-29). We do not know in what measure the offense of St. Paul was justified, but his sincerity provokes no doubts and indicates that

the difficulties and trials of the Church from the first years of its existence were not only external (in particular the persecutions), but also internal.

One should not be astonished that in the historical process of Church life these and other inter frictions, misunderstandings and conflicts often received tremendous dimensions growing from quite acceptable, natural and even desirable "factions" (according to St. Paul, 1 Cor. II, 19) to schisms and divisions which till now weaken the efficiency of the Church message and for many reasons (we are not going to analyze these reasons within the theme presented) and are one of the main calamities accompanying the Church life up to now.

The lack of love to Christ and therefore to God should be recognized as the deep reason of the divisions of the Christian world. This supreme love accessible to man and giving a meaning to the human life, making it happy, would inevitably force Christians to overcome intensively not each other, but the divisions, misunderstandings, preconceptions and prejudices dividing them. The apostolate as the missions of the Church and its clergy, as the mission of each Christian is possible only within the general striving of Christians for God. Only upon this striving full of love the mutual reconciliation and brotherhood between Christians are possible as well as their active cooperation in solving the most complicated problems raised by God before His Church and the whole humanity.

APOSTOLIC TEACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Jukka Thurén

1. Apostolic Teaching in the New Testament

1.1 Apostle

The New Testament concept of apostle cannot be explained on the basis of the use of the word *apostolos* in standard Greek ('covering letter', 'passport', 'cargo vessel' etc., but twice in Herodotus 'envoy'). Closer is the rabbinic *shaluach* / *shaliach*. The word means inspectors and fund-raisers sent out and authorized by the Jewish Sanhedrin after the destruction of the Temple. The common roots of the concepts *shaliach* and *apostolos* are to be found in the age-old Near Eastern institution of the delegate. Mishnah Berakoth 5:5 expresses the principle aptly: "A delegate is as the one who authorizes him."

Diverging from the Greek-speaking environment, the New Testament uses the word *apostolos* of people - envoys, ambassadors, delegates. Origen defines the concept in Comm. in Joh. 32, 17: "Everyone that someone has sent is the *apostolos* of his sender." However, most frequently (in Origen, too!) the word means only certain persons authorized and sent out by God and Christ. In the New Testament there are three divergent, if not entirely separate, concepts of apostle, one of which became largely predominant in ecclesiastical language.

1.1.1 An Apostle is a person sent out and authorized by the risen Christ

1 Cor. 15:7-9: "Then he appeared to ... all the apostles. Last of all ... he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles." Paul learned from the common tradition that Christ appeared to "all the apostles". By this he does not mean only "the twelve" (v. 5) but a wider yet sharply restricted circle. "All the apostles" were unlikely to have been all together at the same time when Jesus appeared, but their apostleship is based precisely on this appearance: it was then that they received their apostolic authorization and mission. Although "all the apostles" is thus a closed circle in the tradition referred to by Paul, he still calls himself an apostle, because he too received a special mission, even a ministry, from the Risen One, e.g. Gal. 1:1. Paul was authorized as Apostle to the Gentiles, as the Apostles' council declared in 49 A. D. According to Gal.

2.8 two apostles were recognized as having a special position: Peter was authorized as Apostle to the Jews and Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles.

An "apostle" is thus a person who has received by revelation a particular, very important mission from the risen Christ; a representative authorized by the risen One.

1.1.2 An Apostle is a prophetic-charismatic person, who demonstrates his apostleship with signs

The appearing of the risen Christ as the basis for apostleship links the concept of apostle with the prophetic-charismatic tradition of the Old Testament and the early church. This may include a second charismatic feature. According to 2 Cor. 12:11f. apostles were expected to perform miracles as signs of their apostleship. Thus Paul's Jewish-Christian rivals proved their apostleship at Corinth. Similarly the rabbis later used the word *shaiach* of several (by no means all) Old Testament prophets, particularly those who confirmed their words by miracles (Moses, Elijah, Elisha). Paul too demonstrated in this way that he was a true apostle, cf. Rom. 15:18f. The mission given by the Risen Christ is not mentioned in this context.

1.1.3 An Apostle is a chosen witness not only of the Resurrection but also of the words and deeds of Jesus

Luke greatly honours Paul, but he only calls him an apostle once, otherwise reserving the name for "the twelve", whose original mission, given to them by Jesus before his death, was to represent and rule the Israel of the coming world. Their circle was supplemented after the death of Judas by one of the disciples who had been with Jesus from the baptism of John until the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:21-26). Such disciples were able to tell of the teaching and deeds of Jesus. They also guaranteed that the Risen One really was the same Jesus who had worked among the people of Israel. Not all Jesus' disciples were apostles in this sense, nor were they all authorized by the Risen One. Matthias was chosen by the church and the lot, not by an appearance of the Risen Christ. He did not need to prove his apostleship by miracles.

1.1.4 Concepts of apostle are not mutually exclusive

We have already seen that Paul was an apostle on the basis of his call by the risen Christ, but he could also be recognized by the charismatic gifts he had received. He was indeed a witness of the Resurrection, but he had not been a follower of Jesus of Nazareth. He placed himself alongside those who had been

apostles before him, both Peter and the twelve apostles, and also included himself among a wider circle (Rom. 16:7). He never disputed the apostolic ministry of the twelve. But if charismatic "super-apostles" rent a church he had founded, he regarded them for that reason as pseudo-apostles, even if he could not dispute their apostleship on other grounds.

The Gospel of John, from the end of the apostolic age, does not use the designation "apostle" with regard to the disciples (13:16 is a parable from a secular environment applied to the disciples). More is said of their being sent or authorized (the verbs *apostello*, *perempo*). Only those who had been with Jesus "from the beginning" could ultimately testify about him, according to Acts. The testimony of the Holy Spirit agrees with their testimony, 15:26f. The risen Jesus confirmed to them the mission he had entrusted them with earlier: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (20:21). They will do even greater deeds than Jesus (but does this mean miracles? Does it not mean the faith engendered by preaching?). The real author of the Gospel is one of these emissaries, 21:24. If emphasis is to be placed on the words "from the beginning", he is one of the very first disciples called by Jesus, 1:35ff. In c. 180 A. D. Irenaeus regarded it as evident that the author was also one of the twelve apostles, John the son of Zebedee, but it may be deduced from the writings of Ignatius and Papias (from the beginning of the 2nd century) and Polycarp (190 A.D.) that the matter was not quite clear in the 2nd century.

1.2 The Apostles and the New Testament

Without going through all the books of the New Testament, we may now state the way in which the aforementioned concepts of apostle have left traces in the books of the New Testament. How does the New Testament represent and transmit apostolic teaching?

1.2.1 The Letters of Paul: messages from the teacher of the Gentiles, appointed by the risen Christ, to his churches and to all churches

Paul writes his letters as an apostle, with the authority of his ministry. He usually appeals to his authority, which in the Epistle to the Romans is explained by the fact that he is introducing himself to an unknown congregation, and in Galatians and 2 Corinthians by the fact that his apostleship is disputed. At Corinth this had happened due to the activity of Jewish-Christian "super-apostles". The dispute portrayed in Galatians is still more remarkable. Paul tells that as an apostle of the Gentile Christian Church he was bold enough to oppose Peter, the first of the apostles (Gal. 2:11-14). He does not find fault with Peter for false doctrine but for inconsistency in applying the common faith to Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian church relations. However, those

whom Paul calls "false apostles" and "false brethren" had markedly diverging views of apostolic doctrine as compared with Paul's teaching. Because, however, it was necessary to speak of Peter's lapse when refuting Judaistic heresy, it is clear that the way Peter acted at Antioch meant at least allowing, even promoting, false doctrine. In 1 Cor. 1:2 the apostle greets not only the Christians in Corinth but also "all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours". This letter was not therefore intended as teaching and admonition for a single congregation but in principle for all Christian congregations. In the manuscripts Rom. 1:7 and Eph. 1:1 sometimes lack the name of the city. Besides the so-called "catholic epistles", apparently even before them, these letters were early on published for all Christians to read. It is therefore not wrong for us to read the apostolic letters as also meant for us. Because our churches are nowadays almost entirely Gentile Christian, our church has good reason to emphasize that Paul was appointed teacher of the Gentiles, and in the apostles' council recognized as such, to teach the truth of faith to the peoples of the world (1 Tim. 2:7). From our point of view Paul's letters are primary apostolic teaching.

The senders of Paul's letters almost always include others than Paul himself. Colossians may have been written mainly by Timothy on Paul's behalf and approved by him. Certain other letters are regarded by modern scholarship as originating in the circle of Paul's disciples after the death of the apostle. These, as in the case of the Acts of the Apostles by Luke, convey to us the teaching of the apostle to the Gentiles as it was preserved and developed among his disciples.

1.2.2 The Letters of Paul: the products of a wise charismatic, of a "brother" or colleague of the twelve

The Apostle Paul himself often appeals to the grace or charisma which he has received. 2 Pet. 3:15f. places his letters alongside the Old Testament ("... as... the other scriptures"), as letters of Peter's "beloved brother" (i.e. fellow apostle), the content of which is based on his charisma, "the wisdom given to him" - while Peter's authority rests on the historical fact that he was with Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, for instance. Thus Paul as a letter-writer is counted among the charismatics, on the one hand, and accepted as a colleague of the leader of the twelve apostles, on the other hand. Here are combined the two concepts of apostle, of which the latter later became dominant.

1.2.3 The Gospels: the apostolic testimony about Jesus

Of the Gospels only John (21:24) asserts that it is authorized eyewitness testimony about Jesus. It extends from the time of John the Baptist to the resurrection of Jesus, thus the entire time-span which, according to Luke, the apostles were required to know from their own experience, Acts 1. In John, however, the redactor ("we") has his own rôle to play.

Luke is the work of a historian based on the testimony of the apostles and other "servants of the word" (Lk. 1:1-4). Mark appears after all - although there is still some doubt about it - to preserve traditions about Jesus related by the Apostle Peter, as Bishop Papias claimed, according to the information he had received from John the Elder. Matthew, however, is not nowadays considered to be the collection of sayings of Jesus compiled by the Apostle Matthew in Aramaic of which Papias speaks, but appears to have originated in Antioch as a codification of apostolic teaching as it was preserved and practised there.

Accordingly, Mark, on the one hand, and John, on the other, are the Gospels of most immediate apostolic origin. Mark is based on the teaching of Peter, and John on that of John the son of Zebedee. Together they most directly demonstrate how those who were apostolic witnesses of the work and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth taught about him. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that the other Gospels (and the other books of the New Testament) have preserved the apostles' witness and teaching about Jesus.

1.3 How and What the Apostles Taught

If Papias and the Elder who transmitted information to him are right, in his Gospel Mark recorded extracts from the speeches of Peter. John, on the other hand, is based on homilies by which the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, taught his disciples. Luke says that he has included in his book and thus confirmed what Theophilus was taught orally. Matthew may have been intended as a manual. Thus since the time of the apostles the Church has in many places been taught about the life, discourses, deeds, death and resurrection of Jesus in the way the Gospels record this teaching. Narrative teaching seems to have been the framework of all apostolic teaching.

Paul worked for years in Antioch as a teacher of these same matters, and later he taught the churches he had founded. In his churches there were early on other specialized teachers. In Acts 19:8-19, 20:18-35 Luke describes Paul's teaching career at Ephesus: for three years he taught the church "God's whole plan of salvation (boûle)". According to one reading apparently based on local tradition Paul taught members of his church and trained new workers during the sabbata, while the students at the rhetorical school were taking a break!

The apostle's letters sometimes repeat, sometimes supplement his oral preaching and teaching, but quite certainly he also gave much oral teaching which he does not refer to in the preserved letters. The apostle's preaching and teaching was presented and in the best case received "not as a human word but as God's word", 1 Thess. 2:13. Paul also consciously taught through his conduct. Following the apostle's example was complying with the model of the Lord, 1:6.

At least the "gospel" of the death and resurrection of Jesus was learnt by heart, 1 Cor. 15:3-7. This concept of the gospel is briefer in content than that of the Synoptics and John. Christians were taught exactly the words of institution of the Lord's Supper and the passion story in relation to it (because the apostle assumes a knowledge of the words "the night when Jesus was betrayed"), 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

Christology was learnt more by singing hymns (Phil. 2, Col. 1, 1 Tim. 3:16, John 1:1-18; cf. Pliny's letter to Trajan) than by defining concepts.

The meaning of baptism was taught to all the baptized, that as children of God they are heirs of his Kingdom, but that wrongdoers do not inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9f., Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:5). A list was made for catechumens and the baptized of numerous types of wrongdoing to be avoided.

Economic and sexual morality was taught especially to former pagans (1 Cor.) The final parentheses of the letters repeat the nucleus of the oral teaching. 1 Thess. 4:2: "For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus." Those who lived near the synagogue were taught that the Jewish dietary rules and calendar are not binding upon Christians. Romans 14 may remind the churches of the apostle's speeches. Verse 14 is interpreted as follows in the new Finnish Bible translation: "On the basis of the teaching of the Lord Jesus I know certainly that nothing is unclean in itself ..."

In the words of Jesus (e.g. on divorce and purity of foods), the Old Testament and his own thinking illuminated by the Spirit the apostle sought answers to the behavioural problems raised by members of the churches. The apostle had to leave Thessalonica hurriedly - fortunately for us! - so that he had in 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11 to supplement his oral preaching on the subject of eschatology, 1:9f.

The doctrine of the justification of the sinner for Christ's sake, through faith, is dealt with by Paul rather polemically, in opposition to the Judaizers (in Galatians and reiterated in Romans), not catechetically as part of a "catechism" taught to all.

In his oral teaching, as in the letters, he gave a constant reminder of what was already known, but particular emphasis was placed on matters on which the apostle considered that others - either outsiders or other Christians - had expounded erroneous, even injurious views.

Polemics also clarified and developed the apostle's thinking and sharpened his teaching. Paul's teaching was at first close to that of other Hellenists in Antioch. 1 Thessalonians represents this teaching still closely related to

tradition; there was as yet no need to fight against heresies. But acting as an independent apostle Paul faced new problems and found independent solutions to them, which in turn gave new content to his teaching.

It is claimed that there were great differences in the doctrine of the primitive Church. Thus it has been concluded from the fact that the reconstructed common source of Matthew and Luke, the so-called Logia source or Q, does not speak of the soteriological significance of the death of Jesus, that the Palestinian church did not teach it. In 1 Cor. 15:11, however, Paul gives his assurance that all the apostles unanimously preached the death and resurrection of Jesus, the nucleus of the faith. In Rom. 6:17 he thanks God that former servants of sin in Rome have now become obedient "to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted". Although the Roman church or house churches were not founded by any of the twelve apostles, Paul trusted that the Roman Christians too were correctly taught, so that God could entrust his children to its teaching and nurture. It was a presupposition, of course, that apostolic teaching was largely shared by all the emerging Church. As apostle to the Gentiles he was, however, bold enough to bring his own contribution to the Roman Christians' already abundant knowledge, 15:14ff.

2. Apostolic Teaching in the Early Church

2.1 The Concepts Apostle and Apostolic after the New Testament Period

The Didache (c. 100 A.D.) is still acquainted with a group of wandering apostles distinct from prophets. They cannot be distinguished from false apostles on the basis of their name, nor immediately due to their teaching but solely on the basis of their conduct. They were not therefore the last of the limited group of original apostles but evidently charismatics who had received revelation later.

In Gnostic circles (Mani) new "apostles" appear even later. Mohammed too believed he was a charismatic apostle (rasul), although not one authorized by Jesus. He considered himself superior to Jesus and authorized by Allah. The Church, however, rejected all these later revelations and regarded as true apostles only those who had received their commission a short while after the resurrection of Jesus. The Didache did not gain acceptance into the canon, nor was its broad concept of apostle accepted in the Church, and it was preserved under the name "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles".

Beside the twelve Paul was also called an apostle. Some writers use the title *ho apostolos* to mean Paul.

The word *apostolikos* "apostolic" is known first of all from the tradition Ignatius Polycarp-Irenaeus. As a letter-writer Ignatius follows apostolic models (Trall. praec.). Polycarp, who collected his letters, is called an "apostolic and prophetic teacher" (Mart. Polyc. 16:2). Polycarp was a personal acquaintance

of Irenaeus, who reliably transmitted the first century apostolic tradition of doctrine. Against the Gnostics' imaginary apostolic traditions emphasis now had to be placed upon controllable apostolic tradition transmitted from person to person and particularly from a bishop to his successor.

Models were to be found in the New Testament: Paul's speech to the elders at Ephesus and the Pastoral Epistles emphasize the significance in opposing pseudo-gnosis of both the memories of the apostles and the apostolic succession of ministry. The Church has preserved this Pauline-apostolic tradition but rejected Jewish-Christian tradition, which indeed appealed to the authority of the original apostles but was directed against Paul (it is preserved in the Pseudo-Clementine literature, for instance).

The *Didache* (c. 100 A.D.) or "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" certainly preserves ancient material, some truly from the apostolic age - but a very one-sided selection. In the third century Hippolytus recorded the old practice of the church of Rome as the "apostolic tradition". Up till the fourth century there appeared new "apostolic" church orders, but there is no guarantee of the apostolicity of their instructions.

Tertullian emphasized the importance of the tradition passing through known apostles and their successors. In opposition to Marcion and the Gnostics it became necessary to emphasize both the fullness and genuineness of apostolic teaching: Paul, especially Paul as edited by Marcion, was not a sufficient basis for the apostolicity of the Church, nor were Gnostic pseudo-apostolic writings acceptable.

The Church's doctrine crystallized during the time of the church of the martyrs in Rome as the so-called "Apostles' Creed". The Nicene Creed mentions apostolicity, the tradition transmitted by the apostles from Jesus, as one of the signs of the true Church. The structure of the creeds comes from the developing doctrine of the Trinity, the basis for which is found in the writings of the apostles, although in this respect confession and teaching take on more precise form later on.

In the second and third centuries a great amount of other new "apostolic" literature was written about the apostles, in addition to church orders written in their names. Some of it was gnostic, some pseudonymous literature directed against the Gnostics (e.g. the *Epistula apostolorum*), and some works were "Acts of the Apostles" (e.g. the Acts of Paul and Thomas) intended to increase the reputation of the apostles. It demands exact critical study if we wish to separate genuine apostolic tradition from this mass of texts. In the early church period testing the apostolicity of books resulted in the canon of the New Testament, the limits of which were fixed in the fourth century.

2.2 The Teaching of the Apostles and Apostolic Teaching

2.2.1 The Holy Spirit leads the apostolic church into all the truth

A delegate has the right to act independently in carrying out the task entrusted to him. Jesus promised his disciples the Holy Spirit to guarantee that they really could make decisions and state their case according to the truth. John 16:13 speaks of this, although the form of the text varies somewhat.

The best modern editions of the text accept the reading preserved in both the East (e.g. Codex Sinaiticus) and in the West (e.g. Codex Bezae, Italia): "The Spirit of truth will guide you with / in all the truth" (en tei aletheiai pasei), so that the disciples remain in all the truth. Our new Finnish translation of the Bible, however, follows the Byzantine text *eis ten aletheian pasan*: "...will guide you to know all the truth". This reading is supported by the preceding context: Jesus himself could not teach the disciples everything, because they were not yet able to receive it. In these words John's Gospel may indicate that the Gospel contains material taught by the Spirit of truth that the historical Jesus could not yet disclose to his disciples. The teaching of the apostles developed during their lifetimes. We shall examine a few examples.

2.2.1.1 Christology

In the time of the apostles, over a couple of decades, the doctrine of Christ and his work of salvation developed into a fixed form. The point of departure was the teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, the background was principally the Old Testament, and the guarantee of the right direction of development was the Holy Spirit working in the Church. In refuting heresies the later apostolic Church standardized teaching and clarified concepts, until finally the Nicene Creed and later doctrinal statements were reached. For example:

Jesus had addressed God by the name Father (*abba*) and referred to the Wisdom traditions of the Old Testament and Judaism. The apostles (the traditions transmitted by Paul and John) were very soon able to speak of the rôle of the eternal Son of God in creation, as Wisdom had previously been spoken of as creator. The Logos hymn of John 1 contributed to the later development of many of the formulae of the Nicene Creed.

Jesus had allowed himself to be addressed (as did other teachers) as "lord" (*marî, marana - kyrie*). He had also let it be understood that his authority was even greater than that of the Old Testament; he was even "lord" of the Sabbath instituted in the Old Testament. The early Church called out to him in heaven: *marana tha, "Our Lord, come!"* The hymn in Phil. 2 applies to Jesus the title *kyrios*, which in the Old Testament was directed to Yahweh. The later apostolic Church had to devote much study to the fact that the Father is Lord and the Son

is Lord - nevertheless we have only one Lord God (in the Western Church in particular the so-called Athanasian Creed).

At Golgotha no one would have doubted that Jesus of Nazareth hanging on the cross was flesh and blood. But in refuting the Docetists 1 John had to issue a reminder that this Jesus is the Christ. The Son of God truly came in the flesh and suffered death. The guardians of apostolic doctrine, with greater or less success, later defended the real humanity of Jesus and the real materiality of his body.

Luke recorded primitive Jewish hymns (the hymns of thanksgiving of Mary and Zechariah), which praise the tremendous miracle performed by God, the conception of the child Messiah. Jesus grew up in the environment in which these hymns originated. In their opening chapters Luke and Matthew add further detail with respect to the nature of the miracle: the origin of the child Messiah was by virginal conception. This is the way in which the texts explain the fact that the man Jesus is the Son of God. John and Paul, however, proclaim the pre-existence of the Son of God, but do not mention the virginity of Mary. The preserved texts from the apostolic age do not thus all explain the origin of Jesus in the same way. But from Ignatius on the successors of the apostles were able to combine pre-existence and virginal conception: they belong together and do not exclude one another.

2.2.1.2 Soteriology

In instituting the eucharist Jesus let it be understood that he was dying on behalf of others. In the formula of 1 Cor. 15 the meaning of the death of Jesus is made more precise: it took place because of our sins. The apostles early on interpreted the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for all men. In the time of the apostles it was already understood in the light of Isaiah 53 and the Psalms also as the penal suffering of an innocent righteous man instead of the guilty. Because of it Satan has lost his position in heaven and the right to be an accuser. From this conviction the apostolic Church developed the doctrine of atonement. Thus the New Testament speaks of atonement (*hilasmos*), reconciliation (*katalage*), redemption (*apolytrosis*), justification (*dikaiosis*), so that these concepts express different aspects of the same thing: redemption brings to mind the freeing of a slave and Israel's liberation from Egypt; justification has its forensic and participatory aspects.

In the early Church apostolic soteriology was taught in ever new forms. Thus 1 Peter mentions in passing the descent of Christ to Hades, which could be described as the shattering of the gates of hell or as a legal case where Christ demonstrated that by his death he had paid for the sins of men and demanded the release of souls.

2.2.1.3 Interpreting the Old Testament

Sometimes clearly and at other times in a more veiled way Jesus himself had spoken and acted in such a way that he could be understood correctly only against the background of the Old Testament. Ancient tradition contained in 1 Cor. 15 states that his death and resurrection took place "according to the Scriptures" or "as it is written", as repeated by the Nicene Creed. But which scriptures are meant? Matthew, Luke and John in particular find in the Old Testament a great number of passages which were fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus. Quite evidently the apostles played a central part in finding and interpreting these scriptures. But not everything is to be found in the New Testament. E.g. such passages connected with the death of Christ as Gen. 3:15 and Ps. 22:17 seem to have been found later by the Church. If an enthusiastic search for Bible testimonies has often resulted in strained interpretations, the attempt to find predictions, promises, types and analogies in the Old Testament is part of the true apostolic tradition. If we have the same God as the Patriarchs and Israel and we are his people, it is natural that in the history of this same people of God many things continue and similar phenomena recur. Because, however, there are two covenants / testaments, of which, according to both the Old and New Testaments, the new is better, replacing the former, since apostolic times there has been debate as to what in the Old Testament applies directly to the people of the new covenant and what does not. Marcion avoided the effort of study and thinking, paid attention only to the differences between the testaments, disputed the unity of God - and, according to the conviction of the apostolic Church, went badly astray.

