

# SACRAMENTS OR HOLY MYSTERIES

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### FOREWORD

#### BY ARCHBISHOP LAZAR PUHALO

The main aim of this *Point of Faith* booklet is to help reorient Orthodox Christians away from the dry, scholastic Latin corruptions which have crept into our theology, toward the vital, living spirit of authentic Orthodox Christian revelation and life.

One of the most unfortunate corruptions which has crept into catechisms and instruction books of the Orthodox Church, is the false teaching about "seven sacraments." This teaching, which was invented by Western Latin philosophers called "scholastics," is contrary to the divinely inspired Tradition of the Orthodox Church, and the mind of the holy and God-bearing fathers of Christ's Church. These "scholastics," replacing the Sacred Tradition with their own "traditions of men," wanted to reduce Christianity and the Christian life to a set of formulas and a series of legal agreements between God and man. They wanted to make the Christian faith follow a system of human, worldly logic and rationalization. The term "sacrament" is borrowed from pagan Roman idolatry and military formula, and indicates a legal oath.

According to the Latin teaching of "seven sacraments" there are exactly seven<sup>1</sup> divinely authorized ways to receive God's invisible grace through visible rituals. This teaching has led to a corruption of the concept of grace, sanctification, the Christian life and the meaning of the divine services, which are ranked as "holy" and "not quite so holy" by this teaching. Moreover, the teaching about "seven sacraments" also corrupts the very meaning of the Church and the meaning of the "people of God" — the faithful. The false teaching of "seven sacraments" reduces mankind's relationship with our Saviour Jesus Christ to a set of legal formulas, a series of almost magical incantations said by the priest.

The Orthodox fathers never attempted to set boundaries on the working of God's grace in the Holy Church. We must understand that, for the Orthodox faith, there are no "sacraments;" only the limitless Holy Mysteries — the mystery of the working of God's grace. Any attempt to number or define the Holy Mysteries is not only arbitrary, but non-Orthodox. Orthodox patristic thought would never conceive such an idea, and it has come to us exclusively from the juridical, legalistic formalism of Roman Catholic scholasticism.

The following work of Fr Taras Kurgansky was written precisely to help free our spiritual thinking and theology from the corruptions which crept into our books during the three hundred year "Latin captivity of Russian theology," and the five hundred year Turkish occupation of the Orthodox countries in the south. Fr Taras, and the whole patristic movement in pre-revolutionary Russia, desired to free our texts from the false teaching of "seven sacraments," which equates chrismation with "confirmation/first communion" and forces upon us the false teaching of a "sacrament of penance." In Orthodoxy, we do not speak of "penance" (punishment; making satisfaction to juridical justice by means of mortification and punishment dictated by the priest), but rather of repentance, *metanoia* (re-thinking; changing our perspective; changing the direction of our lives) and healing. From an Orthodox Christian point of view, sin is both an illness and a "falling short of the mark," and requires both healing and transformation. The essential meanings of the original Greek words is *'amartia*: (falling short, translated as "sin") and *metanoia*: (to come to a change, translated as "repentance")

that is, to "rethink" or "change one's perspective." Punishment and forgiveness are mutually exclusive. The Orthodox concept is a creative, progressive transformation and trans-figuration, a healing. The concept of "penance" negates the doctrine of theosis, while the concept of repentance and healing is consistent with the doctrine of theosis. For example, when a priest assigns a person to perform a number of prostrations (*metanoia*) to help them with repentance, he does so because a prostration is a type of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We die with Christ and rise with Him; we die to sin and rise to life. Prostrations are, thus, not a punishment, not a callisthenic exercise that assuages some deity's juridical wrath, but a prescription for healing that is a type of dying with Christ to rise to life. Our hope is to help continue the work of the patristic revival and the restoration among our people of an Orthodox concept of the Holy Mysteries and the working of divine grace.

