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## **THE EUCHARIST IN THE THEOLOGY OF ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA**

***Rezumat:** Teologia euharistică a cunoscut o dezvoltare completă după controversele anti ariene: insistența apărătorilor ortodoxiei cu privire la rolul esențial al Trupului lui Hristos în taina mântuirii, ar putea atrage doar atenția asupra eficienței sfințitoare a primirii euharistice a Trupului și Sângelui Domnului. Ne vom concentra pe învățătura Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei, datorită importanței sale speciale, care merită o examinare mai profundă. În același timp, aceasta ne va oferi posibilitatea de a exprima unele accente teologice cu diferite nuanțe care determină conceptul Părinților Bisericii și acordă o mare importanță Tainei Euharistiei. În teologia Sfântului Chiril, Euharistia apare ca mijloc privilegiat prin care se realizează îndumnezeirea personală a omului.*

***Cuvinte-cheie:** Întrupare, Euharistie și îndumnezeire, încorporare, comuniune cu Hristos cel înviat.*

### **1. The Eucharist as the basis of deification**

In St. Cyril's theology, the whole economy of salvation gathers and is fulfilled in person of Logos of God Who took flesh in the hypostasis of Christ the God-Man<sup>1</sup>. Thus, Christ is not only the Saviour, but salvation

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1. He who was incarnated is Logos, the Word of God. He is also the Son of God, "born of God by nature" (PG 75 688 c) – so consubstantial with the Father – "the co-eternal with God the Father" (685 a), "the image and seal of Him who conceived" (686 s). Therefore, the Logos is God. In this role He has all the attributes inherent to divinity. St. Cyril emphasizes very much immutability of the Word, He is "the one who knows no change... because the nature of God is set in its own goods and its constancy is firm" (683 b, cf 684, 694 c). Also, the nature of God is transcendent and it remains so in union with human nature (683 cd). This is evidence against those who were accusing Cyril of teopashism – meaning that in the union committed in Christ,

itself; is not only head of the Church but as the God-Man, is the Church itself. He also is the very mystery of the divine Eucharist, because the Eucharist is revising, updating and expanding the whole mystery of Christ. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Christ. All these are real and live secretly in the divine-human frames of the Divine Liturgy, which is the heart of the Church. Therefore, we can say that the Divine Liturgy is the greatest Ecclesiology because Liturgy is Christ Himself in His mystical, active and true presence. Christ, who as God-Man is the essence and heart of the Church, is present throughout when the mystery of the Holy Eucharist is celebrated during the Mass. Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ is alive and eternal foundations of the Church; the Divine Eucharist rests on them and they form the Liturgy. Where the Saviour is, there is His Church. Therefore, the whole Church is present in the Eucharist, as the limbs in the heart, the branches in the root and, as the Lord said, as branches in the vine<sup>2</sup>. So Divine Eucharist forms the heart of the Church, the very existence of the Church, her life, the source of its unity and salvation<sup>3</sup>.

The binder that unites the Eucharistic doctrine the Fathers and their theology on the salvation and deification of Christians appears in full light in a page written by St. Cyril of Alexandria, which is due almost entirely to quote despite its extent, as it introduces us, better than any other text, right in the heart of the subject: "Let us seek, as far as possible, the meaning of the mystery (the Eucharist). The God of the universe created them all so that they are incorruptible and the origins of the world were good. But because of the envy of the devil, death came into the world: indeed, he pushed the first man to transgression and disobedience, thus making him fall under the wrath of God ... But the evil brought by Adam's disobedience was defeated by

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he would attribute Passion to His divinity. However, he clearly supports its immutability and transcendence; therefore the divine nature could not become passioned, meaning a change: "Divinity will never be exposed to the loss of their stability under [the impulse] of the tests (*ton pathon*)" (683 s).