The law of Moses and the words of the prophets need interpretation from the very beginning. Thus according to John the Jews read their own sacred scriptures wrongly. The Word of God was needed as an "exegete", an interpreter, before God could be known rightly (1:18). But what would happen after the death of Jesus? Would correct understanding be preserved - or had it even been attained in every respect?

2.2.1.4 Understanding the Words and Deeds of Jesus

The disciples had in the words of Jesus a fresh and as authoritative an interpretation as possible of the Old Testament and of the will of God in general, but already at the time when John wrote it was evident that before his death Jesus had not solved, nor could have solved, all the problems which became burning issues after his death. Although as the Word, as the Church believed, he knew the problems and the solution to them, the disciples, as limited people, could not receive everything, not even the beloved disciple, who in John's Gospel lets it be understood that he listened to and understood Jesus better than the others.

It was essential that the disciples were not left to themselves to explain the words of Jesus and to ponder new questions which might arise, but the Spirit was their helper in this respect. In the Johannine church the Book of Revelation recorded this prophetic revelation of the Spirit as concerns interpretation of the contemporary situation and eschatological proclamation. But evidently the author of John's Gospel too quite consciously tells of the words and deeds of Jesus relying on the guidance of the Spirit, so that he did not merely trust his memory, tradition or his ability in composition, but allowed the Spirit freely to bring to mind the right words, which applied to the contemporary situation better than those which the writer was able to find in the recesses of his memory or those which Jesus could have said. This is what is meant in John 16:13, to which reference was made above. Such words in John's Gospel, and particularly such words as John had not heard from the mouth of the historical Jesus, were the Word heard by the Spirit from the exalted Lord.

Although the words and deeds of Jesus in John's Gospel quite evidently differ in many ways from those contained in the Synoptic Gospels, the second-century Church received them as inspired by the same Spirit, a message of the same Lord to his Church, an indispensable part of "all the truth".

2.2.1.5 Eschatology

The oldest book of the New Testament pitifully describes a Christian missionary sermon as eschatological proclamation, 1 Thess. 1:10, which the apostle then supplements with his teaching, 4:13-5:10. John's Gospel, written half a century later, contains different teaching. The main emphasis there is on judgment and eternal life, which becomes reality in this life, when one meets Jesus in the preached Word. It does not mean that one has ceased to await the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the future judgment, but the delay makes the writer emphasize what has happened and what constantly happens. John 21 was written and John's Gospel published in a situation where the last of Jesus' disciples had died and the parousia - to the disappointment of the "brethren" - had not yet taken place. 2 Pet. 3 shows that the imminent expectation contained in the letters of Paul created difficulties for the late apostolic Church. The development within the New Testament from imminent expectation to an eschatology with a different emphasis, and the removal of eschatology from a position dominating all preaching and teaching, seem to testify against the original apostolic teaching, but the Church has seen in it the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2.2.1.6 The Holy Trinity

So far we have spoken of how the Holy Spirit glorified the Son of God in the apostolic Church and helped to understand his words and deeds better. At the same time Christians have learned to know the Holy Spirit himself and his relationship to the Father and the Son.

The New Testament does not yet contain a special doctrine of the Trinity, but in various formulae the Father, Son and Spirit are mentioned side by side. Of these three deserve mention: the final blessing of 2 Cor. 13 ("The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"), the baptismal command of Matt. 28 ("in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit") and the confessional passage Eph. 4:4-6, where the words "one Spirit", "the Lord is one", "God is one, the Father of all" stand out. In addition, there are several passages where Father, Son and Spirit are mentioned. Rom. 8:26f., 34; John 14:26 and 16:5-15 are examples. Although the Church's doctrine of the Holy Trinity as such cannot be read from the New Testament, it is the New Testament texts which compelled the Church to consider the unity of God and the relationship of Father, Son and Spirit to each other. The Church has not yet found a comprehensive formula which it can use unanimously in its teaching.

2.2.1.7 The Formation of the Canon

The later Church saw the influence of the same Spirit in the origin of the collection of New Testament books. Thus one should not select parts; the whole contains "all the truth" necessary for us. In the formation of the canon the main principle was the historical and doctrinal apostolicity of the Scriptures: writings from the first and second generations were accorded a special position, because it was considered that the Holy Spirit had led the primitive Church to know "all the truth", so that even good literature from later times could be measured by the writings of the apostolic age (Greek *kanon* 'measuring rod'). The Spirit does not guide Christians of later times to find new truth in the same way, but he helps them to go deeper and to return to the truth learnt in the apostolic age. New prophetic revelations and necessary decisions made by church councils concerning new situations must be subjected to being inspected and checked by the Bible.

2.2.2 Not all development in doctrine is the work of the Holy Spirit

John 16:13 has thus been seen to be important, but it has also been a dangerous verse.

On the one hand, it gives justification to the theological work which the apostles and the other first Christians did in relating their experiences to the texts of the Old Testament, to what John the evangelist did in teaching his disciples and writing the Gospel of John, and to the efforts of theologians who have produced uniform church teaching based on the varied texts of the New Testament.

On the other hand, that text has been seen as justifying the revelations of false prophets, from Montanus (c. 157 A.D.) to Muhammed and up till our time. Probably John's disciples, who according to 2 John 9 wished to "go beyond" (proagon, in the Finnish translation "to bring ... more") the teaching of Christ, believed they were progressive Christians guided by the Spirit. In order to warn them the same John had to emphasize abiding (*menetn*) in the teaching received once for all and the exact preserving and following (*terein*) of doctrine. Nevertheless, this verse has been used to justify new doctrines of the later Church without biblical foundation.

2.2.3 How do we recognize true teaching?

In order for us to understand correctly the original meaning of John 16:13 it must be read in its context. Verse 14: "He will glorify me" is an important definition, because this sentence contains the inner criterion of all genuine teaching given by the Holy Spirit. "Glorify", *doxasei*, means giving glory or honour (*doxa* means both) to Jesus and through him to the Father.

In accepting the two-part canon of the Bible the Church claims that the Old Testament points to Christ and the New Testament proclaims Christ, and this it claims to the glory of Christ and thus to the glory of God. At the same time the Church agrees that every interpretation of the Bible which puts something else in place of Christ, i.e. reduces the glory of Christ, originates without the influence of the Spirit and opposes the work of the Spirit. Because the glory of Christ shone (particularly according to John's Gospel) on the cross, the inner relation of the canon of the Scriptures is defined on the basis of how its different parts fulfil this task of the Holy Spirit, illuminating the significance of the *deus vi* Christ upon the cross and demonstrating its importance.

John 16:14 is thus an essential definition of the previous verse. Such new teachers who claim to interpret apostolic doctrine but teach their own ideas are recognized in particular by the fact that their teaching obscures, even eclipses the glory of Christ and especially of the death of Christ and thus cannot be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Jesus glorified God, that is, in everything he brought into prominence the glory of the Father, while the Spirit glorifies Jesus through the apostolic Word. This continuum is the true distinctive mark of the Spirit. This verse is really sufficient to refute erroneous interpretations of the previous verse. Such new teachings originating outside the Church (Islam) or

within it (e.g. in church councils) as do not glorify but obscure the value of Christ and in particular of his death cannot be a legitimate development of apostolic doctrine, originating under the guidance of the Spirit of God. The confessions of our church, in particular those prepared by Melancthon, constantly appeal to this point in opposing the unbiblical teachings of the church of Rome.

CONFESSING THE APOSTOLIC FAITH TODAY

Vladimir Mustafin

1. Framing of the Topic

What is understood in Orthodox theology by the "apostolic faith" - or the "apostolic doctrine", which means the same - is the whole of Scripture and holy tradition as manifested in the early Church, i.e. in the age of the apostles themselves and the apostolic men. (The entirety concerned is also referred to as the "apostolic tradition", this expression then being used in its narrow sense.) Therefore the topic of this lecture actually aims at solving the following two problems: 1. Is it possible to speak of confessing the apostolic faith today? 2. If this is the case, how, then, is this confessing realized?

The question of the possibility of confessing the apostolic faith today should be understood in one sense only, namely how it has been possible to keep the apostolic faith pure up to the present time. There is nothing peculiar in understanding the question in this way; on the contrary, viewing it from this perspective is the most natural expression of the religious-Christian conception of the world. The history of all the great religions of the world, including the history of Christianity, proves that a religious world view is always the most conservative one - owing to the fact that it always and quite consciously seeks to keep its fundamental principles pure. Therefore, the striving of the Christians to confess the apostolic faith, the faith of the early Church, directly corresponds with the nature of religion in general, and especially with that of the Christian faith. Consequently, the problem does not lie in the question of whether this striving of Christians is justified or unjustified but in the question of whether this striving is possible to realize or not. This issue, however, no longer belongs to the field of the first but of the second of the questions formulated at the end of the first paragraph.

In the light of what is said above it becomes clear that the question of the way of confessing the apostolic faith, i.e. the way of preserving the doctrine of the early Church, is the most important question in the theory and practice of the Church's life. A common answer to this question is, however, quite simple and very well-known: the only way to preserve the apostolic faith is the "ecclesiastic tradition", that is, tradition in the broad sense of the word. From now on this lecture will be dedicated to revealing the content of this concept as well as to presenting the doctrine of the "ecclesiastic tradition" in its most important aspects.

2. Relation between "Apostolic Tradition" and "Ecclesiastic Tradition"

Above all, the relation between the "ecclesiastic tradition" and the "apostolic tradition", which are together referred to as the "holy tradition", must be clarified. What is understood by the "apostolic tradition" is the divine truth which was not written down by the men inspired by God themselves (i.e. the apostles) but transmitted by them to the Church by word of mouth, and which has ever since been preserved in the Church in uninterrupted continuity. The necessity to recognize the "apostolic tradition" as equal with the Scriptures as a source of the doctrine of the Christian faith is usually grounded on the following arguments:

1. The history of the early Church proves that it was in two ways that the truth of the Christian faith was spread in those days: by word of mouth for the most part, and only for a small part in writing. Besides, written texts only served as a brief reminder of the truth received by oral teaching. It was not immediately, either, that these texts became known in the whole Church; as late as in the second half of the second century there were still, according to the testimony of St Irenaeus, whole nations which had converted to Christianity but which themselves had no written apostolic texts and were taught solely through the apostolic tradition.

2. There are direct and clear statements in the Bible itself which allow us to recognize the apostolic tradition as an unquestionable source of the doctrine of the Christian faith: "So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter." (2 Thess. 2:15) "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you." (1 Cor. 11:2) "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge." (1 Tim. 6:20) "Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me" (2 Tim 1:13), "and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well." (2 Tim. 2:2)

3. The holy fathers and teachers of the Church, and in general the prominent Christian thinkers of the first Christian centuries, have unanimously and in uninterrupted continuity testified that the apostolic tradition should be accepted as a fully valid source of the doctrine of the Christian faith. According to the testimony of Eusebius the historian, St Ignatius in the first century exhorted the faithful to beware of the opinions of heretical teachers, and he recommended that the faithful, so as to be able to do that, "hold firmly to the apostolic tradition". In the second century St Irenaeus wrote: "All who want to know the truth must in every church turn to the

apostolic tradition, which is known throughout the world." In the third century Origen directly referred to the apostolic and ecclesiastic tradition as a criterion for the truth of the doctrine: "Let the ecclesiastic tradition be preserved - that tradition which through succession has been received from the apostles and which also until this very day is there in the churches; only such truth is to be believed which in no point deviates from the ecclesiastic and apostolic tradition." In the same century St Cyprian testified: "It is easy for pious and simple souls to avoid deception and find the truth, for once we turn to the divine tradition, deception vanishes." In the fourth century the faithful were told by St Epiphanius to "also hold to tradition, for it is impossible to find everything solely in the Scriptures; the holy apostles left some things in Scripture and other things in tradition." St Basil the Great writes: "Some of the dogmas and homilies preserved in the Church we have received from the teaching that exists in writing, others we have acquired from the apostolic tradition ... and both are of the same relevance for spiritual life... If we start despising unwritten traditions, as if they did not have sufficient authority, then we inadvertently twist the Gospel in the most essential." St John Chrysostom writes: "...[the apostles] did not hand down everything in writing but also much that is unwritten. Both of these, however, are similarly worthy of faith. Therefore we regard also tradition as worthy of faith: if there is tradition, then seek nothing more."

4. The decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, which have revealed heresies and confirmed the dogmas of the true and orthodox faith, were grounded not only on the arguments based on the Scriptures but also on those based on the apostolic tradition. This was the case in the Councils of Nicaea in 325, Constantinople in 381, Ephesus in 431, Chalcedon in 451 and Nicaea II in 787. The fathers of the latter expressed their conviction of the necessity of the apostolic and at the same time the ecclesiastic tradition by means of the following formula: "We preserve all the ecclesiastic traditions given to us written or unwritten."

In those words of Origen and the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, it is easy to notice a very important idea: the strengthening of the close inter-relation between the apostolic tradition and the ecclesiastic tradition. Indeed, in practice (but not in theory!), both these forms of tradition represent almost the same thing, namely they complement and explicate the doctrine of the Christian faith. The difference between them lies in the following: if the apostolic tradition complements and explicates the Scriptures, then the ecclesiastic tradition complements and explicates the whole apostolic doctrine, that is, both the Scriptures and the apostolic tradition. The theoretical (= dogmatic) difference between the apostolic and the ecclesiastic tradition is, nevertheless, a very essential one: besides the Scriptures, the apostolic tradition is a fully valid

source of the divine revelation, that is, it has God's will as its source - whereas the ecclesiastic tradition, to be exact, is not a source of divine revelation and does not have God's will as its source. The latter is the Church's way to interpret and keep pure the divine revelation, and its source is the Church's will. Thus the ecclesiastic tradition is not a source of the apostolic doctrine but it is guidance on to how to realize the apostolic doctrine. The whole practice of the Church's life is based on this guidance and cannot be realized separate from it; such a condition would lead to serious distortions in the understanding of the apostolic doctrine itself.

3. Historical Evidence of Ecclesiastic Tradition

Where, then, is this ecclesiastic tradition to be found? Owing to its close dependence on the apostolic tradition, ecclesiastic tradition can usually be found in the same written documents which include apostolic tradition as well:

1. ancient symbols (creeds), which undoubtedly date from the time of the apostles themselves and have existed from that time onwards in all ecclesiastic communities ever since their foundation
2. Apostolic Constitutions
3. decisions of the Ecumenical Councils and those of local councils
4. ancient liturgies
5. ancient documents dealing with Christian martyrs, such as St Ignatius of Antioch and St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna
6. ancient ecclesiastical histories, especially that of Eusebius of Caesarea
7. works of all ancient fathers and teachers of the Church
8. service books of the early Church, in which data have been preserved on regulations concerning practices of fasting, holy days and feast days, construction of sanctuaries and orders of holy ceremonies and services.

It is obvious that not all the texts included in these documents are expressions of ecclesiastic or apostolic tradition. So in order to find the specifically ecclesiastic tradition in those texts, one must first find the apostolic tradition and separate it from the rest of the text material. Everything that is left in the texts after that and, in addition to this, is in some relation to the doctrine of the Christian faith, is ecclesiastic tradition.

There are two groups of distinctive features which help to define the apostolic tradition. The first group is composed of the following so-called internal distinctive features: 1. there must not be internal contradictions within the apostolic tradition; 2. apostolic tradition must be in accordance with the Scriptures, that is, it must correspond with the Bible. The second group consists of the following so-called external distinctive features: 1. only what can be traced back to the age of the apostles and was used from the very beginning

(i.e. the first and second century) in Christian communities established by the apostles themselves can be recognized as apostolic tradition. There is a clear testimony given by Tertullian to this distinctive feature: "Only such tradition is to be recognized as apostolic which has been preserved until this very time in the churches established by them [the apostles]." It was easy, however, for Tertullian or St Irenaeus - in whose writings statements analogous to this can be found - to operate with criteria of this kind, because they lived in an era close to the age of the apostles. Nowadays it is naturally impossible to verify apostolic tradition using any method of this kind. Owing to this, a weaker criterion has to be accepted today: 2. what all - or, alternatively, many - teachers of the Church have presented as apostolic tradition in the third, fourth and fifth centuries, can be recognized as such, because these fathers have based their statements on testimonies of the teachers of the earlier times - and thus, as St Augustine points out, they have only expressed what they had received in the Church. 3. Finally, an unquestionable distinctive feature of the apostolic tradition is its being something that the Church has always held to but that cannot be found in the Scriptures. As St Augustine expresses it: "What the whole Church has preserved, and what has always been preserved in her without any decree of any council, that we justifiably respect as received from the apostles."

Therefore, when we relate both these groups of distinctive features to the historical documents listed above, we can recognize the apostolic tradition included in them. And having separated this apostolic tradition from these texts, we can also find the ecclesiastic tradition in the rest of the material.

However, the most important information source for the facts of the ecclesiastic tradition are the manifold presentations of the doctrine of faith, i.e. the creedal texts of the Orthodox Church. These presentations of faith divide into two groups: 1. those which originate from the early Church and thus are of absolute value; 2. those which originate from later centuries and are of value because of their being in agreement with those presentations of faith which belong to the first group.

The following presentations of faith constitute the first group of the creedal texts of the Orthodox Church: a) the creeds of the First and Second Ecumenical Council, the dogma of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, the dogma of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of the two wills in Jesus Christ, the dogma of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of the veneration of the icons; b) such definitions of faith which have not been explicitly confirmed in the Ecumenical Councils but which the whole ecclesiastical Church has, in fact, accepted: the profession of faith of St Gregory Thaumaturgus and the creed of St Athanasius of Alexandria.

To the second group of the creedal texts of the Orthodox Church belong, above all, such presentations of faith which are of pan-Orthodox relevance. The most important of these are the following two: 1. "The Orthodox Creed of the Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church", which was formulated in the middle

of the 17th century to confuse certain opinions of Western Christians, namely Lutherans, Calvinists and particularly Roman Catholic and Unitates. 2. "The Presentation of the Orthodox Faith of the Eastern Church", which was produced in the Council of Jerusalem in 1672 and especially took into consideration those Calvinistic views which differ from the Orthodox faith. In 1938 this presentation of faith was translated into Russian under the title "The Letter of the Eastern Patriarchs on the Orthodox faith". Also those Orthodox presentations of faith which have been compiled in the Russian Orthodox Church are to be classified in this group. Their aim has been to guide every Orthodox Christian in faith and spiritual life. Owing to this, they have been written in the form of a catechism. The most famous of these catechisms is the "Great Catechism of Christian Faith" (also known as the "Catechism of Metropolitan Philaret"), which has been reprinted dozens of times in the 19th and 20th century. In addition to these, there are also some polemic writings, which have been published in the 18th and 19th centuries by order of the highest hierarchy of the Church in order to confuse opinions of those belonging to other denominations, particularly Roman Catholics and heirs to the Reformation.

4. "Ecclesiastic Tradition" and "Ecclesiastic Convention"

Finally, a warning must be given of the quite possible confusion of the concepts "ecclesiastic tradition" and "ecclesiastic convention". Because ecclesiastic tradition has as its source the will of ecclesiastical authority, it is, as a matter of fact, ecclesiastic legislation. Ecclesiastic convention, on the other hand, does not have the will of any of the members of an ecclesiastic community (including those outside the hierarchy of the Church) as its source. Owing to this, ecclesiastic convention is not, in principle, part of ecclesiastic legislation.

CONFESSING APOSTOLIC FAITH TODAY

Juha Pihkala

Introduction

I have constructed this paper as a kind of garland: first I shall draw a brief sketch of how I understand what is right now called the "present day". Afterwards I shall give a brief analysis of the semantic field of "confessing" and "confession". Thirdly, I shall consider issues relating to the "apostolicity" of the faith and give some examples of how confessing the apostolic faith has been understood at different times. My method is both historical and hermeneutical. This is the most extensive section of my paper. Finally, I shall return to our own day and try to say something about confessing the apostolic faith at the present time. My focus here is hermeneutical. I shall thus try more to outline principles than to make very concrete statements relating to the content of the apostolic faith. The content is, of course, present all the time.

1. The Present Day

"A new world is approaching us, the old is disappearing."

These words could well come from a contemporary futurologist, who attempts to perceive and predict changes taking place at the present time. They were, however, spoken by Caspar Schwenkfeld in 1528. The uniform world of the Middle Ages had broken up, everything was in motion, both the economy and moral values. For perhaps the first time since the Hellenistic period, at least some people were captured by a kind of global awareness. Small wonder that it is from those years that the modern era is reckoned. It was a time of profound crisis. There was a kind of consciousness that we describe as modern. It is amidst change that man experiences most clearly the concept of 'the present day'.

Typical of our time is awareness of the entire world. Of course, the same kind of consciousness prevailed in Late Antiquity and at the beginning of the modern era, but never before had the world been as completely and immediately present in the consciousness of billions of people as it now. This has been brought about by the global diffusion of technological culture and the flood of information produced by information technology. Radio brings this information

even to the illiterate masses of the Third World. No frontiers can halt it. Futurologists predict that it is in the area of the transfer of information that technology will develop most rapidly. This will happen, although on the whole the development of the world economy is estimated to be clearly slowing down. At the same time as economic development slows down, the gulf between winners and losers grows ever wider.

The flood of information spilling from the electronic media and the tremendous growth in travel has rapidly increased multitudes of people's awareness of diverging ethnic, economic, cultural and religious contexts. Profound worldwide ecological awareness has also been awakened during the past two decades. Every day people see with their own eyes things which they have not wanted or been allowed to see before. In the modern global flood of information distortion or silence leave hardly any trace. The world has shown itself to be extremely multiform, and for many also extremely difficult to understand. On the one hand, it has engendered scepticism, relativism and ideological resignation, but has also led to a fierce identity struggle. Certainly at least part of the modern wave of nationalism and particularism and the revival of world religions is understandable as a reaction to a world which has become at once too large and too small. People and communities entrench themselves in their own contexts. On the other hand, many attempt to break away from their unendurable contexts and collide with new limitations.

Futurologists are largely unanimous in believing that on the whole religiosity is flourishing when people seek purpose for their lives, co-ordinates for understanding the world. Many are, however, of the opinion that this increasing religiosity is channelled in an individualistic direction. The bureaucratic world of institutions and people's variegated and individual worlds are in any case drifting apart. Alongside and beneath established institutions there are developing multiform, spontaneous, independent, democratic and anti-hierarchical organizations.

In this variegated world, which is both uniting and polarizing, divided Christendom seeks unity in order to be able to give a common apostolic witness and confess Christ, so that the world might believe.

2. Confessing and Confession

"One cannot confess¹ that Pythagoras' theorem is correct, that Napoleon lived, or that Caesar is dead. But one can confess that Jesus Christ 'died for me'. One can only confess what is not self-evident, not the everyday routine of this world which can be demonstrated as evident. Even when demanding a decision

¹ Italics the author's.

I cannot confess anything that I can prove with all kinds of scientific instruments but which is the kind of thing that does not affect or move me. I can only confess what can be disputed or denied, in other words, what must create conviction."

Thus Heinrich Fries defines the verb *ὁμολογέω* (Latin *confiteor*), which is the most important one for our theme. In New Testament language it means above all an act, an event, in which a person declares with all his or her being that *Jesus Christ* has *divine authority* in his or her life. It is therefore a verbal confession, whether it takes place in Christian circles or in the forums of the world. It is always - from the viewpoint of the individual - a personal confession, but at the same time - and primarily - it is the confession of the community, that is, the Church.

In some contexts *ὁμολογέω* means *confession of sin* and in some passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews *praise*. In these cases too it is of the essence that the entire existence of man is involved. When he utters his *ὁμολογία* he completely exposes himself. Such is confession of sin, such is praise. Thus the three New Testament meanings of *ὁμολογία* are ultimately inextricably intertwined. In confessing Christ one at the same time publicly utters what (together with other Christians) one believes about Christ, what one believes about oneself, and spontaneous praise resulting from these beliefs.

The verb *ὁμολογέω* occurs twenty-six times in the New Testament and the related noun *ὁμολογία* (Latin *confessio*) six times. The number is not very great, especially when the word is used several times in its ordinary secular semantic context (to promise, concede, admit guilt, agree with, agree on, make an agreement, declare publicly, declare bindingly, etc). However, the characteristic feature of these relatively rare occurrences becomes clearly visible in its own context⁷ and at the same time one can easily observe that in the New

Testament there are many other central statements which are *ὁμολογία* although that word may not be used. A good example of this is Peter's confession in Matthew chapter 16 (vv. 13-20).

