

Orthodox theological education: Reality and perspectives

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The subject is enormous and complicated because, first, we understand the task of theology in different ways due to the different purposes that are set forth through theological education, and second, because we apply different methods of educating which reflect different local educative traditions expressed by different Orthodox schools which teach theology today. In the Orthodox world at this moment there is a great variety of theological schools. Some are related to universities and share in the academic discipline with the other faculties of theoretical sciences, and some are directly under their church auspices serving as theological academies, institutions or seminaries for preparing the future priests of their Church.

There is also another aspect, which renders our subject very difficult. It is the fact that theological education is composed of a variety of disciplines of knowledge; hermeneutic, historical, practical, systematical, which are requiring corresponding scientific methodologies linked with philological, historical and philosophical ways of research. This situation has to be kept in mind and differences of all kinds should be expected and taken into consideration when either we make a survey of the actual reality of theological education or we suggest ways of renewing it.

Due to this greatly diversified field covered by the term "theological education", those who have gone through their basic formation and are now specialized in one of the particular branches of theology are bound to understand "theology" and "education" in radically different ways because they are conceiving the term through their experience working in their special fields of theological research. Some of them feel the need to apply theological knowledge in contemporary society by taking seriously the social milieu of our times, some others lay emphasis on the historical material and try to interpret through it developments of church life, some others are interested in the authenticity of the different traditions which are recorded in constitutive elements of the biblical texts etc.

On the other hand, it is also true that there is a consensus in the understanding of theological education as a discipline of knowledge, which presents a definite and clear

coherence. Regardless of the different natures of our schools and the emphasis of a particular scope of theological education, we all - as theologians- feel and think within a given framework of concern which unifies us in one clearly distinguished scientific work. One can especially refer to the Orthodox theological consensus and admit certain solid bases of unification, which to my mind, might be grouped in the following three categories:

- a. Theology is the articulate expression of the event of the ecclesial faith as it is lived within an Orthodox ecclesial communion;
- b. Theology expresses the unbroken historical continuity of the apostolic faith as it is clearly stated basically in the Bible and consistently explained, expounded, and systematised by the church writers of all centuries, and;
- c. Theology is the reasonable interpretation of the liturgical experience of the continuously worshipping community of faith, rendering glory to the triune God as Creator, Incarnate Logos, Saviour, renewing all things.

Certainly, this solid basis is a given, almost a priori factor for the theologian but there remains always the open question of how theology develops, interprets and communicates this fundamental given of faith in different places, times and social environments. Of course, here we face the need of a critical survey of theological education and again here we Orthodox differ in our appreciation of the diversified situation on account of the different value we attribute to the need of communicating the Gospel and especially how to do it, and in how far we want, we are obliged or not to take the world's situation, social-political, seriously.

Therefore, our survey and evaluation of the existing reality in Orthodox theological education has to be understood as a limited personal contribution expressing a particular situation, which cannot be valid for other places. Our effort should be more to compare different experiences and investigate the existing common elements which can be studied in common effort to renew Orthodox theological education in the measure that this is possible, feasible, and accepted by the people directly concerned.

A. A Survey of the Actual Situation

The first remark has to be made that all Orthodox theological schools, as far as I know, are loyal to their churchly nature and faithful to their theological tradition as it is

described above in its basic self-affirmation, regardless of whether they belong to state universities or are schools under church authorities. It can also be said that, though with different emphasis, their main purpose is the preparation of church leadership and in some cases clearly of theologically trained clergymen. In some cases academic research is developed independent from this immediate purpose, and in some others linked to it, or even subordinate to it. And still, in my situation, we have a very strong (perhaps dominating) emphasis on theological education as preparation for teachers of religion in the state secondary schools and lycees.

There is also a growing, very encouraging phenomenon of study of theology, more or less, is also a vocation inspired by a living faith and the desire to serve the Church as a priest or teacher. But during the three last years in my country we have something as a quite new phenomenon which might also be unique for the whole world in so far as we receive from both the University of Athens and Salonica students into the two theological faculties who had no intention to study theology.

This is happening because of the special system of entrance exams. Theology, belonging to the so-called "philological circle" with three other parent theological sciences, can receive through the computer students who have succeeded in getting the necessary notes of entrance exams, but for whom there are no seats left in the philosophical faculty. They are assigned thus to Theology. It is evident that a great number of these students, coming out of a society in a process of profound secularisation and change, are studying theology, first, under a psychological pressure, second, living intensely the problem of faith, and third, to a great extent, being, therefore, disinterested in the subject matter of theology. In this case, theology has to find the point of contact with these students, who are deprived of the immediate and conscious experience of faith, and create the vocation during the course of their studies. One can say that theology in this situation passes an extremely difficult test as far as its validity as science and its credibility as Weltanschauung (theory of life based on Christian faith) are concerned.

