

## THE BASIS ON WHICH ECONOMY MAY BE USED IN THE RECEPTION OF CONVERTS

*by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky)*

The canons which deal with the relation of bishops, and in general of all the children of the Church, to those outside her, are the following: Apostolic, Nos. 10, 12, 45, 46 and 65; Conciliar, 1st Ecumenical, Nos. 8 and 19; 2nd Ecumenical, No. 7; 6th Ecumenical, No. 95; Laodicea, Nos. 7, 8 and 33; Carthage, Nos. 68 and 79; and the Canonical Rules of St. Basil the Great, Nos. 1 and 47.

Among these some canons directly indicate by what rite which heretics and schismatics should be received into the Church if they desire it and request it, after renouncing their errors and confessing the Orthodox faith and their acknowledgement of the true Church.

Naturally, these canons do not lessen the necessity of baptism by water for every man, although it must not be forgotten that very ancient instances in the Church give us examples of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the yet unbaptized, so that the subsequent baptism had a supplementary and chiefly disciplinary significance, as uniting them to the earthly Church of Christ.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit; for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:44-48).

Of this same event the Apostle Peter recalls further: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us in the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. For as much then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15-17).

Without dwelling further on the explanation of these utterances, we must, of course, also notice that the descent of the Holy Spirit, referred to in the words of the Acts which have been quoted, did not release the believers from the obligation of baptism by water, and this obligation many who converted from heresy had to fulfil in accordance with the 46th canon of the Holy Apostles, although they already had heretical baptism.

Later Councils, however, clearly distinguish which heretics should be "cleansed by true baptism" (95th canon of the 6th Ecumenical Council and 1st rule of Basil the Great), and which should be received by the second mystery,

and which by the third mystery and be left in their existing orders. All this is set forth in detail in the 7th canon of the 2nd Ecumenical Council; in the 95th canon of the 6th Ecumenical Council; in the 1st rule of Basil the Great, and others.

However, they all issue from the same idea which lies behind the 68th canon of the Carthaginian Council, namely, that heretics and schismatics are without grace, which is only received by them on being united to the Church; *there can be no half-grace*, in spite of the Latin opinion. If we compare this thesis with other canons of the Councils, we shall see that it entirely agrees with them.

For this we need note the following characteristics of conciliar legislation on this subject:

1. These canons were changed a) according to time, and b) according to locality.

2. Their strictness or relaxation depended not so much on the character of the heresy or schism, as on the varying relationship of the heretics or schismatics to the Church; and they varied in one direction or the other, according to changes in this relationship of the schismatics to the Church.

3. Sometimes the Ecumenical authorities declared their decisions not to be final, and sometimes even deferred their decisions while awaiting new Church Councils.

Let us turn first to the second point.

The Carthaginian Council, in its 79th canon, decided: "To send letters to our brethren and fellow bishops, and especially to the apostolic throne in which our revered brother and fellow-minister Anastasius presides, to the effect that by reason of the great need in Africa, which is known to him, for the sake of peace and for the good of the Church, even Donatist clergy should be received in their sacerdotal orders if they correct their disposition and desire to come to universal unity, in accord with the judgment and will of each bishop ruling the Church in that place, if this will prove beneficial to the peace of Christians. It is well known that in former times also this schism was so treated, witness to which fact may be found in instances from many Churches and from almost all the African Churches in which this error arose."

So we see here an instance of the application of the principle that has already been pointed out. The manner of admitting the various apostates depends not so much on the quality of the heresy, as on the spiritual disposition of the candidate, and on the expected benefit to the holy Church.

In this connection it is especially important to master the significance of the 1st canonical rule of St. Basil the Great.

"The Cathari are of the number of the schismatics. Nevertheless, those of old, such as Cyprian and our own Firmilian, were pleased to include them all under one and the same regulation: Cathari, Enkralites, Hydroparastalites and Apotactites.

"For although the beginning of the apostasy arose through schism, yet those who fell away from the Church no longer had the grace of the Holy Spirit. For the power of imparting grace disappeared because the lawful succession

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founded on the view that heretics and schismatics have something like grace, some kind of half-grace.

Not without some foundation the Old Believers put to me, while I was still in Russia, this problem. If you consider all heretics and schismatics to be as devoid of grace as the heathen, why cannot you receive in his existing rank a baptized Jewish rabbi, or even a Lutheran pastor?