12.42 ὁμοῦς μέντοι καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχόντων πολλοὶ ἐπίτευσαν εἰς αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦς Φαρισαίους οὐκ ὁμολογούν ὅτι αἰσυνάγωγοι γένωνται· 12.43 ἡγάγησαν γὰρ τὴν θόβαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων μάλλον ἢ τὴν θόβαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Rom. 10. 9 ὅτι ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῇ στήματι σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸν ἠγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ· 10.10 καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογείται εἰς σωτηρίαν.

1 Tim. 6.12 ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως, ἐπὶ λαβοῦ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, εἰς ἣν ἐλπίσῃς καὶ ὁμολογήσῃς τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀντιπαύσαντος.

Hebr. 13.15 διὸ αὐτοὶ οὐδὲν ἀναφέρωμεν θυσιάαν αἰτέμενος διὰ παντὸς τῆς θυσίᾳ, τοῦτ' ἔστιν καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ.

1. Joh. 2.22 Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός; οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ ἀντὶχριστός, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν. 2.23 πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει.

4.2 ἐν τοῦτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὁ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔστιν. 4.3 καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὁ μὴ ὁμολογῇ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν· καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντὶχριστοῦ, ὁ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῇ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη.

4.13 ὁς ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ Θεῷ.

2. Joh. 1.7 ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογούντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος.

1hm. 3.5 ὁ νικῶν οὕτως περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψῃ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ὁμολογήσῃ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ.

ὁμολογία· 2. Κορ. 9.13 διὰ τῆς δοκιμῆς τῆς διακονίας ταύτης δοξάζοντες τὸν Θεὸν ἐκ τῆς ὑποταγῆς τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ διὰ τῆς κοινωνίας εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰς πάντας, Hebr. 3.1 "Ὁδὲν, ἀδελφοὶ ἀγαπῶν, κατὰ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν μετοχοῦν, κατανοήσατε τὸν ἀδοκίμον καὶ ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν Ἰησοῦν. 4.14 ἔχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν διὰ τῆς ὁμολογίας τοῦς οὐρανοῦς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας, 10.23 κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκαλίμῃ, πιστοὶ γὰρ ὁ ἐπαγγελία δαίμωνος.

7
ὁμολογέω· Mt. 10.32 (par.) Πᾶς οὖν ὁστις ὁμολογήσῃ ἐν ἡμοῖς ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁμολογήσω κατὰ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· 10.33 ὁστις δ' ἀν ἀρνήσῃται με ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀρνήσομαι κατὰ αὐτὸν ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.
Joh. 1.20 καὶ ὁμολόγησεν καὶ οὐκ ἠνέκατο, καὶ ὁμολόγησεν ὅτι· Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ὁ Χριστός· 9.22 ταῦτα εἰπὼν οἱ γουεῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἀποβούτρο τοὺς Ἰουδαίους· ἦδη γὰρ συνετίθεντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ Χριστὸν, ἀποκυνάγῃνός γενηται.

Although confessing Christ is, according to the New Testament, above all a comprehensive event, the event has a content. When one made a commitment to Christ, one said who he was and what his significance was. If one can use of that personal and communal commitment and confession of divine authority the phrase which later became prevalent in the Western Church: *fides qua creditur* or "the faith by which one believes", one might use of the statements concerning the content and meaning of faith the phrase *fides quae creditur* or "the faith which is believed". In the earliest writings of the New Testament the emphasis seems to be on the former and in the later writings on the latter. It is evident, of course, that both belonged together from the very beginning.

However, the focus began to shift in the direction of wider statements on the content of faith because of the rise of *heterodoxy*, the problem of heresy. Christ too could be interpreted in many ways. Not all interpretations were consistent with the religious experience of early Christendom. The abundant flood of tradition, partly in inner tension, did not in itself guarantee the right way. This was perceived even before the New Testament, in the form we know it, was in existence. The Church itself had to show which lines of interpretation were correct and reject false trails. At the same time as tradition gradually became fixed in literary form and then in a collection of books, the Church's confessions or creeds developed too as a "literary genre". Their task was to point to the essential semantic contexts of Christian faith. Therefore they almost always *concentrate on the person and significance of Christ and on the view of God*.

The first creeds originated so early that they are now included in the New Testament. They are mostly the brief statements such as: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16), "Jesus is the Messiah" (Acts 18:28), "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:11). In the former two credal statements it is stated that Jesus of Nazareth, who suffered and died, is the Saviour or Messiah (*Χριστός*, *Christos*) promised in the Old Testament. The latter states similarly that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah (*Christi*), but with the addition that he is "Lord" (*Gr. Κύριος*), which in the Hellenistic world was a designation of God. In the New Testament there are also fixed hymn-like *creedal passages*, which present the essential features of the Church's faith in Christ (Rom. 1:3-4; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:3).

During the early church period (2nd-6th centuries) several dozen creeds arose in different quarters to guide interpretation of the Bible and church tradition.¹ They usually consisted of New Testament statements (slightly modified). Their structure was created to demonstrate the central points and main thread of the Christian model of interpretation. From the second century

onwards their basic structure is clearly (unreflectingly) trinitarian, but details of salvation history are listed in quite different ways, depending upon the context. In particular, there are clear differences in the emphases of the Western and Eastern creeds.

Most important is the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed* formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A. D. and supplemented at Constantinople in 381 A. D., which unites all those committed to orthodox Christendom (also all Lutherans). Somewhat later the so-called *Apostles' Creed* became fixed (its prototypes are known from the second century). When the Church thus entered the conciliar and ecumenical period (in the early Church sense), the earlier prevalent (legitimate) credal pluralism largely became part of history.

In its creeds the Church defined its presupposition or perspective from which the Bible was to be studied, so that the perspective should be Christian. The Bible was viewed through the co-ordinates drawn in the creeds. At the same time the Church has always been of the opinion that this presupposition arose and continues to arise from the heart of the religious experience of the primitive Church. The norm of "true Christian faith", in the view of the Church, is not imposed from without but is binding from within. Thus the Bible and the creed are intertwined and belong inseparably together.

One must, however, bear in mind that the New Testament creeds and early church creeds are not *explicitly* comprehensive. They do not state or list anywhere near all that is important to the Church and the Christian. They concentrate on Christ and God. They are thus - in the narrow sense of the word - *theological* (*θεολογικά*) confessions. *Implicitly*, however, they contain much more. What Christ is like and how he is to be understood opens up perspectives as to what is the relationship between God and the world and between God and man. They are of great significance in, say, soteriology (by contrast with e.g. Gnosticism).

3. The Problem of Apostolic Faith

3.1. The Law of Origin as a Formal Principle

The New Testament speaks a fair amount about apostles and their mission, about apostolic teaching and witness (Thuren's paper), but nowhere is the term "apostolicity" defined. Nor does it use the term "apostolic faith" nor draw up a precise theological summa. The expression "apostolic Church" was only added to the creed in the 4th century.

However, at the turn of the first and second Christian generations they were unanimous in considering that apostles personally and then also the apostolic age, in other word the generation of eyewitnesses, had a decisive position of authority as regards church doctrine and life. The first references to this appear

¹ They are collected in e.g. Denzinger-Schönmayer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, editio 35 emendata, Freiburg in Breisgau 1973, pp. 17-42 (paragraphs 1-76).

in the latest writings of the New Testament. In the writings of the Apostolic Fathers the matter is obvious.

From early Church times onwards apostolicity is an unshakable hermeneutical model comparable to dogma. In the Church the law of apostolic origin dominates. Apostolicity has become a decisive and irrevocable criterion of the true Church at every level and in every field. It was used to delineate the limits of the canon, to define the true ministry and to distinguish the pure, authentic, orthodox tradition from heterodoxy and heresy. It has been appealed to in creating church order. This law of origin has not since been disputed - at least when it is a matter of a **formal principle**. One must only remember that the principle of apostolicity has been used in very different ways at different times. It has served (inter alia) all-preserving conservatism (Vincent of Lérins) and radical reform (Luther). When one asks what is the **content** of apostolicity, the response has not been a unison recitative but a rather polyphonic counterpoint. This fact is still valid. The context has always been of extreme significance when one moves from the level of principle to the concrete level.

Both historical and exegetical research have shown indisputably that apostolicity has never appeared in the **abstract**. Although the Church and its faith has always been recognized as true and orthodox in as far as it represents apostolic continuity, it has always been recognized in a certain **actual, historical and cultural context**, and in addition in several parallel contexts simultaneously. In fact, the history of the early Church contains a profoundly tragic vein: each party considers that it represents the apostolic tradition at its purest. This tragedy has repeated itself over and over again through the centuries.

3.2. History Does not Know Monolithic Apostolicity

In the Church there prevails the universally accepted law of apostolic origin. But the situation of origin was a contextually disunified one. This is apparent in the canon of the New Testament. It contains an authoritative apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, but according to exegetical research this witness is not monolithic, but in places a rather tense unity in diversity. The Synoptic Gospels are not as synoptic, "seeing as one", as appears at first sight. It has been possible to analyze within them different situations and environments, in which the message has been interpreted and re-interpreted. The so-called "Johannine circle" (John's Gospel and Epistles) proclaim and describe Christ in concepts which differ considerably from those used by the Synoptic writers. Although in the Pauline circle (*Corpus Paulinum*) there are certain similarities with Johannine literature, its profile is rather individual. In the Epistle to the Hebrews and the catholic epistles there are novel emphases.

The always existent foundation of unity is, of course, what Jesus Christ was and what happened to him, but his person and act of salvation are described (somewhat simultaneously) in the Jewish context somewhat differently from in

the Hellenistic-Jewish one, and again somewhat differently from in the purely Hellenistic context. The chronological perspective must be taken into account. Paul wrote all his letters before any of the Gospels were written. John's Gospel comes from the 90s and some of the catholic epistles probably from the beginning of the second century. The time-span is therefore a long one, almost one hundred years. The situations of at least two Christian generations are recognizable in the texts.

The same can be said of the Church in the patristic period. The nucleus of faith is a common one, but the details are related to this nucleus with different emphases, depending upon the setting and time. Undoubtedly the Church in those early centuries was undivided in the sense that it confessed one faith, had a common ministry, a common baptism and a common eucharist, but otherwise the differences may be great. To a significant degree they created the cultural environment in which the Church lived (language, the philosophical schools which influenced the theology of the early Church, etc.). They were also influenced quite considerably by which part of the apostolic witness of the New Testament happened to be the area of theological emphasis. It was at least partly influenced by the cultural environment. In the West it was clearly the Pauline tradition that was most followed. In the East this was shunned as juridical, with a preference for the more "mystical" Johannine tradition. Each tradition is indisputably based on the apostolic origin but gained strength and became differentiated for contextual reasons. Nevertheless they lived for many centuries in eucharistic fellowship. Differentiation does not therefore necessarily lead to schism. Unity or the striving towards unity does not need to mean the elimination of contextual differences.

3.3. The Apostolicity of the Church - an Important Theological Concept

Everyone who knows the history of early Christianity - whether studied from the viewpoint of church history or of the history of dogma - has to admit that talk of the "period of the undivided Church" reflects backwards a projected ideal picture more than the actual state of affairs. The situation in the early centuries corresponds much more to the present ecumenical situation than to paradise lost. It is difficult to say whether the present differences between churches or internal differences within the churches due to different contexts are ultimately (theologically) greater than the differences then in the so-called undivided Church. The consensus of "undivided Christendom" - at least historically - has always been a constantly threatened unity in diversity.

The idea of a uniform and unanimous apostolic age has, however, been an extremely important **theological construction**, a kind of dogmatic projection. It was absolutely necessary in a situation where the Church had to preserve its identity in the crisis engendered by Gnosticism and other heresies. Undoubtedly it is needed as a similar directive today. At the same time, one must concede

that in the early Church period apostolicity had already - at least in part - a narrower interpretation than appears from the writings of the New Testament (Thurnen's paper). A good example of this is, say, the so-called *Traditio Apostolica*, i.e. the widely used church order of Hippolytus (c. 200 A.D.). In it apostolicity is very strongly linked to the tradition of true doctrine guaranteed and transmitted by monarchical episcopacy. The power and authorization of the Holy Spirit was first given to the apostles and now to bishops as their successors.⁴ The epilogue to the church order summarizes the basic idea of the whole work as follows: "*Hæc itaque si cum gratia et fide recta accipiuntur, præstat edificationem in ecclesia et vitam æternam credentibus. Custodiri hæc consilium do ab omnibus bene sapientibus. Si omnes enim sequantur traditiones apostolorum quas audierunt et servant eas, nullus hereticorum poterit seducere vos neque ullus hominum omnino. Hoc modo enim creverunt hæreses multas, quia præsertim noluerunt discere sententiam apostolorum, sed secundum libidinem suam fecerunt quæ voluerunt, non quæ decerent. Si prætervenerint aliquam rem, dilecti nobis, hæc revelabit deus eis qui digni sunt, cum dirigat ecclesiam quæ digna est applicare ad portum quietis.*"⁵

Hippolytus' "apostolic" church order has had a profound influence upon the Church's later structures and practice. The historical reality is, however, that the church order of 200 A.D. is very different from, say, Paul's church order. The ordained ministry and order of divine service developed and changed with time - also for contextual reasons. One may say that Hippolytus' church order is apostolic, but it is not apostolic because it is the same as the orders of the apostolic age. The differences are significant, partly theologically too. In the early period profound changes took place in the Church. Further changes have happened or been introduced later. They were rarely introduced for the sake of change, mostly they were necessary due to the demands of new situations and settings. Missionary factors were also present. Nevertheless, the Church has

⁴ "Wenn man dies alles mit Dankbarkeit und rechtem Glauben annimmt, bewirkt es den Aufbau der Kirche und das ewige Leben für die Glaubenden. Ich rate allen Einsichtigen eindringlich, dieses zu bewahren. Denn wenn alle die apostolische Überlieferung hören, sie befolgen und beachten, wird euch kein Häretiker noch irgendein anderer Mensch in die Irre führen können. Denn die vielen Häresen sind dadurch hochgekommen, dass die Vorsteher sich über die Lehren der Apostel nicht haben belehren lassen wollen, sondern nach eigenen Gefürchten gehandelt haben und nicht, wie es sich gezieme. Wenn wir etwas vergessen haben, Geliebte, so wird Gott es denen offenbaren, die würdig sind. Er leitet nämlich die Kirche, damit sie den Hafen seiner Ruhe erreicht." *Traditio Apostolica* (Apostolische Überlieferung, Fœdes Christiani Band 1, Zwölf Apostel-Lehre, Apostolische Überlieferung, Freiburg im Breisgau 1991, pp. 214-221.)

⁵ Ibid., p. 312-313.

been able and still is able to hold fast to the law of origin and confess its apostolicity. Criteria cannot be formal ones. They are above all ones of content.

3.4. *Nicæa as the Contextualization of Apostolic Faith*

The immediate context of the Nicæo-Constantinopolitan creed was the crisis engendered by Arianism. It was a question above all of the Christian view of God, which Arius, who had been profoundly influenced by Middle Platonism, shaped according to the philosophical model he represented. He could not accept the paradoxical view of God arising from the New Testament witness that God is both fully transcendent and fully immanent, unchanging and changeable, both Creator and Redeemer. According to his model, only the Father is God in the full sense of the word: only he is fully transcendent, without beginning or end, unchanging and one. The Son (and the Spirit) was a creation of the Father. He had a beginning and was "divine" only by grace (per gratiam). He was of a different substance from the Father and he did not know the Father other than as a creature.

The Nicene Creed (325 A.D.) is based on the framework of the eastern (Caesarean) baptismal confession. At the first ecumenical council necessary additions were made to it as demanded by the contemporary context, in order to solve the problem. The additions are italicized in the following text:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible,
and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
only-begotten of the Father,
that is, of the substance of the Father,
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made in heaven and upon earth,
who for us men and for our salvation
came down and was incarnate and was born as man,
he suffered and the third day rose again,
ascended into heaven,
and shall come to judge the living and the dead.
And in the Holy Spirit.

In this manner several statements which express the emphases of the Nicene solution have been added to the creed, which was originally kerygmatic and doxological in nature, that is, without visible theological reflection. The Father and the Son are of the same substance. The Son is not inferior to the Father nor a divine messenger separate from the Father, but together they represent the

simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the one God. Then both creation and redemption form a unity, the world is one.

At Constantinople (381 A.D.) the creed was extended and recast in the form which we know. To it were added from the Old Roman Creed (R) the expressions "of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary", "for our sake was crucified under Pontius Pilate", "suffered death and was buried", "shall come again in glory", "whose Kingdom shall have no end" and the final part based on R and slightly expanded:

"And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the Prophets. We believe one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And we await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

In the expansion there is expressed first of all (making the Nicene Creed more precise) the unity of substance of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son and then listing briefly the main points of ecclesiology and eschatology.

If we consider the context of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, its overall emphasis is precisely the unity of substance of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and the conclusions regarding salvation history to be drawn from it. It wishes to keep the view of God preached and taught in the Church both uniform and paradoxical. It wishes to stress the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the one God. By contrast, the creed is not, nor does it aim to be, an exhaustive summary of the entire "apostolic faith" or "apostolic witness". Nor does it in any way reduce the significance of the canon or nullify the legitimate pluralism to be seen in the apostolic witness.

The Nicene solution contains, however, a significant dimension from the standpoint of ecumenical method. The meeting at Nicaea took place in a situation where the unity of the Church was seriously threatened or had actually broken up. Nevertheless **all parties considered themselves to represent the apostolic tradition**. The problem was not overcome merely by repeating arguments from the Bible and tradition, since both parties used the same material but arrived at different conclusions. There was no "Archimedes' point" in the material itself which could be used to go beyond one's own context and lift interpretations to a common line. From convergence wavering in different directions they arrived at consensus only by adopting a term from outside the apostolic witness, one derived from philosophy (*ousia*, *homousios*). It is, however, important to note that it was used **against** the Middle Platonist philosophical view of God. It is not "Hellenization" of Christianity.

Apostolic faith is thus - as it unfolded in the first centuries of Christianity - above all trinitarian and christological faith. It has been confessed and interpreted in new ways in new contexts so as to remain faithful to the apostolic

origin. We have considered above the example of the decision taken by the council of Nicaea. A similar example is that of the council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. I shall not, however, deal with that here. In any case, it is clear that apostolic faith unfolded from the view of God. It is a question of God and his relation to the world. Everything else depends on that.

One may therefore rightly say that the decisions of the councils of the early Church and the theological study which preceded and followed them helped to produce **right contextualization** and prevent **wrong contextualization**. For example, syncretism and philosophical rationalism. Both threatened apostolic faith and witness. Therefore new creeds were needed in addition to old creeds.

3.5. Hermeneutical Criteria of Apostolicity

When apostolic faith is confessed and applied at a certain point in time, the basic question - and problem - is that justice must be done to both the apostolic origin and the present moment. Confession and application must thus be **authentic**, on the one hand, and **relevant**, on the other. It must happen in a real historical context. To be pointed and generalized, one might say that unless the authentic apostolic witness to faith meets the actual present, it cannot be normative. Nor can interpretations and solutions from later centuries, which were considered apostolic and relevant in their own day, be directly transferred as such to the present day. They must be shown to be in some way relevant now. This is such a sweeping statement that exceptions to this hermeneutical rule are undoubtedly to be found.

A second important hermeneutical point unfolds from the fact that the apostolic faith exists and is transmitted from person to person only in **historico-human** form. It is impossible to speak about it without the human "taste of the vessel" being recognizable in one way or another. This applies both to the beginning and to all that has happened since the beginning, both the apostolic witness in the Bible and the apostolic tradition of the Church. From this there also follows the fact to which reference has been made above: the apostolic faith has never been separate from the actual Church and its historical form at a given time. It is thus not possible, as it were, to disentangle from the faith of the churches **absolute apostolicity**, which the churches could use as a basis for assessing the relative apostolicity of their own church or of other churches and Christian communities. In the situation of divided Christendom this means that one cannot say beforehand precisely what is the level of consensus sufficient to restore severed eucharistic fellowship.⁶ It will become clear and be

⁶ Article VII of the Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church speaks of consensus as follows: "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." So far one cannot say definitively how broad unanimity has to be.

defined concretely only in humble, open and thoroughly honest ecumenical discussion led by the Holy Spirit, in prayerful and worshipful dialogue. It is a process of growth, which cannot be artificially sped up but which must not be slowed down either.

A third hermeneutical point is closely linked to the previous one. Since Christian faith or apostolic faith is based on a actual and unique **historical** chain of events - life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - in which **God** has established a new saving relationship with man and the world, its fundamental truth cannot be proved rationally, only **confessed**. Apostolic faith is also, of course, expressed in the form of apostolic doctrine and given into the keeping of the Church and Christendom. As such it has developed through the ages, and new dimensions have been found when it has met with new contexts. Doctrine can also be studied rationally in the Church. Similarly, it can be studied in inter-church discussions and discoveries can be made together which promote unity. It can also be discussed outside the Church and Christendom. However, the Church which depends upon apostolic origin itself lives in ever-renewed **homologia**, which only the Holy Spirit can bring about. For the same reason divided Christendom will ultimately be united only in **homologia** engendered by the Holy Spirit.

A fourth point follows the above. The apostolic Church (or community) and apostolic faith are to be found only where Christ is preached faithful to the Bible and the creeds of the early Church. In other words, the apostolic Church and faith are where Christ himself is present. His living influence is the ultimate criterion of apostolicity. For this reason one may well agree with the description of the BEM document in paragraph 34 of the section on ministry:

"In the Creed, the Church confesses itself to be apostolic. The Church lives in continuity with the apostles and their proclamation. The same Lord who sent the apostles continues to be present in the Church. The Spirit keeps the Church in the apostolic tradition until the fulfilment of history in the Kingdom of God. Apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and the needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each."

4. Apostolicity and Modern Contexts

Thus we return to the present day. During the entire history of Christianity the question of **continuity and renewal** has been a burning one - especially in times of crisis. It has been a very serious question, an existential question, and it has sometimes led to very painful splits. Perhaps not all of these would have

happened, if there had been more patience and love. Modern theological research and ecumenical discussion have shown that at least some of the post-Chalcedon differences are due to an inability fully to understand the intentions lying behind deficient words. I cannot yet say whether this tragedy also concerns the great schism between the churches of the East and West. Nor can I say with certainty whether the schism of the Reformation would have been avoidable if there had been more love and patience.

It is not only, of course, a question of how the law of apostolic origin remains in force in **successive** contexts, in the flow of time and ideas and economic development. It has always been a question of how it remains in force, when apostolic faith, witness and confession are brought **simultaneously** to people in very different contexts. Every church or denomination or church family in already divided Christendom has long since needed to face this question in its missionary task. In crossing cultural barriers it has had to apply the law of apostolic origin. It has had to take new decisions and seek new practices with the aim of helping to bring about a genuine confrontation with apostolic faith, witness and confession in those particular different circumstances. This is contextualization and acculturation of the apostolic faith.

In fact, theology is always and everywhere contextual, but differences in circumstances that diverge relatively little are not very visible. Dependence upon the environment is already apparent in the New Testament, which is a document of both Christ's act of salvation and its interpretation in different contexts. As it spread everywhere in the world, one and the same message took on different forms of expression and different conceptual vehicles in different circumstances. The message had to and still has to meet people in the culture and concrete reality in which they were born and grew up. Otherwise it is not relevant. The fundamental thing is, however, that the basic unity of the message remain amidst diversity of cultures and situations. Throughout the ages this apostolic continuity has been the criterion of orthodoxy and heresy.

Christian mission has thus always met with this demand, but it has not always understood it sufficiently well. Sometimes acculturation has not happened at all and sometimes it has gone too far. In both cases what is preached as the Christian message is not relevant. In the former case it is because it does not meet people's living situations and perceptions. In the latter case contextualization of faith, witness and confession has indeed maintained contact with the apostolic origin in the young church which is born as a result of the sending church's mission, but many in the sending church are not able to see it anymore - at least immediately - due to too great **cultural differences**.