I mention this latter category of students because of the fact that, especially through them, theology in our country receives more directly the general uneasiness and the student revolt in the universities today, which started around 1968 in Western Europe and North America. On this point one has to distinguish between Church schools, which are not parts of universities, and theological faculties, which are under the same roof with other faculties within state universities. Because, in the first case the student revolt is not made manifest or it cannot exist altogether, while in the latter case theology is unavoidably involved in it. We have to recognize that we have today a serious and unprecedented new reality, which makes the hidden dissatisfaction, which always might have been there, especially against the methods of theological education, more outspoken, evident, and in some cases violent.

Within the process of growing relationships between radical political ideologies and university studies and life in general, the groaning and grumbling against all educative systems of higher education as being one-way traffic from the professors and institutional authorities to the students who feel manipulated as passive objects of the authoritarian system, is further intensified. The more politically biased student movement,

which in some cases has reached theology directly or indirectly in state universities, will proceed to a more concrete criticism and voice a threefold criticism:

1. For not being sufficiently critical of established pyramidal, authoritarian structures in church and education, which are not allowing student participation in them;
2. For not being sufficiently critical of the unjust society of production and consumption and therefore for not taking seriously into consideration the class mentality which today's science is representing and is condemned to serve, and;
3. For not fighting against the alienation of man in today's technological society.

Certainly, this kind of protest and criticism can be either unjustified, or one-sided, politically coloured and ideologically directed from sources outside of theological education, but to my mind theology cannot remain absolutely passive and indifferent in front of it. In one cleanses this criticism of its specific political origins, means and orientations, there is a lot that Orthodox theological education can admit for the sake of its renewal and better service of the Church, being engaged in evangelism within a world gradually emancipating from traditional patterns. It looks as if our education wants to ignore this criticism for the moment or better, is not prepared to operate the necessary changes and meet it. Certainly, one should not generalise on this point by simply accepting a radical criticism in all of its aspects which cover too much of ideological premises, or a hidden idealism seeking for perfectionism only by the other, the so-called dominant side.

But this criticism can have a benevolent effect for making us proceed to an honest self-criticism on both sides, teachers and students, in a sincere effort to renew structures and methods of theological education in common.

In this sense, I would suggest that on the part of the teachers, we should pay attention to being in general more co-operative, more prepared for dialogue with the students and limit the ex-cathedra one-way teaching to the minimum possible. At the same time we have to give examples of an honest research of truth by our constant teaching and living of it. Especially, we have to become conscious of the dangers which are involved in our occupation and which we are continuously tempted to perpetuate almost unconsciously:

1. a one-sided sacral overtone;
2. a super-developed academism;
3. a historicism and dogmatism;

4. a conservatism which reflects a hesitation to change;
5. an esoterism by using ideas and language cut off from our milieu.

On the other hand students have to be challenged to think of the fact that theology necessitates a self-affirmation on one's living faith if one is to serve Church and society today (and not just study theology as a discipline of academic education).

Students have to make use of academic freedom in its right sense. It is only by a continuous existential relationship with all aspects of the life of a theological faculty or school (unbroken attendance of courses, even the most boring ones, of liturgical gatherings and life, of cultural events). Academic freedom in some state universities has led through its bad application to a total distortion of education, by the alienation of students from their natural faculty environment; with the result of seeing studies only through the periodical or final exams. All sciences, but especially theology, have need of a continuous close relationship with all the aspects of education and are profoundly damaged by the threat of the exams which remain the only possible way of evaluating one's own progress and knowledge in academic life. This system must be overcome, especially in mammoth universities, and the numerous classes of theology and residential students on campus are greatly favoured in this respect.

Certainly, I repeat, this survey is too general and too limited at the same time, as containing remarks, which are not valid in most of the other situations, and as expressing the experience that one can get through his own situation.

B. Thoughts about the Authentic Focus of Orthodox Theological Education

Bearing in mind this short and practical survey of the actual situation, one has to rethink the main focus of Orthodox theological education. We mean by focus the real relationship of the authentic content of theological education with the how of its application dictated by the clear scope or scopes we are pursuing by theological education. We mean, in other words, origin, basis and scope as well as procedure and methods for realising them within today's Church and society.

