Jaroslav Pelikan argues that “as the twentieth century began, each of the major churches of the divided Christendom was obliged, for reason of its own, to address anew the doctrine of the church, its place in the mind of Christ, its essential message, its nature and identity, its mark of continuity, its authority and structure.” Whilst the doctrine of the church has been part of the Christian confession ever since the Apostle’s Creed, ecclesiology, as a doctrine, has developed in sporadic episodes within the history of Christianity. It is the particular mark of the twentieth century to be called the century of ecclesiology: practically speaking, the doctrine of the church has become the leitmotif of this age. It appears, however, that three prominent factors have influenced the development of the doctrine of the church during this period: ecumenism, modernism/postmodernism and internal dynamic.

Firstly, the shift from an ecclesiology of expansion (mission) in which emphasis is laid upon denominationalism and distinctiveness toward an ecclesiology of integration and interdenominational cooperation represents without doubts one of the greatest achievements of the ecumenical movement ever since Edinburgh 1910 (“Faith and Order”) and Stockholm 1925 (“Life and Work”). However, since the ecumenical movement had to address, also, those issues that caused division within the Church, the initial quest for unity took often the form of apologetic debates. Consequently, each tradition (church) appealed to the past in order to legitimise its present and, eventually, to offer its own model as a valid solution to the quest for the unity of the Church.

Whilst the intended unity is far from being realised, Kärkkäinen argues that the ecumenical movement has been effective both to create a platform for dialogue and to stimulate theological clarifications and rapprochements between different traditions within Christendom. However, from an Orthodox perspective, the crux of the ecumenical dialogue appears to be the question of authority. Thus, Konstantinidis affirms that:

It is well known that from the Orthodox point of view the question of authority in the Church is not only considered as an absolutely critical point of dialogue, but it also stands out as a condition of entering into theological dialogue with them [Catholics and Protestants].
Secondly, the Church has also been confronted by Modernism and Post-modernism; confrontation which among other aspects questioned both the Church’s claim to possess the truth, and its role within the society. Consequently, from a modern perspective, the Church came under close scrutiny of the secular society: its teachings were subjected to the same criteria of truth that operate in the scientific world. Especially, the development of the social sciences, the rising of Rationalism and literary and historical criticism have determined the Church to formulate the essential meaning of the Christian Tradition and also its relations, whether positive or negative, to contemporary thought. Alternatively, the culture of Post-modernity with its pluralism and relativism has challenged the Church’s claim to the absolute truth.

And thirdly, the internal dynamics characterised by the emergence of separatist, reforming, or renewal groups has influenced the doctrine of the church yet from another perspective; namely the relevance of the Church’s teachings and praxis for its own members.

One particular aspect which has been challenged in this multi-faceted encounter between Christianity and the above mentioned factors concerns the role of the Church in establishing what is authoritative for faith and morals; in other words to establish a dynamic relation between theological epistemology (episteme) and religious practice (praxis). Thus, if episteme is concerned to identifying the truth (“ultimate reality”), and praxis with the way in which that truth becomes normative, ecclesia represents that community which, being more or less institutionalised, exercises authority in maintaining the balance between them. However, this raises the question concerning the Church’s credentials to exercise such authority.

Whilst in the Western world it appears to be impossible to give a clear answer to this question due to the fact that the views of scholars vary not only from one tradition to another, but even within the same tradition, the Orthodox Church claims to speak with one voice due to the fact that regardless “temporal circumstances [...] Orthodox Christians live in the same ecclesial and spiritual worlds.” Moreover, Gavin argues that:

“There can be only one Church founded by our Lord, and in that Church there can be but one single Faith. This one Church is the Orthodox Church; the one Faith is the whole Orthodox doctrine.”

The Orthodox affirm that the unique authority of their Church to present the apostolic faith and practice lies in its christological and pneumatological constitution, that is, the Church is at the same time both the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Spirit. In other words, the Church’s authority to maintain the balance between episteme and praxis is determined by the relations between Christ and the Church, on the one hand, and between the Church and the Spirit, on the other. Methodologically, these relations will be investigated from the perspective of space between the “Head” and the “Body”, and between the “spirit” and the “Institution.” The mode in which
this space is conceived in ecclesiology can lead not only to relatedness and freedom between the divine and human spheres but also to separation or fusion. If the space is too big it leads to separation and the Church becomes only a social-historical institution, whereas if the space is too small it leads to merging and the Church runs the risk to undertake the prerogatives of Christ and the Spirit.

Orthodox Ecclesiology: The Body of Christ

Timothy Ware writes that “the Orthodox Church in all humility believes itself to be the “one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church”, of which the Creed speaks; such is the fundamental conviction which guides Orthodox in their relation with other Christians.” Consequently, the Orthodox Church attempts to demonstrate that its faith and practice express the infallible embodiment of the divine truth. As Bulgakov puts it: “The Church, truth, infallibility, these are synonymous.” This brings us to the question of Orthodox ecclesiology.

Historical Background

Compared with the Western Church, the Eastern Church knows only relatively feeble development in ecclesiology. Not only that the Greek Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils produced no systematic presentation of the doctrine of the church, but Zizioulas affirms that “during the patristic period, there was scarcely mention of the being of the Church.” One implication of this fact, as Florovsky points out, is the impossibility to find an Orthodox definition of the Church that could claim any doctrinal authority. Consequently, Jay asserts that the Church is “a fact that is lived rather than theologised or dogmatised.” Similarly, Bulgakov affirms that one recognises the Church not by definition but by experience.