The present-day world resembles the world of Late Antiquity and early Christendom in that we and the whole of mankind live conscious of many **parallel** contexts. Although on the surface mankind has now adopted a technological way of thinking and acting, on a deeper level there lives the influence of great cultural differences. It was also like this in the early centuries

of Christianity, when on the surface Greco-Roman civilization covered everything, but on a deeper level people had to grapple with existential distress produced by the relativism and scepticism caused by the multi-religious and multi-cultural situation. Apostolic faith, witness and confession could not then meet this distress abstractly. The Acts of the Apostles illustrates how in new contexts great changes had to be made for pastoral reasons, so that Christ could meet the distress of real people (Jewish Christianity - Gentile Christianity).

Now as then, apostolic faith (in *fides quae form*) and witness lead to *homologia* only when they find a real person in his or her deep-level existential distress. Then he or she can confess that Jesus Christ has divine authority in his or her life. When this happens, the present and the apostolic origin are united.

Some Conclusions

Many conclusions concerning ecumenical work can be drawn from all the above. Firstly, that not all division is the result of sin. Much of the development which has led to tragic differences has been the result of loyalty to the apostolic origin. There has been a desire to take the authentic Christ to real people across cultural barriers. The history of the apostolic age and early Church shows that not even great contextual differences necessarily sever eucharistic fellowship.

Because eucharistic fellowship has, however, been severed, the churches must work to restore it. The motive is very clear: John 17:21 "so that the world should believe." Help can be found by studying together at a deeper level the decisions reached by the early Church and by intensively seeking analogies with the present-day situation. It is then a question of ecumenical hermeneutics and methodology.

The model of early Christendom shows that in preserving its orthodoxy - and even in order to preserve its orthodoxy - the Church took for contextual and pastoral reasons decisions that do not formally correspond to the situation of the apostolic origin. This applies both to church order and to formulation of the content of its doctrine. Similar decisions have had to be taken by every denomination during the period of divided Christendom. For a church living in a different context they might be difficult to accept. It is essential to deal with such difficult points on a profound level - praying and requesting the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It may be that some of them are ultimately solved only on the level of *homologia*.

At the same time efforts must be continued to find increasing agreement on the content of apostolic faith. The programme of the Faith and Order commission "Towards the Common Confession of the Apostolic Faith Today" is in this respect extremely useful and necessary. It is also important that it is the Nicene Creed that has been taken as a kind of lens through which the biblical material is reflected to the present day. The programme is designed to

take seriously the context of the Bible, the context of the Nicene Creed and the modern context.⁷

⁷ Admittedly, some passages in the document 'Confessing One Faith' bother one, because certain present-day ethical questions and challenges are, as it were, squeezed into the framework of the Nicene Creed. They are indeed extremely important from the standpoint of the preaching and pastoral responsibility of present-day churches, but they are not directly related to the Nicene context and the problems addressed in it.

MANIFESTATION OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Constantine E. Skurat

1. "As we said before, so say I now again. If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1.9). In these words by St. Paul a formidable and extremely important admonition is heard. Its meaning is this: may those who preach the teaching in a way different from that proclaimed by St. Apostles, who change or distort it, be excluded from the community of believers in Christ the Saviour and be denied the Church's recognition as her sons. And when the question is posed about the manifestation of the apostolic faith in the life of the Church, then, naturally, different answers may be offered: one answer is witness to its full and infallible embodiment, while the other is indication to its partial and defective assimilation. The first is true, rightful and orthodox, while the second is a deviation from and distortion of the right faith, a heresy. It follows from this: for an Orthodox Christian the criterion of discerning the authenticity of a church lies in comparison (prescribed in old church literature) between the apostolic faith, the apostolic confession, and the confession which has shaped historically, throughout ages in the life of the Church; in short, the established fact of manifestation of the apostolic faith in the life of the Church.

What was it in fact that St. Apostles taught and what is it that the Orthodox Church has assimilated from their teaching? The answer is one word: everything. It is an Orthodox or Rightly-Believing Church precisely because it "continuously and invariably preserves both the teaching of the Apostles and continuity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit through holy ordination" (Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow. Catechism, Moscow 1894, p. 49).

2. The basic feature of the apostolic witness is Christ Crucified and Resurrected. "We preach Christ crucified... the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 2.3-24). "...the preaching of the cross... unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1.18). "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6.14). "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved... that Christ died for our sins... and rose again the third day" (1 Cor. 15.1-24). "But now Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15.20) (cf. Acts 2.23-24; 36.5; 4.10; 1 Pet. 3.1; 1 Th. 1.7; Heb. 2.14-15...). These brief apostolic words express the most important truth of the apostolic faith - the triumph over

eternal death. St. Apostles see in it a sign and foundation of coming resurrection, revival and renewal of the world. They put the fact of the resurrection of our Saviour in intimate relation to the destiny of the whole world. Without the resurrection of Christ the hope and expectation of humanity for its future destiny and the fate of the whole world will have no real foundation. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also in vain... and we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. 15.14,19). Thus, the holy Orthodox Church has accepted this truth in the apostolic way. In all its symbols stemming from the earlier 'good faith' (1 Tim. 6.12) or 'answer' (voprosheenie in Slavonic) (1 Pet. 3.21), 'the form of sound words' (2 Tim. 1.13) which represent vivid monuments of major events proceeding the life of Orthodox Christians, the faith in Christ Crucified and Resurrected is persistently confessed.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ... crucified and buried, raised from the dead on the third day", reads the creed of the Church of Jerusalem - the mother of all churches (survived in the inscriptions over 'Catechistic' statement by St. Cyril of Jerusalem). Or in the creed of the Church of Caesarea in Palestine: "... who suffered and was risen on the third day". It should be noted that the later creed was submitted in writing by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine ('the articulation of faith that we had submitted was read' - words by Bishop Eusebius) to the fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. The continued apostolic meaning of this creed is evident from the statement made by Bishop Eusebius in the preface to the 'articulation of faith' of his Church and in its conclusion. "We", begins Bishop Eusebius, "maintain and confess the faith as we received it from the bishops who were before us, and as taught by Holy Scriptures", and concludes, "In this teaching we are asserted unshakably, we think thus and thought thus before, and will not renounce Him up to death, putting anathema upon every ungodly heresy" (Acts of the Ecumenical Councils, v.1, Kazan 1887, p. 80). It should not be forgotten that Caesarea in those years was still metropolitanate of all Palestine, and its creed, therefore, could be spread throughout the East. But even if it did not happen, the situation is no different, for the same ideas are present in the confessions of faith in other Eastern churches, such as Church of Alexandria (cf. 'The Letter of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, to Alexander, Bishop of Constantinople'). The Acts of Ecumenical Councils, op. cit., pp. 19-28), the Church of Antioch (survived in the writings of St. John Cassian, d. 435), the Church of Cyprus (survived in the works of St. Epiphanius of Cyprus 'The Anchor Word'. See his Works, p. 6, Par. 119,94 etc.). The creed of the Church of Cyprus deserves a special mention, for it is similar, not only to spirit but also in letter, to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed which has become the universal confession of faith.

Important are also later doctrinal documents of the Church expressing the same apostolic faith, such as 1) 'The Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church', compiled in the 40s of the 17th century by

Metropolitan Peter Moshila of Kiev and subsequently approved by all the four Eastern Patriarchs (in 1685 it was authorized by the Patriarch Ioakim of the Russian Church, in 1696 by Patriarch Adrian and later the Holy Synod of Russia); 2) 'An Articulation of the Orthodox Faith of the Eastern Church', written by Patriarch Dositeus of Jerusalem to be adopted by the 1672 Council of Jerusalem as the confession of the Orthodox faith. (It was also adopted by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and in 1838 was published under the title 'The Letter of the Patriarchs of the Orthodox-Catholic Church Concerning the Orthodox Faith'); 3) 'An Extended Christian Catechism of the Orthodox-Catholic Eastern Church' by Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow (d. 1867), which was considered and adopted by the Holy Synod and commented as a text-book for theological schools, secular secondary schools and for all Orthodox Christians. It had over seventy editions and is used up to this day as a text-book in the theological seminaries of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Orthodox theology is also a 'theology of the cross' and 'theology of the resurrection'. The intimate relation between the feat on the cross and the triumph of the resurrection can be felt in all the internal life of the Orthodox Church and, above all, in its Easter service: "Through the Cross joy has come to the whole world", "trampling on death by death". This link was firmly attested to by St. Gregory the Theologian: "We have come to need God who was incarnate and died so that we may live" (Works, Part IV, Homily 45, Moscow 1899, p. 148).

Like St. Apostles, Orthodoxy sees in the Resurrection the justification of our existence the height and ultimate goal of our aspirations. Just as in early Christianity the pivot of sermon lied in joy at the victory of Eternal Life, so in Orthodoxy the most important holiday and feast of feasts is Pascha - the Day of the Radiant Resurrection of Christ. "Enjoy, every one, the feast of faith", St. John Chrysostom calls upon the faithful on this day, and cries out, "Where is your sting, Death? Where is your victory, Hell? Christ is risen, and you are cast down. Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life comes to reign. Christ is risen, and there is not a single dead in the grave: for Christ, having risen from the dead, has become the first among those risen from the dead".

3. The holy sacraments of Church are the revelation of eternity in the time of our life on earth.

There are seven holy sacraments: Baptism, Chrismation, Repentance, the Eucharist, the Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. "We have no more, no less than this number of sacraments in the Church. Any number of sacraments greater than seven is invented by unreasoned heretics. The sacraments, seven in number, are established on the Holy Scriptures" (The Letter of the Patriarchs, ch. 15). Indeed, all the sacraments of the Church represent a manifestation of the apostolic faith in its life, a continuation of the economy of our salvation.

In the sacrament of Baptism a human being is born spiritually for new and holy life. St. Apostles performed it according to the commandment of the Divine Teacher: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28.19). There was no doubt as to the necessity of this holy sacrament, for everybody knew and remembered the words of Christ our Saviour: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16.16). "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3.5).

Those who are born spiritually need gifts to enable them to grow in spiritual life. Such gifts are given in the sacrament of Chrismation. St. Apostles state this about its Divine institution and gracious gifts: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things... But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 Jn. 2.20,27). "He who establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1.21-22). It is evident from these words that 'unction from the Holy One', 'he who hath anointed us is God' and that the gifts given convey the knowledge ('ye know all things') and 'teach all things' - all these coming not from human considerations.

But a person can commit sins even after the Holy Chrismation. To renew him in moral life, to forgive his sins in the Church, the sacrament of Repentance has been offered since the apostolic times. St. Apostles performed this sacrament by the direct order of the Lord: "Whosoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 18.18). "Receive the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (Jn. 20.22-23).

In the sacrament of Holy Communion, "a believer partakes, in the form of bread and wine, of the very Body and Blood of Christ for life eternal" (Metropolitan Filaret, Catechism, Ch. 10). Nobody doubted the Divine institution of this holy sacrament just as nobody doubted the Divine institution of the sacrament of Baptism, because it was performed for the first time by the Lord himself who gave the communion to his disciples and at the same time commanded that it should be always performed (cf. Mt. 26.26-28; 1k. 22.19-20; 1 Cor. 11.23-25).

The Lord stated its necessity for salvation with the same clarity: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink of his blood, ye have no life in you" (Jn. 6.53). During the Divine Liturgy when the Holy Eucharist (Communion) is celebrated, the whole of the gospel story of the God-Man unfolds before the mental eye of the worshipper. The whole order of the Liturgy, according to Archbishop Nicholas Kavasilas (d. 1391), represents 'as if a body of history integral and steady from beginning to end' (An

Interpretation of the Divine Liturgy, Par.16, JMP 1971, No.3, p.49). In the Holy Gifts there is the Lord Jesus Christ himself truly, really and essentially, and through the partaking of them he offers himself to communicants. But this is not the whole use of the Holy Gifts in Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Church does not allow the celebration of the Eucharist for the express purpose of preparation of the Holy Gifts to be only venerated or adored, for it does not find any evidence of this tradition either in Holy Scriptures or the practice of the early Church.

In the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, a person is healed spiritually and bodily. It is performed in the Church in accordance with the action of St. Apostles who "anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (Mr. 6,13) and enjoined others to do the same: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jam. 5,14,15).

The sacrament of Marriage offers gifts for the sanctification of the marital union and creation of the home church. That this sacrament has also been divinely instituted follows from the words of St. Paul: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5,31-32). Thus, St. Paul describes Marriage as a great mystery and compares it to the union of Christ with the Church. It means that it was filled with special gracious gifts. In his letter to another church the same Apostle writes, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7,39). The words "in the Lord" lead us to the conclusion that in the apostolic times the Christian marriage was contracted in the name of God, that is, it was a matter of faith and was sanctified by the Church. The Holy Fathers of the Church do not doubt it.

All sacraments which, taken together, sanctify the whole life of man from birth to death are intimately related. The sacrament of Holy Orders stands in especially close, or to be more precise, intrinsic, relation to all other sacraments. In this sacrament the Holy Spirit entrusts those who are rightly elected through the laying on of the hands of bishops with celebrating sacraments and feeding the flock of Christ (Metropolitan Filaret, Catechism, Article 10). It takes its origin from our Lord Jesus Christ himself and from the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. That Holy Orders is really a sacrament is evident from the words that the Apostles addressed to those in a hierarchical rank, as well as from their actions during their missionary trips. Thus, in his letters to his disciple and bishop of the Church of Ephesus, Timothy, St. Paul twice reminded him of the fact that he had a special gift received in a special way, that is through the laying on of the hands of priests, through the laying on of the hands of the Apostle himself: "Neglect not the gift

that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Tim. 4,14). "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1,6). And in his letter to the Church of Corinth and in his conversation with presbyters in Ephesus St. Paul indicated what the 'gift' of priesthood consisted in - in the right to perform sacraments and to take spiritual care of the flock. Here are his words: "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4,1). "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20,28). And during their missionary trips to Asia Minor the holy Apostles Paul and Barnabas, establishing new churches, ordained presbyters "in every church" (Acts 14,23). In addition, St. Paul was concerned with spreading priesthood in the Church and demanded that worthy people be called to holy ministry. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee", he wrote to the overseer of the church of Crete (Tit. 1,5ff). This is what St. Paul enjoined upon another bishop: "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. 5,22). Thus the Holy Church accepted these apostolic instructions. Since the day of Apostles it has had priesthood as an obligatory organ of its Body, as uninterrupted stewards of the gift of Pentecost, as successors of Holy Apostles. "Christ was sent from God, and Apostles from Christ", testifies the contemporary of the Apostles and their disciple St. Clement of Rome (d.101), "as both were in order according to the will of God... Preaching in various countries and cities, they (the Apostles - C.S.) installed the first among believers as bishops and deacons... and is it surprising that those who were entrusted with the cause of God in Christ should install the above-mentioned ministers?... For this very reason they... added the law that when they die (bishops consecrated by the Apostles - C.S.), other tried men should assume their ministry" (cf. The First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapters 42,43 and 44). According to the resolute statement of the apostolic father, St. Ignatius the God-Bearer (d.107), without the legally ordained clergy "nothing can be done in the Church... It is inadmissible to baptize without a bishop, nor to celebrate the Supper of Love; and on the contrary, whatever he approves is pleasing to God as well, so that every action may be firm and indisputable" (Letter to the Smyrnians, Ch.8). Therefore, according to St. Irenaeus of Lyon (d.202), it is necessary to follow in the Church those who "have continuity from the Apostles and, together with the episcopal continuity, received by the Father's grace the certain gift of truth. But others, who evade the original continuity and assemble in various places should be held under suspicion or as heretics and false teachers, or schismatics, proud and self-complacent, or hypocrites who behave so for self-interest and ambition. All such have fallen away from the truth... All such should be avoided... The truth is to be learnt from those who maintain

church continuity from the Apostles" (Against Heresies, v.IV, ch.26, Par.2,4,5).

4. The Orthodox Church is unthinkable without veneration of the Mother of God, saints, relics, icons, and the cross. Orthodox theology and Orthodox piety bear the stamp of this veneration. It penetrates all the devotional life of the Orthodox believer. And this life of his gives manifestation to the same apostolic faith.

The magnificence of the Mother of God is affirmed on the very first pages of the Holy Gospel and belongs, accordingly, to the faith of the Evangelists. Archangel Gabriel, as St. Luke tells us, was sent from God to Virgin Mary in Nazareth in Galilee, and "came in unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women; for thou hast found favour with God" (Lk.1,26-30). It is true greatness to receive God's grace, to become blessed among women, to hear from the Heavenly Messenger, "the Lord is with you". And soon Virgin Mary proclaimed prophetically: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Lk.1,48). If that was said by the Most Holy Virgin herself and her words were recorded by the Evangelist, then those who call themselves Christians have no right to refuse to venerate her!

The Holy Evangelist Luke left another important testimony uniting in one whole the praise of the Holy Virgin Mary by the people and of her Divine Son: "...a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Lk.11,27-28). Interpreting these words of the gospel, Metropolitan Stefan Yavorsky of Ryazan (locum tenens of the Patriarch See of the Russian Orthodox Church and, later, President of the Sacred Synod, d.1722) says, "By this utterance Christ does not deny the praise that this woman gives to the Mother of God, but rather redoubles the praise of his Mother. For it should be taken into account here what it means to conceive and bear the word of God in flesh and, secondly, what it means to conceive and bear the word of God in thought. That woman praised the Mother of God for the former, when said: Blessed is the womb that bare you, and Christ himself commended her for the latter, when said: Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it. Both praises or, to put it better, beatitudes, truly belong to the Mother of God; for she conceived Christ by heart, rather than womb, by thought rather than flesh, by spirit rather than body, by word rather than womb, and she would have never conceived him of she had not done it by faith" (The Doctrine of the Veneration of the Mother of God and Most Holy Virgin Mary According to Stefan Yavorsky, Moscow 1887, pp.36-37).

The above testimonies can be complemented by other, not less important ones. Thus, as soon as the Most Holy Virgin was found "with child of the Holy Ghost" (Mt.1,18) and went "in those days" to the house of Zacharias in order to salute her relative, Elizabeth, the latter not only called her blessed among

women "in a loud voice", but also confessed her as the Mother of her Lord, which means the Mother of God. It is remarkable that the holy Evangelist noted: Elizabeth made that confession not of her own accord, but being "filled with the Holy Spirit", at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Lk.1,39-41). The same thoughts are read in the words of St. Paul: "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent his (Only-Begotten) Son, made of a woman" (Gal.4,4). "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim.3,16).

The devotional veneration of the Virgin Mary in the Orthodox Church was and is great. There is not a single Orthodox family without an icon of the Mother of God in its house. There is not a single Orthodox Christian whose life was not connected in this or that way to the memory of the Mother of God or prayerful petition to her. In the Orthodox divine service, her most holy and blessed name is always invoked. But calling upon her children to venerate the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the holy Orthodox Church at the same time instructs them that this veneration should not be like that befitting God, but the Most Holy One among the holy and that the honour given to her belongs to God himself. The veneration of the Mother of God in the Orthodox Church is combined with special warmth, with something dear, cherished and of our own. In praising the Mother of God, the Orthodox Church also glorifies saints - the friends of Christ the Saviour (Jn.11,15;14,15). In this glorification the apostolic faith is realized in the life of the Church.

In one of his letters, St. Paul, this teacher of the Church, teaches on the Church Heavenly and earthly, the Church Triumphant and militant, and testifies to their mutual relation: "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched... but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (Heb.12,18,22-24).

Another searcher - apostle, John the Theologian, exposes the essence of this relationship: the saints in heaven pray for those living on earth. In the revelation he saw an Angel, who was given "much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the Angel's hand" (Rev. 8,3-4). This revelation contains very important thoughts. They are: the saints lift up many prayers, "much incense"; the prayers are offered by all saints ("the prayers of all saints"); the prayers offered by them reach God as fragrant incense ("the smoke of the incense"). The same searcher saw twenty four elders falling down before the Angel, each having a harp and golden vial full of odours, "which are the prayers of saints" (Rev. 5,8).

The faith of the holy Church in the prayers of saints was expressed by the Forth Ecumenical Council made up of 630 fathers. Its eleventh session

recorded: "All the venerable bishops and clerics of Constantinople said: Eternal memory be to Flavianus.... Flavianus is alive after death. Let him, martyr, pray for us!" (Acts of the Ecumenical Councils, v.4, Kazan 1865, pp.264-265). Since the saints pray for us, being our helpers and intercessors, it is pious and fair to glorify and invoke them in our prayers.

But how can the invocation of saints be combined with these words of St. Paul: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim.2,5-6)? Does the intercession of saints not lead to a belittlement of the intercession, that is 'mediation', of the Saviour? We should pay attention here to the expression of the Apostle: "Who gave himself a ransom for all". Having said this about the intercession of Christ the Saviour, the Apostle shows that this intercession should be seen in deliverance, redemption. Christ is really one Mediator in the sacrificial feat, but not in human petitions and prayers. That this affirmation is right can be seen from the statement of the same Apostle when he asks those living on earth, whole Christian communities, to pray for him (See, Rom.15,30; Thes.5,25; Eph.6,18-19). This request would have been in vain, if the Apostle had not recognized any other intercession than that of Christ Crucified and Risen. But confessing the saving power of the intercessions of saints, the Church teaches to invoke them not as intercessors according to their own power of grace and heavenly glory (this belongs only to God), but as conciliators who are close to God.

The veneration of saint in the Orthodox Church is combined with the veneration of their relics, that is their holy remnants, clothes etc.

In the days of the ministry of our Lord and the holy Apostles, many sought, with faith and reverence, to touch the clothes of the Saviour and his disciples, because they received from this touching the beneficial power of healing. A woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years and wasted all her property on treatment, was healed by touching only once the cloak of the Son of God. Remarkable in this respect is this testimony of St. Matthew who described this fact: "She said within herself, if I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole" (9,20-22). This means that those who followed Christ were aware of the grace proceeding from actions of the Divine Teacher. The same thought is expressed in the words of other Evangelists, St. Mark: "And whosoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or countries, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole" (6,56). The third Evangelist and narrator of the apostolic deeds, St. Luke, tells us that not only St. Paul himself performed miracles and healing by the power of God, but the same did his garments when laid on the sick in his absence. "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 13,11-12). Moreover even the shadow of St. Peter wrought miracles, by the will of God. The sick on beds and couches

were brought to the street where the Apostle walked so that at least his shadow could touch them in passing (Acts 15,5). The gracious power was also given by the will of God to the relics of saints - the friends of God (Jn. 15,14), the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.6,19).

In all ages the Holy Church venerated holy relics. This veneration was expressed in their discovery, preservation, translation and the establishment of feasts to commemorate their discovery or translation, in the erection of churches over them, putting them in the foundation of sanctuaries (see 6th Ecumenical Council), in pilgrimages to them and ardent prayer to God before them.... Venerated were not only the relics of saints but also their various belongings.

The veneration of saints and their relics creates in the Orthodox Church what was described by St. John of Kronstadt (d.1908) as "an atmosphere as if of a spiritual family filled with profound love and peace. It cannot be separated from the love of Christ and his body - the Church" (St. Ioann Sergeyev. My Life in Christ. Diary. v.1, Supplement to The Russian Pilgrim, 1903, p.62 and 101).

The doctrine of the veneration of icons is based on the faith in the coming of Christ the Saviour in flesh. The icon of the Saviour is also a consequence of the incarnation of the Son of God and a vivid testimony to this event. The Lord, by his coming in flesh, has shown in deed that he can be represented in icons. He also pointed to the possibility of portraying saints: "He that receiveth you receiveth me" (Mt.10,40). Especially remarkable is the answer the Saviour gave to the Pharisees' question whether they should or should not pay taxes to Caesar. Having taken a coin, he asked: "Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them. Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt.22,2-21). By this answer the Lord, on the one hand, showed that honour given to an image belongs to him whose image it is, and, on the other hand, through the image of Caesar, he reminded the believer of his duty to render God what is God's. The coin reminded the Pharisees of Caesar, while an icon reminds the faithful of the Heavenly World. And just as it is proper for the portraits of worldly rulers to be in public places, so for icons to be in churches and Christian homes.

The Revelation of St. John the Theologian says that twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb who is actually the Saviour (Rev.5,8). If the Heavenly Church worships Christ as the Lamb, then the earthly Church too should have no obstacles for venerating the icons of the Lord and his servants.