In rethinking our focus we have to be comprehensive regarding the different scopes that Orthodox theological schools are pursuing. I would enumerate them in the following way:

1. Formation of priests and church leadership

This focus has to remain the fundamental one, though for the Orthodox tradition a priest does not have to be a theologian as a prerequisite for his ordination, as is the case with other Christian traditions. Theological training with an emphasis on pastoral and clinical psychology and on religious philosophy and psychology is absolutely necessary for Orthodox clergymen in all parts of the world. Theological preparation in view of the priesthood, however, should not be regarded as a technical training and formation. It has to envisage the spiritual development of the whole personality in a broader and deeper sense. Theological knowledge is inseparable from a method of training/comprising the whole of a person's aspirations and possibilities to become an integrated personality. This is necessary not only in view of the delicate pastoral ministry of the theological students aspiring for ordination but also and especially in view of formation of members of the hierarchy in the Orthodox Churches.

2. Training for the ministries of the Church

Theological education has to continue to equip also the so-called lay members of the Church (who compose the fullness of the Church) in view of their function as charismatic persons within the Orthodox Church communities. School teachers, lay preachers, deaconesses and Christian social workers as well as medical doctors and educators who want, out of their Christian commitment, to serve in the world as faithful members of the Church have to remain a central focus of Orthodox theological education, according to a very eminent tradition of the Orthodox Church. This aspect of theological education fulfils the requirements of our Orthodox charismatic ecclesiology which envisages the Church *pleroma* as composed of clergy and lay people equally engaged in the responsibility of developing Church life, action and mission in the world. A one-sided clerically-centered focus on theological education presents serious symptoms of clericalism and threatens the authenticity of theological education in Orthodox understanding.

3. Academic research

Theology is a discipline of knowledge that works either under the auspices of state universities or church authorities. The academic character of theology is due to the subject matter of its function and the scientific method of its work. Research is always necessary when the human mind tries to grasp the deepest roots of truth and when it is concerned with the intellectual and spiritual development of human personality. In this sense, academic research cannot become an end itself. It is the necessary presupposition of all educative endeavours envisaging the integral personality of an educated person, who has put himself at the service of truth without prejudices and fanaticism. Theology without academic research is seriously crippled and sooner or later it will prove to be unable to serve its educative purposes.

4. Spirituality

If academic research is so absolutely necessary as a focus of theological education, spirituality is its counter but inseparable part of according to Orthodox theological tradition. The more we honestly search within the Bible, the documents of history of theology and the writings of theologians and reflect on them critically, the more we deepen into the treasures of the Christian commitment which is necessary for understanding, developing and applying the *sophia*. This is the biblical "wisdom", which combines knowledge, commitment and transformation of one's mind and heart according to the biblical and patristic witness. That is why theological education cannot be separated from the liturgical-eucharistic and kerygmatic experience. The liturgy and kerygma of the Church is the framework and the basis for building up a theology, which comprises spirituality as an inseparable part of academic research. A theology which neglects the aspect of spirituality in its focus is weak, and in many respects, unnecessary function of human intellect amongst the other disciplines of knowledge. Spirituality is the genuine and self-evident focus of theological education and it is the basic element, which must distinguish it in the university and church education today.

5. Continuous renewal of Church life

Theology, functioning in an authentic Orthodox way, cannot be but an element of primary importance for a perpetual restoration of Orthodox Church life. This does not mean a change for the sake of change or, because the world is continually changing, a sudden break with the past has to be dictated by theological schools. This kind of renewal is not of the Orthodox theological focus. There are neither changes, which are imposed by a principle of change nor an absolute criterion of change imposed by the abstract notion of a "secularised" world. But there is a continuous renewal from within, of church tradition, which is identical with the dynamic function of theological education. Learning patristic theology with church history in an academic research process one is called upon to think anew, in a fresh and contemporary way, of the Christian message in a given situation today. Renewal, as a part of the focus of Orthodox theological education, is the re-interpreting function of theology in all realms of Church life, of the past knowledge envisaging the present situation and the future. Without this element of renewal,

theological education is neglecting to serve its full purpose of being and risks to become a study of sacred archaeological findings. It remains static, historical, analytic and descriptive of an ancient glory, which overwhelms and surpasses the present, discouraging any present action for necessary transformation and changes from within the Church life envisaging the future.