However, in the last few decades of the twentieth century a large number of books have been published which illustrate the emergence of a vigorous theology of the church within Orthodoxy. Three major trends are particularly influential. Firstly, there is a trend which attempts to establish the identity of the Orthodox ecclesiology in contrast with Catholicism and Protestantism. Consequently, it emphasises certain distinctive features of Orthodoxy such as; iconography, the transfiguration of creation, a spirituality of kenosis and theosis, a personalist view of society and the ecclesiology of sobornost. Secondly, there is another movement which explores both the internal and external factors which have generated the contemporary crisis of the Orthodox Church. The third group emphasises the role of trinitarian theology as the ground for a new approach to the ontology of the Church. The contribution of this group to contemporary theology, particularly its role in the shift from an christological to a trinitarian ecclesiology, is openly acknowledged by Western scholars. However, it has to be pointed out that
the simple rediscovery of the doctrine of Trinity does not in itself resolve the problem of ecclesiology. C. E. Gunton, for instance, argues that the Eastern Fathers failed to carry through their theology of the Trinity by developing a theology of community, conforming instead “their views to those of the world around, with baneful consequences.” Similarly, Nissiotis affirms that the Orthodox tradition has “excellent theological models of a very profound ecclesiology but fail to use them, fail to put them to work.”

In conclusion, one can observe that within traditional Orthodoxy there is neither an “officially accepted” definition of the Church, nor a universally accepted ecclesiological model. Therefore this paper interacts with those views and authors that are widely accepted by the Eastern Orthodox churches.

A Theandric Being – The Body of Christ

Description

Orthodox theologians underline the fact that the Church is not a purely “earthly” institution to be studied as a social group, or as a simple historical reality. Rather it is a “human-divine” being which although not exactly definable nevertheless can be described. In the Byzantine tradition, for instance, the Church is

a sacramental communion with God in Christ and the Spirit, whose membership (the entire Body of Christ) is not limited to the earthly oikoumene (“inhabited earth”) where law governs society, but includes the host of angels and saints, as well as the divine head.

This sacramental communion, affirms Bulgakov, has a visible part and an invisible one: the visible part is the historical church whereas the invisible is the universal church. Alternatively, other Orthodox scholars reject this combination of Roman Catholic and Neo-Platonic categories and point out that there is but one Church, visible and invisible. The distinction is made simply from a human point of view.

The Church, the Body of Christ, manifests forth and fulfils itself in time, without changing its essential unity or inward life of grace. And therefore, when we speak of “the Church visible and invisible”, we so speak only in relation to man.

Whilst avoiding a dualistic image, this view “spiritualises” the Church as a changeless being running thus the “danger of historically disincarnating the Church.” Alternatively, other Orthodox scholars argue that a correct approach to ecclesiology has to include both the mystical and historical aspects of the Church, as well as to establish the link between them.
The Body of Christ

The key toward an understanding of Orthodox view of the Church is the synergistic concept “divine-human” or “theandric”, developed by analogy to the Christological definition of Chalcedon. The Church, as a divine-human being, belongs to the history of salvation as the fifth event after Christ’s Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. Therefore the Orthodox speak about the Church as the body of Christ. As Staniloae puts it: “the Church is Christ, understood as Christ extended into humanity.” This thought is deeply rooted in patristic tradition, especially in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine and Anastasius of Antioch.

(God) assumed our whole race in a single individual, having become the first-fruits of our nature [...] For his purpose was to raise up in its totality what has fallen. Now what had fallen was our whole human race. Therefore he mingled himself completely with Adam. Life itself with the dead, in order to save him. He penetrated into the totality of him to whom he was united, like the soul of the great body, vivifying it throughout, communicating life to it wholly in all its perceptive faculties. This is why mankind is called “the body of Christ and his members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27), the body of the Christ who both diffuses himself equally in all together, and dwells individually in each one according to the measure of his faith.

Between Christ and the Church there is the closest possible bond; Christ “mingled” himself totally with men in so far that it is impossible to distinguish between them. In fact Andruțos affirms that the Church is the centre and the organ of Christ’s redeeming work; [...] it is nothing else that the continuation and extension of His prophetic, priestly, and kingly power [...] The Church and its Founder are inextricably bound together [...] The Church is Christ with us.

And as such, continues Andruțos, the Church has the same authority as its Founder. Moreover, founded upon the mystery of God itself, and God’s being as communion, the Church is also a reflection of the Holy Trinity and the life of God, which is love and communion. Communicated to the Church through the work of the Son and the Spirit, God’s love expands to the entire creation in order to bring it to communion with God. In other words, the Church is also the organ of the Holy Spirit to mediate the saving energies of Christ, that is, to lead the whole creation to theosis. Orthodoxy regards theosis as being, first and foremost, the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. Lossky writes, “The Son has become like us by the incarnation; we become like Him by deification, by partaking of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.” Similarly, Stavropoulos affirms that theosis is offered by Christ, but realised only with the Holy Spirit: “Only in the Holy Spirit will we reach the point of becoming gods, the likeness of God.” In other words, Christ has achieved our salvation and deification in an objective way whilst the Spirit applies it in
a subjective way, through the agency of the Church, to our persons.\textsuperscript{59} However, Meyendorff argues that “it is not the Church which through the medium of its institutions bestows the Holy Spirit, but it is the Spirit which validates every aspect of Church’s life, including the institutions.”\textsuperscript{60} Thus, one can be confident that one does receive grace by means of sacrament, precisely because it is through the Church that the Spirit works.

The Church is God’s temple, a sacred enclosure, house of prayer, a gathering of the People, body of Christ, his Name, Bride of Christ, which calls the people to penitence and prayer; purified by the water of holy baptism and washed by his precious blood, adorned as a bride and sealed with the ointments of the Holy Spirit [...] The Church is an earthly heaven wherein the heavenly God dwells and walks; it is an anti-type of the crucifixion, the burial and the resurrection of Christ [...] The Church is a divine house where the mystical living sacrifice is celebrated [...] and its precious stones are the divine dogmas taught by the Lord to his disciples.\textsuperscript{61}

However, since the Church is a divine-human being, the question which arises concerns not only the link between these two aspects, but also the distinction between them. In other words, can one predicate to the human aspect of the Church whatever is true about its divine element? These aspects will be analysed in the following methodological, theological, and sociological observations.