Orthodoxy sees in an icon a place of the grace-giving presence of Heaven as if descending on earth. Icons attract the eye of Divine benevolence and the grace of God. A human being as a spiritual-bodied creature needs the Boundless Essence to be as if reduced in his boundlessness, to appear to him in limits accessible to him and influence him through sensual - visible and tangible - objects. Without being bound by certain limits, the human mind can spread

over eternity, and God himself can appear as some pantheistic idea. But the icon produces the sense of the presence of Personal God by whom we live, move and exist (Acts 17.28). It is permanent descent of the One Who once, at a certain time, became flesh for us and came to dwell in us, so that we could see his glory as 'the Only-Begotten of the Father' (Jn. 1.14; Eph. 4.10). On the other hand, the icon makes the human mind elevate, with more ardour and passion, from an image to its archetype and enter into communion with the Upper World. Thus, the icon enables man to enter into not abstract but rather concrete conversation with God and his friends (Jn. 15. 14). And this conversation brings very good fruits.

The veneration of icons has nothing to do with idolatry of which the Orthodox are accused in view of the second commandment of the Old Testament Law: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Ex. 20.4). But this commandment forbids to make images for the purpose of worshipping false gods; for the pagans they were: in heaven - sun, moon, stars; on earth - human beings, animals, various objects, in water - its inhabitants. But the image of Christ is not an idol depicting a non-existent god, but the image of true God, as Cherubims were in the Old Testament. The Prophet Moses, who was instructed not to create images, was also given the order to create Cherubims and to put them at the most sacred place. This is the first point. The second is that the commandment forbade to make images for the purpose of worshipping them; what is forbidden is worship in service (*latritia*) befitting One God alone. But an Orthodox Christian venerates icons not through worship service, but reverence befitting a shrine, and prays before an icon without worshipping it, but bringing to God himself his broken and humble heart.

The following should be said about the veneration of the cross. Before the passions of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, it was regarded as a disgraceful tool of execution. As a rule, grievous criminals who had committed many iniquities were crucified. That is why the Holy Scriptures refer to them as accursed of God (Deut. 21.23). But the Saviour was raised to the cross not for his sins and not involuntarily, but for our salvation and voluntarily. (See Gal. 3.13; Jn. 10.17-18). Thus the cross became the altar on which the great sacrifice was offered for all humankind. And if in Christ the Saviour's lifetime people sought to touch his cloak in the hope to be healed - and they were healed, if early Christians venerated aprons and handkerchiefs which belonged to St. Paul, then, similarly and even more, the cross should be venerated as an object which was not only touched by the body of the Lord, but also the object on which our deliverance was accomplished.

St. Paul boasts about the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6.14). It would be wrong to think that the Apostle boasted about the wooden cross as it was, without thinking about the One Who was crucified, as the wood has no grace-giving power in itself, but receives it through the passions of the Saviour.

For St. Paul the Cross of the Lord, therefore, is something to be venerated. That the New Testament writings refer to the Cross of the Lord as including not only the passions of Christ the Saviour but also the Cross itself, that is the wooden cross, is shown by the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian: "And there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene" (Jn. 19. 25). The Saviour himself, while speaking to his disciples about his second coming said that it would be preceded by a sign: "And then shall appear the signs of the Son of man in heaven" (Mt. 24.30). What is this sign? According to the explanation of the holy fathers of the Church, it is the Cross of the Lord (See, St. John Chrysostom. Works, v.7, St. Petersburg 1901, p.767; St. Petersburg 1896, p.455).

The meaning of the Cross in the life of an Orthodox Christian is shown by the words of St. John Chrysostom: "Everything that is necessary for us is accomplished through the cross. When we are born, the cross is offered to us; when we want to be nourished by the sacramental food, when we want to be ordained or to do any other thing, we face everywhere this sign of victory. That is why we draw it so thoroughly on our houses, walls, doors, as well as our foreheads and hearts. Cross is a sign of our salvation, universal freedom and the mercy of our Lord... So do not be ashamed of this great benefit, and Christ will not be ashamed of you, when he will come in his glory and when this sign will appear before him, shining brighter than the rays of the sun themselves" (Works, v.7, SP. 1901, pp.558-559).

5. The apostolic faith is expressed not only in the preaching of Christ Crucified and Risen, in witness to the saving power of the sacraments and the necessity of spiritual link between the Church earthly and Church triumphant, but also in our being co-crucified with the One Crucified, that is in feat.

On the day of Pentecost when the Church was graciously founded, St. Peter "lifted up his voice" and proclaimed the history of the economy of our salvation, and when those who heard him asked, "What shall we do?", the Apostle replied, "Repent" (Acts 2.1-38). By this appeal the Apostle showed that the beginning of our ascetic moral journey and the basic tone of our spiritual life should lie in repentance, with our being profoundly aware of our sinfulness and need to reform.

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, But Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2.19-20); "and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5.24), says St. Paul about himself and other Christians. However great and priceless the passions and resurrection of Christ the Saviour may be, they will be of no benefit to those who do not participate in his sufferings through crucifying their own sins and passions. His beneficial fruits will be used by only those who voluntarily participate in them through living not carelessly, "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8.1ff).

The Holy Church has embodied these apostolic instructions and testimonies in its life. As Bishop Feofan (Govorov) the Vyshevsky Recluse (d. 1894) teaches

us, "First of all, repent. Remember that nothing can be done in spiritual life without repentance. Whatever one may seek, the first thing to do would be to repent. Just as a house cannot be built without a foundation and just as one cannot either sow or plant in a field without first cleaning it, so nothing can be done in our spiritual searching, without repentance; whatever you do without it is in vain". (His Homilies for the Feasts of the Lord, the Mother of God and Festive Occasions, Moscow 1899, p.51).

"Out of the depth I cry to Thee, O Lord" (Stiche 8 on 'I call to Thee, Lord, Vespers): "Bring my soul out of prison" (Stiche 10 on 'I call to Thee, Lord, Vespers): "Open to me the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life" (Lenten Triodion, The Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, Martins) - these are extracts from church hymns. But repentance is not only penance for the sinful past, but also a real feat for acquiring the good. According to St. John Climacus (d.1649), "Repentance is a covenant with God concerning the reformation of life" (His 'Climacus', Homily 5, Par. 1). If there is no reformation, there is no good change in life, no true repentance.

The heart of the New Testament moral law is love of God. "This is the first and great commandment" (Mt.22.38). But it should always be combined with the love of the neighbour. According to St. John the Theologian, "And this commandment have we from him. That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 Jn.4.21).

Developing this idea, the Holy Church teaches: "Our salvation is in our neighbour." These words belong to St. Pimen the Great (d.c.450). Reflecting on their contents, Hegumen Nikon (Vorobyev), an ascetic of the Russian Orthodox Church of the new times (d.1963), writes: "It means that if a person has the right attitude to his neighbour, that is if he observes the sacred commandment to love his neighbour as himself, then, through it, he will certainly be able to fulfil all other commandments and the most important of them - the commandment to love God" (Hegumen Nikon, Letters to Spiritual Children, IMCA-Press, 1979, p.72).

And again, in accordance with the apostolic commandment: "Provide things honest in the sight of all men... live peaceably with all men... overcome evil with good" (Rom.12.17,18,21), the Holy Church taught and teaches to love all people, "regardless of their differences in faith, confession, nationality and origin, regardless of their social status, richness or poverty, their health condition, good or bad face" (St. John the Righteous, The Sun of the Truth, St. Petersburg 1902, p.122). Seeking this virtue, a Christian does not envy, nor judge, or lie, or rave, or offend others, but shares their misfortunes as his own, help them by counsel and deed, that is, renders his love simply, without any evasion, without any worldly penny, selfish calculations or ambitions, keeping in mind that God himself as Most Perfect Love is Very Simple Essence. There are many examples of such life in the history of the Church (see, the Lives of Saints and stories about the zealots of piety).

The Church sees one of the actions of love towards neighbours in cultivating in oneself 'the loving hearts', as St. Isaac the Syrian put it, - the heart filled with charity for all creatures and unable to remain indifferent or 'to hear or see any harm or even the least misfortune suffered by any creature' (St. Isaac the Syrian, Works, Homily 48). The call to such burning of the heart found a vivid expression in the admonitions of Staretz Zosima, Dostoyevsky's prototype of St. Tikhon Zadonsky (d.1782). The starets taught: "Brethren, do not be afraid of people's sins, love man also in his sin; for this is already a likeness of the love of God and is the highest love on earth. Love every God's creature, both the whole creation and every grain of sand. Love every small leaf, every God's ray, Love animals, love plants, love every thing. If you love every thing, you will comprehend the mystery of God in things. Once having comprehended it, you will begin to know more and more... and ultimately will come to love the world with complete and universal love" (F.V. Dostoyevsky, Collective Works, v.3, Moscow 1958, p.399).

Spiritual perfection is accomplished in humbleness. According to the apostolic teaching the grace of God necessary for salvation is received by precisely the humble: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (Jam.4.6; 1 Pet.5.5). Therefore St. Paul voices this call: "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate" (Rom.12.16).

We can see the same in the life of the Church. "What is self-perfection?" asks St. Isaac the Syrian, and replies: "The profundity of humility" (His Works, Homily 48). Then he describes a Christian who attained this stage in his spiritual growth: "A humble one would not dare even to pray to God... or ask anything... and does not know what to pray for, but only keeps silent about all his thoughts, expecting that mercy and that will which will be ordained to him by the person of everworshipped Magnificence... and if I may say so (perhaps, it is improper to say), the humble are not 'from this world' (Jn.8.23), because he is not appalled or changed even in sorrow, nor is he surprised or excited even in merriment. But all his merriment comes from true joy over what is pleasing to his Lord" (Op.cit.). A humble Christian behaves in this life in such a way as to make it a preparation for life eternal. With all his actions, he thinks about how they will be assessed in heaven, not on earth. He always imagines himself to be in the presence of God, angels, saints, remembering that the heavenly dwellers will one day become the judges of not only his deeds, but also words and thoughts.

As great spiritual doing, humility is necessary at all stages of spiritual life and inseparable from it. "All is right in its time", writes a great woman-starets of the turn of the century, Abbess Arsenia Sebyakova (1905), "but the best thing done in wrong time may cause harm. But there is one cause which is always timely the cause of humiliation of the spirit as the best of all" (Abbess Arsenia, Mother Superior of the Ust-Medveditsky Convent of the Don Troops Region, Moscow 1913, p.183). St. Abba Dorotheus (5th-6th cent.) clearly shows the indissoluble link between humility and other virtues. He writes,

"Perfect humility is born from the fulfilment of the commandments. When there are many fruits on a tree, they bend the branches down... There are such trees (for example, lemon trees), which do not bear fruit so long as their branches grow upward; but if you take a stone and hang it on a branch to bend it down, then it will bear fruit. Similarly, if the soul humbles itself, then it brings fruit, and the more fruits it brings, the more humble it becomes" (His 'Ascetic Admonitions').

The way in which this highest apostolic virtue is realized in practice in the life of the holy Orthodox Church is vividly shown by an incident in the ministry of one of the last Altai missionaries, Father Innokenty (Solochin), later Bishop of Kherson (d.1919). This story is told by Metropolitan Veniamin (Fedchenkov) who knew Bishop Innokenty very well. Metropolitan Veniamin spent the last days of his earthly existence in retirement at the Pskov Monastery of the Cave, where he died in 1961. Here is what he writes:

"Once the missionaries led by Father Innokenty pitched camp at the border of a small pagan village. They had no food. The father leader himself went with a sack to one of the villagers to ask him to sell him some flour or bread. But the villager refused him, saying he was poor, and directed him to the rich 'shaman' (local pagan priest). Father Innokenty went to him to ask some bread 'for Christ's sake'. The shaman was unfriendly, but pretended to be willing to give him some flour. They came in the barn. The shaman ordered to open a sack. And, having taken a handful of flour, said with a sneer, 'Take it for Christ's sake!'. The disciple of Christ was not confused. Having crossed himself ardently, he fell down before the shaman, saying, 'May Christ the Lord save you for your gift!'. The shaman was amazed at the monk's humility so much that he immediately asked him to teach him the Christian faith, and without much preaching, was baptized together with his village... Father Innokenty could have told you very many interesting, important and instructive things about his work, but he never did it. For the humble love silence".

(Metropolitan Veniamin. *The People of God*. Moscow 1991, p.63).
6. To bring the paper to a conclusion I will cite the words of Archbishop Innokenty (Borisov) of Kherson and Tavria, a famous preacher of the Russian Orthodox Church of the middle last century and also a man of God (d.1857), in the preface to his 'Monument of the Orthodox Faith' - collected confessions of the Orthodox Church of all ages beginning from early Christianity:

"The holy faith that we support and the holy Church that supports us are called apostolic not in vain. Every dogma of the faith originated not yesterday or the day before yesterday, but in the times of the Apostles. But there are 18 centuries lying between them and us. During this time innumerable number of events took place in the physical and spiritual world to change the face of the earth and human communities... Has this law of changeability spread also to the essence of our faith and Church? Do we believe and maintain what was taught and established by the Apostles? This question is very important for every true Christian. It can be answered in many ways, but the most faithful and

comfortable for all is the one based on the testimony of the past 18 centuries. For what is it from which our century has received the faith and the sacraments? - From the last one. And what about the last one? - From the previous one, and so back to the beginning of Christianity. Therefore, if any of the previous centuries of Christianity set forth before us its faith and show the model of its confession, and if these models are compared impartially, then it will turn out that every preceding century, as regards its faith, communicated to the subsequent one the same as it received from the previous one, and then all questions and doubts as to the faith will be removed and become invalid. This is the great and sacred purpose that this 'Monument of Faith' is called to serve. Its intention is to show the continuity and unchangeability of the teaching on faith in the Orthodox Church from the beginning of Christianity to this day and to present every member of the Church not with conclusions and reasoning which always lead to doubt, but rather models of the confession of every one of 18 centuries, so that he could see their perfect harmony with one another and the tradition of the apostolic times and perfectly satisfy himself with that fact that he, following the teaching of the Orthodox Church, follows not in human, but Divine steps" (Quoted in 'Collection of Symbols and Confessions of the Orthodox Church Compiled by N.Chetsov, St.Petersburg 1869, pp.4-5).

THESES

of the paper by C.E. Skurat on
MANIFESTATION OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

1. St. Paul anathematizes those who preach not the apostolic teaching. The criterion of determining the authenticity of a church lies in comparison between the apostolic faith and the confession which has been shaped historically to ascertain the manifestations of the apostolic faith in the life of the church.
2. The basic feature of the apostolic witness is Christ Crucified and Risen. The holy Orthodox Church assimilated this truth in the apostolic way. The same faith is confessed in all its symbols and confessions which represent conclusions from the preceding 'form of sound words' (2 Tim.1,13) and vivid monuments of major events which preceded the life of Orthodox Christians. Like the holy Apostles, Orthodoxy see in the Resurrection the justification of our existence and the ultimate goal of our aspirations.

3. The revelation of eternity in the time of our life on earth is expressed in the sacraments of our Church. They are seven: Baptism, Chrismation,

Repentance, Communion, the Anointing of the Sick, Marriage and Holy Orders. They are all manifestations of the apostolic faith and continuation of the economy of our salvation in the life of the Church.

4. The Orthodox Church is unthinkable without the veneration of the Mother of God, saints, icons, and the cross. A stamp of this veneration lies on the Orthodox theology and Orthodox piety. It penetrates the entire devotional life of an Orthodox believer. And in his life too the same apostolic faith is manifested.

5. The apostolic faith lies in co-crucifixion with the One Crucified, that is in feat. The Apostles believed the beginning of the ascetic-moral journey to lie in repentance (Acts 2,1-38); the first and foremost commandment - love (Mt. 22,38; 1 Jn. 4,21); the height of spiritual perfection - humbleness (Jam. 4,6; Rom. 12,16). The same we can see in the life of the Church.

6. The faith that we Orthodox maintain is apostolic, and life according to this faith is also apostolic.

APOSTOLIC FAITH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Simo Peura

1. Apostolic and Lutheran Faith

The basis of the theology of the Lutheran Church is the Bible, the normative interpretations of the Bible in the creeds of the early Church (the Nicene-Constantinopolitan, Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds) and in the confessions of the Lutheran Church. The most important of these are the Augsburg Confession (CA), which expresses commitment to the creeds of the early Church, and Luther's catechisms, the content of which the author believed to derive from the time of the early Church. These documents contain the apostolic faith which the Lutheran fathers in their day and the Lutheran Church today wish to confess.

The main content of this apostolic faith is the message of the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer and the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier. Faith in the trinitarian God includes the view of the unity of the substance of God and of the three persons, as expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and also confessed in the Lutheran confessions (CA 1). Apostolic faith also includes the message of Christ and of his divine and human natures, which are inseparably united in one person. This faith is expressed both in the creeds of the early Church and in the Lutheran confessions (CA 3).

In the Lutheran view, God himself engenders faith that accords with these confessions by his Word and sacraments, the administration of which God has entrusted to the Church (CA 5, 7). In his Word and sacraments God reveals himself. In them he also condescends to come within reach of man, gives himself and creates the Church, the communion of Christ and all believers (*communio sanctorum*). Apostolic faith thus involves not only knowledge of the substance of God and knowledge of Christ, but also participation in the object of faith in the Church, in connection with the Word and sacraments.

In the Apostles' Creed - as Luther says in his expository catechisms on the teaching of the early Church, the content of which is based on trinitarian and early Church theology - the essence (*Wesen*) of God, the will of God and all the works of God are described. In the third article of faith the trinitarian God reveals himself. Firstly, he reveals all the depths of his fatherly heart and his pure love. Secondly, Christ is the reflector of this fatherly heart. Thirdly, we can know Christ through the revelation transmitted by the Holy Spirit when he illuminates our understanding. Thus the Father has given and delivered to us

not only every created thing in heaven and on earth but also his Son and the Holy Spirit. He has done this in order to bind us to himself in faith through the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹

It is central to Lutheran theology that by faith the trinitarian God gives himself to man and thus makes him a participant in himself. The creed does not only tell what God is like in essence, but also says what God does and gives to us. Faith is basically a question of the trinitarian God giving himself to us entirely, everything that he has and all his power for our support and help. The essence of faith includes confidence that God is the giver. In the *Large Catechism* this character of faith and confession is expressed as follows: "The Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts."² The Holy Spirit takes further care that believers are sanctified and protected in union with Jesus Christ in the only true faith of all Christendom.³

In the Lutheran Church we think, in accordance with the apostolic view, that faith is born in a sacramental way. Sacramentality means firstly that in this world God engenders faith and saves man through the sacramental word and the sacraments, and secondly that the centre of this salvific activity of God is Christ, in whom God gives himself to believers. Christ is the Word, who was in the beginning with God and who is God (Jn. 1:1). Our faith and salvation became possible when this Word became flesh and dwelt among us. In the word of the Gospel - for the words of the Gospel and stories of Christ are sacramental words⁴ - and in the sacraments the Word comes among us today, so that we can say like John: "We have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." (Jn. 1:14). Our view is that the grace and truth in Christ do not remain, as it were, enclosed within Himself but we participate by faith in Christ and His characteristics: "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (Jn. 1:16). Our faith and salvation are thus dependent upon the presence of God and his fullness in our hearts.⁵

This Lutheran view is based on the apostolic faith whereby the trinitarian God is confessed, the centre being the Gospel, that is, the apostolic preaching about Christ. This Christ is the sacramental word: He is both the favour that

God shows towards us, wherein He forgives our sins, and a gift wherein God gives himself and comes in all his fullness to live in believers.

2. God gives himself in the sacramental word

The focus of apostolic faith is that the trinitarian God saves man by giving him himself through faith and by making him a participant in himself. This work of God takes place in the sacramental word and in the sacraments. The starting-point for everything is God's own being, the Word he has spoken in himself and its coming to the world in the incarnate Christ.

2.1. God's speech in Christ and in the Gospel

In a Christmas sermon (1514) Luther, who was the most important of the Lutheran reformers and who still holds a central position in the Lutheran tradition,⁶ explains the coming into the world and into the hearts of believers of the word spoken by God with the aid of the prologue to the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The process of the Word to the world begins within the Holy Trinity, when God speaks the Word in himself, and it leads finally to the presence of the fullness of God in the believer and his deification. When God speaks in himself, the Son is born from the Father. This Word spoken by God has all the essential characteristics of the divine nature, such as righteousness, holiness, wisdom, etc.⁷ As Luther emphasizes, as epithets of the essence of God, the Word not only has these characteristics, but the Word is identical with these characteristics. God, his nature and speech are divine wisdom, light, power, glory, truth, salvation, life and all goodness. These are names which God has applied to himself and in which he gives himself to man.⁸

In the Lutheran view the Word God has spoken in himself and his characteristics are nevertheless never directly and immediately within reach of

¹ BC 419 (BSLK 660, 63-661, 65).

² BC 419-420 (BSLK 661, 67-662, 69).

³ BC 345 (BSLK 512, 6).

⁴ WA 9, 440, 2-5. See below para. 2.2.

⁵ "For he is here present, and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. No man can be just before God without him." BC 308. In the *Schemata* articles (BSLK 446, 32), one of the Lutheran confessions, where Luther explains repentance and faith.

⁶ Luther's significance becomes understandable by the content of his theology. His theology is based on the early Church tradition. This is apparent most clearly in the way Luther understands the essence of the trinitarian God and the divine and human natures of Christ, as well as the relationship between them.

⁷ Luther's view of the sacraments opens up from early Church christology. The descriptions of the process of the word and the glowing iron presented in this paper also indicate this.

⁸ WA 1, 24, 7-9; 25, 24-26.

⁹ On the characteristics or names of God in Luther's theology, see also *Stenczak* 1990, 42-46.

natural, human knowledge. For God always takes a curtain where he hides his divine nature: in the incarnation the veil is the real humanity of Christ and the human preaching serving it in the word of the Gospel. Thus God both hides and reveals and gives himself to man. This means that in preaching Christ the whole fullness of God really reaches the heart of man, but in a hidden way. In preaching the Gospel it is a matter of such God-speech as communicates to human understanding correct knowledge of the object of faith, but produces at the same time the presence of God in the hearer.

In the word spoken by man that serves the preaching of Christ, God's own Word is thus present. This is possible because in the Gospel the Word of God forms a union with human speech, as in Christ God and man are inseparably and in an unmixed way one. In this sense God not only gives knowledge of himself but his very self, that is, the Word.⁹

This all means that the preached Gospel of Christ, the sacramental word, is for us truth, righteousness and judgment, because God's own Word is connected with it. The Gospel word preached, read and heard in divine worship and the Word continually spoken by God in himself are nevertheless not identical, nor does the external merely refer to the divine word. They form a union, as in Christ the divine nature and the human nature are one.¹⁰ This means that we must be satisfied with looking at the human nature of Christ, if we wish to participate in God and His Word. We cannot look at the essence of God with our eyes, but we must be satisfied with hearing with our ears and with how the Gospel describes God in Christ. As Luther states, in this life God only reveals of himself his hands, feet, eyes, ears and sides.¹¹

When we hear the Gospel, which, when it has the right content, is always a sacramental word, there takes place an incarnation of the Word: As God gave himself really to men in Christ, so He also gives himself in the preaching of the Gospel. Then there takes place the miracle of regeneration: a person who believes in the name of God becomes a child of God and is born of God (John 1:12-13). Luther declares this miracle of being born of God in the words of Athanasius on deification: "As the Word of God became flesh, so flesh must become the word. The Word has become flesh, so that flesh should become the word. Thus God became a man, so that man should become a god."¹²

This process of the word of God - God speaks the Word in himself, thus he gives himself in Christ to believers and regenerates them from God, that is, deifies them - shows the sacramental nature of the word. Coming into

Christians' hearts as a sacramental word Christ engenders in them true faith and makes them participants in the gifts of salvation. The word thus understood is called by Luther himself a sacramental word, not in the Christmas sermon of 1514, but five years later in a Christmas sermon in 1519.¹³

2.2. Looking at the image of Christ and Christ's birth in the believer

Apostolic faith means participation in the trinitarian God through Christ. This happens when Christ is born in the hearts of believers when the Word is preached.