6. Prophecy in witness and Diakonia

Theological knowledge is a reasoning on the presence of Christ and His Church, His people in the world, i.e. a reasoning on how the Gospel can be present in today's society. Theology should never forget that it operates not only on books, but also on living examples and people who voice the word of God of reconciliation and judgement, of salvation and crisis to the world. In other words, theology cannot forget its prophetic function preparing future Church leaders, preachers, charismatic persons and educators. Prophecy is the consciousness that one has, as a committed Christian, to speak and act on behalf of God's word to the world. This consciousness urges theologians of all kinds, as described above, to be ready to place the world under the judgement of God, boldly and frankly, against all nationalistic, racial or economic discrimination. Certainly, theology cannot serve directly this purpose as an educative discipline, but its focus has to include this function of the Church, which is absolutely necessary at all times and in all places. The perspective in theology should not be identified with any ideological, political or economic system, but it should, first, keep in contact with those who struggle for justice, freedom and peace. It should educate church leaders and responsible church people to perform their prophetic function as an act of witnessing to Christ. This is a diakonia to their world environment. Witness and diakonia according to the prophetic word of God in this sense has to be a sine qua non condition of Orthodox theological education today; otherwise, Orthodox theology will remain at the fringe of the social reality and will present an esoteric system of thought which does not do full justice to its basic premises and obligations prescribed by the word of God and the living example of Christ, and the multitudes of His witnesses throughout the centuries.

In other words, on the basis of these six areas in Orthodox theological education we can state its focus, finally, in the following threefold pattern and way:

- a. Quality, that is to say scientific excellence, intense and genuine scholarship and study;
- b. Authenticity, that is to say true Orthodox theology comprising ancient wisdom with contemporary open attitude to new streams of thought and patterns of action in today's world;
- c. Creativity; that is to say reasoning in view of a renewed action of the Church in the field of mission and witness.

In this sense the focus of Orthodox theological education will enable Orthodox theology to display its full identity, i.e. to remain in all changing circumstances and in all

parts of the world, within different cultural, political and economic systems, in the same way faithful to its long and rich traditions, loyal to its calling, consistent with its given framework in service to the Church renewal, and finally, dynamic and creative, inspiring to all of its students an aspiration for a deeper consciousness of the need to present a theology as witness to the Gospel on the one hand and as an authentic and profound reflection on life, history and human destiny.

C. New perspectives in Orthodox theological education

Having exposed some of the basic principles and elements of the focus of Orthodox theological education we can now look at some new perspectives for this education today. When we write "new", we mean new approaches to some problems, which were always there with the Church life. We mean also the realization anew of needs that theology has to face in a new way, through a new method and with a renewed spirit. It means our full conviction that a reinterpretation of old theses should and could be made in order that theology can fulfil its task in a fuller way and on the basis of its authentic focus.

The new perspectives are created either by an inner necessity of theology in its service to the continuous renewal of Church life or by requests presented from the new environment of a changing society and culture. To some extent these new perspectives are opened to Orthodoxy as a challenge by modern theology of other Christian traditions. This fact does not mean that Orthodox theological education has to copy or adopt attitudes of non-Orthodox theologies. It simply means that in some concrete cases our theology recognises the validity of new attempts of other theologies to meet today's needs of modern man on the basis of Christian faith and the biblical message, and that these needs are recognised by Orthodox theologians as being equally valid for them. At the same time, the fact that these new perspectives are opened by other theologies does not prejudice and prescribe the way that Orthodox theology has to grasp them and work out its own method of interpretation and elaboration of theses. Challenges in this sense have not to be understood as norms or models, but as simple "reminders" that these problems exist for us also and require our own Orthodox theological thinking for the sake of our diakonia to its renewal and its dynamic witness in the world today.

In the following, I am attempting again very shortly to review some of these areas and give some hints of a possible Orthodox approach.

1. The end of "theistic" mentality and language in systematic theology

The challenge of modern science to theology has led theological thinkers to review their way of recognising God as a revealed person in history. The traditional language, borrowed from a kind of idealistic philosophy insisting on the idea of God as

an absolute Being, of absolute transcendental nature does not resist the new dynamic concept of creation and nature of modern science and the philosophy of history, closely related with it. The "God out there" who reposes in Himself as a pure Being and who intervenes from "outside" and from "above" to keep His creation in order or to prevent it from deviations, appears more and more to become mythical language and pure speculation. The developments in modern science as well as the violent rise of ideological conflicts and the urgency of racial, economic and social reforms challenge such an ironic and aristocratic concept of God as the enthroned King of heavens. Christian theology has all of the reasons as a theology of the revealed, personal God who shares in the suffering of man in history and who restores the whole cosmos in Christ to rethink its theistic premises and abandon a framework and a language which does not do justice to the reality of a God conceived out of His personal revelation. Theism is always in between an idealistic philosophy and a rational apologetic Christian theology, which tries to arrive at a concept of God, which preserves His absolute transcendental character. Today this type of Christian philosophy does not appeal either to modern scientists or to the common mentality of a man who conceives life without a pre-existing rational pyramidal structure, whose top is rationally conceived as "out there" where abides the supreme Being with His sovereign will. Certainly, the extremist attitude of God's death theology should not impose or dictate a new theological interpretation; but this extremism points out to the need of rethinking the basis of systematic theology on a more realistic concept of the revealed God. A process theology, which lays emphasis on the continuous creativity of God in nature and history, is definitely closer to Christian theology, which wants to remain faithful to God's personal revelation in Christ recapitulating the whole Creation in Him. Especially, Orthodox theology insisting on the trinitarian nature of God and the continuous renovating out of all by the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth due to the salvation give in Christ, has to abandon the theistic language and mentality and adopt a dynamic approach for communicating a dynamic theology today.