"Definitions" are not proper when we speak of Orthodox teaching, but the reader may need at least a sketchy definition of some terms in order to more easily follow the discussion in Fr Taras Kurgansky's paper, particularly to follow the application of the terms "Holy Mysteries" and "grace," as they appear in the work. The two "outline definitions" are drawn most directly from St John Chrysostom, St Gregory of Nyssa, and St Isidor of Seville.

### **WHAT ARE HOLY MYSTERIES?**

The meaning of the Holy Mysteries is outlined in two ways, as the word appears in the works of the holy and God-bearing fathers.

First, the term refers to all those truths of the faith which unite us to God and lead us to salvation. These truths were given by Christ to His apostles and established in the Church as the faith of Christ. They were taught to new Christians as they grew and progressed in that faith of Christ. When these truths are fully believed and assimilated, they are sources of grace; they bring one into communion with the ever-present grace of God. The holy, God-bearing fathers, the successors of the Apostles, refer to these truths or mysteries as *dogmata*. This term includes a mysteriological/mystical concept in Orthodox Christian thought, as opposed to the rigid legal definitions and categories of Latin and Protestant literalism and rationalism. St Basil the Great says that "the dogmas are kept in silence," by which he indicates that they are assimilated by a spiritual growth and development, rather than taught and learned pedagogically, as in catechisms, etc. To be precise, the dogmata are learned in two ways: First, by actually living them in a practical, spiritual way, and by prayer and contemplation.

Secondly, the term "Holy Mysteries" also refers to all those practices in the life of the individual, which reveal and confirm the truths of Christ's faith. With references to specific divine services, the term refers to any invocation, in a special service, asking God, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to touch, fill and consecrate any person, act or thing. We must include in this, each time an Orthodox person makes the Sign of the Cross.<sup>1</sup>

These two ways of viewing the Holy Mysteries are not separate. They are one and the same. The divine services are all revelations of, and teachings about, the truths of Christ's faith. How do they unite us to God's grace? We do not know, and the "mechanics" of it are of no importance. We only know, by God's promise, that they do. Here is a fact to consider in trying to understand the Holy Mysteries: the divine services, whether baptism, the Liturgy, marriage, ordination, tonsure, blessing of water or burial,<sup>1</sup> are all Holy Mysteries. All of them not only teach us the truths of Christ's faith, but bring us into a living, vital communion with those truths and impart to us the grace to assimilate

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and live those truths.

All of them are spiritually transforming, provided they are approached with sincere faith, though Baptism/Chrismation is usually held in a certain pre-eminence. This is not because it is a different "species" of grace, or because the actions of grace have relative value, rather it is because Baptism/Chrismation is a kind of door which admits us to the rest. It is like the entrance to the wedding chamber, as in the parable, in which we can partake of all the good things of God. Holy Communion *is* set apart. It is, first of all, the wedding feast, a grace-filled manifestation of one's union with the body of Christ. Baptism/Chrismation reconciles us to God, uniting us to the Bride of Christ, the Holy Church and brings us into the realm of grace in which all the rest is received. Holy Communion *is* totally indispensable to our salvation, as Christ Himself said. It makes us one with Christ, bestows life and sustains us. Holy Communion is rightly called "the medicine of immortality," and it is the means of our glorification in Jesus Christ.

One might surmise then, that since these two mysteries are "indispensable," others are "relatively dispensable." In scholasticism that is, in fact, what is taught. However, such a teaching presupposes that redemption is a purely juridical act of vicarious punishment, and that salvation consists in either a passive acceptance of that vicarial sacrifice, or participation in legally prescribed "sacraments" which substitute for our own struggle toward illumination and sanctification.