\textit{Observations}

\textbf{Methodological}

The first observation related to Orthodox ecclesiology refers to the use of images in order both to safeguard the mystical character of the Church and to rule out any tendency to reduce it to a simple, historical institution.\textsuperscript{62} However, due to the fact that little has been done by Orthodox scholars\textsuperscript{63} in the area of hermeneutics\textsuperscript{64} in general and linguistics in particular,\textsuperscript{65} the critical reflection that lead to a more accurate discrimination between the valid and invalid application of images,\textsuperscript{66} is, to a large degree, absent from the Orthodox writings.\textsuperscript{67} Thus, whilst the New Testament contains, for example, dozens of images of the Church such as bride of Christ, building, plant, priesthood, race, temple, people of God, it appears that Orthodox ecclesiology prefers the figure of the Church as the Body of Christ. Paradoxically, however, the concept of “the Body of Christ” has not been carefully studied from an exegetical point of view within the Orthodox tradition.\textsuperscript{68} Ware, for example, speaks in one place about the “Body of Christ” in two different senses: first, the eucharistic Body of Christ, and second, the Church as the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{70} The relation between the two is a causal one: “\textit{Because} we eat from the one loaf, \textit{therefore} we are made one Body in Christ.”\textsuperscript{71} In order to support his view, Ware quotes from G. Galitis:
Communion [... makes us according to Paul one body, the Body of Christ. And this Body of Christ [...] is the Church. Consequently, participating in the Body of Christ, that is in the Church, and partaking of [...] the Body of Christ through the Eucharist are two ways of same thing [...] Thus the Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Church itself. It is through this Sacrament that the Church realises itself, that the Body of Christ is built and held together.\textsuperscript{72}

However, if the eucharistic Body of Christ and the ecclesial Body of Christ are one and the same thing, then the logic of the discourse is absurd. The Church eats the Church in order to build up the Church.

Elsewhere, Ware makes an attempt to distinguish between the three senses of the concept “Body of Christ”: incarnated Christ, the ecclesial Body of Christ, and the eucharistic Body of Christ. First, the distinction between the incarnated Christ, and the ecclesial Body of Christ:

The dogma of Chalcedon must be applied to the Church as well as to Christ. Just as Christ the God-Man has two natures, divine and human, so in the Church there is a synergy or cooperation between the divine and the human. Yet between Christ’s humanity and that of the Church there is this obvious difference, that the one is perfect and sinless, while the other is not yet fully so. Only a part of the humanity of the Church, the saints in heaven, has attained perfection, while here on earth the Church’s members often misuse their freedom.\textsuperscript{73}

This explanation, indeed, attempts to differentiate between the incarnated Christ and the ecclesial Body of Christ. In order to defend his view that the Church is the Body of Christ, Ware uses a Platonic image of the Church with two distinct entities: the invisible perfect and the visible imperfect. However, in reality Ware identifies the Church with its changeless nature.

[...] The sin of man cannot affect the essential nature of the Church. We must not say that because Christians on earth sin and are imperfect, therefore the Church sins and is imperfect; for the Church, even on earth, is a thing of heaven, and cannot sin. Saint Ephraim of Syria rightly spoke of “the Church of the penitents, the Church of those who perish”, but this Church is at the same time the icon of the Trinity. How is it that the members of the Church are sinners, and yet they belong to the communion of saints?\textsuperscript{74}

In order to answer this question, Ware quotes Meyendorff:

The mystery of the Church consists in the very fact that together sinners become something different from what they are as individuals; this “something different” is the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{75}

Consequently, in affirming that the nature of the Church is not affected by the life of its members, Ware and Meyendorff follow a Platonic approach in which the invisible essence of the Church subsists independent of its particular visible mode(s) of expression. Alternatively, the argument that in mysterious way sinners in communion becomes saints suggests that the
divine element “so overwhelmed humanity that it became a mere cipher.””\textsuperscript{76} As Bria argues:

The key issues facing Eastern Christianity today are linked with the tension between a defensive and magisterial way of presenting the church as a symbolic, mystical reality, and the history, life and mission of the concrete communities that form the visible church. We cannot idealise the church by ignoring the people who carry the burden of tradition in different situations. We must reflect on what people are actually doing to identify what is emerging in contemporary Christianity.\textsuperscript{77}

And further,

A deeper comprehension of holiness, repentance and sin in the institutional life of the church is needed. The view that the objective holiness of the church cannot be spoiled by the sin of Christians fails to take account of ambiguities in the life of the church, the sinful duality of human history.\textsuperscript{78}

However, the view that the Church is a perfect sinless being, totally separated from the sinful life of its members still dominates the Orthodox ecclesiology and constitutes the main argument of the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church.\textsuperscript{79} As Meyendorff puts it:

The mystery of the church consists precisely in the fact that sinner, coming together, form the \textit{infallible Church}. They constitute the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Spirit, and the Column and Foundation of Truth. No analogy can possibly be drawn between individual member, who is a sinner, and the Church, the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{80}

Second, the relation between the incarnated Christ and the eucharistic Body of Christ is described by Ware using the words of the Orthodox Liturgy: “Thine of Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all.”\textsuperscript{81} Ware interprets the line from the Liturgy as follows:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item We offer \textit{Thine of Thine own}. At the Eucharist, the sacrifice offered is Christ himself, and it is Christ himself who in the Church performs the act of offering: he is both priest and victim.” Thou thyself art He who offers and He who is offered.”\textsuperscript{82}
  \item We offer \textit{to Thee}. The Eucharist is offered to God the Trinity, not just to the Father but also to the Holy Spirit and to Christ himself. Thus if we ask, \textit{what} is the sacrifice of the Eucharist? \textit{By whom} is it offered? \textit{To whom} is it offered?, in each case the answer is Christ.
  \item We offer \textit{for all}: according to Orthodox theology, the Eucharist is propitiatory sacrifice offered on behalf of both the living and the dead.\textsuperscript{83} In this explanation, however, there is no distinction between the incarnated Christ and the eucharistic Body of Christ. Consequently, the discourse runs thus: Christ sacrifices Christ and offers himself to Christ. In addition, if we keep in mind that there is no distinction between the incarnated Christ and the ecclesial Body of Christ, then the discourse is even more confusing: Christ
\end{enumerate}
sacrifices Christ and offers it to Christ in order to be eaten by Christ. These methodological aspects have significant theological implications to which we now turn.