2. Ecclesial theology in content

The school of theology has been greatly challenged by the urgent need of consistent thought for action in situations where human dignity is at stake. There was a strong request on theology for serious concern about the equality of races, antitotalitarian movements in politics and support of revolutionary forces against all kinds of violation of human rights and social justice. The social Gospel of Christian faith has been seriously put into a test as far as validity and relevance are concerned in today's struggle for justice and liberation. A new image of person of Jesus as a revolutionary has gradually developed by biblical theology, and social ethics have taken primacy and priority over the other branches of systematic theology. The result of these new trends has become evident in theological methodology in the so-called "contextual theologies". They are characterised by their inclination to give pre-eminence to the socio-political context within modern societies as the point of departure for theological reason over against the traditional God-manward movement as an independent event embodied in the sacred history. Contextualists are bound, therefore, to work on an inductive theology over against a deductive theology of the past. They conceive their task out of the world

situation, where God is always in action, more than out of global statements about the nature of God. Inductive theology edifies theological systems out of the experience of the world struggle in situations of clash for the sake of human dignity, and thinks of God on the basis of a theological evaluation of these situations. God appears in some extremist theologies of this kind identical with the suffering side of the struggle. This attitude permeates the whole of theology consistently and dynamically. Orthodox theological education cannot remain indifferent in front of this new approach. Again, it cannot adopt an unreflected activist theology of revolution as a definite norm of theological reasoning. It is with profound gratitude, however, that one has to let himself, as an Orthodox theological student or teacher, to be challenged by inductive contextual theologies, because they are correctives of a theological tradition, which has neglected to link its reflection with the existing contextual situations. A deep grasp of the meaning of incarnation obliges theology to respect more the historicity of the theological message in the world here and now. Of course, theology cannot accept all kinds of adjectives. It is a Christian theology and its point of departure is the event of the personal revelation of God in time. It is preferable, therefore, to speak of this new perspective as theology in content in the sense that it is a Christian theology respecting the primacy of the act of God and His Word over all other kinds of norms and conditions limited in time and space. It is, on the other hand, imperative that this Word, because it is incarnate and because it opens the era of the Spirit restoring all things, be studied and enacted by theology in a definite, concrete world and historical context in order to affect it. In this way theology has relevance and fulfils its task and does not remain a simple speculation. It can, also, be said that in some extreme cases of urgent need, where human existence and dignity are immediately and inhumanely threatened, priorities can be reversed and the contextual situation can oblige Christian theology to be primarily inductive.

In all cases, Orthodox theology must remain a voice and a thought of the whole of the Church in all centuries and at all places. The Gospel is one and the Church is catholic. That is why this new perspective in theology has to be accepted within Orthodoxy as a challenge to renew theological education as a Church thinking within a situation with which the Church is inseparably linked. If the Church is really the microcosm and the *pars pro toto* of the world and there is no opposition between the two as between two realms, the sacred and the profane, then "the context" in Orthodox understanding must be seized in and through the Church. In this way the ecclesial theology has to be always in context if it is an authentic Orthodox theology.

3. The eschatological dimension and the future-oriented theology

The emphasis on the importance of the appearance of the incarnate Word in time, and the beginnings of the apostolic and early patristic theological tradition led to a one-sided attitude of Christian theologians, especially Orthodox attached to the past. Certainly, the past-dimension in theology has an evident and basic importance and no one is allowed to contest it. This attitude however, proves to be exclusive and unilateral if it causes a devaluation of an equally important dimension, i.e. that of the future. Theology is nourished and supported by the past but it is oriented to the future. We exist as theologians out of the wisdom of the past but for the sake of the future. In this respect theology as a whole has been greatly gratified by the rediscovery of the importance of

eschatology in contemporary theological thought. Eschatology in this respect does not mean the word about the meta-historical situation for the Christian souls after death, but the always present reality of the End, as the end of time and the fulfilment of history by the saving judgement of God. It is an eschatology, which exercises pressure on our present times and gives to life here and now a deep meaning by pointing out to the final destination of humanity. It is, therefore, an evaluation of life from its end in this double sense. This aspect of eschatological theology has offered to contemporary theology the basis for the realisation of its mandate to work as a future-oriented thought. Again, this attitude cannot be identified with any kind of optimistic man-centered and science-dominated futurology. It is more a new perspective, which reminds theology of its genuine orientation concerning its dynamic concept of history and its task of continuous service to the renewal of Church life in a world, which aspires for a better future in manifold man-centered ways. Theology, here, has to remain faithful to its eschatological nature as it is prescribed by the biblical message which makes all men attentive and aware of the fulfilment of Christ's promise for a new heaven and a new earth.