What is necessary for salvation is a life-long struggle for illumination and sanctification, ending in glorification by the Holy Spirit. Salvation depends on our own willing co-operation with God's grace.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Baptism is only the beginning of our regeneration, though it does bestow upon us a re-birth into a covenant relationship with God in His holy Church. All the holy mysteries, which involve our willing co-operation with grace, serve for the continuous process of our sanctification and illumination through grace. There are external, physical actions involved precisely because we are creatures composed of body and soul, the physical and the immaterial. We pray both body and soul, and we participate in the grace of God, both body and soul together as one. Thus, there is both a material and an immaterial aspect to all prayer and the body manifests its participation in these things physically.<sup>3</sup> It is tragic and shocking that "catechism" writers, so polluted by Western Scholasticism, forgot that Christian burial is a Holy Mystery of the Church, just as is marriage and ordination, and the memorial services for the reposed. If the burial service was not a Holy Mystery ("Sacrament") then the service could be offered for non-Orthodox as well as believers. The services for those who have fallen asleep in Christ sustain our communion with them in the Holy Spirit and express and preserve the integrity of the Church, which is not separated into compartments by death. Indeed, the services for the departed reveal another, profound meaning of the promise that "the gates of Hades [death] shall not prevail against the Church."

## WHAT IS "GRACE?"

For the sake of simplicity, and to avoid becoming philosophical and technical, we will offer this outline explanation. Grace is an uncreated energy of God. It is uncreated and eternal. It is not something that God created or creates for man, but an eternal energy of the Godhead. Grace, as a special gift of God, is a coming together of God and man. We receive grace by being permitted to participate in the energies of God to some degree. An act of grace is when man is brought into a

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2. We are touching here upon the process of *theosis*, which is beyond the scope of this discussion. We also cannot enter into a discussion of participation in the uncreated energies of God at this point, but the reader should pursue these subjects.

3. We are discussing the meaning of the order of service (rites) elsewhere and cannot digress here to carry this explanation further.

special moment of communion with the Holy Spirit. Grace is not a "thing" or an "attribute" of God, and even though it is a "gift which God sends down" (Ja.1:17), it cannot be defined, limited or ranked by degrees. It is God's act of lifting man up to Him and coming down to man, so that man shares in something of God Himself, and from this, receives a consecration. If, for example, some saint receives the "gift of working miracles," this gift is not something he possesses on his own, it is a result of his nearness to God. God extends His blessing by working miracles through that person, and it is a communion of that holy person with God.

Perhaps what we have said is already too much. The question of the Holy Mysteries and grace must not be over simplified or over defined. An understanding of these things can never be intellectual and can never be fully obtained from books, explanations or definitions. An understanding of the things of God can only be assimilated through an actual living experience of them in a life of prayer, contemplation, fasting, moral struggle and Holy Communion.

### **THE DIVINE SERVICES AND PRAYERS WHICH ARE SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO AS "HOLY MYSTERIES."**

*"The Orthodox Church is a spiritual hospital"*

The ways God works through His Holy Orthodox Church to save us and consecrate us are wondrous and beautiful. He gives us His grace in ways which we cannot always see with our eyes. For this reason, we call *all* these personal works of God "Holy Mysteries."

We must work together with God and cooperate with His grace in order to participate in it. Moreover, the life in Christ is a life preeminently in His Holy Church. The Church was manifested by God especially for this reason: to bring together as one people of all times, places, tongues and races, and unite them together by the grace of His Holy Spirit, in a bond and unity of faith. This is the reason for all the liturgical services, including those specifically referred to as holy mysteries: that we understand that our redemption consists in the healing of the fallen human nature and its divisions, and that the works of grace are accomplished in the unity and oneness of the faith, expressed in the synaxis (coming together) of the people of God, in faith and love. For this reason, the Church has given us a system of worship services in which, coming together, the people of God, *led* by the ordained clergy, call down the grace of the Holy Spirit in mutual prayers, offered with love of God and neighbour. The prayers are not "formulas," but revelations of the meaning of redemption and of the heavenly kingdom. These prayers and worship services have been given us to help us understand these wonderful gifts of God better when we do receive them.