I answered thus: first, they themselves do not desire it; and secondly and chiefly, they had not even the visible side of those mysteries which goes with the bestowal of invisible grace in the Church — at least in the interest of Church discipline, and perhaps also for other reasons.

The conditional nature of this aspect of the matter is so great that the holy Fathers, the canonists, left some questions (of a liturgical character) in an undecided state for a time. Thus St. Basil the Great leaves many details regarding the manner of receiving schismatics and heretics into the Church, without definite decision, and, while fully recognizing the lawfulness of various attitudes towards them in different Churches, leaves open certain questions to be decided by new Councils and more definite opinions of ecclesiastical authorities (Rule 1).

We have already seen that the 79th canon of the Carthaginian Council decrees the reception of Donatist bishops in their existing orders, "according to the judgment and will of each bishop ruling the Church in that place; if this should prove to further the peace of Christians."

Therefore, reception into the Orthodox Church, 1) is dependent on the pastoral discretion of the local bishop, and 2) this discretion is conditioned by the general good of the Church.

We may now add that the same canon establishes our manner of reception in comparison with that of the Church of Rome and others. The same 79th canon says further: "This is done, not in violation of the decisions of the Council held on this subject in lands beyond the sea, but for the good of those who desire to enter the Catholic Church on these terms, and in order that no barriers might be set up against their union with the Church."

Such decisions of the Church would be quite impossible if the mode of reception were conditioned by the same dogmatic point of view from which each mystery is regarded by the Latins and contemporary Russian theologians, namely, that strict differentiation of the grace of the mysteries which is rooted in our own theological schools.

Even Basil the Great, dogmatic as he is in defence of ecclesiastical authority in the same classical first rule regarding the manner of receiving the Cathari, expresses himself quite conditionally and hypothetically, and admits both practices. About the Enkratites he expresses himself thus: "In as much as nothing has been clearly declared about them, it were seemly for us to repudiate their baptism, if this not be detrimental to the general well-being."

Continuing, St. Basil still further mitigates his pronouncement, and after decreeing their reception by chrismation he adds, "I am aware, moreover, that the brethren Zoin and Satorin, who belonged to their community, were re-

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was cut off. For those who first fell away had received consecration from the fathers, and through the laying on of their hands had the spiritual gift. But when they fell away, becoming laymen, they had power neither to baptize, nor to lay on hands, and could not confer on others the grace of the Holy Spirit, from which they themselves had fallen away. Therefore, those who came from them to the Church, being considered to have received baptism from laymen, were of old commanded to be cleansed anew by true ecclesiastical baptism."

It is clear that by this regulation the Church does not recognize in heretics and schismatics either the priesthood or the other mysteries, and considers them subject to ecclesiastical baptism in the nature of things. However, in this rule of St. Basil, she admits the possibility of yet another manner of receiving them. This is what we read further:

"But inasmuch as some in Asia have been resolutely desirous, *for the sake of the edification of many*, to accept their baptism, let it be accepted." St. Basil writes further: "The baptism of the Enkratites should be rejected and such, coming to the Church, should be baptized, but if this should be detrimental to the general well-being, then the usual custom should be adhered to, and the example of the fathers, who judiciously arranged our affairs, should be followed. For I fear lest in desiring to keep them from hasty baptism we should hinder those seeking salvation, by the severity of postponement."

Now let us attempt to generalize all these indications given at various times and reconcile them with apparent exceptions and relaxations.

Every mystery has two sides — the visible and the invisible. The second is administered only within the true Church by faith and sincere prayer, according to the words of the Apostle Peter: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3:21). And the same thought is found also in the teaching of St. John Damascene. For those who are baptized without faith "the water remains water" only. Heretics and schismatics, having the visible side of baptism, chrismation and holy orders, are entirely devoid of those gifts of grace which are bound up with these mysteries for believers within the true Church. Therefore, certain of them, for the alleviation of the rupture in their spiritual life and for "the edification of many," are permitted to enter the Church without the visible side of the mysteries of baptism or holy orders (that is, by the second or third rite), but through the operation of another sacramental act in which they receive the grace of baptism, chrismation and holy orders. (For example, for Roman Catholics, Nestorians and Donatists.)