According to Luther all the words of Christ and words about Christ are to be regarded as sacramental signs which give us the reality of which they speak: "Atque hoc est, quod dico sacramentaliter, hoc est, omnia verba, omnes historiae Evangelice sunt sacramenta quedam, hoc est sacra signa, per que in credentibus deus efficit, quicquid ille historie designant."¹⁴ Luther's view is that words spoken by Christ or about Christ are of a sacramental nature, because in them are given to the hearers the characteristics of God's nature, such as righteousness, power and salvation. "Ita verba Christi sunt sacramenta, per que operatur salutem nostram. Itaque sacramentaliter notandum est Evangelium, id est verba Christi sunt meditata tamquam symbola, per que datur illa ipsa iusticia, virtus, salus, quam ipsa verba pre se ferunt."¹⁵

We participate in this righteousness, power and salvation when we hear the preaching of the Gospel and meditate on Christ described in it. Then we must pay attention to the humanity of Christ. The divinity and majesty of Christ is not, as we have stated, within the reach of human senses and powers of comprehension. The pursuit of divinity in this way would be so terrible that we would not be able to bear it. Therefore God submits to coming within our reach only in human form and concealing his divine nature. It is, however, then that it is possible to perceive the favour and love of God: "Nolo te in Christo deitatem contemplari, nolo maiestatem suspiceris, sed advoca cogitationem animi tui ad hanc carnem, ad hunc puerum Christum, non potest homini non terrori divinitas esse, non potest hominem non terrore maiestas illa inundata. Propterea et Christus hominem et quicquid est humanorum affectuum preter peccata induit, ut non terrearis, sed completi favore et amore et consolari et confirmari incipias."¹⁶

⁹ See, e.g. WA 3, 303, 20-26.

¹⁰ See in more detail WA 1, 23, 40-24, 11.

¹¹ WA 1, 24, 9-18.

¹² WA 1, 28, 25-28.

¹³ On what follows, see in more detail Mannermaa's analysis (1989, 14-17).

¹⁴ WA 9, 440, 2-5.

¹⁵ WA 9, 440, 9-12.

¹⁶ WA 9, 440, 33-44, 4.

It is characteristic of the sacramental concept of the word that meditation on the words of the Gospel and the image they offer begins to have the effect that man perceives the love of God towards him. Meditation on the image of Christ gives to the tormented conscience and the trembling soul joy and power.¹⁷ Joy and power are Christ's own characteristics, but they are also real in the believer, because Christ is born in him. The birth of Christ means that the believer is born anew of God: "Evangeliū sone medianar sacramentaliter, hoc est verba per fidem hoc ipsum in nobis operantur, quod pre se ferunt. Christus natus est: crede tibi natum esse, et tu renasceris. Christus vicit mortem, peccatum: Crede tibi viciisse, et tu viceris. Et hoc proprium habet Evangelium, quod humanis historiis non datur. In Evangelio revelatur iusticia &c. Christi natiuitas est causa nostre."¹⁸

The Lutheran Church understands itself to be a church of the Word. This means that in the worship and ceremonies of the church an attempt is made to keep the word of the Gospel in the central place. Lutheran worship and spirituality are largely based on reading and hearing the word of the Gospel and explained by the fact that in Lutheranism the word is understood as being of a sacramental nature. Only when the Gospel is read and heard in divine worship and when Christ is preached correctly, paying attention to his humanity and the sweetness and goodness of God revealed therein, does God give himself to believers. Our view is that in a hidden way God gives himself through the simple words of the preacher and Christ is born in the hearts of the hearers.

The sermon is thus fundamentally always a sacramental event in which - if God so wishes - there can happen the miracle of God giving himself. The word engenders in us a real, therefore apostolic faith, and this faith means the rebirth of man, that is, his deification. Only with the aid of this sacramental word are troubled consciences comforted.

It is the same thing when the sacraments are administered in the correct way. Our view is that God, who as the hidden God is present everywhere, is present with regard to salvation and participation - not anywhere but - exclusively in the word, in the preaching of the Gospel, in baptism and in the sacrament of Holy Communion.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Quis est, quem non hec species capiat, consoleretur. Iam superata est vis peccati, inferni, conscientie et flaret, si ad hunc gesticulantem condignas preces, tantum crede atque hoc, quod ait venisse se, non ut iudicet, sed ut salvos faciat, tantum cense. Sicut baptismus certissime operatur gratiam, sicut absolutio certissime effectū condonationem peccati. Ita procubatio hec pueri meditatio, hic lassus, gaudium laborantis erit conscientie et robur trepidantis anime." WA 9, 441, 24-30.

¹⁸ WA 9, 442, 23-28.

¹⁹ Am 23, 122-123 (WA 33, 189, 33-190, 19).

3. The sacramental nature of baptism and the participation of the baptized in God

According to apostolic and Lutheran doctrine, baptism is the constitutive sacrament of Christian faith. Baptism is essential to salvation and through it God's grace is given. As in the early Church, Lutheranism teaches that children should be baptized, and that baptism must not be repeated (CA 7).

The administration of baptism is by nature a service of worship, with sacramental baptism as its centre. Sacramental baptism is preceded by remembrance of the fact that Christ himself instituted baptism and obligated the Church to make all nations his disciples (Matt. 28: 18-20). The Church carries out this mission given by Christ until this age changes into another, and trusts in the promise of Christ that he will always be with his Church. The Church also believes the Gospel, which affirms that children too may be brought to Christ (Mk. 10: 13-16). Trusting in this promise, those present at the baptism pray the Lord's Prayer together.

In the Lutheran Church baptism is performed in the name of the trinitarian God, whose essence is confessed together in the words of the Apostles' Creed just before the baptism. Lutheran Christians, as individual Christians and together as a church, are thus joined to the tradition of apostolic faith, in which all the saints participate and which means participation in the trinitarian God. Therefore the pastor declares after the confession of the apostolic faith: "into this faith and into the possession of all its promises we baptize this child in the name of the True God". Then by faith and obedient to the command of Christ, the Church and the body of believers bring the child to the water of baptism and leave him or her to be the object of the saving work of God.

Above is described the administration of sacramental baptism as it takes place in the Lutheran Church. Practice is based on the view that God's saving activity in baptism is real in nature. Salvation and justification bound to the sacraments is of an extremely, actually tangibly real nature. Baptism effects the forgiveness of sins, liberates from the power of death and the Devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe in the words and promises of God. This is possible because God's word is linked to the water.²⁰ This real nature of salvation is apparent in more precise terms in the teaching of Luther's baptismal sermons (1534).

Luther declares that the water of baptism is not just any water, because the name of God is in the water. By this he means that the word of God, that is, the name of God, that is, the trinitarian God himself has been united to quite ordinary water. These two have become one. The water of baptism is no longer merely water, but it is "deified or thoroughly divine water", because God himself and his name are not far from that water. Thus it is not, as Luther

²⁰ BC 348 (BSLK 515, 6); BC 349 (BSLK 516, 10).

continues, "watery water" but "divine, heavenly water", in which God himself is. Our view is thus that the water of baptism is not a symbolic image, but due to the word linked to it the trinitarian God is present in that heavenly water, truly, as a person, his essence and life as well as his power.²¹

The nature of the water of baptism should thus be understood as a union formed between Christ and created material. The Word of God, that is, Christ, links himself to natural water, when two different substances form something quite "new". Of this "new" thing can be used the expression "thoroughly deified water" (*durchgotetes Wasser*). The union which thus arises is the uniting of two beings and essences. The new unity is not natural water, but due to the word linked to it living and thoroughly deified water. Nevertheless, union does not mean exchanging the substances of the unified elements, in other words, Christ does not change into water nor water into Christ.²²

The water of baptism and the faith poured out in it bring about in the baptized person what God promises. There takes place the same as with the sacramental word, in connection with which meditation on the image of Christ was mentioned: the baptized person becomes a new person by the power of the word, that is, the name of God. God's own name uttered at the moment of baptism is nothing other than the almighty, divine power, eternal purity, holiness and life. When God's name is now used in baptizing in the way ordained by God, it cannot remain without effect. In baptism God gives, as Luther says, his majesty, light, power and himself and all that he is. In baptism, therefore, there takes place the same miracle as when the sacramental word penetrates a person's heart: God engenders faith and gives himself and thus the believer is born a new person. As Luther teaches, baptism effects a great thing that words cannot express: baptism makes one into what God and his word are in themselves. The conclusion to be reached is: in baptism God's word makes pure, heavenly and divine people.²³

After sacramental baptism begins life in Christ. The baptized person is seen off on the road of the Christian life and constant repentance when the

²¹ WA 37, 640, 17-25; 642, 5-21.

²² Luther often describes the sacramental union with an example taken from the patristic tradition of a glowing iron. The object placed in the forge is, on the one hand, still entirely iron, on the other hand, it has already changed into pure fire and glow. It is no longer possible to make a distinction between these two, the iron and the fire, as to what is exclusively iron and what is exclusively fire. The iron has not lost the substance of iron nor the fire the substance of fire. Two substances are joined together and form a new entity. The true nature of the water of baptism and the uniting of Christ and the Christian should be understood similarly. See in more detail WA 37, 642, 22-34.

²³ WA 37, 642, 35-643, 6. On Luther's theology of baptism more in detail, see Haavinen 1991.

pastor and the godparents lay their hands on him or her in accordance with apostolic practice. Then the pastor recites the trinitarian blessing, which effects the presence of God: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you." After this the pastor lights a baptismal candle and hands it to the parents or godparents in remembrance that the child has passed from darkness to light, that the child has been brought into fellowship with the true Light, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that from now on the foundation of his or her whole life is this Christ-union: "Jesus says: 'I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'" (Jn. 8:12).

4. Apostolic faith and prayer

According to apostolic faith, baptism is the beginning of the Christian life and is followed by lifelong endeavour and repentance. It is essential for the Christian to hear the word of God, receive the sacrament of Holy Communion and pray. These all have their place in public worship. Prayer is also part of the everyday Christian life of church members outside church services. Its significance is illustrated by the apostolic idea that in it "we have access to the Father in one Spirit through Christ" (Eph. 2:18). Prayer thus means access to the trinitarian God and life in fellowship with Him.

As Lutheran Christians, we must openly confess that we have not sufficiently fostered prayer, although our tradition and the teaching of our fathers obligates us to do so. According to our catechism, the Christian's morning and evening prayers and grace at meals (and for pastors the midday prayer also) contain the reading aloud of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer and meditation on them point by point. These three are a brief, easy-to-understand and simple summary of the contents of the whole Bible. According to the confessions, Luther teaches that the fathers or apostles in this way produced a summary of the Christian doctrine, life, wisdom and knowledge of which they spoke and which they dealt with and practised.²⁴

One thus remains in the apostolic faith by maintaining the practice of daily prayer. The Holy Spirit is himself present in such meditation and prayer and continually gives new and deeper light and enthusiasm. Thus praying the words of the Bible and the catechism always means a deepening of faith and God's becoming present, as Christ himself promises in Matt. 18 (18:20): "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst."²⁵

The purpose of praying the commandments is to help us to perceive what God wishes us to do and what to leave undone, as well as to notice what we

²⁴ BC 363 (BSLK 557, 15-19).

²⁵ BC 359 (BSLK 548, 9-549, 9).

lack. Thus there is realized in our lives what in the Lutheran tradition is called the task of the law. Praying the first commandment reminds us that God wishes us to regard him as God, that is, as One from whom one should expect everything good and in whom one must take refuge in all distress. Thus when praying the commandment "I am the Lord your God. Do not have other gods" we remember firstly that God wishes to show us pure goodness and help and that he wishes to be ours with all his goodness, to protect and help in all distress, but secondly that we constantly offend against God's will when our hearts become attached to created good things and expect help from them, forgetting the source of all goodness.²⁶

When we pray the creed on our own behalf we remember all that we can expect from God and can receive from Him. The creed teaches us to know God perfectly and helps us to do what the commandments demand. It is at the same time a response to the demand of the first commandment to regard the trinitarian God as the only God. From it we note how God has given himself to us, that he takes care of our temporal needs by giving created good things and that he gives eternal gifts in his Son and in the Holy Spirit.²⁷

When we pray the Lord's Prayer we ask that God will give us an enduring and growing faith and the power to keep his commandments, and that God will help our neighbours in distress. In the second petition of the prayer we ask that the Kingdom of God will come to us during this life, "growing every day," and that it will come to us also in eternal life. When we pray thus we ask for eternal and abundant treasure, that is, everything that God possesses. As God, our Father is like an eternal and inexhaustible spring: the more wells forth and flows from him, the more he gives of himself.²⁸

The starting-point of all prayer is thus that God gives himself and of himself, and is a good giver who desires that His people participate by faith in His fullness. Faith, thanksgiving and praise to God take the form of prayer, meaning that we allow God to be such and to fill us with his goodness.

What is important in the Lutheran service²⁹, apart from the Lord's Prayer and the fixed prayers, is intercession. In intercessory prayer the church bears before God the needs of individual people, entire peoples and the whole of mankind, as well as the church's own needs. In our view, intercession begins when the Church and body of believers pay attention to the distress of others and place themselves in their position in accordance with the principle of the

Golden Rule. In applying the principle the Christian sees his neighbour's sin and fall, has compassion on him, lets it into his heart, complains to God about it and prays about it. Such intercession should extend to the point that the Christian places his faith and righteousness before God on his neighbour's behalf, to cover his sins. Out of love the Christian bears his neighbour's sins and acts as if they were his own, in accordance with the example given by Christ.³⁰

Prayer arising from one's neighbour needs and from faith is the effective "deed" and "sacrifice" of the body of believers, the Church. Prayer is in essence co-operation between God and man, synergy, that is, a deed that God desires to work with us and through us. According to Luther, those who seek good works discover that the teaching of the holy fathers is right that there is no greater work than prayer. Prayer is not only "valuable and the most effective thing", but it is the greatest power and action of the Church against all that it can meet with. Intercession is a special duty of the pastor administering at the eucharist.³¹

Hymns also have an important part to play in public prayers and private devotions. Hymns are the shared prayer, thanksgiving and praise of the congregation. In them there happens as there does in all prayer. The Christian who sings prayer with his mouth and heart meditates on the content of faith and the image of the crucified Christ. Then the Christian is in fellowship with God and participates in his saving work, for Christ begins to take form in him. A hymn with original words by Gerhard Tersteegen and adapted by Anna-Majja Raitila describes taking on the form of Christ as follows:

"God is present, we pray to him, in holiness we worship.
He is amongst us, let our hearts be quiet, let everything within us bow down.
Man, sink under the gaze of Christ, bend before the holy.
Open my heart, take it as your dwelling, as your temple for the Spirit,
that the Father's face, Christ, you should glorify, take form in me.
In everything let me see your goodness, live before you."³²

Besides prayer, the Christian life includes the sacrament of the eucharist. There the Christian participates in Christ and his life. Participation in Christ means the communion of all the saints. The eucharist is thus the sacrament of the common faith and mutual love of all Christians.

²⁶ BC 365 (BSLK 560, 1-561, 5); BC 368 (BSLK 566, 27); BC 370 (BSLK 569, 39); BC 370 (BSLK 570, 41); BC 411 (BSLK 646, 2).

²⁷ BC 370 (BSLK 569, 39-570, 41); BC (BSLK 646, 1-2); BC (BSLK 650, 24).

²⁸ BC 420 (BSLK 662, 2-3); BC 427 (BSLK 674, 53, 55-56).

²⁹ On Lutheran service in general see *Cantell* 1989.

³⁰ SIA 2, 55, 6-18; Am 31, 375-377 (WA 7, 37-38); *Forsberg* 1988, 40.

³¹ Am 36, 62 (SIA 2, 212, 17-24); *Forsberg* 1988, 34-40.

³² Finnish translation by Anna-Majja Raitila in *Hymnbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland*. Hymn 194, verses 1 and 6.

5. The eucharist and participation in the life of God and salvation

After the pastor administering the eucharist has prayed the eucharistic prayer, which contains both the elements of anamnesis and the epiclesis, in which the Holy Spirit is invited to come upon the communicants, the words of institution of the communion are read. In the Lutheran view, the Word of God is then linked with the heavenly bread and wine and forms a union with them. There comes into being a sacrament, which is no longer only bread and wine, but the true body and true blood of Christ. While baptism is the beginning of the new Christian life, the eucharist is the Christian's everyday food, from which faith receives refreshment, power and comfort. In receiving the eucharist, one receives forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Thus the new life begun in baptism can constantly make progress and grow.³³

The eucharist is the medicine of immortality, because in believing and receiving the bread and wine the communicant meets God and participates in Christ, thus in immortality. When speaking of the communion Luther teaches thus: "He will not let Himself be found or discovered anywhere but in this flesh and blood of Christ the Son. 'If you believe in the Son, accept Him, and taste the flesh, then you assuredly have encountered Me' says God the Father. 'You will neither have nor find Me in any other way.'"³⁴ Participation in the sacrament of the eucharist is thus, as with the sacramental word and baptism, always participation in God himself. Receiving communion through the mouth does not leave a person as he was before but renews him. "If you touch My flesh, you are not touching simple flesh and blood; you are eating and drinking flesh and blood which makes you divine. It does not make you flesh and blood, but it has the nature and strength of God."³⁵

The Lutheran view is that in receiving the bread and wine the communicant "eats and drinks Christ." A consequence of this is victory over death, life and salvation, that is, deification: "...but it will imbue you with godlike power, with godlike virtues and works. It will wipe out your sin; it will deliver you from the devil and from death; it will free you from all wretchedness."³⁶ Again Luther teaches thus: "Earlier He explained the term 'to eat,' namely, that it denotes to believe in Him, that he who adheres to His flesh and blood by faith is eating and drinking it, and that it is this faith, this eating and drinking, or this food and drink, that affords eternal life. This flesh

is not mere empty flesh; it is a flesh permeated with God. Whoever encounters this flesh, encounters God."³⁷

As one may note from the above quotations, Luther understands the eucharistic elements and their reception and effect in an extremely real way. Christ is no more present in the eucharistic elements than He is in the believer as a merely external influence but He is present in the entire fullness of His being. In the Lutheran view, Christ does not exercise influence without being himself present: when Christ preaches or does a divine good work, he himself is not far away.³⁸

This means that when the communicant receives the defiled body and blood, he or she really participates in divinity, that is, Christ and His power. According to Luther, this body and blood has the capacity to scrape away sin and death, to give life and justification, to forgive sins and break down all barriers in heaven and on earth.³⁹

In the Lutheran eucharist, the presence of Christ (*Christus praesens*) and the real nature of His presence is unrelinquishable. The presence of Christ must in no wise be diluted into a mere "presence of thoughts": "The Lord does not say: 'Your thoughts of Me are in Me' or 'My thoughts are in you' but rather: 'You, you are in Me, and I, I am in you.' He does not refer to a mere thought, but He demands that I be in Him with body, life, soul, piety, and righteousness, with sins, folly, and wisdom; and He says that He, Christ, on the other hand, is also in me with His holiness, righteousness, wisdom, and salvation."⁴⁰

The eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving for Easter and Pentecost stresses this real nature of the eucharist. In the eucharist Christ and the believer become one, so that the believer participates in Christ and in His death and resurrection. Because Christ himself is life and salvation, and because the communicant is a participant in Christ, victory over death is possible in his case too: "We praise you, Almighty God, that in Christ you have given us life and salvation. Let us experience participation in His sufferings and the power of His resurrection. Support us with your grace until the day when the last enemy, death, is vanquished and you are all in all."

³³ BC 348 (BSLK 515, 6); BC 447 (BSLK 709, 9-10); BC 448 (BSLK 710, 14); BC 449 (BSLK 712, 23-25).

³⁴ Am 23, 120 (WA 33, 185, 18-25).

³⁵ Am 23, 122 (WA 33, 188, 19-24).

³⁶ Am 23, 122 (WA 33, 188, 35-40).

³⁷ Am 23, 125-126 (WA 33, 194, 13-24).

³⁸ Am 23, 147 (WA 33, 230, 3-20).

³⁹ Am 23, 130 (WA 33, 202, 23-34); Am 23, 134-135 (WA 33, 209, 41-210, 1); Am 23, 141 (WA 33, 219, 12-31).

⁴⁰ Am 23, 144 (WA 33, 225, 18-27).

6. The presence of God realized by faith and love uniting Christians

We have several times emphasized how the Christian's faith and entire life is based on God giving himself to the believer, being really present and allowing him or her in Christ to participate in the divine nature and its good things. Only then can the Christian live by faith and lead a Christian life, and deepening of faith is possible.

It is important to emphasize the real, essential presence of Christ, because sin and its power is so real in a person's life. Thus it is essential that salvation and grace should be many times more real than sin in the Christian's life. Without Christ there would be no renewal; man would remain full of evil, sin and delusion. The Christian's situation would be desperate when in distress and at the moment of death. It is at these times that Christ must really be inside a person's heart, making the heart joyful and saying: "Honor, goods, life and limb, and all that is earthly, begone! I am determined to remain here, right here!"⁴¹

Because of the distress of the Christian and the destructive forces threatening his life, it is essential that God show his favour towards Christians not merely externally and from afar. The union of the Christian and Christ is not only the fellowship of the like-minded. Luther disputes this interpretation and gives the example of two friends of similar will and mood, one of whom, Christ, is within the city walls and the other, the sinner, remains outside. When the one outside is attacked, he receives no help from his friend if the latter remains in the city, even if he does show sympathy towards his friend. Outward and insubstantial fellowship does not help, only the friend, Christ, must be really present where the battle takes place, that is, in the sinner.⁴²

This life of the Christian in Christ is called in the Lutheran tradition participation in God, although it is often expressed in different terms. The sacramental word and sacraments and faith firstly bring it about that Christ joins himself in a real, but hidden way to the sinner.⁴³ Participation in Christ

and the divine nature mean then that in the sinner there takes place a profound and fundamental renewal. From this wells forth true love of God and one's neighbour. In Lutheranism this is all called by the name, new birth, justification, adoption by God, deification of man.

In the Lutheran tradition, participation in God does not mean, despite its realness, denying the remaining sin in man. The renewed person is troubled by sin and beyond the reach of the natural, sin-marked human eye. As union with Christ is by nature realized by faith, a reality unperceived by the eye and thus a mystery of faith, so the new person born in union and participation is indiscernible to the ordinary eye. The sin of the Christian is, however, evident and visible, all kinds of imperfections and disabilities, while the present Christ and the new man are not attainable by such vision, but only by faith.⁴⁴

This means that the Lutheran tradition is characterized by a certain restraint when it comes to speaking of works arising from faith in the life of the Christian. This is so in spite of the fact that the Christian is in Christ in a real manner, due to the sacramental work of God, and that he is also made loving. There is good reason to exercise particular restraint in evaluating the change initiated in man, because conclusions drawn from people's deeds presuppose correct vision. When viewed from without two deeds may seem exactly the same, but they may still be quite different in essence: one good and pleasing to God and the other sinful.⁴⁵

It is safer to study the appearance of apostolic faith as love from the viewpoint of God's sacramental action. Then we come again to the sacrament of the eucharist, participation in which makes love possible on the part of the Church and its members. This love is essential to conquer the sin still remaining in the Christian. When in baptism a person is united to Christ and thus to the communion of the saints, the eucharist creates this ever-deepening mutual love and fellowship among this group of saints. In the eucharist there takes place the so-called wonderful exchange (conmercium admirabile), in which Christ and his saints participate in our sins and distress, and we in turn in Christ and his life. This is what is meant by eucharistic communion.

In his sermon on the eucharist (1519) Luther explains this loving communion in the eucharist as follows. On the one hand, Christ with all his saints takes in love the form of us temporal Christians and fights in us and together with us against sin, death and all evil. Thus we can leave ourselves to his righteousness, life and blessedness. This act of Christ then kindles love in us, so that we place ourselves in the position of our neighbours. In this way, in the eucharist Christ and all the saints, both those in heaven and those on earth, are united in love: "And through the interchange of his blessings and our misfortunes, we become one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all

⁴¹ Am 23, 145 (WA 33, 226, 1-10, 31-41); See also Am 23, 146 (WA 33, 228, 14-31; 228, 41-229, 6).