God has given us not only visible divine services which are served in church *by all the faithful together*, but prayers which we say any place and any time. In these services and prayers, we communicate with God and turn our hearts to Him. When our hearts are turned toward Him, God communicates with us by giving us the gifts of His grace to sustain us and make us stronger in faith. The words of the prayers and the actions used in the divine services teach us about God's grace, how He gives it to us, and what happens to us when we receive it. ***Neither the divine services nor the prayers are "formulas," and the Holy Mysteries are not accomplished by liturgical formalism as if the words and actions were magical. All these things — the elements of the liturgical services of the Holy Mysteries — are revelations of the unity and oneness of the people of God, the faithful Orthodox Christians, who share them all in common.*** The liturgical services convey meaning, bring the community together and join the faithful in common faith and prayer. They maintain

correct theology and teaching and prevent any priest from being the centre of a personality cult. Since a liturgical service can be equally celebrated by every priest and community, the Holy Spirit and divine grace are the only "messages."

We are taught that the Orthodox Church is a spiritual hospital in which God treats our souls and bodies and makes us well enough to enter the Heavenly Kingdom. How does God treat our spiritual illnesses and give us His divine medicine? This is what the Holy Mysteries are for. Through them, God gives the medicine of divine grace for the healing of our souls and bodies.<sup>4</sup> In the Holy Mysteries we also receive strength to live a truly Orthodox life. In the divine services, we all pray together, led by our priest, and the prayers of all the people together bring these Holy Mysteries to pass and call down the grace of God on us. We are one body praying together in love and faith. Because of this unity of love and faith, God answers our prayers and heals us.

How many "Holy Mysteries" are there? There are many. The Orthodox Church does not have a teaching of "seven sacraments" as some people think. The word "sacrament" is not even an Orthodox word. There is no limit to the number of Holy Mysteries, just as there is no limit to the grace and work of God. Every act by which God gives us His grace through the Orthodox Church is a Holy Mystery.

The whole purpose of the divine plan, the "economy" of God is the return of man and of all creation to fellowship (*koinonia*) with God. To use the words of Apostle Peter, it is to make us *partakers of the divine Nature* by grace (2Pet.1:4). When St Paul tells us that we are saved by Grace, what did he mean? The answer comes with his words: *the mystery hidden from ages and generation, but now made manifest to His saints* (Col.1:26). What is this mystery? *Whereby when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the children of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit* (Eph.3:4-5). Christ is the *mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory* (1Tm.3:16).

How is this *mystery* communicated to us? The sectarians, in their delusion, think that it is by preaching because they philosophize in Augustinian terms<sup>5</sup> about created grace and subjective faith. They think themselves merely declared righteous and have no concept of the transformation of created being. They have no idea about the elevation of human nature to a higher genera, that is, *theosis*. How, then, is this *mystery* communicated to us? How does He dwell in us and we in Him? By uniting ourselves to Him. What do we call those united to Him? The Church. *This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church* (Eph.5:32). How are we united to Him? Baptism: everyone who has been baptized into Christ has put on Christ, being baptized into His death and Resurrection (Rm.6). Quite simply, we are *baptized into the Mystery*. Every person baptized into Christ is baptized into the unity which God the Son came to accomplish by His Redemption: *having made known to us the Mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the economy of the fulness of times he might recapitulate all things in Christ, both that which is in the heavens, and that which is on earth* (Eph.1:9-10).

This unity is not merely a collocation of individuals, rather it is an organic unity: a unity between God and man, man and man, man and the angels: Christ in all, all in Christ. How is this

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4. St Ignatius the Godbearer calls Holy Communion "The medicine of immortality."

5. That is, according to the false teachings of the early Western Christian philosopher Augustine of Hippo. Augustine's teachings are directly responsible for the Great Schism, because he introduced pagan and heretical thought into the Roman Church and distorted not only the theology, but the "mindset" of Western Christianity.

accomplished? Baptism and faith are the start. The Eucharist, the Mystery of Mysteries, the crown of Mysteries, the liturgical actualization of *the mystery hidden before the ages*.