Many are troubled by this question: Is it then possible to replace one mystery with another? But we, that is, not we, but the canons quoted above, are evidently founded on the words of the Gospel: "God giveth not the Spirit by measure" (Jn. 3:34). Or, in other words, those among heretics, whether clerical or lay, baptized and anointed (with chrism) by heretics, had only the empty sign (or outward form) of the mystery, and it receives the complement of grace only through that mystery which unites them with the holy Church

(chrismation or penance). Moreover, in confirmation of this principle, should be added the custom, established in the Church, that the reception of heretics and schismatics, "in their existing orders," may be performed only by a bishop; if a priest receive them, then they enter the Church as simple laymen. This means that a schismatic priest united to the Church receives true priesthood only through episcopal reception; but a priest cannot bestow this grace on the one received. It is only on such a conception of the mysteries of the Church that her regulations as to the applicability to heretics and schismatics of one or the other rite of reception can be accepted; only on such a conception can the decisions of the holy apostles about the baptism of heretics and schismatics be reconciled with the further canons of the Councils about not baptizing them, and about their reception by the second, or even by the third rite. And therefore it is futile for Roman Catholic theologians to blame the Orthodox for such diversity in practice.

As a condition of their reception in their existing orders, the existence among schismatics, before their conversion to the Church, of hierarchical succession, is usually insisted upon; but from the canonical rule of Basil the Great already quoted, we see that *no schismatics have any succession and cannot have any*; a hierarchy falling away from the Church "become laymen and cannot confer the grace of the Holy Spirit, of which they are themselves devoid." Therefore, in judging of one or the other rite of reception, the question of schismatical succession is in any case secondary if not quite irrelevant.

Besides the canons of the Councils already quoted, and those of the holy Fathers, we may refer to the words (also already quoted) of St. Basil the Great, that each Church should keep the customs established by her, and be guided by considerations of benefit to the Church, and the changing disposition of heretics (for the better or the worse). Thus special consideration was shown to the Nestorians, although their heresy was recognized as one of the worst, for it divided the One Mediator (I Tim. 2:5) into two persons and refused to entitle the most holy Virgin, Mother of God. But by the time of the promulgation of the canon they had forsaken their fanaticism and sought reunion with the true Church. That is why local Churches now increased and now relaxed strictness in the manner of reception.

Thus under the Patriarch Philaret, in 1620, the Latins were reunited through baptism by water, like the heathen, because then, that is at the time of the introduction of the Unia, a very seductive propaganda was carried on by them, but when the Russian Tsar annexed Little Russia (1653) and the next year carried out a victorious expedition into Lithuania, and many Uniates began to ask to return to Orthodoxy, the Council of 1667, in spite of all its severity towards deserters from the Church, decreed the reception of Roman Catholics by the third rite. Under the Turkish yoke the holy Church was in a different position. There heresy and schism were stronger, just at the time when among Russians they were weaker, and therefore the practice of the Eastern Churches took a different direction from that of the Russian Church: when our forefathers baptized the Latins, the Greeks only anointed them with

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chrism, and when we were already keeping the regulation of 1667 and admitting them by the third rite, the Greeks in the Council of 1754, in which all the four Eastern Patriarchs took part, were decreeing the rebaptism of Latins and Protestants. (They have only of late revoked this decree, and that without a new conciliar decision, thereby yielding to the principle of opportunism.)

Another opinion is held by the estimable Russian Old Believers, whom I have always regarded with special respect and sympathy, although they consider us Orthodox "heretics of the second rite," and receive those entering their community by chrismation, even bishops. (The last such case took place in Russia in 1925, and the first in Rumania in 1846, when they received Arsenius, the first Greek bishop to join their community.)

Apparently the Old Believers are imbued with Latin views on this question. For though the warmest opponents of the Latin heresy, of which they, as well as our other forefathers as far back as the seventeenth century, wrote: "of all the heresies the Latin is the most terrible," yet, by a misunderstanding they assimilated the doctrine of the mysteries according to the Greater and Lesser Catechisms of the seventeenth century, which only by a misapprehension are called Orthodox, and which set forth (in the section on the mysteries and on the Atonement) purely Latin doctrine. However, as books in "the ancient printing," they are held by the Old Believers to be infallible. In reality these books, like the majority of the Greek and Slavonic books of that and the preceding epochs, were paraphrased from Latin books, only with the exclusion of such Latin errors as were exposed by the Patriarch Pholius in his Encyclical Epistle of the ninth century. This is why, like the Latins, our Old Believers have declared that the Nikonites (that is we) are "heretics of the second rite," and anoint with oil (they have no holy chrism), not only the laity who come to them, but also bishops and priests; at the same time receiving them in their orders — a matter for tears and laughter. Like them the Latin theologians also — those dull scholastics — make it an accusation against the Orthodox that they have changed the rite of the reception of schismatics and heretics at various times and places, which indeed is fully agreeable with the meaning of the canons and with ancient ecclesiastical practice. A mystery is not simply an *opus operatum*, but a pouring out of the grace of God preserved in the bosom of the Holy Orthodox Church.

