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## The African Coptic Church

### Introduction

Orthodox churches in Africa today may be identified as follows: The Coptic Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria and All Africa. There are also independent churches in different parts of Africa that carry as part of their title the term "Coptic," "Orthodox," or "Ethiopian." Dealing with these independent churches is beyond the scope of this study. However, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church will be mentioned in connection with its long standing relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church. As for the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the limitations of the present study will not permit dealing with this church. Hence, the present study will concentrate on the "African Coptic Orthodox Church."

### The Heart of the Ancient World

The continent of Africa played no small role in the ancient world, as well as in our times. The northern part of the continent, with Egypt holding its eastern borders, represented the center of the ancient world. The gates of Egypt opened through the Mediterranean Sea in the North towards Europe, the Red Sea to the East led to the Indian Ocean, and the vein

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of life, the Nile River, held together Central and Northern Africa. Through the three waterways, the ancient civilizations in Africa, Asia and Europe were linked to one another. Sinai at the northeast of Egypt, between the Suez Bay and the Aqaba Bay, links the land of Egypt with Western Asia; the lands of Palestine being its immediate neighbor.

### **Name of the Land**

In ancient history Egypt had several names. The pharaohs called their homeland "Kemyt" or "the Black Land." It was also called "Tway" or "the Two Lands," referring to the Upper Egyptian Valley and the Lower Egyptian Delta. It was also called "To-meri." The Hebrews named it "Misrayem" and the Arabians called it "Msr," which is the Arabic name for Egypt to this day. The name "Egypt" that is used in European languages derives from the Greek "Aigyptos" and the Latin "Aegyptus."

The term "Copt" and "Coptic" originally means "Egyptian." It is used today to designate the ancient church of Egypt—the Coptic Orthodox Church and its members.

### **The Coptic Language**

Under the rule of Alexander and his successors, the use of the Greek language increased, and the use of Demotic, the national language, decreased. From about the year A.D. 200, some attempts were made to represent the Demotic in Greek letters. Seven letters from Demotic were added to the Greek alphabet and formed what has become known as the Coptic language, the last phase in the development of the ancient Egyptian language. Five literary dialects existed in Coptic literature. The first Coptic writings consisted of translations of the Gospels and Psalms from the Greek. By the year A.D. 350, the translation of the Bible into the Bohairic and Saidic dialects was completed. Parts of the Bible were also translated into Achmimic, sub-Achmimic, and Fayyumic dialects. Later Coptic

writings constitute sermons, the history of the patriarchs of the Coptic Church, the life of the saints, and liturgical and hymnal works.

When Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, Greek became the official language of the state until the Arab conquest of Egypt in A.D. 651; then Coptic became the language of state transactions until it was replaced by Arabic in A.D. 706 by the Umayyad Viceroy Abd-Allah ibn Abd-al-Malik. The Islamization of some Copts created a new community which began to learn Arabic alongside Coptic, their native tongue. However, Coptic continued as the language of communication among the Copts until the sixteenth or the seventeenth century. The translation from Coptic to Arabic took a long period of time during which Coptic and Arabic intermixed and borrowing from one language to the other was not uncommon. Starting from the tenth century, Copts compounded their writings in Arabic. Gorgy Sobhy, the late Coptologist, traced hundreds of words, names and expressions still in use in colloquial Arabic to their Coptic origin. He considered that the intermixing of the two languages "was the beginning of the formation of the colloquial Arabic in Egypt."

Nevertheless, travelers in Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries met Copts who spoke Coptic. Few Coptic families still speak Coptic as a family tradition. Today, the Coptic language is used in the Coptic churches as a liturgical language. Coptic and Arabic are used alongside each other in worship, but the use of Arabic is increasingly making worship understandable, instead of using a language which practically no one in the congregation understands today.

### **Community and Church**

In past centuries the Copts lived as a distinguishable community. They live today side by side with their Muslim neighbors all over the Arab Republic of Egypt. Together they all share the same rights and responsibilities in social, political and economic affairs.