Theological

First, the theandric ecclesiology built around the analogy of the “body” offers a model of union between God and man: Christ is the “Head” and the Church is the “Body”. Yet, in the absence of a clear distinction between Christ and the Church the analogy of the body runs the risk of an “ecclesio-Christomonism.” In fact Barth warns against such a risk when he writes that the Church: “Even in its invisible essence it is not Christ nor a second Christ, nor a kind of extension of the one Christ.”

Consequently, the figure of the “body” needs to be balanced by other images that convey clearly the idea of otherness of the Creator in relation with creation. For example, the Catholic Church adopted since Vatican II the image of the “People of God” which allows for a clearer distinction between the Church and its divine head. Lossky himself tried to resolve this aspect when he turned toward the image of the “bride.” Thus, he affirms that Christ is the head of the body in the same sense in which the husband is the head of a single, unique body of the man and woman in marriage. Nevertheless, Lossky realised that the union of a man and a woman in marriage implies two distinct persons (prosopa or hypostaseis). The problem, then, is to identify the hypostasis of the Church. Drawing from the patristic interpretation of the Song of Songs as referring to Christ and the Church, Lossky considers that the hypostasis of the Church in this case can be neither the hypostasis of the Son nor of the Holy Spirit but only the hypostasis of the Mother of God.

Thus it would seem that until the consummation of the ages, until the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgement, the Church will have no hypostasis of her own, no created hypostasis, no human person having attained to perfect union with God. And yet, to say this would be to fail to perceive the very heart of the Church, one of the most secret mysteries, her mystical centre, her perfection already realised in a human person fully united to God, finding herself beyond the resurrection and the judgement. This person is Mary, the Mother of God [...]. In two perfect persons, the divine person of Christ and the human person of the mother of God, is contained the mystery of the Church.

The “spiritualised” hermeneutic of the Fathers combined with Lossky’s attempt to offer the Church a hypostatic identity, led to one of the most unfortunate conclusions reached by an Orthodox theologian. Besides the fact that Lossky personifies the Church into the hypostasis of Mary and thus transforms Mary into a kind of “macro-anthropos”, he also portrays the relation between Christ and his mother in concepts that resemble the story of Oedipus marrying his mother.

Alternatively, most Orthodox theologians accept the image of the “body” without the necessary correctives for a balanced ecclesiology and
consequently divinise the Church. The Church is one organism with its head. In fact some theologians went as far as to speak about the Church as a new hypostatic union.\textsuperscript{92} Elsewhere Lossky asserts:

Thus, all that can be asserted or denied about Christ can equally well be applied to the Church, inasmuch as it is a theandric organism, or more exactly, a created nature inseparably united to God in the hypostasis of the Son, a being that has, as He has, two natures, two wills and two operations which are at once inseparable and yet distinct.\textsuperscript{93}

This approach, however, fails to draw the distinction between the incarnated Christ and the ecclesial Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{94} Moreover it leads easily to the personification of the Church either as “the Incarnation itself”\textsuperscript{95}, or as a new hypostatic union.\textsuperscript{96} Consequently, the uniqueness of the historical Christ is endangered by this fusion between the incarnated Christ and the Church. Further, the divinization of the Church leads to a takeover by the “body” of the attributes of its “head.” Subilia points towards the shift from Christ to Church, from apostles to bishops, from revelation to dogma:

The grand New Testament phrases, “through Christ”, “in Christ”, “with Christ”, “in the sight of Christ” undergo a change from a Christological to ecclesiological reference, and take on the meaning, “through the Church”, “in the Church”, “with the Church”, “in the sight of the Church.”\textsuperscript{97}

One other aspect of an ecclesiology construed by analogy to the body refers to the role of the Holy Spirit. In the absence of a clear distinction between Christ and the Church, the Orthodox emphasis on pneumatological ecclesiology leads to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is the life-principle of the Church.\textsuperscript{98} Bulgakov argues that:

The Church, in her quality of Body of Christ, which lives with the life of Christ, is by that fact the domain where the Holy Spirit lives and works. More: the Church is life by the Holy Spirit because it is the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{99}

The risk of this approach lies in the fact that there is no space between the Holy Spirit and the institution in order to make possible a critical reflection upon the ministry of the Church. Moreover, the Church is perceived as the only channel (instrument) whereby the Spirit realises the relation between creation and deification.\textsuperscript{100} Yet, whilst such an approach provides a theological framework for the relation between creation and new creation,\textsuperscript{101} the absence of space between the Church and the Spirit leads to realised eschatology.\textsuperscript{102}

**Sociological**

According to the Orthodox tradition the threefold office of Christ (Prophet, King and Priest) is continued by the Church.\textsuperscript{103} Scholars agree that in order to
fulfil its role the Church has always had some forms of organizational features such as recognised ministers, accepted confessional formulas and prescribed forms of public worship. 104 This is what is generally called the institutional aspect of the Church. However, historically speaking, this institutional aspect developed from a charismatic and diversified form into a more hierarchical model. 105 Thus the teaching, sanctifying and governing ministries of the Church became the [exclusive] prerogatives of the hierarchy being thus institutionalised. 106 Subsequently, the Church developed the view that the institution is both sacred and represents the sphere of the operation of the Spirit.