2. Cf. St. Nicolas Cabasilas, *Comentariu la Dumnezeiasca Liturghie*, 38, PG 150, 452 C.

3. Cf. I. Καρμίρη, *Σώμα Χριστού, ό έστιν η Εκκλησία*, in "Εκκλησία" (1962), p. 366: "Holy Eucharist is the center of Christian unity with Christ in the body of Church, considered as a sacrament of the Church".

the mercy of the Creator, who came to the aid of people. Indeed, God the Father is life by nature; He makes Christ shine – Who is also Life, since the Word proceeds in essence from life. Therefore, God the Father gives life to all things through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. So, how could man who lived on earth and was subject to death have again access to incorruptibility? The body which was sentenced to death needed the life-giving power of God. Or the life-giving virtue of God the Father is the Word Himself, the only Son. He was sent as Saviour and Redeemer. He did not change in something that was not before, and He never ceased to be the Word, but was born from the flesh of a woman and became incarnate in order to be bound to us by an indissoluble union and make us impervious to death. Indeed, He renewed our flesh so that through the resurrection of the dead to open the way back to immortality for the body which had been corrupted ... Thus, taking a body subject to death, the Word, being God and life, cast away this corruption and made him life-giving. Do not refuse to believe what I say, but accept my words with trust and receives some humble examples that demonstrate these things. If you throw a piece of bread in wine, oil or other liquid, you'll find it imbued qualities; if the iron comes in contact with fire, it fills with its energy and, although there is only iron, it will be filled with the virtue of the fire. Therefore, the life-giving Word of God, united with the body he took, made it life-giving through a way known only by Him. He really said: «Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life» (John 6: 47) «I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you» (John 6: 51-54). Thus, if we eat the body of Christ, our Redeemer, and if we drink His blood, we have life, we become one with Him, dwelling in Him and have Him within us. So He had to come to us, as it pleased to God through the Holy Spirit, and to interfere in some way with our bodies through His Holy flesh and His precious blood so that we might receive the life-giving blessing through the bread and wine. Indeed so that we do not be astonished seeing flesh and blood on the holy table of the church, God was condescending to our weakness and sent the power of life to the

elements we are given; He changed them to fill them with the energy to His own body, so that we possess them for a life-giving participation and for the body of life be in us as a life-giving seed. Do not be afraid to believe it is true, for He Himself has said it clearly: «This is My body» and «this is My blood»<sup>4</sup>.

The reflection of St. Cyril is based on a set of absolutely biblical notions. While Greek philosophy identifies the divine with the intelligible and immaterial being in opposition to sensible and material world, the biblical thinking put in opposition the divine sphere which is spirit, *pneuma* on the one hand (in the sense of divine power and not immateriality), incorruptibility and life, and, on the other hand, the present world, of the creature subject to corruption, sin and death. The God of the Bible, in His transcendence, is beyond comprehensibility and matter; no created being or reason, no matter how devoid of immateriality cannot be measured with the intimate being of God and under no circumstances can have for God such a necessity as to be manifest. But without loss of transcendence God can communicate freely to His creatures with a real participation in His own nature (II Pt. 1, 4) and thus to introduce them into the sphere of Divine grace. This “spiritualization” can reach not only the intellect and will, which develops into “knowledge” and “unity of spirit”, but also the body by a way still unknown to us, but obvious to Parousia (I Cor. 15, 42-44). Commenting II Cor. 3, 7-18, L. Cerfaux writes: “The glory which continually transforms us is not an ephemeral glory distinct to God; it is not a mere creature of God, like the glory of Moses in the Old Testament. Secretly it is the glory of God, eternal, divine, communicated to our bodies ... that become spirit and glory”<sup>5</sup>. It is the glory that the Fathers call in a more philosophical way the energy or divine virtue<sup>6</sup>.

4. St. Chiril of Alexandria, *La Luca*, Omilia 22, PG 72, 908-912. See also the French translation of *Commentary on John 4*, in *La Messe. Liturgies anciennes et textes patristiques*, chosen and presented by A. Hamman, coll. *Lettres chrétiennes*, 9, p. 134-166.

5. L. Cerfaux, *Le Christ dans la théologie de saint Paul*, Paris 1951, p. 70: cf. 125 and *Le chrétien dans la théologie paulienne*, Paris, 1962, p. 166-167.