At the heart of the Coptic community exists the Coptic Church as a

cementing factor that has continuously distinguished the Copts as a religious community. It has always been contiguous with the community and symbolizes the continuity of the Coptic identity.

The Coptic Church has preserved its ancient tradition: its primitivity, mysticism, asceticism, and sacramental life. Religious rites and acts in the Coptic Church, represented in the liturgies, the canonical hours of prayer, the practice of fasting, and the celebration of religious feasts, have served as modes for communicating religious faith and life to the Copts. Coptic culture prevails in Coptic art, music, the architecture of Coptic Church buildings, and religious doctrine.

The Coptic monasteries supplied the Coptic Church with an uninterrupted succession of patriarchs and bishops. In the past Coptic patriarchs served not only the religious needs of the Copts, but they also assumed leadership of the Coptic community in the face of persecution, intolerable taxes, or discrimination to which the Copts were subjected from time to time.

Nevertheless, the congregational character of the Coptic Church left the choice of the clerical hierarchy in the hands of the Coptic community and its lay leaders. This has resulted in an interwoven relationship between community and church, and rendered reciprocity between the two almost inevitable.

## II. The Spread of Christianity in Egypt

Egypt first appears in the Christian era in the story of the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt. The picture of the Virgin Mary riding an ass with the child Jesus in her arms and Joseph walking by her side is a common subject in the Christian art of the West and the East. It is not uncommon to see a similar scene in the Egyptian villages today. This visit has a special significance for the Copts: not only do they celebrate an annual feast of the coming of the Lord to Egypt and join in the steps of the Holy Family,

but they also consider this visit the firm ground upon which their church has been built.

Coptic historians trace the patriarchs of the Coptic Church to St. Mark, the Evangelist, whom they consider the founder of Christianity in Egypt, and the first in a still unbroken chain of 116 patriarchs of the Coptic Church. He is believed to have first come to Alexandria in the year A.D. 48 (some sources say A.D. 55, 58 or 61), and to have been martyred in the streets of Alexandria in the year A.D. 68.

The successors of St. Mark carried the Christian message all over Egypt. William Worrell points out that "by the year 200 Christianity had spread greatly among the native Egyptians, and the Delta was full of converts. Some scholars attributed the rapid spread of Christianity in Egypt to the parallels between Christianity and the ancient Egyptian cult of the triad Osiris, Isis and Horus. Christianity gave the Egyptians new hope for salvation from the aimless and dull life under Roman rule. Only future comfort and spiritual solace in the next world remained, and this Christianity amply promised."

### The Catechumenal Schools

In the first four centuries, converts to Christianity in Egypt were instructed in the Catechumenal schools. The catechumens (the instructed) received instruction in the principles of the Christian faith before baptism. The *Didache*, or the "Teaching of the Apostles," was used as a manual of instruction. In his Festal Epistles, St. Athanasius said that the *Didache* "was appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who are just recently coming to us, and wish to be instructed in the word of godliness. The catechumens received instruction concerning the Two Ways: the Way of Life and the Way of Death. The Way of Life is the Way of Christ; that is, the way of virtue and spiritual life.

The catechumens were instructed for a period of two or three years, during which they passed four stages in the process of instruction. The *inquirers*

were those who expressed desire to enter the church; the hearers (*audentes*) were admitted to a part of the worship; the kneelers (*the prostrati* or *genuflectentes*) joined in the prayers of the faithful; and the chosen (*electi*) were ready for baptism and participation in the communion of the church.

The first part of the Coptic liturgy is called the "Liturgy of the Catechumens." It includes readings from the Epistles of Paul, the Catholic Epistles, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the sermons. The Catechumenal schools have been revived in the Coptic Church since the 1920s in the form of Sunday Schools and the Schools of Church Education.