Orthodox theological education again has to become more sensitive in front of this theological rediscovery. It is not because it has to adopt a new attitude. It is simply because our theology has to be consistent with its liturgical theology nourished by the liturgical praxis based on the eschatological expectation. Orthodox liturgy is a foretaste of the End, of the *telos*, of the fulfilment of the promise of Christ and the earnest of Spirit. All liturgical acts of the Orthodox worship are taking place in the light of this sure expectation. An eucharistic liturgy based on the historical offering of Christ in the past is an enactment of the incarnation, cross and resurrection, but in reality it opens the faithful as a community representing the whole transfigured world towards its final consummation and fulfilment by the glory of God.

The rediscovery of the eschatological dimension in theology has a tremendous importance for the dynamic understanding of tradition, which is one of the fundamental characteristics of Orthodox theology. It is indeed that with a renewed emphasis on eschatology tradition cannot be conceived simply as a historical dimension, which requires repetition. It becomes a stream of life and thought, which cuts across all Christian centuries as a continuous and mighty life process. It is a witness to the Christian truth in the Church but which turns us to the future. It is again the same double movement: nourished by the past but oriented to the future. We have to experience this complemented sequence of the two dimensions by our existential decision of faith at the present moment and situation.

4. Eucharistic-charismatic theology over against provincial confessionalism

Following a long period of polemic interconfessional debate due to the separation between Christian traditions, a new perspective in theology has appeared during the

second part of the twentieth century. For the Orthodox this new perspective has already been initiated before this period by Russian Orthodox theologians in the West facing the Western confessional theology early this century. As a matter of fact this new perspective represents Orthodox theology rightly, because it always manifested beyond all scholastic formulations of faith and definitions of sacraments, which are necessary to a certain extent that the authentic dimension of theology coincides with the operation of the Holy Spirit through the sacramental life of the Church. Though precise in its formulation when necessary Orthodoxy afforded the framework to the human mind to enter into the mystery of God as it is lived within the eucharistic community which is the culminating reality for the Orthodox faithful. It is there that the unity between the personal revealed God is reaffirmed and shared and it is there that the gifts of Grace are spread out by the Spirit.

Without refusing a scholastic side Orthodox theology emphasises this dimension over against a narrow-minded apologetic confessionalism, which renders dogmatic theology to a limited operation of rational catechetical nature denying the mystery of the charismatic operation of the Spirit which draws theology into an operation of the mind liberated from its boundaries by the Spirit's continually renewing act.

5. Pneumatological Christology: the "rediscovery of the theology of the Holy Spirit"

These new perspectives in theological education would have been unthinkable without the new emphasis in contemporary theology on the central role of the operation of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth in divine economy, in Church sacramental life and in the renewal of the whole creation. After a long period of emphasis on theology in western thought, followed by an absolute christocentric approach as a reaction against the liberal theologians by the "theology of crisis" early this century, a strong pneumatology has shaken the one-sidedness on trinitarian theology after the early fifties. A greater attention on the biblical text led theologians to rediscover the basic role of the Spirit in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, in the foundation of the Church, in the mission of the apostolic Church, in the sacraments, and in the eschatological dimension. Beyond any kind of extremist unreflected and enthusiastic charismatic attitudes, the authentic pneumatology is always linked with the fundamental and once for all sacrifice and victory of the crucified and risen Christ and the overall reigning love and providence of God the Father. Pneumatology is in this way part of a consistent trinitarian theology, otherwise it can lead to all kinds of extravagant strange and curious attitudes of groups of believers who are gradually falling into enthusiastic movements, and in theology are in danger to separate the Spirit's operation from the trinitarian revelation of God.

Orthodox theology has played an intense role in this rediscovery. It can be said, to a certain extent, that it has initiated a pneumatological Christology as a presupposition to a genuine ecclesiology in contemporary interconfessional dialogue in the framework of the ecumenical movement, for supporting fundamental theses concerning the true sense of qualitative catholicity over a quantitative geographic one, the sense of the *pleroma* of

the Church against all kinds of clericalism and vicar representation of Christ on earth by an absolute monarchic system of church structure, the meaning of the charismatic nature of the sacraments and finally the significance of the eschatological hope and expectation as a present reality of the Church gathered around the Eucharist as a sign of the Kingdom of God breaking through in history.