⁴² Am 23, 150 (WA 33, 234, 19-235, 7). The union of the believer and Christ also differs from the union between the different persons of the Trinity. The Christian does not by faith form a "natural essence" (ein natürliches Wesen) with God as happens between the Father and Son. The essential presence of Christ in the believer and their mutual union is not so "great and high" as the union of the incarnate Christ with the Father and Holy Spirit. Therefore through being united with Christ by faith man does not become eternal God, as only Christ is with the other persons of the Trinity, but a deified man. See on this Am 23, 148-149 (WA 33, 231, 30-233, 8).

⁴³ Am 23, 150 (WA 33, 235, 3-22).

⁴⁴ Am 23, 142-143 (WA 33, 222, 20-223, 9); Am 23, 150 (WA 33, 234, 1-17).

⁴⁵ See e.g. WA 10 II, 137, 14-138, 3; 234, 1-4.

things in common. O this a great sacrament [Eph. 5:32] says St. Paul, that Christ and the Church are one flesh and bone.⁴⁶

The union established in the eucharist with bonds of mutual love is aptly depicted by the eucharistic bread and wine. The bread used in the eucharist comes from individual grains and the wine from individual grapes. When the grains are ground, they lose their own form; then the ground grains are mixed together to form one bread. The same happens to the grapes: when the grapes are crushed, the wine they give forms one drink. Those who participate in the eucharist are, to use this picture, grains and grapes, which lose their own form, are "mixed" together and form one bread and one drink; that is, the body and blood of Christ, the communion of saints.⁴⁷ The sacrament of the eucharist is thus a sign of the unity and love which prevails between members of the Church at the eucharist and between the member and Christ.

From the viewpoint of the individual Christian, receiving the eucharist means first of all that the received bread and wine form a union with the nature of the communicant. This union is real and affects a person deeply: there is no more inward and indivisible union than the one that arises between this meal and the communicant. Therefore eucharistic union does not leave the communicant as he or she was before but changes him or her into the form of Christ. In the sacrament of the eucharist we are thus one with Christ and - as Luther continues - also bodily united to all the saints.⁴⁸

Secondly, the union of love which takes place in the eucharist means that everything which is possessed by Christ, the saints in heaven and the saints on earth becomes common property. Then Christians too participate in each other's distress and sin. The eucharist thus means helping in love others' poverty, tolerating others' sin, caring for others' misery, suffering others' suffering and praying for others. Then the communicant acts in accordance with the example set by Christ and his saints. Life in accordance with this example is also important from the viewpoint of the salvation of the Christian. For if we want Christ and his saints to take our distress to be theirs, we must also take others' distress to be ours. Only in following this example is fellowship experienced in its totality and does mutual love between Christians grow continually.⁴⁹

The love of the believer and the whole Church is thus based on participating in Christ's love. This further means that the unity of the Church has a sacramental foundation. In baptism one becomes a participant in the community of saints, because in baptism one becomes a participant in God and

Christ. In the eucharist this unity deepens and grows when the love of Christ makes the communicant loving. "O, this is a great sacrament," says St. Paul [Eph. 5:32], that Christ and the Church are one flesh and one bone."⁵⁰

The Apostolic faith in the life of the Church and its members is thus participation in the word and sacraments and through them in Christ. Participation in Christ is participation in the divine nature, that is, the self-giving goodness and love of God. From this faith and participation there wells forth love towards other Christians and suffering neighbours. During this life, until death, this faith and love must deepen and grow. This happens when the Christian remains a participant in the word and sacraments, in prayer and in the communion of the saints. Then God fills him or her and the Church again and again with his love.

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THE WAY OF REASON IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH (Witness to the Apostolic Faith to the World)

Prof. A. Ossipov

The main difficulty of the Christian witness to the world is that the world, understood as a human society, maintains secular (pagan), i.e. completely different from the Gospel, ideals and principles. They are well shown in the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. Apostle John expressed them in the following words: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2.16). But they are not just indicated, their interdependency, certain hierarchical collateral subordination are also named. In this hierarchy the last, i.e. the most dangerous of all the passions, is pride. According to the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition pride is the major obstacle in a human soul on his way towards Christ. Hence it follows on what a Christian's attention in the apostolic work must be concentrated - on revealing and neutralizing the source of this passion, for otherwise a sermon shall be fruitless.

With the manifold manifestations of pride of a man of our civilization it expresses itself most powerfully and frankly in the cult of reason - reason, naturally, of an old man (Eph.4.22), i.e. who is a slave of passions (lusts), of reason not yet purified through the faith, not enlightened by the Spirit of God. This reason is proclaimed by the world to be the highest instance in solving all human problems. It demands subordination of all the sides of spiritual life, of the Christian faith itself.

So where, according to this reason, dwells the truth along with the good of existence and the sense of life? Primarily in science and philosophy. Science must provide for the satisfaction of the first two lusts named by St. John the Theologian, and philosophy - of the third. It is in science and philosophy, rather than in God and holiness of life, that "the pride of life" sees an opportunity of realizing eternal hope of humanity to achieve happiness. Hence follows an acute and serious task of a theological analysis of these two directions of human cognitive activity, so that every man, earnestly searching for the truth, could impartially listen to the word of Christian witness to the Apostolic faith as it is kept in the Holy Tradition of the Church.

Humanity always faces the question of the sense of life or of what is existence or what is the truth, inspite of corroding philosophical sceptis and attempts by the reason to keep the understanding of life within purely positivist or utilitarian limits.

The present report attempts to present a short analysis of the way of reason and its limits in the search for the truth in philosophical and scientific directions of creative thought.

1. What is truth? In an attempt to answer, this question four main aspirants enter the scene of history: philosophy, science, mysticism, religion (their order is determined by purely methodological considerations).

Their short answer to this question of questions could be as follows.

Philosophy (the one that accepts this question): the truth is the result of the activity of "pure" reason, for the truth is rational and can be expressed in concrete notions and opinions. Not all systems of thought seemed to accept this thesis. And they again proved their disagreement by the use of a discursive-logical method while reaffirming that they considered reason to be the supreme judge in solving this question.

Science (natural science until mid 20th century): the truth is "objective" reality which can be conceived by empiric-intuitive-rational method, or (the 20th century) "a useful" model of this reality.

Mysticism¹ (of all times): the truth is inexpressible "nothing" experienced by a person through inner fusion with it.

Cognition of "nothing" is extraconfessional, it is not related to any "orthodox" teaching.

Christianity: the truth is God Himself, endless in the possibility of knowing Him and, therefore, always inconceivable in essence, but being constantly revealed in His acts. The truth is incarnated God - the Lord Jesus Christ, the knowledge of whom depends on strict laws of spiritual life.

Unlike philosophy and science whose methods are subject to rational control mysticism is irrational, while religion, as covering the wholeness of cognitive abilities of man, proposes different methods of both rational (scientific theology) and irrational (spiritual life) character at different stages of his spiritual development.

2. Why do we call into question a philosophical method of searching for the truth? First, because this method is in fact purely rational, i.e. including a known logic (of judgement) and a certain conceptual mechanism, and that makes philosophy an ordinary formal system. But if logic is purely instrumental and impulsive, the situation with concepts is much worse. While not mentioning the problem of "universals" we can state the following. Philosophy uses a

language which is a reflection of our human activity. Even if we accept that there are concepts a priori, they would also appear pointless for human consciousness and thus "non-working" without filling them with certain content, also borrowed from "empeiria". Even when a philosopher would contemplate in a state of a specific intuitive or mystical illumination a certain deep reality exceeding this "three-dimensional" world, he would nevertheless be unable to describe it in view of complete absence of corresponding words-notions or images in our human vocabulary. Besides, all our words-notions (excluding mathematical abstractions) are as a rule very vague. V. Geisenberg was right when he wrote: "The meaning of all notions and words formed by means of interaction between the world and ourselves, cannot be determined precisely... By means of rational thinking only it is impossible, therefore, to reach the ultimate truth" (1).

It would be interesting to compare this thought of a modern scientist and thinker with the idea of a Christian zealot who lived 1000 years before Geisenberg who knew nothing about quantum mechanics and natural sciences - St. Simeon the New Theologian. Here are his words: "I... mourned the human race, for, while searching for unusual arguments, humans mention human notions, things and words, and believe that they describe Divine nature, the one that could be neither seen, nor named by anyone of the Angels and of the people" (2). As we can see, both statements in fact say one thing: the truth, no matter how we call it, is transcendent to the reason. And while it is clear that it is impossible to describe realities of the nondimensional world or even infinite (such as, perhaps, existence?) using the notions of the three-dimensional world, the reason, all the more, must stop if the truth is at all irrational. Besides, philosophy, while raising the question of the truth of cognition being realized within itself, finds itself in a vicious circle. It (as any other formal system) cannot prove its truth (what was shown by Goedel in his second theorem on the impossibility to prove the non-discrepancy of a formal system by means of the system itself), while it is not capable of exceeding the rational-empiric reality outlined by its logical-conceptual mechanism. Such is the conclusion which, in fact, philosophy has reached in its historical development while studying the problem of existence.

3. We can summarize the way of reason in this historical-philosophical direction in the following way.

What is an absolute essence? - That was the question with which our European philosophy in ancient Hellas started. And while a changeable world, this "incorrect" available reality, could not be accepted as such, already the first thinkers, Meletians, Heraklit and others, affirmed as a first beginning ("one in many things") that what could be perceived only metaphysically. This dogmatic approach, however, and especially in the face of diverse answers, could not satisfy human reason. In search for the essence, participation in which could give a meaning to both existence of the world and personal existence, man

¹ The term "mysticism" denotes here and further a false spiritual experience.

² "Temperament" in the words of the Holy Fathers, as compared to the experience of the true knowledge of God, theosis.

started to look for an absolute proof of the truth. Thus, along with ontological objective there appeared a second dimension in philosophy - logical means, and these two dimensions - existentiality and rationality - came to determine its future.

With the new times speculation in the West took the road of total doubt. For in order to become "strict science" philosophy was obliged, in solving the question of true essence, first to raise the question of the existence of this essence, i.e. the question of being of the being. Before answering this question it first had to make sure of the trustworthiness of the cognitive abilities of man, to make sure that thinking can perceive reality adequately, and moreover, cognize itself, i.e. make sure that thinking is capable of proving its own truth ... through itself. There was a real deadlock in philosophy: if it started with a legitimate doubt of our abilities to cognize existence, now the results of the activity of cognitive ability in relation to itself are called in question; in other words, while in the beginning the existence of being could not be proved, now the existence of reason itself also cannot be proved. Thus, a doubt which is called to raise philosophy to the highest level of a trustworthy knowledge of the being led it to realize its complete unauthenticity. R. W. correctly observed: "While irrefragably speeding towards its end, both the history of the world and the history of philosophy reveal themselves as the history of the loss of existence".

Russian Slavophiles, while diagnosing the illness of Western philosophy, shrewdly saw the reason of the evil in the autonomy of rational basis and called (A.S. Khomyakov) to form ontology proceeding from a theist premise of the "willing Reason" (3). For if it is impossible to prove the existence of being on the route of reason, this does not at all mean that there is no other possibility to prove it. Thus, negative results of Western philosophy (and this is its great merit) necessarily led to the state when reason itself forced us to search ways towards new ontological thinking and sanctioned it. Thus, historical movement of philosophizing reason on the route towards the truth leads man to the starting point of religious world outlook.

This is also confirmed by further (after Hegel) attempts of the thought - which freed itself from the old problems of gnosiological irreparability, but did not take the road of ontology - to address the available being, thus solving the problem of the essence. They led to nothing. Here I mean the so-called philosophy of culture and philosophy of existence. The principle of the first direction is a witness by collective-historical consciousness found in the existing forms of culture. But after enlarging philosophical subject, philosophy of culture abandons the essential question: what is the basis of the world?

The second direction, philosophy of existence, also proceeds from available being, but from the inner being rather than outward. Going back to human existence, existentialism at the same time breaks with the "hostile universe" and other non- and super-personal being. In both cases there is, therefore, a return from bold reason to "existence" - but existence deprived of

ontological character, taken at a phenomenal level of "existence": collective in philosophy - of culture, individual - in existentialism. In the first case, however, philosopher leaves the world non-comprehended in the second meaningless, for a philosophies loses sight of the question of the truth.

4. Another is the way of reason in natural-scientific cognition of the world. And while this way is much shorter in terms of history than that of philosophy, it is no less effective in its achievements. What are the conclusions of a scientific thought in cognising the being?

In the 18-19th centuries and partly, "mechanically", in the 20th century, there prevailed in science a purely mechanical concept which viewed the world as a huge mechanism working in conformity with strict laws, given once and forever. The famous Laplace's answer to Napoleon: "Sir, I do not need this hypothesis", when the latter asked a question on the role of God in the world, expressed the absolute determinism in the understanding of the world which is characteristic of this concept. It is well known that one of Leibniz's cherished ideas was a dream to find the so-called "Universal characteristic" - logarithm, with the help of which it would be possible to "get the whole truth" by a purely mechanical way. The living-nature, however, to say nothing of man, did not have enough room in this doctrine. Later, therefore, a notion of probability was included into it, and they started to explain everything with the use of a certain (annameable, however, to any change) combination of causality and opportunity, or "Opportunity and Necessity" (using the title of the book by a French biologist Jacques Monod). This, as it is often called, "scientific understanding of the world" is in fact positivist, and it includes conviction that the only truth is "objective" truth, i.e. the one that can be certified through special observations and changes available to every impartial researcher. All the rest that exceeds the so-called objective observation and experiment, i.e. God, spirit, eternity, love, joy, etc., is subjective and has nothing to do with science and truth.

With all its great achievement and, to be more precise, thanks to them, modern science is more modest than the science of the recent past. Scientists more rarely than in the past speak now about absolute laws and more often - about theories and hypotheses, less about determinism, and more about possibility, less about "the truth", and more about "models". And these models are understood not as mental or graphic copies of reality, but as effective methods of thinking over the problems of reality for the sake of objectives set by man.

Of special interest and extremely significant are here the criteria that are being used now to evaluate new theories. There are two types of them. First are a kind of an expression of satisfaction with one's own understanding of the world. When a new theory links phenomena that could not be linked by previous theories, or can compare these phenomena in a more "beautiful" (Poincaré, H. Poincaré) or "simple" (E. Mach) way, this theory considers to be

convincing and true. Another kind of criteria relates to functionality: a theory is considered to be true when it is experimentally proved and has an ability of prediction. These second criteria, however, often "do not work" without the first. F. Frank observes in this respect: "Science is like a detective story. All the facts prove a certain hypothesis, but absolutely another hypothesis, however, turns out to be correct in the long run" (4).

There are four other characteristic features of modern science which are of special interest in terms of understanding the extent of its conclusions' trustworthiness.

Firstly, scientists rather seldom speak now about a "scientific method" as the only universal scientific method. They speak of methods and invent new methods for solving new problems.

Secondly, in order to understand the same phenomena, scientists create different additional models. One of the most well known examples relates to nature of light, where, depending on the aims, light is seen either as particles moving the space at a great speed, or as waves in an energy field. Both models which seem to be mutually exclusive, proceed from quantum mechanics, but none of them, taken separately, provides a scientific idea of light. And while this dialectics of quantum mechanics is incompatible with a common sense, scientists accept that the use of these models provides best opportunities for describing the nature of light.

Thirdly, there is a revaluation of the notion of objectivity in science. According to traditional thinking, science provided objectivity absolutely independent of the scientists' personal interests. There still remains something of this ideal. More and more often, however, it is being accepted that scientific research concerns the questions raised by a human person rather than by any "objective" reality. The answers are the answers to human questions. Moreover, there exists an understanding, and especially after the publication of the works by V. Geisenberg, that at least in some delicate experiments, for example connected with the study of the microcosm, the observation itself influences the results of experiment, and the resulting knowledge is in many respect a relative knowledge. Geisenberg wrote: "Our complicated experiments represent nature not in itself, but rather changed and transformed under the influence of our activity in the course of study... Therefore, here we run across insuperable limits of human knowledge" (5). R. Oppenheimer wrote: "I had an opportunity to consult forty physicists-theorists... My colleagues, in spite of their different views, adhere to, at least one conviction. They all accept that we do not understand the nature of matter, its laws, and the language which can describe it" (6).

Fourthly, a rapid process of expanding the limits of science makes it more and more evident that practically no knowledge can be seen as final (The most vivid seems to be an example of the evolution in the knowledge of atom) (7). R. Feinman even speaks of the unauthenticity of science. "That is why science is unauthentic", addresses he the students. "As soon as you say something about

the sphere of experiment with which you personally had nothing to do, you lose confidence immediately. We, however, must necessarily talk about the spheres which we have never seen, otherwise no good will come of science... Therefore, if we want to benefit from science, we have to hazard conjectures. So that science would not turn into mere minutes of the experiments, we have to suggest laws reacting the spheres not yet known. There is nothing bad about it, but in the result science turns out to be unauthentic. And if you thought that science is trustworthy you were wrong" (8).

These, as well as other peculiar features of modern science and its modern criteria make it possible for scientists and researchers of scientific knowledge to come to quite definite conclusions of the limits of this knowledge and its trustworthiness. Let us quote some authoritative statements.

Academician L. Landau (USSR) on the physics of microcosm: "We will have to stop asking nature certain questions, realizing that it has no answers to our curiosity. Not because the level of our knowledge does not yet allow to hope to hear a desirable answer which the nature supposedly always has. No, this is senseless just because the nature itself does not have such an answer in store" (9).

A. Einstein: "In our desire to understand reality we resemble a man who wants to understand a closed clock-work. He sees the clock-face and moving hands, he even hears it ticking, but has no means to open it. If he is witty, he can draw a picture of the mechanism that would reflect everything he sees, but he can never be sure that his picture is the only one that is capable of explaining his observation. He would be never able to compare his picture to the real mechanism, he cannot even imagine a possibility and meaning of such comparison" (10).

Scientists from the USSR Academy of Sciences' Institute for Philosophy, headed by the corresponding member P. Kopnin: "The impossibility to relate knowledge to the ideal of absolute strictness can now be considered proved. After a long and persistent struggle "logicians" also had to accept a conclusion that it is impossible to expel "unstrict" concepts even from the most strict science - mathematics... All this witnesses not only to the fact that any system of human knowledge includes elements which cannot be substantiated by theoretical means at all, but also to the fact that without such elements no scientific system of knowledge can exist" (11).

And the last statement by academician L. Berg (USSR): "Truth in science is everything that is expedient, that is justified and confirmed by experience as being able to contribute to further progress of science. In science the question about the truth is being solved through practice..."

Benefit is a criterion of suitability, and hence, of the truth. No other method of discerning the truth is given to man... Truth is a useful fiction while delusion harmful" (12).

5. The last statement seems to summarize all the above said on the question of the limits of knowledge in science, its trustworthiness and the place of the notion of truth itself in this knowledge. Science, even the most theoretical one, is always deeply pragmatic in terms of its final objectives, it is in principle limited to a horizontal plane, it provides no room for the problem of truth as it is raised by religion and philosophy, and, therefore, there is no nerve in it which is the only one that makes life and other human activity sensible and purposeful in terms of world outlook. Two dimensions of science, the absence of an ideological content in it - of this third dimension - makes it a kind of apolitical, indifferent in the questions of existence, God, truth, meaning of life, eternity, etc.

This formally "intermediate" position of science in terms of world outlook does not, however, make it neutral aesthetically and spiritually, for many achievements of science are or can be used for the purpose contrary both morally and spiritually. And while the role of reason in the ethical orientation of science is more evident, the question of its importance for spiritual orientation of science is more problematic.

In this respect we can single out three main negative tendencies in interpretation and orientation of science. One of them - so to say, a "zero option", under which all the questions connected with spiritual and ideological life of man, and the problem of truth itself are declared to be unscientific and pseudo-questions, and, what is more important, not worthy of any serious attention. The essence of this gnostic direction is quite evident and does not require any special analysis. Most clearly it is expressed in the words of Christ: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead" (Matt. 8, 22).

The second tendency, both ancient and modern, is manifested in an attempt to extend the limits of the cognition of the world and the power over it by means of including into science the elements of mysticism and magic.

Mysticism and magic, while having certain elements in common (irrationality, belief in the existence of supernatural forces, etc.), differ by the character of their attitude towards the Supreme source and its cognition. Mysticism is impossible without acknowledging the Supreme source. Mystical cognition is exercised only in a state of ecstasy when "mystic experiences himself as integral Unity" (13). And finally, mystic is deeply indifferent to all the values of this world, he does not seek them.

In magic the situation is different. It is mostly far from accepting God; ecstasy is not at all necessary; and its aim relates to this world only. According to Freiser, in this aspect it is identical with science. "When magic", he writes, "is in its pure and unchangeable form, it assumes that in nature phenomena must follow each other inevitably and invariably, not requiring interference of a personal or spiritual agent. Its basic principles, therefore, are identical with those of modern science" (14). The aim of magic - to make spirits, supreme and inferior forces serve a given man in his exclusively earthly interests irrespective of their moral content. A certain category of scientists also believes

that ethical categories cannot be applied to science, and that it has to take advantage of any means in order to achieve certain objects (of course, earthly, of this world).

In many countries there is now a special interest in the so-called extrasensories, spiritism, yoga, telepathy, telekinesis, other "tele", etc. For a well-known American scientist Mudy the reason for the modern enlightened society's interest in magic, sorcery, witchcraft, occultism, is as follows. "The distance between rational, scientific world and the world of magic is not great", he believes. "Our Western world is full of magic world outlook. A Jewish-Christian concept of the world, created by God, is necessarily supplemented with the world, in which Devil reigns; God withstands the Devil, the forces of the white world withstand the legions of darkness and earthly lusts. This bipolar division might be a natural human quality, but it is without doubt a part of Western tradition" (15).

Some Western sociologists and psychologists also tend to see positive aspects in magic and magic cults. The same Mudy believes that "Satanists, after a treatment by means of magic therapy, become better citizens than they were before. Perhaps that is why", he concludes, "such marginal cults as the church of Trebizond, must gain support.... Everything that improves a person's ability to adapt to the world he is living in, can and must be a criterion for evaluating new, and originally marginal institutes of our society" (16).

In 1921 Freud wrote the following on relations of psycho-analysis to occultism: "An increased interest in occultism does not necessarily contain a danger for psycho-analysis. We must, on the contrary, be ready that a mutual sympathy would spring up between the first and the latter.... A union and cooperation between psycho-analysis and occultists can, therefore, turn out to be acceptable and promising" (17).

Before assessing this tendency in modern science let us speak about this third "spiritual" stream, very close to the previous.... It is most vividly expressed by one of the major modern physicists in the USA, C. Towns, in his article under a very characteristic title: "Fusion of science and religion" (18). The main idea expressed by Towns in this article is that science and religion have one and the same objective, but pursue it by different means. I.e. it is being affirmed that there is a union in essence between science and religion. This idea, deist in form and pantheist in essence was also expressed by A. Einstein and other major scientists, and goes back as far as Aristotle. In this case, however, it witnesses to a deep misunderstanding if not of religion on the whole, than of Christianity undoubtedly. And here we see an open attempt to turn metaphysics into physics, to bring heavens down to the earth, and understand God himself just as a universal principle of the Universe. And this seems to be one of the greatest mistakes of positivist reason on its way towards the truth.

This is the main mistake of the previous variant as well, at least as far as the magic is concerned. The turn of science to mysticism would not expand the

limits of its knowledge, moreover, it would lead it far away from cognition of the truth, and would inevitably lead to grave consequences for humanity. For while affirming the so-called liberty, i.e. actual arbitrariness in spiritual life, mysticism thus destroys the very basis of this life. And this is its principal difference from positive religion, from Orthodoxy with its strict rules of asceticism.

A mystic looks for ecstasy, spiritual enjoyment, revelations. He "sees" his own impartiality, purity and force. He grows spiritually in his own eyes. He often seems to be above his passions, what is understood by the inexperienced as spiritual perfection, humbleness, while in fact is a deep pride resulting from suppression of all other passions. A mystic does not recognize God and, therefore, prefers to speak of Divine Nothing. Inexpressible, Inconceivable One, etc. F. Geiler, theologian and prominent expert of religion, stresses in his major work "Prayer" that "consistent mysticism liberates knowledge of God from all personal attributes, and there remains only 'naked' and pure infinity" (19). In the long run a mystic understands himself to be like God (Gen.3,5).