### III. The Copts In Modern Egypt

Copts lived during the Middle Ages and until the middle of the nineteenth century in relative isolation from the rest of the Egyptian society. They lived in particular quarters of the towns and in separate parts of the villages. They continued to hold their traditional positions as land administrators, tax collectors, technicians, and craftsmen. The Coptic community continued as a religious and social unit which preserved the racial, cultural, and religious identity of the Copts. The Coptic patriarch, the head of the Coptic Church, was in a sense a political leader. He was held responsible by the state authorities for fulfilling the financial obligations of the Copts toward the governing powers, such as the *Jizya*, and the occasional taxes that were imposed on the Copts from time to time. Starting from the second half of the nineteenth century, the status of the Copts has undergone continuous change corresponding to contemporaneous social change in the Egyptian society as a whole.

The modern history of Egypt started after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (1798-1801). When Mohammed Ali came to power in 1805 his ideal model of a modern state was along the lines of the French pattern. He destroyed the Mamlouk system and started to modernize the administration by cen-

tralizing authority and power in his person and by building a modern army. The social autonomy of the Coptic minority started to be liquidated within the developing nationalism as a result of the establishment of modern administration and new institutions, such as modern schools, a modern army, and a modern system of taxation. The *Jizya* was completely abolished by Said. In 1866, Ismail proclaimed equality between Muslims and Copts in political matters, and the Copts were permitted to be nominated for election to offices.

### **The Copts Since the 1952 Revolution**

The socio-political map of Egypt was changed during the last thirty-five years. Egypt has undergone radical changes politically, socially and economically. The practice of socialism between 1952 and 1970 created a public sector owned by the state that is responsible for a large percentage of the national economy.

The condition of the Copts accordingly changed. Although religion was eliminated as a factor in political affairs, it was difficult to change the attitudes of the masses. In the elections of the National Assembly in 1958, only one Copt was elected out of 350 representatives. The government appointed eight Copts as members of the assembly. In another election, in order to ensure Coptic representation in the National Assembly, the government limited certain districts exclusively to Copts.

Furthermore, the socialist practice differentiated between what is social and what is religious. One sign of the separation between these two was the separation between the Coptic benevolent societies and the churches which they established and headed. A law was passed, according to which the establishment and administration of the churches was given to the patriarchate and the dioceses.

During the 1970s and the 1980s the Egyptian political system was transformed into a democratic republic. Opposition parties were established. Although the Egyptian government represents the Nationalist party (the

party of the majority that is presently headed by President Hosny Mubarak), the opposition parties own their own newspapers and express their opinions through their representatives in the People's Council (the Egyptian Parliament).

Egyptian economy adopted during these two decades an open policy that allowed for the development of a powerful private and economic sector. The last Five Year Plan for Social and Economic Development (1982 - 1987) and the present one depended heavily on developing the production and reducing the consuming patterns. Developing new industries, land reclamation and cultivating the vast Egyptian deserts are major goals for developing Egypt's economy in face of the explosion of the Egyptian population that has reached more than 52 million in 1988. The annual population increase is more than 1.3 million persons. The more than six million Christian Egyptians, along with their church, share in nation building through their private business or government employment. The Coptic Church has developed programs of economic and social development as well as family planning.

During the last forty years, Egypt was involved in four wars with Israel: 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973. Egyptian youth, Muslim and Christian alike, sacrificed their lives in facing the aggressor and defending their country. Their blood was mixed together on the sacred soil of Egypt.

The Muslims and the Christians are today facing together the dangers of fanaticism that has tried to infiltrate their midst. In 1956 the late President Gamal Abdul Nasser participated in laying the foundation stone for the St. Mark Coptic Cathedral. On that occasion Nasser said:

God never called for fanaticism, but called for love...We are striving for our ideals and our principles, but we find before us problems and difficulties caused by fanatics, be they Christian or Muslim. We all know of quarrels that happen in villages and other places. A Muslim fanatic stands up and incites the people, or a Christian fanatic stands up and excites the people,



and brothers begin fighting each other...We must exhort the fanatics, Muslim or Christian, to follow the right path...The world was created and along with it fanatics will be in it until the end.