From the christological point of view, as the body of Christ and the grounds of organised sacramental life, the church is a sacred institution; from the pneumatological point of view, as the temple of the Spirit and the field where the Spirit of God operates, the Church is a continuous Pentecost. 107 Hence the Orthodox agree with Cyprian’s conclusion that Extra Ecclesia nulla salus,108 or, “a man cannot have God as his Father if he does not have the Church as his Mother.”109 Similarly, Florovsky asserts that “outside the Church there is no salvation, because salvation is the Church.”110 This view is supported, among others, by Pheidas who argues that the canonical limits of the Church coincide with its charismatic boundaries.111 However, there are other Orthodox theologians, such as Zizioulas, Karmires, and Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, who are in favour of a distinction between the canonical limits and the charismatic boundaries of the Church.112 Thus, whilst Orthodox theologians agree that the Orthodox Church is the only true Church113 and that outside the Church there is no salvation, Ware asserts that there are disagreements among them concerning the situation of those who do not belong to their communion.114 First, there is a “rigorous group” who hold that “since Orthodoxy is the Church, anyone who is not an Orthodox cannot be a member of the Church.”115 This view seems to be consistent with the Orthodox teaching that Extra Ecclesia nulla salus, because the Church mediates the saving grace of Christ through the Holy Spirit. But once this view is accepted it leads to strong institutionalism, which implies that the work of the Holy Spirit is circumscribed to an institution. Second, the “moderate group” holds that it is true to say that Orthodoxy is the Church but false to infer from this that those who are not Orthodox cannot possibly belong to the Church.116 This view allows for a little more space for the freedom of the Spirit, but it does not clarify the relations between the Spirit and the institution; between the believer and the institution; and between the believer and the Spirit. The clarification of these aspects would imply a significant shift in Orthodox theology. So far the preparatory commission of the great and holy Council of the Orthodox Church produced a document (1971) on oikonomia in the Orthodox Church, in which it affirms that “the Holy Spirit acts upon other Christians in very many ways, depending on their degree of faith and hope.”117 However, Zizioulas believes that thus far Orthodox theology does not have a satisfactory solution to the problem of the
limits of the Church and their implications for those individuals and communities who exist outside those limits.

It is certainly not easy to exclude from the realm and the operation of the Spirit so many Christians who do not belong to the Orthodox Church. There are saints outside the Orthodox Church. How can we understand that theologically? How can we account for it without saying that the canonical limits of the Church are not important?\

The best way to describe this model would be “open ended institutionalism”, which without doubt renders a more favourable ecumenical rapprochement between different traditions.

Furthermore, an institutionalised approach to ecclesiology promotes what can be called an “institutionalised hermeneutic.” According to this approach the task of the theologian is “to show how a doctrine defined by the Church is contained in the sources of Revelation.” There is however a difference between the “institutionalised hermeneutic” of an “over-institutionalised” Church, as in Roman Catholicism, which tends to canonical formulation of its entire teaching inventory, and the “moderate institutionalism” of the Orthodox Church, where the dogmas includes only the major doctrines of the Church. Bulgakov affirms that the Orthodox Church has only a small number of dogmas that are absolutely binding for the whole church; the rest of its teaching is in the area of theologoumena (theological opinions). However, Orthodox theologians do not speak with a single voice on this issue. Those who upheld the “one-source” theory of revelation affirms that, strictly speaking, the minimum dogmatic teaching consists of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol and the definitions of the Ecumenical Councils, whilst other who adhere to the “two-source” theory of revelation argue that “the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Catholic Church is identical with the teaching of the one, ancient and undivided Church, this teaching having been preserved integrally and without change over the centuries in Orthodoxy.” And further, the “Orthodox dogma is the sum total of all the truth of Scripture and Tradition, all Orthodox doctrine is “equally obligatory for all believers, as absolutely necessary for salvation.” Yet, in spite of these contradictions the Orthodox Church still considers that it contains the entire deposit of truth which is binding on all believers. In this context, Stăniloae explains the task of the Orthodox theologian:

Thus Orthodox theology still remains faithful to the dogmatic formulations of the first centuries of the Church, while nevertheless making continuous progress in their interpretation and in the revelation of that ineffable mystery which they only suggest [...] Orthodox theology today understands that every dogmatic term and every combination of dogmatic terms indicates the boundaries and safeguard the depths of the mystery in the face of a one-sided and rationalist superficiality that seeks to dissolve it.
In other words, Orthodox theologians are free to find new meaning in old dogma, but are not free to question or critique them. As long as theologians accept the binding character of the definitions of the councils, they are free to hold contradictory views on the meaning of these definitions. This is indeed one of the advantages of the “moderate institutionalised hermeneutic”, although any dogma that has unsatisfactory and contradictory explanations will lose its internal authority and subsequently will rest upon the external authority of the office.

Notes

3 The initial credal formula “I believe in the Holy Church” had been expanded into “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church” and formed the underlying ecclesiological foundations during the Patristic period. The later episodic development includes the issue of baptism of heretics, the authority of the bishops and patriarch, the schism between East and West in 1054. It was during the Protestant Reformation that the doctrine of the church became the subject of explicit theological concern, but during the following centuries (seventeenth and eighteenth) ecclesiology became relatively peripheral, with the exceptions of the vigorous polemics generated by Jansenism, Puritanism and Pietism. The doctrine of the church, however, reawakened during the nineteenth century as a result of the emergence of the strong theological schools of the Russian Orthodox (Khomiakov, Soloviev), the Tübingen School in German Catholicism (Mohler), German Lutheranism (W. Lohe), the Anglican Oxford Movement (H. Newman) and the Mercersburg theology in the Reformed Church of America (Schaff). See J. Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)*, 289.
7 The recapitulation of the entire doctrinal tradition from the preceding centuries became a priority task of each major church in the attempt to prove its continuity with the apostolic Church. Therefore the criterion of apostolic continuity has been re-analyzed under the heading: Apostolic Scriptures, Apostolic Tradition and Apostolic Office. In an oversimplified form each of the three components of the definition of the apostolic continuity has become dominant in one of the major branches of Christendom. Thus, the Protestant Reformation elevated the authority of Scripture over that of Tradition and Apostolic Office. The Roman Catholic Church, although professed to retain all three criteria of apostolic continuity (as defined by the Council of Trent) in fact elevated the authority of the Apostolic Office in laying the dogma of papal infallibility. Meanwhile the Orthodox Church has elevated the authority of Tradition as the sole norm of biblical interpretation and the limits within which the bishops can exercise their authority. See J. Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)*, 282-283; D. Stâniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 221; C. Patelos (ed.), *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1978), 9; R. Rouse and S. C. Neill (eds), *History of the Ecumenical Movement (1517-1948)*, vol. 1; H. E. Fey (ed.), *A History of Ecumenical Movement*, vol. 2.