6. In the Bible, the word glory designates at the same time the being of God himself – as shown in His creatures and contacts with them, not stopping to be transcendent – and to glorify God. The Fathers know this double meaning.

We cannot talk about the church without a proper Christology and that single fact – “God manifest in the flesh...” – which includes and interprets everything. St. Cyril called the incarnation “the great mystery of faith” (acc. I Tim. 3, 16): “Which is the mystery of the faith (tes eusebeias) for us, if not the very Word of God the Father, who appeared in the flesh?”<sup>7</sup> St. Cyril emphasizes that the Logos assumed human nature and made it truly His own by appropriating it. By this he “brought something to human nature”, brought up from the damage and death, and deified it<sup>8</sup>. “For this work it was not enough sending an angel, an apostle or a saint, but the very incarnation of the One before ever”. First defeating the corruption of human nature in Himself Christ “was established as the source and ground of those who are transformed to the new life in the Spirit; from now on He will transmit to the whole human race through participation and grace, both the incorruptibility of the body and the aid and strength of the divinity”<sup>9</sup> so that we become “sons of God”, “through participation and by grace through Him in Spirit”<sup>10</sup>. Here it is very clearly expressed that it does not produce a transformation of human nature to the divine. So it is obvious the relationship between Orthodox Christological doctrine and teaching on the Eucharist, because it is about two aspects of the same dogma, about a single *theandric fact*<sup>11</sup>. These notions are in front of the entire Orthodox theology of salvation and the Eucharist, as has just exposed by St. Cyril. The divine glory, lost by Adam’s sin was restored to humanity through the incarnation of Christ and the salvation brought by Him. St. Gregory of Nyssa already formulated this doctrine in more appropriate terms: “Since then, there was needed a lifting up from death for the whole of our nature, God stretches forth a hand as it were to prostrate man, and stooping down to our dead corpse He came so far within the grasp of death as to touch a state of deadness, and then in His own body to bestow on our nature the principle of the

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7. St. Chiril of Alexandria, PG 75, 681 a.

8. *Ibidem*, 690 e.

9. *Ibidem*, 692 a.

10. *Ibidem*, 700 a.

11. G. Florovski, *Ocer Dom*, in “Hriskanski Zivot”, 4 (1926), p. 170; St. Irenaeus emphasizes particularly this theandric aspect in *Against Heresies IV*, 18, 5.

resurrection, raising as He did by His power along with Himself the whole man”<sup>12</sup>.

Indeed, by virtue of the hypostatic union in Christ, there is a genuine com-penetration of human nature by the divine energies<sup>13</sup>. On contact with the divine fire, the consequences of sin – suffering and death – assumed by Christ in the human nature, are abolished. First they change to signs of the Son love for the Father and for the people, then disappearing in the glory of the resurrection. Risen Christ receives even in His body the glory He had as God before the creation of the world<sup>14</sup>.

According to a shared understanding of most of the Fathers, the Son of God “became man had in him the whole nature, so to restore it entirely”<sup>15</sup>. Deification of the human nature of Christ resurrected was, in a way, a deification of the whole human nature: “And so, mankind is united with God by means of Christ’s humanity. Through our weakness assumed in Him the whole body was penetrated by divine virtue.”<sup>16</sup> But it still needed that salvation universally fulfilled in the person of the risen Christ effectively reach every individual man. The transmission of divine life through time and space will be accomplished by means of Christ’s humanity, for this fully deified, is itself deifying: “For when the nature of the flesh is considered alone and by itself, plainly it is not life-giving... For since it was united to the Life-giving Word, it hath become wholly Life-giving, hastening up to the power of the higher Nature... He filleth whole His Own Body with the Life-giving operation of the Spirit. For He now calls the Flesh *Spirit*, not turning It aside from being Flesh: but because by reason of Its being perfectly united

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12. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. catech.*, 32, in PG 45, 80 b.