Along with Haile Selassie and other dignitaries from all over the world, Nasser was present at the celebration of the inauguration of this cathedral in 1968.

The late President Anwar El-Sadat expressed similar views at a meeting with Muslim and Christian leaders in 1977. He said:

We have lived together for thousands of years on this land and beneath this sky in an atmosphere of tolerance, and our sons and grandsons shall follow suit until doomsday. Egypt has never been the scene of religious strife...Ever so often a rash act might be committed by one faction or another, but we always unite to put an end to it and contain it. Apart from this, we Egyptians have always lived according to the religious tolerance which the Christian religion and the religion of Islam impart to us.

However, Sadat made a grave error by imprisoning leaders of opposition parties, Muslim leaders and some bishops and priests. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, was confined to his residence in the monastery. Sadat was assassinated by the same Islamic groups that he had earlier encouraged. The Egyptian press is concerned these days with the expansion of these Islamic groups. The ideology of some Islamic groups tends to be that of violence and extremism.

One of the recent developments that has created great concern in the Egyptian government is "The Islamic Companies for Islamic Investment." The Egyptian government feels that such economic enterprises are threatening the national economy. It recently issued a new law to regulate the actions of such economic entities.

President Hosny Mubarak, since his election after Sadat, has attempted

to remedy the hurt feelings of the Copts, because of Sadat's incomprehensible actions against religious leaders. Pope Shenouda is highly honored by President Mubarak.

### **Pope Shenouda III**

Pope Shenouda III had been a Sunday School teacher since his early youth. He was also editor of the Sunday Schools Magazine. When he became monk, he chose solidarity life in a cave ten miles away from the monastery. In 1962 he was ordained Bishop of Theological and Religious Education. His consecration as Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, on the 14th November, 1971, was a real ecumenical celebration. Patriarchs and representatives of many churches from all over the world, including the Vatican, shared in the occasion. The following section of this study will elaborate on the biblical teaching of Pope Shenouda III.

### **IV. Biblical Teaching of Pope Shenouda, III**

One unique phenomenon witnessed in the Coptic Church since 1962, was the weekly Friday meeting of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. More than five or six thousand persons, men, women, youth and even children assembled every Friday afternoon for about two hours to listen to the young bishop, and later to the Patriarch, addressing himself to their questions. This phenomenon may need some systematic analysis. How could one person attract an audience of thousands for many years? Pope Shenouda spoke in very simple language but of very high quality. His wit and sense of humor contributed to the attractiveness of his words. The important element in his weekly words was the fact that he was able to analyze life situations and personal problems and concerns. His analysis of biblical texts and church history showed the vastness of his knowledge and his capability in relating difficult meanings to the simple words.

Since 1986, Pope Shenouda III resumed his teaching in the Conference

Hall situated under the Coptic Cathedral at Anba Rueis. Again, about six thousand persons, most of whom are young men and women, assemble every Wednesday to listen with open heart and mind to the words of the Patriarch. When the Pope begins to answer the questions that he receives in writing from his audience, every person in the hall listens attentively in order not to miss any word. After a recess that is spent in singing hymns, the Pope again speaks. For forty-five minutes he lectures to the assembled believers. Each lecture is usually devoted to a biblical theme, or to examining a biblical concept, studying a biblical personality, or meditating on a Psalm or teaching one of the books of the Bible.

### **How to Study Biblical Personalities**

In the introduction to his book *Adam and Eve*, Pope Shenouda analyzed the importance of studying biblical personalities. Through the study of biblical personalities each person may find his personal life. The human spirit since Adam and Eve is the same.