In Christianity this kind of mysticism is called temptation, i.e. flattery to oneself of the highest degree, self-deception, ruin of one's soul. Christian revelations and spiritual state and experience which unfortunately are very often called Mystical (what leads to confusion of the opposite spiritual poles: 2 Cor.6,14-15) are of principally another character, and in many respects contrary to mystical ones.

It seems that the error of the mentioned tendency in science can be seen in proper perspective only after the most serious study of the Christian (as universal and thus optimum) principles of spiritual life and criteria of cognition.

6. The way of reason is very characteristic. Its scientific-technical achievements, unprecedented in history, are accompanied by the appearance of the forces of destruction, equally unprecedented in the concentration of power. And these forces manifest themselves primarily in spiritual-moral sphere. And the process of destruction of criteria of good, beauty and truth is now the greatest challenge. Everything is being aeroded now, turned upside down, mixed up. And neither philosophy which has withdrawn the very notion of truth from the sphere of its speculation, nor the science, for which the categories of good, beauty and truth are unscientific, can put an end to this process. And "the only he who restrains" (2 Thess.2,7) - Christian Christ - is being resolutely and more and more consciously excluded from society not only by science and philosophy, but by the whole atmosphere of life. The Slavophiles saw this in the West already in the last century, and spoke openly about fatal consequences of the development of such process. Here is one of the statements by I.A. Aksakov, wonderful in its prophetic pathos: "The progress which rejects God and Christ", he writes, "in the long run turns into regress; civilization concludes with becoming wild; freedom with despotism and slavery. After

divesting oneself of the image of God, man inevitably shall and already is divesting himself off the human image and cares for the image of the beast".

The statement seems to be too hard. But do the social, ecological problems, the problems of nuclear and other arms, of exhaustion of natural resources, of population and many other, unrepresented in history and huge in their breadth and acuity, witness to the progress? Is not the ragin - legalized - of immorality, mockery of everything human, of lie, usury and dictates of monopolies, racism, fascism, etc., the witness to becoming wild? Is the hypocritical democracy with its vivid elite of the real power, not the veiled slavery and sometimes even open despotism? And, finally, free propaganda of all kinds of occultism, magic, sorcery, up to the open Satanism and mockery of all the sacred, even of the truth - is it not divesting off the image of God and human image and the care for the image of the beast (Rev. 13,1-18)?

It goes without saying that reason has made a principal error in the very "project" of civilization and its development. And it is becoming more and more evident now, at the end of the 20th century. And it is in this vision and realization of a next deadlock that reason, which broke with the soul, has reached (21), that the door to its revival seems to open once again. It is possible on the way towards spiritual-moral purification of man, of his heart which comes to know God - the Truth (Matt.5,8). Pascal was right when he wrote: "We come to know the truth not only through the reason alone, but with the help of the heart as well" (20). And here he means the heart cleared of passions.

And here is the main characteristic feature of the Christian understanding of the question of truth, of the sense of life.

Christianity sees the sense of life not in cognition of created world in itself, but in eternal life in God, also called salvation. This means, firstly, conviction that God exists, and that He is not only the source of existence, but existence itself, in which the good for the being of all existing and valuable understanding of the truth is possible, and through this cognition of created world and its essence. Secondly, this assumes the understanding that real (earthly) life is not a self-sufficing value, but a necessary condition, a transitory form of personal existence for attaining a perfect life in God. Therefore, Christian consciousness does not accept an atheist call: "Believe, man, life is only here, and eternal death awaits you later!", for this call excludes the most important thing for man - life which is the only thing that can have sense.

The essence of Christian understanding of the truth can be expressed in two words: "CHRIST IS RISEN". They contain the whole endless perspective of life and its concrete sense simultaneously. This sense is to become like Christ and achieve union with Him, in other words - divinization, theosis. What does it mean? In short, it is perfection in kenotic love which is the essence of God revealed to us, for "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4,16). Apostle Paul writes about this state in detail in his letter to the Galatians when he names the fruit of the God's act in man.

They are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5). In another letter he describes this state as follows: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2,9). As we see, Apostle writes that a man, spiritually purified, healed from passions, i.e. spiritually healthy, stays in deep joy, love and peace of his soul - in modern language, in happiness, not transient, accidental, called by the action of nerves and psychology, but a property of the soul of a "new" man, and therefore inalienable, eternal. It should be mentioned, however, that this state is not at all the aim and sense of life of man according to the Christian teaching. It is just one of the consequences of the achievement of the goal - theosis, union with God in which a human personality reveals itself fully, and becomes like God.

Perfection in love, however, is not just moral and emotional goodness of man. Love is no less a perfect "instrument" for cognition of the Truth and created world. It is not accidental that those who are called "holy ones" due to their special spiritual purity, considered spiritual life to be a true philosophy, science of sciences. And they called it like this because true ascetic life, while restoring the union of soul with God, confides to man the knowledge of the Truth and contemplation of its imperishable Beauty and cognition of the essence of all creatures.

Experience of the Church witnesses most evidently to the fact that spiritual perfection of man, to which the Reason of the Revelation - the Gospel's calling, is not a fantasy of excited dreamers, but reality, the fact tested many times in the history of Christianity, and up till now being offered to a searching man as the only reasonable aim of existence.

NOTES

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15. Quot. from I. Grigulevich "Prophets of a new truth", Moscow, 1983, p. 191
16. *ibid.*, p. 193
17. *ibid.*, p. 200
18. "Literaturnaya Gazeta", 1967, No 34
19. Quot. from G. Kyung, p. 297
20. Quot. from G. Kyung, p. 41
21. Here I recall the words by Kallistos Karifigistis: "The mind must observe the measure of knowledge in order not to perish".

THE WITNESS AND SERVICE OF THE CHURCH IN A SECULAR SOCIETY

Voitto Huotari

Introduction

Church life can be viewed from two directions. On the one hand, it can be viewed in the light of faith and doctrine, and on the other hand, by describing the Church in the historical and social reality in which it lives, witnesses and serves. In Lutheran theology both of these sides have been to the fore. In this paper the main emphasis is on the latter, the describing of the social setting of church work.

Becoming acquainted with modern reality helps us to know the context in which apostolic faith lives. The surrounding world cannot indeed change the content of faith, but it influences which aspects come to the fore and are emphasized nowadays in church life.

I shall mention such modern phenomena as, in the light of research and experience, have influenced church life. I shall also attempt to describe how Lutherans think about the relationship between the Church and the world. Then I shall set forth the practical solutions which have recently been proposed in our church in the search for ways to bring church life into prominence today.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF CHURCH LIFE, WITNESS AND SERVICE TODAY

Ideological and political crisis

Within a few years the whole of Europe has experienced tremendous social changes, the direction and final outcome of which are not yet fully known. The consequences in the life of different churches vary. But in any case they affect the setting of church life and the opportunities for and emphases of witness in the whole of Europe, both east and west.

Communist ideology and its economic system has collapsed in Eastern Europe. This has been felt as a new spiritual and intellectual climate elsewhere too. The churches too are expected to take part in the search for new basic values. They must decide for themselves how they wish to participate in the creation of a new social life.

Nationalist ideas have in recent years been emphasized in a new way, and the churches have been wanted as partners in realizing nationalist aspirations. In this situation the churches must decide how they express their loyalty to the people among whom they work and, on the other hand, their loyalty to the worldwide people of God, the universal church community. In the history of the western churches there is a cautionary example of the period between the World Wars, when in church circles there were attempts to sanctify the existence of one's own nation. It tended to strengthen indifference, even hostility towards other peoples. From this has been learnt the lesson that Christianity must avoid turning into a national ideology. Instead it must be seen that the universality of the Church means a lowering of national barriers and an increase in solidarity between peoples, not their separation from one another.

When the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has evaluated its relation to the people, it has been found, on the one hand, that the Church should live for the people, because it has been sent among the people to serve it and individual people for both their temporal and eternal salvation. But on the other hand, the Church should strive for as much independence as possible from national and social aspirations, so that there should be more emphasis on identification with the universal Church of Christ, thus on the catholicity and ecumenicity of the Church.

The European trend towards unity breaks down barriers in the way of co-operation between peoples and churches. In this has been seen a return to the foundation which the Roman Catholic Church laid in mediaeval Western Europe. For centuries divided Western European Christianity has not, however, been particularly well prepared for co-operation and common witness across national and denominational barriers.

The ideological and political crisis has already influenced the thinking and way of life of individual church members. Therefore the churches have to meet the changes specifically through their members. They must help their members to see what faith means to them amidst changes. It is also a question of the kind of witness the Church gives to the world through them.

Secularization

The religious world-view is no longer as usual as in earlier decades and centuries in Europe. In interpreting the world and life, many do not accept the way of thinking which takes into account the existence of the divine, unseen world. This phenomenon is called secularization. It is a question of the disappearance of the common religious thinking, values, language and rites maintaining communal life.

The ideological roots of secularization extend to the post-Enlightenment period and in particular to the left-wing Hegelian philosophy of the 19th century. In this there was a strong emphasis on temporal, empirical reality and

the existence of the beyond was rejected. One was supposed to change from "a graduate or the beyond to a student of this existence". This starting-point has influenced the development of both the naturalist view of life and the positivist view of science and Marxist social philosophy.

Although in the West the significance of Marxist ideology has been slight by comparison with the East, secularization has been seen in other ways as an attempt to reject the supernatural in the interpretation of the world and in one's world-view and to concentrate only on the temporal.

In recent decades Western theologians have emphasized that secularization is not only opposition to the Church, but up to a point a consequence of the teaching of the Christian Church. It has freed people from a magic way of thinking for more genuine Christian thought.

Secularization must be distinguished from secularism, which is an anti-religious ideology. It bases its explanatory model on some beliefs about the nature of beingness and life. Enlightenment thought regards the interpretation of existence as open in principle, raises new questions and examines them, but secularists believe they know the final answers. Such ideologies include National Socialism and Marxism. When they claim to know the only true explanation of the world, and demand that life and existence must be organized in accordance with that explanation, such secularist ideas have given no room for genuine Christian faith but have seen it as their task to fight against it.

The result of secularization has been, among other things, long-lasting conflict between faith and knowledge in western thought. Faith has also been considered an explanation of the world similar to rational knowledge: faith confines from where knowledge leaves off. While knowledge continually grows, faith seems to remain without significance, and in man's thinking it does not thematize questions relating to his life. Science or some other secular explanation of the world has been considered as providing sufficient answers to these questions.

Science has offered answers to many problems affecting mankind, but it has also posed threats to human life and creation. The values of technology and materialism have one-sidedly distorted the view of life and the goals of people and societies. The pursuit of wealth has become by far the most important cause for concern. As people have lost the religious way of thinking, they have lost an overall view of life and its basic supports, and in particular a responsible relationship with one's neighbour and nature.

In Lutheran theology it is emphasized that social and scientific interpretations of man and life are not final and absolute. They must be evaluated in the light of divine truth. Christianity illuminates the visible world as part of the whole formed by the beyond and this existence, the heavenly and the worldly together. The knowledge it brings towards an overall view of the structure of beingness and existence, as also in relation to how everything originated and what is to be expected at the end of time.

In any case, the churches need to think what in present-day multidimensional ideological development is ultimately opposed to them in the deepest sense. Some of it is only a change in thought and way of life such as is part of historical development, which is without significance with regard to the apostolic, original faith and witness to it. When Christian values are replaced by numerous other ideologies and systems of values, the Church constantly has to oppose them and compete with them. This demands a readiness for dialogue, and courage and spiritual power to keep to the fore one's own values and ways of thinking.

From a certain point of view, secularization has also been a phenomenon within the western churches. In the life of the churches, temporal questions are emphasized instead of transcendent, supernatural ones. The focus of interest moves from God to man. The background to this has been seeing the value of worldly, temporal matters from the viewpoint of faith. The churches have increasingly paid attention to showing love and to other consequences of faith today.

The position of religion does not seem to have a place in people's thinking and life as easily as previously. But besides this "crisis of religion" people have recently begun to talk of the "crisis of secular thinking". A new feature of western discussion has been talk of the "post-secular time" and of the need for religion in new forms.

Privatization

In secularized societies, religion is often classified as a private matter. Especially in urban conditions people in any case preserve their privacy. They no longer form compact villages and family communities, within which they live fully and spend both their working and free time. Instead, life is separated into several areas of life. ... the same time a person has different groups to which he belongs: one in the family, another at work, a third in free-time hobbies, etc. Similarly, he has different models of thinking for each group and area of life, and they are not necessarily in harmony with one another. The Church and Christian faith do not provide a rounded philosophy of life for every thought and action of modern man. It is valid for him only in certain situations when people take part in church life and think and act in the way the Church teaches. In other contexts, thought and action may markedly differ from this. In people's minds the Church has thus become separate from the rest of life.

Privatization, and the mobility and anonymity of the individual in his own society, bring about loneliness and lack of identity. People long for fellowship, faith and trust, and seek after truth and inner certainty. Because the common way of thinking does not necessarily guide them into finding these things in the

Church, the task of the Church is to live as a community of faith so that channels are opened for outsiders to find their way into the Church.

The rise in religious seeking

Besides secularization a new rise in religiosity has taken place. People have sought help from the churches in their attempt to achieve social liberty. The need for a new morality and values has increased interest in religion. Christian seeking has taken other forms than the churches have offered. It has been characteristic of western religious life that religion itself is not rejected, but traditional forms of church life are shunned.

In addition, some of the religious seeking has been channelled outside the traditional churches. New religious movements have gained a foothold among young people. Their background is the need for a simple explanation of the world and a secure small community. Their religious content is extremely varied, most reflecting the ways of thinking of Asian religions. Their existence is a challenge to the Christian churches to explain clearly the apostolic tradition of faith and to create the kind of congregational life in which members are taken care of and not left alone.

Meeting of religions

The Christian churches are more than ever aware of their mission, also in relation to other great religions. Awareness that we Christians are only one religious community among many can create uncertainty or a feeling of being threatened. It is true that God does his hidden work amidst other religions, but he has only given salvation in Jesus Christ, whom we Christians know. From this follows active mission in the whole non-Christian world.

Christians must learn to see the meeting of religions as a positive opportunity to deepen one's own faith and conviction in dialogue with others. Meeting other religions thus demands, on the one hand, being thoroughly aware of one's own Christian identity and calling and, on the other hand, a readiness to engage in dialogue with others. When in dialogue we meet the thought-world of other religious communities we must express our own views of the Gospel in a language, forms of speech and concepts understood by others.

In carrying out their mission amidst religious pluralism, the churches have to ask themselves: How can we avoid the mutual hostility and conflict which different religious traditions often cause? How can we achieve confidence or even love in relations with representatives of other religions? How can we work together for people's welfare in spite of religious differences and inherited prejudices?

Religious pluriformity makes the common witness of Christians more important than ever. It can be realized by finding ever deeper awareness of the common apostolic legacy and an ever greater readiness to witness accordingly in the world.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD IN THE LIGHT OF THE LUTHERAN VIEW

The creation of the world is an expression of the love of God. As an expression of his love, God also continually maintains life and creates new things at the present time. God created the world as the world, and there is nothing in it that is unknown to him. Therefore the Church should not forget tasks in this world and in secular life, but the Church's responsibility includes all life created by God. The so-called secular world is thus not a reality which has escaped from the Church but it is God's sphere of influence. Witness to the apostolic faith takes place on the whole in the world in which God is otherwise present and active.

Due to the Fall, in every area, among all peoples, cultures and religions in the world, there works the power of evil. In a world corrupted by sin the task of the Church is to explain what the law and will of God is for the realization of a real well-balanced life. Corruption is even so great that mankind cannot even see its own need for redemption. It is awakened by the preaching of the Law and Gospel. Christ's act of redemption is the only salvation from the power of the devil, wherever it appears.

The Church amidst the corrupted world is a community of new life. It is in every place where in accordance with the apostolic tradition the Gospel is preached purely and the sacraments are rightly administered. It is a witness to the fallen world of the possibility of salvation, and its mission affects the whole of creation.

Salvation is given to us in the Church through the Word and sacraments by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Church proclaims Christ to the whole world as the only Saviour. In addition to those without faith, the Church has had to take notice of those who after receiving baptism become alienated from the life of the Church. Evangelization is bringing them back to the grace of baptism and to a life lived accordingly.

In addition to the spiritual sphere, the acts of God also appear in the secular sphere, such as family life, economics, politics, etc. The rising to power of love, truth and justice in these areas is realizing the will of God. Apart from the Church, its individual members have the calling to live in the world and implement there the will of God. A temporal, secular vocation is thus a task received from God, in which man participates as a co-worker of God in the continuous creative process.

WITNESS AND SERVICE IN CHURCH LIFE AT THE PRESENT DAY

Targeting and applying witness and service

To Lutherans apostolicity means in particular originality and biblicalness. According to the New Testament both our Saviour's and the apostles' activity was characterized by preaching being addressed to its hearers in a way that they could understand it and so act accordingly. According to the same principle our Lutheran church aims in its witness and service to bring the unchanging content of the Gospel near to people in a way that accords with the prevailing culture, age group or situation.

Divine worship, which is the centre of church life, is at present being renewed in our church. In the Lutheran tradition, the sermon, which is contemporary explanation of the Bible, has traditionally occupied a central position, even so that services of the word have been held without communion. Now the attempt is being made to return to the common practice where the communion is part of every Sunday church service. In service music congregational hymns have a dominant position. In addition, efforts are being made to increase and diversify other liturgical music so that traditional liturgical parts can find modern musical expression. Attempts at renewal include increasing the role of laypeople in appropriate tasks in services.

In baptism, confirmation, weddings and funerals almost all Finns join in church life. Of all the children born in Finland, the Lutheran church baptizes 90 per cent, 92 per cent of all 15 year olds take part in confirmation classes and confirmation, approximately 80 per cent of all weddings are church weddings and over 95 per cent of the deceased have Christian funerals. Our church sees its task as being better to prepare its members for these events, for instance, by the pastor visiting the home or otherwise meeting family members beforehand. Renewal of the liturgy of church ceremonies has meant that the content of faith is apparent in a more varied way in the event itself, and the participants are better able to receive it.

In the Lutheran church there are many other activities in addition to services. Many more parishioners participate in these weekday activities than in church services on Sundays. For education and teaching there are separate activities for children and young people, who meet in their own groups for their own events. For young people at the age of 15 there are confirmation classes before confirmation. For adults there are groups and meetings for Bible study, for supporting missionary work or making preparations for serving the poor, the handicapped and the sick. In addition, in local churches there are choirs and music groups. The elderly have their own clubs and events.

Different groups in the local churches have been set up by the revival movements, which are a special feature of the Finnish church. They arose in the 19th and 20th centuries to renew the life of our church from within.

Parishioners have gathered under the leadership of laymen or pastors to hear sermons and sing religious songs and hymns. Five different revival movements work in the parishes of our church. Those who take part in their activities attend church worship but in addition they meet in their own groups. In the summer each revival movement arranges a national religious festival attended by tens of thousands of Finns. The revival movements are for many Finns a channel to the life of the local church.

Different forms of activity tell how in the Lutheran church ways have been sought to adapt church life to the needs of different age groups and situations. Thus one of the principles of our church is that conclusions reached concerning a faith for life do not remain the responsibility of individual people, but the church aims to bring the message of the Gospel in each situation as close to its members as possible. As a result, socio-ethical questions, such as a responsible life-style in relations with one's fellow-men, with the underprivileged, with nature and the environment, are noted in the preaching and teaching of the church and in the groups within the local church.

For a long time past the Lutheran church has, by means of education in particular, aimed to lead people to faith. Educational work has comprised Sunday schools for children, confirmation classes for young people and didactic preaching for adults. Today confessional, that is, usually Lutheran religious education in municipal schools and high schools is very important from the point of view of the Church. Finns still have a fairly good idea of the content of Christian faith. In the future the church will nevertheless find the need to take responsibility itself for Christian education and teaching.

Nowadays, besides knowledge, religious experience has become more important. Western people are interested in different experiences and seek them. People want from the church experience rather than knowledge. This means a new emphasis in church work.

That in its activities the Church shows neighbourly love, is frequently better understood in a secularized environment than is speech and words. The witness of the Church's social work, serving one's neighbour, means in practice helping the weak, the underprivileged and the poor. In everything that the Christian and the Church do, there should in any case be an element of service. In leading a church service or in education, in missionary work or in fulfilling one's vocation at work or at home, the Christian serves his neighbour.

The Church does not serve only for the sake of witness, but love is an essential part of faith. No faith the Christian receives good things from above, and in love he passes them on to other people. The Christian does for his neighbour as Christ has done for him. Faith without deeds of love is dead.

Church social work as a special type of church work is one manifestation of Christian service. The need for it is just as current in western welfare societies as elsewhere. The Church is expected to act as the "voice of the voiceless" against those rulers who are indifferent to people's distress and

suffering. Together with others the Church must seek the implementation of justice, truth and love in the life of society.

In each Lutheran parish there have for decades been parish social workers who visit homes and help those in material and emotional difficulties. The diocese of our church is thus charitable, aiming at helping the poor and needy.

In addition to material need, church social work has emphasized mental distress, which appears in many ways in modern society. Besides official parish social workers, the largest parishes have employed hospital counsellors, founded family counselling centres and arranged telephone ministries to meet mental and spiritual distress. International social work, helping the needy in developing countries and in Finland's neighbouring areas, has also expanded in recent years.

The Church 2000 process

In recent years the Finnish Lutheran Church has introduced reforms, the aim of which is to make faith contemporary, living and close to many Finns. The development of parish activities in a modern way is called the Church 2000 process. There are two main objectives: supporting spiritual renewal and developing the parish structure.

These objectives are aimed at in different ways in other Lutheran churches. "Our most urgent need is to strengthen faith and deepen the spiritual life of believers. We should work for the renewal of worship so that the gifts of all are fully utilized. Small groups, where faith and life concerns are held together, could give strength to Christians who witness to the gospel by seeking justice and building fully inclusive communities." (Curitiba 1990. Proceedings of the Eighth Assembly. Lutheran World Federation.)

Spiritual renewal is supported in the Church 2000 process in particular as follows:

1. Improvement of the spiritual life of church workers and employees. Our aim is that alone in silence and together with others we can achieve a more varied and lively Christian life.
2. The spiritual life of homes. For this our church published in 1991 a Book of Home Prayers, which the local churches have distributed to every third Finnish home. At the same time they teach homes how to observe Christian customs, particularly on Sundays and Church festivals. Most Finns are baptized as babies, and their parents teach them an evening prayer when they are a few years old. This is the starting-point of a personal prayer life. The Book of Home Prayers also aims at modern young families teaching an evening prayer to their own children.

3. Renewal of worship. In our Lutheran church renewal of services of worship has been initiated. The aim is to give more space for prayer, preaching and music arising from the Church's common tradition of worship but at the same time expressing contemporary feelings before God. The strengthening and deepening of spiritual life happens principally through the service of worship. The Church which prays and praises in a living way is the strongest testimony to the world.

4. Emphasizing Lent and in particular Holy Week as a special time of prayer in the Church. Our aim is to learn better how to observe and preserve spiritual life during Lent. Lutheran preaching and theology traditionally pays attention to the Passion and the cross. Without neglecting this side of our faith we now wish in addition to learn a deeper and more varied life full of Easter joy and praise in our church.

5. Publishing a book on Christian ethics. Because there is great uncertainty as to what is the Christian way of life, we have started preparations for the publishing of a guidebook on the subject.

Developing the structure of parish work. The parishes of our church are large in membership. Alongside church services there have long been various small groups where believers have gathered to pray, to study the Bible and prepare for church work and everyday tasks. The support and setting up of small functioning communities in the parishes is a goal of church renewal. In them is realized the communal side of the Church, mutual care and preparation for carrying out the Christian's vocation. In them the faith of the Church comes very close to man and his everyday life.

Renewal of the Church is the work of God's Holy Spirit. Because he continually does his work in the Church, renewal of the Church is also a continuous event. When we are involved, we wish to aim at faithfulness above all to the apostolic tradition of the Church. Our starting-point is the ecclesiastical tradition in which we have grown up. But acting accordingly, we need ever more openness to learn from the tradition of other churches and the way in which they witness and serve today in their own environment. Thus the churches' common witness and service can be strengthened in the contemporary world, which is corrupted by many injustices and seeks hope amidst fears and dangers.

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