13. There are different perspectives on this issue between the theologians of Alexandria and Antioch. In the West, Augustine and Leo the Great will lack this sense of com-penetration of Christ humanity by divine glory, which makes Him have the role of deifying organ for the people. Here the doxological importance of the Resurrection is dimmed. In part Thomas Aquinas will find these concepts again by Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus.

14. Cf. St. Chiril of Alexandria, *La Ioan*, Omilia 11, 12 în PG 74, 564 a.

15. *Ibid.*, Omilia 5, 2, PG 73, 754 a.

16. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra lui Eunomie*, 2 PG, 45, 533 a.

to Him, and now endued with His whole Life-giving Power, It ought to be called Spirit too.”<sup>17</sup>

We understand that the Eucharist thus appears as a privileged means by which the personal deification of man is achieved. But the mystery of the body and blood of the Lord completes this work sacramentally, expressing and realizing through the Eucharistic ritual, the most intimate union that can exist: “The bond of our union with God the Father is clearly Christ: He unites us to Him as humans, but being God He dwells by nature in God the Father. Corrupted fallen nature could not reach the state of incorruptibility again unless that nature – which is above any damage and any change – went down to it by raising it and bringing it to a convenient limitations of a nature created through communion and mixing with the superior nature and forging what it was not like according to its the image and likeness. We are so consumed in unity with God the Father through the intercession of Christ. Indeed, physically and spiritually receiving in us Him who is truly Son by nature and substantially united to the Father we are glorified through participation and communion to the supreme nature”<sup>18</sup>. “And if by the touch alone of His Holy Flesh, He giveth life to that which is decayed, how shall we not profit yet more richly by the life-giving Blessing when we also taste It? For It will surely transform into Its own good, i. e., immortality, those who partake of It.

And wonder not hereat, nor ask thyself in Jewish manner, *How?* but rather consider that water is cold by nature, but when it is poured into a kettle and brought to the fire, then it all but forgets its own nature, and goes away unto the operation of that which has mastered it. We too then in the same way, even though we be corruptible through the nature of our flesh, yet forsaking our own infirmity by the immingling of life, are trans-elemented to Its property, that is, life”<sup>19</sup>. “For as if one took a spark and buried it amid much stubble, in order that the seed of fire preserved might lay hold on it, so in us too our Lord Jesus Christ hideth life through His Own Flesh, and inserts it as a seed of immortality, abolishing the

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17. St. Chiril of Alexandria, *La Ioan*, Omilia 4, 3, PG, 73, 601 c - 604 b.

18. *Ibidem*, Omilia 12, P G 74, 564 a.

19. *Ibidem*, Omilia 4, 2, P G 73, 577 d - 580 a.

whole corruption that is in us.”<sup>20</sup> “Precisely therefore putting eucharistic elements to God, we pray with insistence to be changed for us in spiritual blessing, for receiving them, we should be holy in body and soul. Then the Savior through the words «This is My Body and this is My Blood», wants you not to think that what occurs is a fantasy, but to know that the Almighty unspeakably changes the items into His Body and Blood, and we, partaking with them receive the life-giving and sanctifying power of Christ. Lord must surely be in us through the Holy Spirit, in a manner worthy of God and unite with our bodies through His Holy Body and His precious blood that we have the blessing of life-giving.”<sup>21</sup>

We see this truth in the theology of St. Gregory Palamas, who in his homily on *the Holy and frightening Mysteries of Christ*<sup>22</sup> presents the elements of a hesychasm integrated into the sacramental life of the Church. It can be seen that Palama, penetrated by some significances of his priestly ministry, did not isolate the practice of Jesus prayer from the Divine Liturgy. He established a close link between union with Christ (and through Him, the Holy Trinity, which is at the heart of hesychastic spirituality) and the sacramental mystery of the Eucharist celebration. Just as the mystery of salvation is “present” or updated (not a realistic or naturalistic) in the Eucharist, Jesus’ name constantly repeated (not in the almost magical supported by “onomatodoxy”) contains the entire mystery of salvation, from the Incarnation to the Resurrection, to Ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The homily begins with a lengthy exposé about the importance of preparing for Holy Communion: repentance (metanoia) and confession in the presence of a spiritual father (pater pneumatikos) are necessary, especially during those forty days that “put us close to the annual feast of the Nativity of the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, feast during which it is good for all the Christians to partake of the Body and Blood and they unite with Him, to become one spirit and one body with Him”<sup>23</sup>.