The Bible introduces us to different types of saintly personalities. Each of them has a distinct character and differs from the other persons in age, sex, function, social life and spiritual orientation. Saintly life is the property of everybody. The saintly life exemplified in the Bible was not limited to the prophets, the apostles, priests and arch-priests or miracle makers. On the contrary, it is for all and possible for everyone.

Pope Shenouda noted that some of the saints that are mentioned in the Bible made mistakes or committed sins. We have to look at the depth of their repentance to see how they were naturally close to God. When we say that they made mistakes, we do not mean that all their life was spent in sin, but that these mistakes or sins were temporary in their lives; saintly life was their normal state.

The Bible is the record of God's way of dealing with people. This treatment gives us an idea or a vision of the beautiful characteristics of God. When we study the lives of biblical saints, we do not want to study history,

but to absorb a kind of life. The Bible is not meant to be a book of history. It is a book of faith, and a book of life, and this is the difference between studying the Bible and studying history books. History gives events, but here we do not only investigate events, we rather examine the condition of the heart.

Through the investigation of events we study the human soul, all of its sensations, feelings and actions. We enter into the depth of the soul and study its inner struggles and its relationship with God, with men and with itself. From all this we find our own image as we study, analyze, and try to understand the biblical personalities. We benefit from their experiences. We learn from their falling and from their uprising and uplifting.

The previous sections of this paper gave only some examples of the teaching method of the Bible as applied by Pope Shenouda III. In addition to what was already mentioned in this paper, Pope Shenouda lectured and published on specific books of the Bible, such as *Meditations On the Book of Jonah the Prophet*. He also published a book of four volumes on the *Ten Commandments*. Pope Shenouda III has published more than fifty books. His lectures on cassettes are spread among the Christians in all Arabic-speaking countries.

### V. Mission Of The Copti Church In Africa

Since the dawn of human civilization Egypt was aware of its place and role in Africa. The Great River, the Nile, materialized the ties that linked Egypt and the rest of Africa. The ancient Egyptian Queen Hatshebsut was known for making trade with other African countries in the south of Egypt.

The impact of the Coptic Church on world Christianity has been widely recognized by ancient and modern historians and writers. At the beginning of Christianity in Egypt, Alexandria had been at the crossroad of the ancient world as both a trade and cultural center. Many visitors to

the city learned the Christian faith there and carried the Gospel with them back to their countries.

The Catechetical School of Alexandria was attended by students from other nations who carried the teachings of the Fathers of that School to their own homelands. Coptic converts to Christianity carried the Gospel to other nations around the three continents of the ancient world: Africa, Asia and Europe.

In his visits to Cyrenaica or the Pentapolis (presently Libya), St. Mark was accompanied by Coptic helpers from Alexandria who continued his missionary endeavor in North Africa. Cyrenaica was recognized as one of the dioceses of the Coptic Church at the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.).

Christianity spread from Egypt towards the south along the upper valley of the Nile, and reached Nubia and southern Sudan. Christian art in the National Museum of Khartoum shows similarity with Coptic Art.

The Kingdom of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) was converted to Christianity in the fourth century through the mission of Frumentius who landed near the Ethiopian shore in the Red Sea after the wreck of his boat going to India. St. Athanasius ordained Frumentius bishop for Ethiopia under the name of Abba Salama (the father of peace). Until the 1940s, the head of the Ethiopian Church was a Coptic Archbishop ordained by the Coptic Patriarch in Egypt. In 1960 the first Ethiopian, Catholicos (Patriarch) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was ordained in the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo and in the presence of Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia at that time.

During the Christian era new dimensions in the relationship of Egypt and the rest of Africa developed. As mentioned earlier, Christianity spread from Egypt to Libya and other parts of North Africa and south to Nubia, Sudan and Ethiopia. In recent history the Coptic Church had a mission in South Africa. A bishop and two priests were based in Cape Town. Because of Egypt's firm stand against the apartheid policy in South Africa and the difficulty of communication between the Church in Egypt and

the diocese in South Africa, the mission was closed down some years ago, and the last of the three missionaries was buried in South Africa.