Special attention was given to the place of worship in the life of the Church leading to the exploitation of the “ways of worship” not only for ecumenical purposes but also for a redefinition of the Church as “the worshipping community.” See J. Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)*, 295. Within the Orthodox Church besides the tension brought about by the Uniate Church, there are other separatist groups of the Old Believers in Russia (the popes, who accept priests but derives their own episcopate from a Greek bishop, the bezpoposts, the “priestless ones” who hold that the apostasy had destroyed the orders of the Church and limited themselves to such rites that the laymen could administer), and the duckhobors (a variety of extreme groups, some of whom picked up pagan practices). Further, there were long lasting tensions between the “Tichonite” Church in USSR, which co-operated with the Communist regime, the Regenerated Church organised in opposition to the Patriarch Tichon the Karlovichi Synod in exile which did not recognised the hierarchical authority of neither of these two churches in Russia. In addition, Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris broke his relation with Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow and the former became the exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the Russian Orthodox in Western Europe. In Greece the internal dynamic revolved around “Zoe” Brotherhood which attempted to form an “elite” of preachers for the Orthodox local Churches and the movement that emerged from the ministry of Apostolos Makrakis who was eventually condemned by the Holy Synod. See W. A. Visser ’t Hooft, *Anglo-Catholicism and Orthodoxy* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1933), 79-84; George A. Maloney S. J., *A History of Orthodox Theology Since 1453*, 56-87; 190-193; W.
Walker, A History, 677-678. In Romania within the Orthodox Church there is a dynamic renewal group called “The Lord’s Army”. See P. I. David, Collatian, 165-186.


17 Within Western Christianity in both its major traditions (Roman Catholic and Protestant) there are a variety of trends such as: hierarchical authoritarian institutionalism (Roman Catholic), conservative evangelicism (Protestants), liberation theologies, clublike (social) approach, and the belief that the Church should dissolve its function totally into the world. See P. Hodgson and R. Williams, “The Church”, in P. Hodgson and R. King (eds), Christian Theology, 223-246.

18 T. Hopko, “God and Gender: Articulating the Orthodox View”, in St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 37/2-3 (1993), 141.


20 Zizioulas asserts that the Church is in-stituted by Christ and con-stituted by the Spirit. See J. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 140.

21 T. Ware, The Orthodox Church, 315.

22 S. Bulgakov, The Orthodox Church, 64.


24 J. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 15. This is one of the aspects that Harnack underlies pointing out that even John of Damascus in his treatise On the Orthodox Faith failed to develop an Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology. See A. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. 3, 235; J. Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, 79. There are, however, in Greek Patristic literature, writings that use a language of imagery to describe the Church as a divine-human mystery. Among these are the Mystagogies (mystical interpretation of the Church), commentaries on the liturgy and symbolical descriptions of different parts of the building. Maximus the Confessor expounds the symbolism of the Church as building in which the nave represents the earthly and the sanctuary the heavenly, both being brought together in the act of worship. As the image of God who is all in all and holds all things together in unity, the Church unites within single body men of every age, condition and race by the grace and energies of God. The Church is also the image of the cosmos because like the universe unites things visible and invisible: the visible things of the Church (hierarchy and sacraments) are symbols of invisible, spiritual realities. As the image of man, as God intended him to be, the nave, the sanctuary and the altar are the image of the body, soul and mind (nous). Man must approach God through his mind which is represented by altar. Also Maximus sees the nave and the sanctuary as images of the Old and New Testaments, and he interprets the liturgy as symbolically representing the whole saving work of Christ. See Maximus the Confessor, Mystagogy, PG 91, 658-718. Even today there are Orthodox theologians who consider that any other approach to ecclesiology is inappropriate and could be compared with a monk trying to live outside monastery. See I. Brâa, The Sense of Ecumenical Tradition, 1.

25 See G. Florovsky, The Universal Church in God’s Design (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 43. This is not an exclusively Orthodox problem, because, generally speaking, there are disagreements among theologians from different backgrounds concerning the possibility of an adequate definition of the Church. The discussion revolves very much around the issue if a being with both “natural” and “supernatural” essence can be properly expressed in words. See Y. Congar, “The Church: The People of God”, in Concilium 1 (1965), 1, 7-19; A. Dulles, Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All Its Aspects (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1976), 14-15; M. D. Koster, “Ekklesiologie im Werden”, in H.-D. Langer and O. H. Pesch (eds), Volk Gottes im Werden: Gesammelte Studien (Mainz, 1971), 245-253.


27 S. Bulgakov, The Orthodox Church, 3. In contrast to those who advocate for a feeble development of ecclesiology in the Orthodox tradition, there are other authors who suggest
that the Eastern Fathers approached the doctrine of the church from a different perspective than the Western Church. This difference goes back to Ignatius and Tertullian. The first emphasized the importance of the apostolic office and the apostolic tradition whereas the second saw the Church in the light of the relationship between the theory and the practice of penance. Moreover, Meyendorff asserts that the Eastern Church was more interested in communion with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit (a Trinitarian ecclesiology) while in the West the accent has been laid upon the institutional aspect of the Church. See J. Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, 79; V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology, 174-175; B. Haggland, History of Theology (St. Luis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 107-108.