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20. *Ibidem*, Omilia 4, 2, P G 73, 581 c.

21. Idem, *Contra lui Nestorie* 4, 4. Historia monachorum in Aegipte, 1, 64.

22. St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia 22*, ed. S. Oikonomos, Atena, 1863, p. 200-212.

23. The fact is confirmed by Saint Nicholas Cabasilas too, connected to the hesychast doctrine, who insists on frequent Communion – in the literal sense, “con-



This insistence on preparation shows that in that time it was not used for “all the Christians” to partake the Eucharist during each Liturgy<sup>24</sup>. Speaking of confession and the need for the presence of a spiritual father, St. Gregory insists that forgiveness is not automatic given through confession, but we get it through repentance and acts of contrition that is self-sacrifice, the sacrifice of our lives to God: “Let us make worthy through repentance, or we better give ourselves by works of repentance, to the One who can make us the unworthy worthy.”

This “sacrifice”, as we shall see, is considered by Saint Gregory Palamas as a form of participation in the sacrifice of Christ himself, His death and resurrection. The homily text continues as follows: “Thus, with a hope and a belief that they have nothing to be ashamed, let us draw near, not only on visible reality, but also the invisible. Yes, this bread is like a veil that hides divinity.”<sup>25</sup> The word “veil” (*katapétasma*) used here by Palamas, asks for an explanation. The image of “the veil” “hiding in it the divinity” might suggest that the bread of the Eucharist is considered only as a symbol. However, the continuation of the text shows St. Gregory’s sacramental realism. He asserts, indeed, that we can see with bodily eyes but bread and wine (“if we see only the appearance, we gain nothing”), but he also cites the Epistle to the Hebrew, where the veil of the temple is the image of Christ body (Hebrew 10, 20). In other words, Palamas means that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are the body of Christ, that is Christ’s human nature that “hides His divinity” and His divine nature. The text continues: “And

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tinuous” (*Viața în Hristos*, IV, 34-354, SC, 355, Paris, 1989, p. 294), meaning that the celebration of the Eucharist should not be an isolated event. This abstinence seemed so normal in the eighteenth century that St. Nicodemus makes a scandal in Mount Athos with his treatise *On continuous communion*. In the homily of St. Gregory Palamas we find the same sacramental theology and the same living and lived experience: the Eucharist is seen here as the foundation, centre and goal of spiritual life.

24. In another work (*Decalogue*, PG 150, 1093d) Palamas writes that Sunday – “Lord’s Day” is the day that “we must share with the Holy Body and Blood of Christ”. This does not necessarily mean that the time of Gregory Palamas believers had the habit to receive the Communion every Sunday.

25. St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia* 22, ed. Cler, p. 30. St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia* 22, ed. S. Oikonomos, Atena, 1863, p. 200-212. Translation in French by J. Cler: Grigorie Palama, *Homélie*, ed. YMCA Press, Paris, 1987, p. 25-37.

thus, our community (politeuma) ascended to heaven; there is indeed this bread; and we enter into this Holy of Holies thanks to the pure, true sacrifice of the Body of Christ.”<sup>26</sup>