Some years ago, the Coptic Church started a mission in Kenya with its base in Nairobi. Bishop Antonious Marcos, with his priests, monks and deacons is spreading the mission in Kenya and Uganda. However, the mission of the Coptic Orthodox Church today goes far beyond its physical presence. The visit of Pope Shenouda III to several countries in equatorial Africa, including Kenya, Zaire and Sudan, opened up new dimensions for extending the spiritual influence of the Coptic Church in Africa.

At the laying of the cornerstone for the AACC headquarters in Nairobi in 1975, the late president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, spoke about the leading role of Africa in Christianity through giving refuge to the Holy Family from persecution in our homeland. He also mentioned the leadership that African Christianity in Egypt offered in the early centuries and the need for Africans to explore the theological heritage of the Fathers of the Church of Alexandria as exemplified in the Catechetical School founded by the African Apostle Mark.

Since the beginning of Christianity, the mission of the Church was a mission to the poor, to the deprived, to the sick, to the marginalized people, and in fact to the whole troubled world. Our Lord made it a condition for belonging to the Kingdom of God that all nations will be judged before God concerning their care for one another. (Matthew 25:31-46).

The mission to the poor was exemplified by the way in which the Apostolic Church dealt with the needy since the day of Pentecost. The whole church was transformed into a mission to the poor, whereby every member of the new community sold his/her property and brought the money to the feet of the Apostles who distributed to each member according to his or her need. Soon after the church felt the need for organizing its mission to the poor and consecrated the first seven deacons in the Christian Church, of whom the martyr Stephen was a good example.

The *Didache* (*The Teaching of the Apostles*), gives a good model of the

Church's mission to the poor. The bishops, the priests and ministers and the deacons were given specific responsibility with regard to widows, orphans, the deprived and needy, wherever they may be. The Coptic Orthodox church has followed this model of the Church Fathers in its mission to the poor. St. Shenouda, the Abbot of the white monastery, Abba Abraam, the Bishop of Fayoum, offered a model of self-denial and self-giving to any person who came to him asking for any kind of help.

However, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Copts began to develop the mission to the poor in a more organized way. Benevolent Coptic societies were formed by lay men and women all over Egypt. These societies addressed themselves to the basic needs of the Copts. They opened modern schools, hospitals, clinics and orphanages. They established a special ministry to needy families, established new churches and built them in conjunction with these basic services to the poor.

By the middle of the twentieth century, a new model for working with the poor was developed. Father Makary El-Sourianny (later called Bishop Samuel) started the Department of Social Studies of the Institute of Coptic Studies in 1955. Academic analysis was backed up with applied and practical programs related to the poor and deprived persons. Action and reflection were not separated. His lectures on pastoral theology and social services provide a good agenda for the Coptic mission to the poor until this day. In 1956 he developed a program for church membership, by which the Coptic Church would identify all its members so the *koinoia*, the fellowship, among all the members of the church could be materialized and the needs of the poor cared for as each member of the community took seriously his membership in the one body of Christ, the Church, and fulfilled his/her obligation to the brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Rural Diakonia Project was another example of the Church's mission to the poor, wherever they may be. The basic concern was not only to help the villagers with material need, but rather to bring the church to them as members of the body of Christ. Some of these rural communities

were isolated and scattered. In some places just one Christian family lived in the village.

In 1962 Bishop Samuel was ordained Bishop of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services. Since then the Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services was born and with it new dimensions of the Coptic Church's engagement with the poor were inaugurated. New development programs were initiated; such as the community development centers, providing vocational training for girls who are school leavers; the vocational training centers for young men, providing skills for non-employed youth in one of the needed manual skills, badly needed in Egyptian society today; desert reclamation programs; services for the garbage collectors—only to name a few of these engagements with the poor. Bishop Samuel left behind him devoted disciples who have learned with him the meaning of the Church's mission to the poor today. (Bishop Samuel was assassinated when Sadat was slain).

