

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IN ORTHODOXY

Historical development and theology of the "Holy Mystery of Confession/Repentance"

Summary

In this work, divided in two parts, the author treats the sacrament of penance and reconciliation (the holy mystery of confession/repentance) in the orthodox tradition, theology and liturgical practice. In the first part the author first presents the development of penitential practice in the East, especially in Byzantium, specifically in terms of canonical penance, transition to individual penance and also the development and significance of penitential books. Then follows the theology of reconciliation as a "holy mystery of healing", i.e. spiritual treatment, in which Christ through the minister of the Church applies a spiritual remedy to the penitent's soul, so that he may come up to the Eucharistic integration with the Lord. In the second part the author explains the Orthodox theology of the sacramental act in certain elements (repentance, admission of sins, absolution, penance); he also brings the liturgical pattern of the "holy mystery of confession" according to Veliki Trebnik (in the Serbian Orthodox Church), and opens the issues on pastoral practice, touching on the possible ecumenical initiatives as a solution of present crisis in practicing this sacrament, in Orthodoxy and Catholic Church as well.

Key words: Sacrament of penance; holy mystery of confession/repentance; history of penance; theology of reconciliation; penitential liturgy in Orthodoxy; ecumenical theology.