Echo of the Cherubic’s last sentence of the Divine Liturgy (“*For Thou art the Offerer and the Offered, the Receiver and the Received*”), this passage inspired by the Epistle to the Hebrew reveals that there is only one sacrifice, one on the Cross of Christ and the fact that there is only one High Priest, Jesus Christ himself. In other words, if we receive Holy Communion, we take part in the sacrifice of Christ. This identity between the Eucharist and the sacrifice of Christ, confirmed by the Council of Constantinople in the twelfth century, gives the deepest sense of the mystery of the Eucharist, which includes our sacrifice, meaning “the sacrifice our glory” with angels and entrusting to God our gifts of bread and wine (which is the gift of life or the whole creation)<sup>27</sup>. In this respect, St. Cyril says that “in Christ we bring us and we who are defiled approach Him. But by faith we turn to our Father in good fragrant, not for ourselves, but having Christ in us with spiritual sweetness.”<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the Divine Liturgy is a gift from God for us participating in His sacrifice, that get us close to Him, which results in evoking the theme of God’s mercy: “Oh miracle! Great is the love that God has bestowed upon us! We were reborn in the Spirit, and we made one spirit with Him, as St. Paul says: «But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit» (I Cor. 6, 17)”<sup>29</sup>. This theme of God’s love will be resumed in the homily. Thus, as Irenaeus Metropolitan of Oltenia well summarizes: “transformation is beyond words and so is incarnation. The difference of mode and substance is not a difference in position, in both cases the body of the Lord exercising the same work. The Eucharist is thus the necessary continuation of the incarnation, although it is a different way of presence, but the same body gives us life and unites us to life”<sup>30</sup>.

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26. St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia* 22.

27. *Synodiconul Ortodoxiei*, ed. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1967, p. 72.

28. St. Chiril of Alexandria, *Închinare în duh și adevăr*, 15, PG 68, 973 b.

29. St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia* 22, p. 31.

30. Arch. Irineu Slătineanu, *Experiența realității euharistice ca Trup al Fiului lui Dumnezeu înomenit după Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei*, in magazine “Mitropolia Olteniei”, year LIII, no. 5-6, 2001, p. 17-18.

## ***2. Co-bodily in Christ***

The mystery of the divine Eucharist mystically confirms the union of the Church because they all share one body. "The divine mystagogy the Body and Blood is a fulfilment of the unity between human nature and Christ and between all members of the Church"<sup>31</sup>. In the text reproduced at the beginning of this study *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, an important aspect of Eucharistic doctrine of St. Cyril remained in the shadows: the community character of our incorporation into Christ. Cyril explains this issue in another passage. For every Christian sees himself mystically identified with the most glorified Body of Christ by the Spirit's<sup>32</sup> power through participation in the Eucharistic body, we should conclude that by this participation all Christians are "con-corporeal"<sup>33</sup>.

"In order, then, that we ourselves also may join together, and be blended into unity with God and with each other, although, through the actual difference which exists in each one of us, we have a distinct individuality of soul and body, the Only-begotten has contrived a means which His own due Wisdom and the Counsel of the Father have sought out. For by one Body, that is, His own, blessing through the mystery of the Eucharist those who believe on Him, He makes us of the same Body with Himself and with each other. For who could sunder or divide from their natural union with one another those

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31. V. Lossky, *Theologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*, Paris, 1944, p. 212.

32. In relation to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist, see closely the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia *La Messe. Liturgies anciennes et textes patristiques*, p. 83-85. The importance that Orthodox theology gives to epiclesis – prayer used by the priest during the Liturgy asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ – is a consequence of this Trinitarian vision of the salvation oeconomic. The Spirit has the role to manifest Christ.

33. "Con-corporeal" – with (or form) the same body. The phrase comes from Eph. 3, 6 and was often repeated by the Fathers after St. Athanasius. The teaching of the Fathers about the Church as the Body of Christ seems to correspond quite closely to that of St. Paul, as recent exegesis interprets it: the most – glorious, real and personal body of Christ "is at the centre of the Christian world and the origin of the unit; because the mystical union identify us all with this unique body, we can be one" (L. Cerfaux, *La théologie de l'Eglise suivant saint Paul*, Paris, 1965, p. 236; cf. p. 287 with note 4).