This Mystery is communicated to all those who belong to Christ as His body, as the participants of the new covenant of His Body and Blood. The divinity of Christ is communicated to us through this great Mystery, the Mystery toward which all the other holy mysteries of the Church are aimed: Baptism/Chrismation, Ordination, Monastic Ton- sure, Blessing of Water, Crowning of Marriage, Confession,<sup>6</sup> Blessing of Homes, even Burial.

The realization of the Mysteries among us and for us is accomplished by that uncreated grace, the grace by means of which we become divine, for, the mysteries are the manifestation of that grace by which we *partake of the divine Nature*, according to Apostle Peter.

The discussion above is intended only to lead into the following work of V. Rev. Fr Taras Kurgansky, providing brief explanations to help the reader follow his work more easily. A member of the patristic revival movement in pre-revolutionary Russia, Fr Taras discusses the conflict between the Orthodox Christian concept of Holy Mysteries, and the Latin false teaching of "seven sacraments," providing an excellent survey of the subject.

## **THE FALSE TEACHING ABOUT THE "SEVEN SACRAMENTS"**

*by Hieromonk Taras Kurgansky*

The efforts of Western theologians to establish rationalized definitions for all the sacred things and acts of Christianity compelled them to examine all these matters illogically, in an attempt to categorize them and separate some from others on the basis of relative importance. Such an approach is unavoidable in an atmosphere where religious life is based on the principle of juridical legalism, where the inner quickening of the spirit is replaced with a reign of strict discipline, and there is no place for the triumph of the regenerated soul. In harmony with this principle, the tendency of scholastic theology to attempt to define everything by an exact number, led to the Roman Catholic teaching that there are exactly seven church sacraments, which are the exclusive sources of divine grace.

Such a teaching excessively exalts the hierarchy above the people of God, since it is the exclusive prerogative of the representatives of the hierarchy to serve these sacraments. The entire inner, spiritual life of the Church is thus conveniently reduced to the performing of these sacraments, and this placed the whole matter of salvation in the hands of the hierarchy, relegating the people to a passive, subjugated role in the general structure of Church life, denying them any living, active participation. In addition to this practical significance in the life of Western Christianity, the teaching of seven sacraments naturally follows the [erroneous] teaching about the "three offices" of the Lord, the "satisfaction of divine justice" and "juridical truth" which is supposedly manifested in the life of the Lord. The Roman Catholics state the matter thus in one of their catechisms: "*Sacraments' is the name given to physical sacred forms established by Jesus Christ for the bestowal of grace. The*

*Old Testament had a multitude of rituals, but not a single sacrament which communicated grace. These sacraments belong only to the New Testament. Jesus Christ Himself established them so that His blood and infinite grace, which are abundant and sufficient to encompass all people, might be assimilated by all his followers.*" [Ironically, in the "seven sacrament" formula, Confession and repentance are omitted and replaced with a "sacrament of holy punishment." In every one of the scholastic formularies of the "seven sacraments" that I have read in the Orthodox Church, Confession and repentance (metanoia) are not mentioned, but are replaced by something called "penance." Here, penance means to make satisfaction through an act of mortification imposed by a priest.]

In the process of importing the Latin system of theology and the scholastic manner of reasoning, into the Ukrainian ecclesiastical school in the 17th century, Kievan theologians first introduced the teaching of seven sacraments to Orthodox Christianity. This teaching, a Roman one, both in origin (Peter of Lombardy) and in juridical content, did not encounter resistance on the part of the naive Russian people, who did not realize how completely contrary it is to sacred tradition. It is completely clear, from a survey of the Russian church writers Joseph and Zinovy, that in the 16th century, the Orthodox Church in Russia had never heard of any sevenfold number relating to the Holy Mysteries. The very definition of the mysteries as sacraments is taken from the Latin catechism: *"A sacrament is a visible sign of God's invisible grace, given for our sanctification,"* says Lavrenty Zizany. *"A sacrament is a sacred action which, under the guise of form, communicates God's invisible grace to the soul of a believer,"* teaches Peter Mohyla.