30 Bria points towards a more critical attitude undertaken at several theological centres, including Thesaloniky (Greece), Holy Cross (Brooklin, Massachusetts, USA), St. Vladimir (New York) and New Valamo (Finland). See I. Bria, The Sense of Ecumenical Tradition, 2.

31 The renewed interest for Trinitarian theology has been observed among all the major churches during the first part of the twentieth century: Protestant, see K. Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, first German edn in 1932), vol. 1, part 1, ch. 2; Catholic, see K. Rahner, The Trinity (London: Burns and Oates, 1970), and Orthodox, see V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (London: James Clarke, 1957). More recently there have been treatises representing the trinitarian theologies of the main churches of Christendom: Roman Catholic, see W. Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ (London: SCM Press, 1984); W. J. Hill, The Tree-Personed God, The Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), Orthodox, see J. Zizioulas, Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), Lutheran, see R. W. Jenson, The Triune Identity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), Reformed, see J. Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (London: SCM Press, 1981), and Anglican, see D. Brown, The Divine Trinity (London: Duckworth, 1985).


33 There are aspects of Orthodox ecclesiology which reflect non-Christian ontologies. Gunton mentions two such rival ontologies that filled the vacuum created by the failure of the Church to implement into its ecclesiology the doctrine of the Trinity: the first is the neoplatonic doctrine of reality as graded hierarchy and the second is the legal-political approach introduced mainly by Cyprian. See C. E. Gunton, “The Church on Earth: The Roots of community”, in C. E. Gunton and D. W. Hardy (eds), On Being Church, 53.

Orthodox scholars reject the idea of the Church as a “perfect society” developed since the Middle Ages, especially by the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, Bellarmin affirms that the Church as a society “as visible and palpable as the community of the Roman people, or the Kingdom of France, or the Republic of Venice.” See Robert Bellarmin, De controversiis, tom. 2, liber 3, De ecclesia militante, cap. 2 (Napoli: Giuliano, 1857), vol. 2, 75. Consequently, the Church as a historical society has to have “a constitution, a set of rules, a governing body, and a set of actual members who accept this constitution and these rules as binding on them [...].” See B. C. Butler, The Idea of the Church (Westminster: Newman, 1962), 39.

V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology, 174-175. If the Church is a theandric being, the epistemic approach has to be appropriate for this task. The approach that seems to receive a wide support among theologians is the method of analogy (images) and description. It appears that the idea of some kind of description of the Church that would lay down the foundation for further reflections on the Church is gaining more and more support with the scholars. Among the metaphors taken into account “the People of God”, “the Body of Christ”, “the Mystical Body of Christ”, and “the Bride” are further explored. See H. Rikhof, The Concept of Church (London: Sheed and Ward, 1981), 220.

J. Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, 79.

This approach goes back to Clement of Alexandria and Origen who distinguished between the “church on earth” (the historical, empirical, observable) and the “church on high” (the mystical, spiritual body of Christ, which exist in heaven), and was theologically developed by Augustine who described the visible and invisible church. See Origen, On First Principles, G. W. Butterworth (ed.), Preface, 2 (London: SPCK, 1936), xi, xii; Hom. on Ex. 9, 3; PG, 12, 297-396; Hom. on Jeremiah 20, 3; PG, 15, 255-606; Augustine, On Baptism 3, 18, 26, in NPNF, 1st series, vol. 4, 443-444; City of God 10, 6 in NPNF, 1st series, vol. 2, 183-184; On Rebuke and Grace, 9, 22, in NPNF, 1st series, vol. 5, 474, 480; On the Gift of Perseverance, 2, in NPNF, 1st series, vol. 5, 525-552. Bulgakov is of the opinion that the Church existed even in Paradise, before the fall, and it continue to exist throughout the Old Testament and even in the darkness of paganism as a “pagan sterile church”. See S. Bulgakov, The Orthodox Church, 5-7. For a comparison with Origen’s Platonism see W. C. Friend, The Rise of Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 370-384; G. Maloney, A History of Orthodox Theology, 62-65; T. Hopko, “Foreword” in S. Bulgakov, The Orthodox Church, xi.

A. Khomiakov, The Church is One, section 1. Cf. T. Ware, The Orthodox Church, 247.

J. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 20.

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53 Lossky argues that this love is communicated to the Church through the “two economies” of the Son and the Spirit. The economy of the Son achieves salvation (or redemption) in our nature, whereas the economy of the Spirit brings deification (theosis) to our person. See V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology, 174-195. Zizioulas criticizes Lossky’s sharp distinction between the “two economies” and proposes a new synthesis between christology and pneumatology. Accordingly, “the economy [...] insofar as it assumed history and has history, is only one and that is the Christ event” (Z. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 130). The work of the Holy Spirit is just the opposite: “The spirit is beyond history, and when he acts in history he does so in order to bring into history the last days, the eschaton” (J. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 130). In other words, Christ is the One who institutes the Church, whereas the Spirit is the One who constitutes the Church, as a communion and an eschatological community. See J. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 140.

54 The Orthodox Church follows the Patristic trinitarian view according to which the Father is the “primordial cause” of creation, the Son is the “creative cause”, and the Holy Spirit is the “perfecting cause” of creation. In other words, the world is created for and destined to the life of theosis, that is life in communion with God. See Bishop Maximos Aghiorgoussis, “East Meets West”, 6.

55 “Mediating salvation to the world on behalf of its founder, Christ, the church sanctifies and transfigures the world, leading it to a life of theosis in communion with God, and leading it to God’s holy kingdom, of which the church is a partial manifestation, epiphany, and inauguration.” See Bishop Maximos Aghiorgoussis, “Orthodox Soteriology”, in J. Meyendorff and R. Tobias, (eds), Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue (Augsburg: Fortress, 1992), 52.