who are knit together through His holy Body, Which is one in union with Christ? For if *we all partake of the one Bread*, we are all made one Body; for Christ cannot suffer severance. Therefore also the Church is become Christ's Body, and we are also individually His members, according to the wisdom of Paul. For we, being all of us united to Christ through His holy Body, inasmuch as we have received Him Who is one and indivisible in our own bodies, owe the service of our members to Him rather than to ourselves. And that, while Christ is accounted the Head, the Church is called the rest of the Body, as joined together of Christian members, Paul will prove to us by the words: *That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but, speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, Which is the Head, even Christ; from Whom all the Body, fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several member, maketh the increase of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.* And that those who partake of His holy Flesh do gain therefrom this actual physical unity, I mean with Christ, Paul once more bears witness, when he says, with reference to the mystery of godliness: *Which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ.* And if we are all of us of the same Body with one another in Christ, and not only with one another, but also of course with Him Who is in us through His Flesh, are we not then all of us clearly one both with one another and with Christ? For Christ is the bond of union, being at once God and Man. With reference, then, to the unity that is by the Spirit, following in the same track of inquiry, we say once more, that we all, receiving one and the same Spirit, I mean the Holy Spirit, are in some sort blended together with one another and with God. For if, we being many, Christ, Who is the Spirit of the Father and His own Spirit, dwells in each one of us severally, still is the Spirit one and indivisible, binding together the dissevered spirits of the individualities of one and all of us, as we have a separate being, in His own natural singleness into unity, causing us all to be shown forth in Him, through Himself, and as one. For as the

power of His holy Flesh maketh those in whom It exists to be of the same Body, so likewise also the indivisible Spirit of God That abideth in all, being one, bindeth all together into spiritual unity. Therefore also the inspired Paul thus addressed us: *Forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in all.* For while the Spirit, Which is One, abideth in us, the One God and Father of all will be in us, binding together into unity with each other and with Himself whatsoever partaketh of the Spirit”<sup>34</sup>.

St. John Chrysostom expresses too this Community dimension of our incorporation in Christ. He comments the text of the Apostle Paul from I Cor. 10, 16-17, which expresses the mystery of our union with Christ that is of the Church with Christ in the Eucharist. Also, the text expresses the mystery of union between the members of Christ together in a single body through one Eucharistic bread, i.e. the union of the Church in the Eucharist sacrament.<sup>35</sup> St. John Chrysostom says the following: “Why not say participation? Because he wanted to show this is something much more and highlighted that the union is very close.”<sup>36</sup> As shown in the interpretation of St. John Chrysostom, Paul expresses our actual union with Christ and with one another in the Church, which means Christ’s union with His Body, i.e. the Church, which is formed by us “the many”, since we are members of Christ. Chrysostom’s interpretation of the Pauline text from I Corinthians is the quintessential teaching of the Church as the “body of Christ”. “The many” are the Church, which in and sharing the Body and Blood of

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34. St. Chiril of Alexandria, *La Ioan*, Omul 11, 11, PG 74, 560 A – 561 b.

35. See I. Zizioulas, “In the most important point of this fragment (pre) dominate the idea that” the many “are” one flesh “identified with the bread of the Eucharist” (*Η ενότης της Εκκλησίας εν τη Θεία Ευχαριστία και Επισκόπω κατά τους τρεις πρώτους αιώνας*, Αθήνα, 1965, p. 38). “The Church occurred first in Jesus Christ. By including in Him «the many», for whom He was crucified and risen, the Church constituted the unity of Christ Body, where «the many» are One. Along history this unit is expressed in its fullness through Divine Eucharist” (*Ibidem*, p. 100).

36. Sf. John Chrysostom, *La I Corinteni*, Omilia 24, 2, PG 61, 200. See also Sf. Ioan Damaschin, PG 96, 1409 c.

Christ become one body through one bread, not a simple body, but the “body of Christ”, that is Himself, “one Christ”, “one Bread”<sup>37</sup>.