Does this practice agree with our teaching about the Church and about grace, or with the Latin teaching and its understanding of sacraments, *opere operato*, as giving great grace to the faithful and a certain half-grace to heretics and schismatics? The latter is denied by the 68th canon of the Carthaginian Council, which declares that in the true Church alone are the mysteries administered, for she "is the dove, the one mother of Christians, in which all mysteries, eternal and life-giving, are received to salvation; but by those remaining in heresy are received to great condemnation and punishment. That which in the truth would enlighten and assist them towards eternal life, in error becomes to them the more blinding and the greater condemnation."

From this canon it is seen that heretics and schismatics have no grace

whatever; it does not exist outside the one Church of Christ. And if in the same canon, immediately before the words quoted, it is said that those heretics, on anathematizing their former errors, "are received into the Church by the laying on of hands," then it is clear that they obtain freedom from the ancestral sin, that is, from the taint of sin, precisely through this laying on of hands. That is to say, in this second mystery, the first is given to them also, namely, the grace of baptism.

Mechanical or purely formal understanding of the mysteries and the Church leads even educated people into the most foolish beliefs, superstitions and actions. Thus, devotion to the faith, though worthy of all respect, under the slavery of Western scholasticism was the cause of the following amusing episode:

In the eighties of the last century a Greek bishop, a speculative person (probably Bishop Lycurgus, but perhaps I am mistaken in the name), visited England. Certain English priests, doubting the validity of their orders (that means also of their Church?) asked him to reordain them, and this the traveller performed, of course for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:11). But withal, remembering the canonical rule that bishops may not officiate in a strange diocese without the consent of the local ecclesiastical authority, they set forth with the said bishop to the open sea, and there on the vessel received "ordination" from him, still remaining afterwards clergymen of the Church of England. In this way, while straining at a gnat, they swallowed a camel, for it is clear that if the Greek Church is the one true Church, then after entering it it is impossible to remain Anglican; and while remaining Anglican it is impossible to receive ordination from a bishop of the Greek Church, which is as yet alien from Anglicanism.

Contemporary practice in the matter of reception is defined along the following lines:

There must be 1) apostolic succession in the community to which the person to be received has belonged; 2) baptism by a regular rite (that is by threefold immersion in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit).

When these conditions are fulfilled the rite of baptism is not repeated. And if his community had that mystery which we call chrismation (or myrrh-anointing), the candidate for union with Orthodoxy is received into the Church by the third rite, that is by the mystery of penance only. We proceed thus with Latins, Armenians and Nestorians; this is in accordance with Canon 95 of the 6th Ecumenical Council and others. Such reception is called "the third rite," and "in existing orders," that is, if the candidate be a cleric, then he remains such in Orthodoxy after his reception. Does it follow from this that the Church recognizes as means of grace and valid mysteries the baptism, chrismation and orders which the candidate received while yet outside the Church?

Contemporary practice, inherited from Latin teaching on the sacraments and practiced by them long before their secession from the Church (as is seen, for example, by reference to 47th rule of St. Basil the Great), is evidently

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founded on the view that heretics and schismatics have something like grace, some kind of half-grace.

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ceived as bishops (that is by the third rite). And therefore those who belong to their community cannot now be estranged from the Church by severity of judgment after we have established a certain manner of reception in admitting their bishops."

From the point of view we have presented, all this is reasonable and consistent, but from the Latin scholastic point of view quite impossible. Thus the adoption of one or the other mode of reception for those of other confessions who enter the Church (that is, heretics or schismatics) depends on ecclesiastical economy, on the judgment of the local bishops and the Councils, and on the existence of the outward form of the mysteries of baptism, chrismation and orders in the communities from which the applicants come.

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