The emphasis on pneumatology had two different effects apart from those presented in the previous paragraph:

- a. The limitation of the legalistic spirit in theology imposed either by the "confessionalistic" precision on defining the mystery of the Church or by the jurisdictional understanding of order and canon law;
- b. The universality of the Christian message by a renewed appreciation of the operation of the Spirit making all things new in Christ;
- c. The cosmic dimension of Church unity

It becomes thus evident how contemporary theology came to realize that Church unity is not an end in itself but a channel, an instrument, a factor and a sign of the unity of all for which we pray in the Orthodox liturgy. It can be said that Church unity is a foretaste and the core of the world unity, because the unity of the Church reminds us of its final scope, i.e. the gathering of all peoples of the earth within the same family of God.

This universal perspective of Church unity is of tremendous importance today for the close and inseparable relation between Church and world. It is also the basis on which we can grasp anew the role of non-theological factors (racial, political, cultural, economic and nationalistic) in dividing the Christians in the past. We have to think now how a possible positive role of the same factors can play in the Church, working prophetically in its mission. The unity of the Church cannot be fully realised unless these disruptive factors cease to operate their dividing role amongst men. In this way the effort and debate to reunite Christian traditions is linked with the active presence of the Church defeating the dividing issues of injustice, exploitation and racial discrimination in the world of today.

Unity of the Church- unity of mankind is the new perspective in the whole debate about the unity of the Church, which is of vital importance. Orthodoxy, on this point again, has stood in its history for the universal vision and reality of the One Church. For the Orthodox the Church is the miniature of the One Creation, including peoples and nature. It is the *par pro toto* of the whole created world. Orthodox ecclesiology in patristic thought as well in the liturgical praxis is a commentary of the prologue of the Epistle to the Colossians, especially the verses 1:16-17. Therefore, this new perspective is also a challenge to Orthodox theology and action in today's effort of the gradual gathering of the peoples of the earth into the family of the One God. Church Unity is not simply a result of confessional agreement. It comprises a struggle for all men in all parts of the world and a profound sense of responsibility on the part of Church people for the ongoing

influence of inhuman elements of injustice dividing us into classes, races and self-centered nations.

6. Theosis and humanisation

A new perspective has been created for Orthodox theological education by the modern emphasis on anthropology both in science and theology. All kinds of scientists and philosophers make anthropology more and more the main chapter of their investigations. The defeat of speculative idealism and transcendental theism has progressively led to an anthropocentric research in all branches of sciences. Biology, clinical and social psychology have anew occupied themselves with the mystery of man and its inseparable psychosomatic unit. Certainly, this new intense anthropological research has very little to do with the humanist framework of a romantic past, which saw man out of ivory towers. Today's anthropological research deals with the greatness of man and his centrality in creation through man's misery and tragedy of existence and sees the human condition realistically.

The general trend, however, is to render man humane, to make him fulfil his destiny on this earth by seriously taking his existence into his own hands, in view of a continuous transformation of himself and his conditions of life. One speaks in this sense of man who comes to his adulthood in our times as a man who is consciously concerned with his deeper self. Man who comes to an age signifies a process of becoming, a dynamic struggle to realise his highest possibilities afforded to him by creation and nature.

The "New Man" is a slogan, which more and more becomes a symbol of the necessary change from the old man. It is the motto of man's struggle to realise his full identity with himself as member of a community of people. Man, meant here as man and woman without discrimination, looks today for another type of transcendence able to affect his being. It is that which one can call "transfiguration" in Orthodox theological language.

The new anthropology is definitely scientific, therefore worldly and immanently bound. But it is pointing out to the need of man's transformation towards the fulfilment of his purpose in history. It is the new type of anthropology expressed by the term humanisation. Christian theology of our days is trying to deal with the modern scientific trends in anthropology by adopting this idea of new man as biblical. It works out the importance of man Jesus, insisting on the human nature of the historical Jesus as a prototype of humanity revealing the potentialities of human nature away from all kinds of triumphal humanisms.

Orthodox theology again is seriously challenged by the new perspective in scientific anthropology and non-Orthodox radical anthropological theology. The question for Orthodox theological education is how to cope with such a new trend in one of the central chapters of Christian theology. The whole of the Orthodox anthropology stands on the basis of theosis of man. Divinisation, in English, is a risky terminology, a rather wrong term but for a justified cause. Are we now to interpret theosis as pointing to the identity of man with God or better should we try at the present moment to see it as

gradual transformation of the person of man by sharing in the deified human nature of Christ? Because theosis can also be grasped christologically, signifying the real humanisation in the sense that it makes man realise his authentic manhood as it has been created from the beginning by God as His image and likeness. The real humanisation is the *verus homo* revealed in Christ. It is this "new man" that we are invited to regain by baptism and share in the Eucharist.