Evoking the transcendence of God, the theology of St. Gregory Palamas always proclaims a distinction between the three hypostases of God and us, although we are united with them in Holy Communion. A similar distinction is present in the images we used to talk about the relationship that Christ keeps with us. Christ is the “Brother”, “Friend”, “Father” and even “Mother”: “O, multiple and inexpressible communion! Christ became our brother, as having of the same flesh and blood almost like us, and by them assimilating Himself with us ... He made us His friends, making us the honour of communicating His secrets ... He became, however, our Father, because of the Divine baptism in His name. He fed us on his bosom, as a mother full of tenderness to her children still infants.”<sup>38</sup>

St. Nicholas Cabasilas describes the unity of the body of Christ as “through Communion, Christ abides in us and us in Him: in me, and I in him (John 6, 56). And if Christ stays in us, what we are missing or what other goodies shall we want? ... If Jesus Christ Himself fills our soul, through all our depths and outputs, enveloping us from all sides, then what good could come over us or what we would be able to add? He fills the whole house of our soul. And then, we do not partake one of His kindness or ray or a glow of divine sun disc, but the disc itself (Holy Communion). So, we have Him dwelling in us, penetrating to our bones and members and we together form one and the same Body...”<sup>39</sup> “... Therefore, we eat the holy food of the Communion and drink from the divine chalice because we partake the very Body and Blood that Christ took upon Him from the womb of the Virgin Mary – Theotokos. So, strictly speaking, we make one with the One who was incarnate and was deified and with Him who died and rose for us”<sup>40</sup>.

St. Gregory Palamas says in the same passage that the relationship between Christ and the church members is very close and very intimate as that between spouses. But the text also points out that

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37. Idem, *La Coloseni*, Omilia 8, 2, PG 62, 353. I Cor. 12. 12, 27. Gal. 3, 28.

38. St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia 22*, ed. Cler, p. 32s.

39. St. Nicolas Cabasilas, *op. cit.*, p. 83-84.

40. *Ibidem*, p. 26-27.

Christians are not equal with Christ. He had the same flesh and blood “almost as we do”. The theme of the relationship between Christ and we must be seen in a relationship of *love*. The purpose of marriage is carnal union between man and woman for them to be “closely related” to each other and become “one flesh”. However, in the Holy Eucharist<sup>41</sup>, “not only we are closely related, but even mixed with Christ body, by participating in this divine bread and not only become one body with him, but one Spirit” (once again “Spirit”, Pneuma means divine power or divine life which Christ body is impregnated with). Through Holy Communion, Christ “brings us to an even greater desire, fulfilling our desire to see Him, and still more, touch Him, live in His gentleness, having Him in our hearts and bearing Him in ourselves and our entrails.”<sup>42</sup> The Eucharist is the mystery that really turns a human community into God’s Church, the ultimate criterion and the base for the ecclesial structure. “The church is Christ’s body and so is the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Therefore, the Church has an Eucharistic nature. Outside the Church there is no Eucharist and the outside Eucharist there is no Church. The divine Communion is the union with the mystical body of the Church. In the Eucharist, the faithful unites with Christ – his head, in a body, the Holy Church”<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, there is no the Eucharist outside the Church, because “there is no body outside the Body”<sup>44</sup> and also there is no Church without and outside the Eucharist.

We can bring together many texts through the Patristic, showing that the doctrine St. Cyril of Alexandria gave full expression is the common property of the Church<sup>45</sup>.

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41. St. Gregory Palamas quotes *Epistola* 5, 31s.

42. St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia* 22, ed. cit., p. 33.

43. Kiprian Kern, *Euharistiae*, Paris, 1947, p. 304.

44. *Ibidem*, p. 33. Vezi și B. Bobrinskoy, *To Άγιον Πνεύμα εις Θείαν Λειτουργίαν*, in “Εκκλησία”, 11 (1965): p. 317 and 321: “The Eucharist is the hypostasis of the Church. Where is Eucharist, there is the Church ... The Church and the Eucharist are inseparable. The Eucharist is for the Church and within her. By nature the Church is Eucharistic”. M. Σιώτη, *Θεία Ευχαριστία*, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1957, p. 70-71.

45. However, the particular positions of the Antiochian school in Christology lead to some disagreement regarding the Eucharist. We will not insist upon them now.