

Awareness of Orthodox Identity in Inter-Religious Dialogues

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



The term “Orthodoxy” comes from two Greek words, one meaning ‘correct’ and the other ‘to think’. The word therefore has the sense of ‘correct thinking’. True faith is not cut off from the ecclesiastical, liturgical and sacramental life as glory and praise of God [This is why ‘Orthodoxy’ is sometimes interpreted as ‘right glory’. WJL]. The true faith is a product of what is expressed in Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the life of the Church. The content of the dogmas which were formulated at the Ecumenical Synods takes on flesh and bone within the Church. In this way it becomes a doxology to the Holy Trinity, through the ceremonial, liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.



With good reason, the Orthodox Church declares that it is the guardian of the dogmas of Christianity, as these were formulated at the Ecumenical Synods and interpreted in the writings of the Fathers. In the two thousand years since the foundation of the One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic [i.e. 'Universal'] Church, it is Orthodoxy which has been the sole genuine continuation of the religious Tradition and teaching which were set out by the Apostles and Evangelists. As was mentioned above, this is implied by the etymology of the word itself.

Given what has been said, Orthodoxy cannot be considered an ideological or philosophical system or trend. Naturally, it is not some sort of museum exhibit either, some folk tradition. And, finally, it is not the component that guarantees the enduring and universal unity of Greeks [or any other Orthodox nation]. Orthodoxy is the Church. The Church of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This is the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church to which we declare our faith and allegiance in the confession of the Creed, which was formulated at the 1st and 2nd Ecumenical Synods and is therefore known as the Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed. The Orthodox Church is also the body of Christ, the incarnate Word. Those who are members of that body are the people of God. To be part of the body of Christ, that is His Church, you have to have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity- in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Finally, the Church consists of the clergy and the laity, who unite in the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist.

As the body of Christ, the Orthodox Church has an enduring and, at the same time, universal unity as regards the dogmatic teaching of the faith. Although its teaching was formulated in a particular place, at a particular time, by a particular person, it was not restricted to these factors, but from the beginning emphasized its universal and eschatological nature. Two millennia since the birth of Christ, the Orthodox Church, in its ecclesiastical and liturgical life, observes faithfully what He taught, what the Apostles preached and what Tradition has preserved. Many people believe, wrongly, that Orthodoxy is another 'Church'.

This is one view of the Church. Another is that Orthodoxy is a religion. Both of these are entirely wrong. Orthodoxy is not one of the 'churches, because it is the only One true Church of Christ. This is not, of course, arrogance; it is the truth. Since Christ founded only one Church, how do we speak of many? Moreover Orthodoxy cannot be called a religion, because religions are superstition, in that all of them seek to meet people's psychological needs. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, heals people (everyone, of course) who are sick in their soul and makes them holy. That

is the tangible and unimpeachable evidence of the truth. Orthodoxy is not part of a local truth, but is truth on a global scale. It is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

There is no Orthodoxy and no salvation without the Church. Unless it is connected to the life of the ecclesiastical body, what many people call 'Orthodoxy' is cut off from its roots, loses its identity and becomes merely an ideology. This is why Saint Paul calls the Church 'the pillar and bulwark' of the truth [I Tim, 3, 15]. Under the guidance of its Fathers who were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the Church has guarded the truth revealed by Christ. Because only the retention of this truth leads to salvation. Despite the human weaknesses and extremes- which are unavoidable, given our imperfect capacities- the many battles the Church has waged over the centuries, through its God-bearing shepherds and teachers, the synods it has convened and the steadfast persistence it has shown have all had one purpose: the protection of the revealed truth. The truth which frees those who live it and leads them to salvation. Because the life in Christ is the conversion of faith into practice and experience.

Orthodoxy is the experience of the presence of the Uncreated Light of God within history and the opportunity for us created being to become gods 'by grace'. Orthodox Christianity, therefore, provides us with the possibility of reaching glorification through leading a particular way of life and observing certain rules and principles.

(to be continued)