56 “God became man so that man might became God.” Athanasius, De Incarnatione, 54. For a clear account of the doctrine of theosis in its Eastern Orthodox form, see G. I. Mantzaridis, The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Tradition (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).

57 V. Lossky, In the Image, 109.


60 J. Meyendorff, Catholicity and the Church, 28.

61 Historia ekklesiastike kai mystike theoria (Intro.), a work attributed to Germanus (634-733), Patriarch of Constantinople, in PG 98, 383f. See also D. Stăniloae, Teologia dogmatică, vol. 2, 208.

62 A. Dulles, Models of the Church, 16.

63 See “Consultation on “Education in the Orthodox Church” (Utrecht, 1972), in C. Patelos (ed.), Orthodox Church, 101-102; H. S. Alivistos, “Orthodoxy, Protestantism and the World Council of Churches”, in C. Patelos (ed.), Orthodox Church, 199-208.

64 Bria argues that one of the reasons why the Orthodox Church feels marginalised within WCC is the fact that the Orthodox members are not familiar with the theological framework and methodology used by WCC. See I. Bria, The Sense of Ecumenical Tradition, 46.

65 In the recent years some Orthodox authors tried to overcome this problem. See C. Scouteris, “Image, Symbol and Language in Relation to the Holy Trinity”, in St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 36/3 (1992), 257-267.

66 See A. Dulles, Models of the Church, 20; W. G. Jeanrond, Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988).


K. Ware, “Church and Eucharist, Communion and Intercommunion”, in *Sobornost*, 7/7 (1978), 550-565 (here 555-556).

K. Ware, “Church and Eucharist”, 553.


T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 248.

Ibid. 248.

J. Meyendorff, “What Holds the Church Together”, in *Ecumenical Review* 12 (1966), 298. Cf. T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 248-249. Similarly, in his *Catholicity and the Church*, Meyendorff affirms that “she [the Church] is what the Holy Spirit makes her to be. In her being she is not man-made. Human beings and human communities can rebel against her, but they cannot change her being”. See J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*, 10.

Position held by classic Apollinarianism. See C. E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today*, 92.


Ibid. 95.

See J. Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, 221.

Ibid. 221.

T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 292.

From the priest prayer before the Great Entrance. Cf. T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 293.

Ibid. 293.

More recently Zizioulas pointed out that the concept “body of Christ” has been used in Christology (the historical Jesus), ecclesiology and Eucharist, without a clear distinction between them and also without an attempt to provide a synthesis. J. Zizioulas, “Ecclesiology. The Mystical Body of Christ”, paper presented at King’s College, 16th February, 1993.

This tendency is clearly seen in the *Mystagogy* of Maximus the Confessor when he asserts that in relation to God the universe is arranged in concentric circles about a centre which is occupied by the Church. See Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy*, cap. II-IV, V, PG, 91, 658-718. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 178. It appears that Zizioulas is aware of the risk of identifying the Church with Christ if the figure “the body of Christ” is taken too literally or in a metaphysical sense. Consequently, Zizioulas suggests than any attempt to explain the meaning of the concept “the Body of Christ” has to maintain the tension between created and uncreated, divine and human. See J. Zizioulas, “Ecclesiology. The Mystical Body of Christ.”


Lumen gentium, Art. 9.


Ibid. 193-195.


Hopko asserts that it “occurred in Orthodox Christian tradition, particularly in mystical contemplation and doxological poetry, a ‘conflation’ of the Holy Spirit, the Church and Mary in a complex of symbolism and images which manifest what may indeed in some sense appropriately be called the ‘divine feminine’.” See T. Hopko, “God and Gender”, 158.


Lossky speaks about the “enhypostasized” union between Christ and the Church. See V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 185.

See S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 2.


S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 2.

Bishop Maximos Aghiorgoussis, “Orthodox Soteriology”, p. 48; G. Tsetsis (ed.), *Orthodox Thought: Reports of Orthodox Consultations Organised by the WCC, 1975-1982* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 38ff. “Throughout the two thousand years of its tradition, the Orthodox church has been deeply conscious of the fact that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost inaugurates a new time for the whole humanity and cosmic history. From Pentecost on, the church-and with it the whole creation-has been experiencing the pains of childbirth “until Christ is formed in each one of us, the single humanity is restored and the universe becomes, in Him, by a Christological cosmology, the Body of Christ.” See B. Bobrinskoy, “The Holy Spirit-in the Bible and the Church”, in *The Ecumenical Review* 42-43 (1990), 357-362 (here 361).


See A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 34-35. The difference between institution and institutionalism has been characterised by Bishop Emile De Smedt by three terms: clericalism, juridicism and triumphalism. Generally speaking, the Orthodox Church opted for a “moderate institutionalism” and consequently its clericalism, juridicism and triumphalism are not as developed as in Roman Catholicism. See Bishop Emile De Smedt of Bruges, in *Acta Concilii Vaticani II*, vol. 1, part 4 (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis, 1971), 142-144.


See E. Clapsis, “Boundaries of the Church”, 117-120.

See S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 1, 9; E. Clapsis, “Boundaries of the Church”, 122.

See T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 315-316.

T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 317.

Ibid. 316.


Pius XII, *Humanae generis* (1950), No. 36.

See S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 107-109.

S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 100.


Stamoolis argues that some documents of the past are considered secondary simply because they were influenced to a certain degree by the particular historical setting and thus express the spirit of their own age. See J. Stamoolis, *Orthodox Mission*, 17. Alternatively, Gavin asserts: "There can be only one Church founded by our Lord, and in that Church there can be but one single Faith. This one Church is the Orthodox Church; the one Faith is the whole Orthodox doctrine." See F. Gavin, *Some Aspects of Contemporary Greek Orthodox Thought*, 259-263.

D. Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 215.