Anyway, modern anthropology and the radical theological response to it raise for Orthodox theological education a vital and very interesting issue in one of its most favourite and genuine Orthodox topics of research.

7. Salvation and social ethics

Finally, Orthodox theological education has to be aware of the most fundamental issue in all branches of theology today. This issue concerns the question of conceiving salvation in Christ in relationship with the sharing and transforming the unjust structures of modern society and with the ongoing struggle for liberation and humanisation in general. The problem has become very acute today, as all theoretical sciences have been greatly challenged by the ongoing activist and positivist trends in modern social sciences, which have affected theology. The former traditional way of Christian theological ethics which emphasized the priority of individual ethical preparation as a necessary prerequisite for influencing society does not seem to be the answer any more. The emphasis is more and more laid on the transformation of structures first which are affecting individual ethics. Furthermore the theological approach to salvation as an apart reality of the individual saved by Christ crucified and risen and as envisaging eternal life as its scope and fulfilment has been seriously challenged by a more history-bound sociological approach to salvation with primordial accent on saving man from inhuman situations here and now as being the main part of the Christian message to the contemporary world.

Certainly, Orthodox theology will always maintain the priority of salvation in pure Christological and pneumatological terms. Again extremist positions, which tend to reverse priorities on account of situations of emergency in the realm of social action cannot dictate another theology of salvation. We have, however, to become more sensitive on the inseparable nature of salvation with social action. It is absolutely true that salvation in Christ comprises also for a genuine Orthodox theology the dimension of concern for human dignity and welfare. We cannot continue to speak of two qualitative levels of theology, i.e. the one dealing with the heart, the center of Christian Gospel, i.e. salvation in Christ and then the other secondary, inferior subject which is professed as "ethical duty" which deals with social thought and action. We cannot insist only on individual salvation in a puritan's or a pietist's framework. For Orthodoxy the social dimension in theology has to be rooted inside the meaning of the salvation in Christ. It is the reality of this salvation, its nature as well as its immediate, necessary and self-evident impact that a saved man in Christ is the one who takes his earthly life seriously and his sharing in the struggle of authentic humanity as it is revealed by Christ as the *sine qua*

non condition in living this salvation here and now in the world. As Orthodox theologians we have to accept humbly the challenge, because we have too easily neglected the coherence of individual salvation and social action in modern times and allowed in our theology to distinguish between a vertical line (God-man priority) over a horizontal one (man-to-man relationship). The priority of the salvation in Christ and its centrality must be certainly preserved but this priority does not signify the establishment of two qualitatively different dimensions with the result that the second becomes so secondary that in the end it becomes non-existent. The two exist but one within the same reality of salvation in Christ.

Orthodox theological education has a difficult task to face today. It has to reinterpret a very rich heritage taking into serious consideration very clearly new perspectives which though of a non-Orthodox origin are absolutely legitimate within a changing world and a rapidly developing society. It seems to me, however, that in most of the cases the theological perspectives today are reminding Orthodoxy of its genuine tradition. To a certain extent, if the Orthodox want to proceed to this reinterpretation of their theological tradition they have to try to conform more to it and be more consistent with its authentic principles. This operation requires a careful study of the Orthodox premises in theology (pneumatological-eucharistic-eschatological) as a condition for successful renewal of Orthodox theological education. At the same time, Orthodox educators and students in theology have to listen more carefully to the requests of our times and profess the coherence of theological thought with the prophetic witness in their own social milieu avoiding esoteric language or self-sufficiency. It is for the sake of our theological education and its renewal that it is challenged by new perspectives which are opened by non-Orthodox theologies or by new societies, which are in revolt against traditional, patterns combining nationalism and social conservatism. Orthodox theological education has nothing to be afraid of and nothing to defend apologetically apart from its full devotion to the One Ecclesia of Christ involved in the same struggle in all parts of the world. We should not forget the great changes occurred to the Orthodox Church in the 20th century, which have caused such a differentiated structure in its theological education as it is exposed in the introduction of this essay. There are Orthodox Churches in entirely new situations not any more characterized as Eastern Churches. They have to witness in entirely new settings and cultures and their national identity is put into a terrific test. This is a moment of crisis, but of a positive, corrective and purifying nature for Orthodox education. We should not miss the chance to share in its renewal and contribute also to all efforts of theology in other Christian traditions facing these new perspectives in the way prescribed by the one and the same tradition of the One Catholic and Apostolic Church.