It is not difficult to grasp the arbitrariness and artificiality of these definitions and concepts. All theologically educated people know that in the language of Holy Scripture and of Orthodox Christian patristic works, **the expression 'Mystery' does not have a sacramental sense**, which is attributed to it by the scholastics. Not only in the poetical and rhetorical works, but also in the deeply theological expressions of the holy fathers, the term "Mysteries" designates all the manifestations of divine grace, independent of any formalistic conditions of their accomplishment. Incidents in the life of our Lord are also referred to as "Mysteries," and the very Christian teaching itself is called a "Mystery." St Gregory the Theologian calls the feast of the Nativity and Theophany "Mysteries." Other phenomena of the sacred life, and also monastic tonsure are called Holy Mysteries in sacred hymns of the Church. The Russian theologians of the 16th century faithfully adhered to the broad, Orthodox Christian sense of this concept, and only in the 17th century did Russian theology begin to assimilate this novel [sacramental] concept of the term "Holy Mysteries" or "Mystery."

Following the Latins, Lavrenty Zizany and Peter Mohyla consider a specific, demonstrable proof of divine establishment to be the distinguishing sign of the "sacraments". If one wished to define this sign exactly and clearly, then one would have to search for a long time and most carefully in the Holy Bible. If we take them at their word, then we must come to the conclusion that so far as the "sacraments" are concerned, the scholastics gave greater significance to ranking them than to demonstrating a direct and exact proof of establishment by divine will. In most cases, they considered as sufficient proof of "divine establishment," a vague hint in the Gospel or a casual presence of Jesus Christ at the occurrence of some common event of life, although this hint or presence might be remote from its spiritual significance. In other cases, there is not even an example in the life of the Lord which can be mentioned. Moreover, the principle of the provable divine establishment of seven sacraments, degrades other divine services which are no less important and which are certainly divinely established. There is, in fact, a firm testimony of St Basil the Great which establishes the clearly divine origins of rites, acts and manifestations of Church life which are

not included in these "seven sacraments":

*"Of the teachings and practices preserved in the Church, some we have from written instruction; others we have received 'in silence' by the Apostolic tradition. Both of these have the same authority in relation to true religion. And no one will contradict these — no one, that is, who is even moderately knowledgeable in the institutions of the Church. For if we were to attempt to reject such traditions as have no written authority, on the grounds that they are of little importance, we would inadvertently injure the Gospel in its very vitals; or rather, we would make our public preaching a mere phrase and nothing more" (On The Holy Spirit, 27:66).*

Advocates will not tolerate signs of these "seven sacraments" other than the "external form of inner grace" categorization. Nevertheless, in the life of the Church there are other divine services which fully satisfy these conditions, but which, for some reason, the scholastics do not consider worthy of the name "Holy Mysteries," [or "sacraments"]. There is even a divine service which has the greatest importance for the whole life of the one receiving it, and has always been regarded, along with baptism, the Eucharist and ordination to be a great manifestation of divine grace, but which is regarded by the scholastics as lower than simple confession or anointing. This divine service is the rite of monastic tonsure, which is called a Holy Mystery in the works of St Dionysios the Areopagite and St Theodore the Studite. Thus we cannot be reconciled with the "internal/external signs" by which we are supposedly obligated to distinguish a "Holy Mystery" from other divine services.