### CONCLUSION

Man is alienated in his world. He has developed a sense of estrangement in the world he has shared in shaping. Contemporary art and music express this alienation in different ways. Philosophers, theologians and educators formulate new conceptions in an attempt to bring humankind to its true self-consciousness and self-awareness. Paul Tillich said that we are alienated because we are estranged from "the ground of our being" and from the "origin and aim of our life." Paulo Freire called for the educational process of "conscientization" as a means for "social action for freedom" and for developing commitment. To the Orthodox educator, our search for meaning loses direction when it is confined to abstract ideas in isolation from our existential experience in a changing world. Christian faith is an existential decision which is basic for the transformation of personal experience in life situations. True self-knowledge is also a



knowledge of God. Saint Antony of Egypt said: "He who knows himself, knows God." Self-knowledge, in this perspective, means our return to our true nature: the sinful becoming sinless.

Human beings are persons because they are created in the image of God. They are free to accept the truth and are responsible to the truth. Their freedom allows them to become "partakers of the Holy Spirit," to become the likeness of God.

The greatness of man is therefore the continual building of his freedom in the Spirit in order that, from being an individual, he may become a person, a center in which the grace of God functions and which allows itself to be used as a channel of grace to others.

The Christian person enjoys communion with God and fellowship in the community of faith: *the ecclesia*. His spirituality is not simply an appearance of external piety, but a genuine quality of internal life and experience which finds expression in external behavior and in the person's relationships and actions. The quality of spiritual life can be seen as the continuous development towards what St. Paul called "mature manhood." The growth towards maturity, towards a whole, can be realized only through interrelatedness and fellowship within the *koinoia* of the church, as members of the body of Christ. Thus, "speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every joint with which it is supplied, where each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and up-builds itself in love" (Eph. 4:15-16). As an unified whole, the Christian person is the image of God in his entire person: body and soul. The goal of Christian life and Christian education is to attain *theosis*, i.e., deification. Deification presupposes a continued act of repentance, love of God and love of neighbor, and life in the liturgical-sacramental experience of the Church. Thus, knowing and being are not separated in the Orthodox conception. The dichotomy in Western thought between the "material"

and the "spiritual," the "profane" or "worldly" and the "sacred," is overcome in the Orthodox understanding of spiritual life. In worship the whole existence of the person is involved.

Hence, reconciliation is a process of the dynamic transformation of human life through the grace of the Holy Spirit. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Corinthians 5:19). Orthodox theologians emphasize the importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for an understanding of reconciliation and redemption.

In other words, the deification of human existence is not actualized, but it is a goal. We need always to partake of the body of Christ. We believe that when we receive the communion, it is truly the body of Christ which we partake. It is a total process of transformation in Christ.

Deification is a continuing process of becoming. It confirms that we are molded after the Holy Trinity. It also *affirms* that we are molded after the Holy Trinity. It also affirms that we are truly human through the Incarnation of the Logos: God's act of becoming man. In this sense, a new meaning of man-woman relationship takes place. It is not by chance that St. Paul made the analogy of the relationship between husband and wife and the relation between Christ and the Church. The new relationship between the man and his wife and between the wife and her husband has taken a new form: the fulfillment of humanity after the shape of the Trinity. We no longer speak of "I" but "We." As the three persons in God share in the one nature in Three Persons, we also have this type of relationship which has been sanctified in the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit acted in the Church and continues to act. We cannot understand the future of the Church unless we understand that the Holy Spirit has acted and continues to act as was done at the time of Pentecost. Pentecost is a continuing action in the life of the churches. It was not done once and for all, but it is a continuing action in which the church continues to find its meaning through the Holy Spirit. Perhaps what we need today is a theology of the Holy Spirit through which we would find new meanings for our being *in* the Holy Spirit.