In examining this concept of "sacrament," one is struck by the dichotomy of character and significance which has created a strange division into "sacraments *absolutely* necessary for salvation and ones only *relatively* necessary for salvation. Such a division is possible only when salvation is viewed as a formalism. We read in the [heretical] **Great Catechism**: *"Those which are absolutely necessary for salvation are three: baptism, communion and penance. Those necessary for salvation are two: confirmation and last rite unction. Marriage is necessary for those who use it to help preserve them from fornication, and absolutely necessary in bearing children for the sake of fulfilling the Church. The priesthood is similar. It is necessary for those ordained to direct the Church and perform the holy sacraments of God" (para. 30).*

By their very name, all the Holy Mysteries must have equal significance, yet the incomprehensibility and confusion engendered by such a legalistic division of the Holy Mysteries is evident even to the author of the **Great Catechism** himself. Later, he adds still more Latin scholasticism, writing: *"It is beneficial for you to know of yet another division. All seven sacraments are necessary, but not for every person, nor are they equal. Marriage and priesthood are absolutely necessary for the Church, nevertheless, one who is not married and not ordained can be saved. The other five sacraments are necessary for salvation, but not equally so. Baptism, Communion and penance are absolutely necessary for everyone for salvation, and will save. Without them, not a single person can be saved. Holy unction and last rites are necessary for salvation in this degree: they give us more assurance of our salvation, for holy oil prepares us to suffer with more assurance, while last rites release one from all remains of sins. For this reason, one who is neglectful of them has no certainty of his salvation, unless he desired them but was unable to obtain them" (ibid).*

Though he did not attribute varied significance to the Holy Mysteries, Lavrenty Zizany nevertheless asserts the sevenfold number and sacramental nature of them.

Regardless of the convincing tone of these writers, every unbiased reader who is acquainted

with the spirit of patristic writings remains convinced that the very idea of a Holy Mystery being understood as a sacramental act special and different in comparison with other divine services and acts, belongs exclusively to Latin [Roman Catholic] theology. He will also understand that the number of such sacred actions is set by the scholastics arbitrarily and artificially, that deliberation about a greater or lesser necessity for salvation of one or another of the Holy Mysteries is foolish. For, salvation is accomplished not by separate sacred actions, but by union with the life of the Church<sup>7</sup>, in which there is nothing which has little significance. Such divine services as the great blessing of water, monastic tonsure and the funeral service are no less significant and important than others. We find it onerous to make comparisons of the relative importance of divine services or sacred actions. Upon what does the importance of a divine service or sacred act depend? Could it really be the quantity or degree of grace? But if one is to deliberate on such grounds and not consider the higher spiritual sense of the divine services and sacred acts, then the serving of various services is incomprehensible. [This is one of the great tragedies of "sacramentalism." Not only does it make the people of God peripheral in the life of the Church, but it denigrates and renders meaningless the "synaxis of the people of God," in whom the Holy Spirit indwells both individually and corporately, and through whom all the mysteries of the grace of God are accomplished.]

There is neither need nor basis to apply a vain concept of human understandings to Christian divine services, which must be understood purely spiritually. In addition to what we have already said, it is obvious from other sources that the Kievan theologians were attached to the Latin sacramental formula, and the influence of Latin juridicalism is also present in this.

As we saw in our review of the patristic approach, the holy fathers, when discussing divine services and sacred acts, say nothing of a formula of sacred actions, and no such references occur in the dogmatic teaching of the Church. The difficulty in sacramental formulae and definitions of formulae and the attempt to pinpoint a legal "moment of accomplishment," became evident in the teaching about the Eucharist. In exploring this teaching, we see a contradiction in the system of Lavrenty Zizany and Peter Mohyla. Zizany, together with the Roman Catholics, considers the pronouncement of the Lord's words ["Take eat, all of you....All of you drink of it...] to be the "moment of visible accomplishment" of the Mystery, while Peter Mohyla, coming closer to the sense and meaning of the liturgy, considers the blessing of the bread and wine to be the formula.

One must protest that the lofty, spiritual sense of the Divine Liturgy, composed by the apostles and transmitted by two of the greatest pillars of the Christian Church, is not open to such coarse, sensual philosophizing. A notable example of such sensual philosophy is Lavrenty Zizany's deliberations on the moment when, after the consecration of the Gifts, the deacon says " Break, master, the Holy Bread."

The **Great Catechism** is especially penetrated with a worldly spirit reminiscent of the medieval scholastic doctrines from which the whole document is borrowed. Also striking is the author's coarse literalism. First of all, one is shocked at the teaching of the Eucharist as a sacrifice satisfying God. We have already spoken of the complete insolvency of the very idea of "satisfaction" or "satisfaction of justice," but even for those who would accept this idea, it seems strange why God, who was once [according to their doctrine] infinitely satisfied, continues to receive satisfaction with each new offering of the blood and body of His Son. As if this was not enough, the author of the **Great Catechism** has the bloody suffering of Christ in the Eucharist exceed the limits of Golgotha. The scholastics did not want to omit even the insignificant easing of His sufferings wherein the

Roman soldiers did not break His bones. They assert:

"On the Cross, it is said that 'His bones will not be broken,' but in order that the thing which was not suffered on the Cross be suffered somehow, it is suffered in the prosphora. That is to say, in the breaking of the prosphora, we behold this broken thing that this [the breaking of the bones] may be fulfilled" (**Great Catechism**, para.33).

These words demonstrate clearly what a coarse, sensual character distinguished the view of the Eucharist held by the Kievan theologians.

We have already had occasion to mention the concept of "satisfaction" which was introduced into the realm of the theology of repentance from the general view of Latin theologians. For now, we will limit ourselves to observing that their teaching of "penance" is distinguished by the idea that confession is a juridical cleansing of sins. No doubt the custom of confessing one's sins to a spiritual father is ancient in the Church, but the holy instructors of the faith, in expounding the concept of repentance, turned their attention to the soul of the repentant ones and not to the external circumstances of the repentance. Truly, confession is an important act, and it is undoubtedly a "mystery" in the broadest sense. Nevertheless, if, when setting forth the teaching about repentance, one limits oneself to a discussion of the conditions of confession, and introduces juridical elements into it, this is a departure from the teaching of the holy and God-bearing fathers and an absorption of Latin scholasticism. In the East, the nature of repentance was understood more clearly, and was not limited by the idea of confession. The monk Job even identifies anointing with repentance, and one must agree that the inner spiritual content of both holy mysteries leads to such a conclusion.

The **Great Catechism** and the [Latinized] **Orthodox Confession** introduce marriage as a "sacrament," even though marriage is something which exists outside the realm of religion, even in societies which are not religious. Christ did not omit to mention such an important phenomenon of human life and, as the Evangelist relates, showed a preference for virginity (Mt.19:12). The apostle expounds the same thing in more detail (1Cor.7). In the dogmatic writings of St Gregory, St John and Blessed Zinovy, nothing at all is said of marriage as a Holy Mystery, only as something which is possible in the Church.

Lavrenty Zizany waivers concerning his "absolute necessity" and "relative necessity" of marriage, and is inclined to consider marriage "absolutely necessary" for the Church. Let us merely note that the idea that marriage is indispensable for the Church actually contradicts the Apostle, who desired to see all Christians virgin (1Cor.7:7). It is true that the Apostle referred to marriage as a "mystery" (Eph.5:32), but he is not specifying Christian marriage, rather all marriages. In this instance, one must understand by the term "mystery," a mystical, transcendent law of life. Indeed, the very content of the words of the Apostle makes it clear that he has in mind not a sacred ritual or divine service (about which nothing is mentioned), but rather a psychological and a physiological act of marital love. What is to be considered as a mystery of marriage — the rite of crowning, or the marital cohabitation?<sup>8</sup> We will not make any further comment since the explanations and interpretations given in the **Great Catechism** is so obviously strained. [Let us note that, in the early Church, as in Israel, marriage was "common law." There was no special divine service for it.]

Concerning the teaching about "seven sacraments," a teaching which has its source in the works of heretics cannot be authentic or of any vital use. The practice of the Orthodox Christian Church never followed the narrow tendencies of scholastic theology, and it always acknowledges great efficacy and spiritual power in all prayers, sacred acts and rites of the faith.

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