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INTRODUCTION

This book consists of a collection of articles and dialogues written in the last twelve years or so on various themes relating to Orthodox Christianity. Most of them reflect controversies that have divided Orthodox Christians in this period, such as: ecumenism, sergianism, the icon of the Holy Trinity, the relationship between faith, science and art, eldership in the Church, the nature of the sacrament of the Eucharist, feminism, cloning, marriage and sexuality, abortion and the soul, the seal of the Antichrist, the soul after death, the Last Judgement and the problem of evil. It is hoped that they will show that the Orthodox world-view based on the teaching of the Holy Fathers is consistent and able in principle to answer all the perplexities posed by modern life.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us! Amen.

Holy Apostle Philip.
St. Gregory Palamas.

East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, Surrey. United Kingdom.
1. A DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN AND A GENUINE SEEKER ON THE ORTHODOX FAITH

**Seeker.** What is Orthodoxy?

**Orthodox.** “Orthodoxy” means “right glory”, giving the right glory to God. For there is also a wrong glorification of God, a glorification in which He takes no pleasure. “Unto the sinner God hath said: Why declardest thou My statutes and takest up My covenant in they mouth?” (Psalm 49.17 (LXX)). Thus Orthodoxy is the giving of right glory to God through the right faith and right worship. In fact, “Orthodoxy” is often equivalent to “right faith”.

**Seeker.** Why is right faith necessary?

**Orthodox.** We cannot glorify that which we do not know, and right faith is the true knowledge of God. Those who do not have the right faith cannot glorify God rightly. To them the true believers say, not with arrogance but in humble recognition of the treasure they have received: “Ye know not what ye worship: we know what we worship” (John 4.22).

**Seeker.** What is the Orthodox Church?

**Orthodox.** The Orthodox Church is the Church which has Orthodoxy – “the faith once given to the saints” (Jude 9) and the “worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4.23) – that is, the worship of God the Father in the Son, Who is the Truth, and in the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of truth. She is the Body of Christ, the Dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, the Ark of salvation, the True Vine. By another definition She is the Church that is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic – One in Her unity in faith and worship, Holy in Her sacraments and the multitude of holy men and women she has produced, Catholic in Her wholeness in each of Her constituent parts, Apostolic in Her origin and unbroken succession from the Apostles and in Her fidelity to the Apostolic teaching. St. Germanus of Constantinople defines the Church as “a divine house where the mystical living Sacrifice is celebrated,... and its precious stones are the divine dogmas taught by the Lord to His disciples.”

**Seeker.** What bigotry! What, then, are the other Churches – the Roman Catholic and the Protestant, for example?

**Orthodox.** They are branches that have been cut off from the True Vine in the course of the centuries. The Western Church was Orthodox for the first thousand years of Christian history. But in 1054, after a long period of decline, Rome broke away from the Orthodox East and introduced a whole series of heretical teachings: the infallibility and universal jurisdiction of the Pope, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (the Filioque), indulgences, purgatory, created grace, etc. The Protestants broke away from Rome in the sixteenth century, but did not return to Orthodoxy and the True Church. Instead, they introduced still more heresies, rejecting Tradition, the Sacraments, praying for the dead, the veneration of Saints, etc.

**Seeker.** But are there not good people among the other Churches?

**Orthodox.** “Someone came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him,
callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God. But I thou
wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19.16-17).

Man in his present fallen state is not, and cannot be, good. “There is none
that doeth good, no not one” (Psalm 13.4). Even the Apostles were called evil
by the Lord (Luke 11.13). Man can become good only through union with the
only Good One, God. And this union is possible only through keeping the
commandments, of which the first is the command to repent and be baptized.
Unless a man has repented and been baptized through the One Baptism of the
One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, thereby receiving God’s goodness
within himself, he cannot be said to be good in any real sense. For the
“goodness” of the fallen, unbaptized man is not good in God’s eyes, but
“filthy rags”, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah.

Seeker. So the Orthodox are good, and all the rest are bad? A pretty self-
righteous religion, I should say, just the kind of Pharisaical faith the Lord
condemned!

Orthodox. No, we do not say that all the Orthodox are good, because it is a
sad fact that many, very many Orthodox Christians do not use the goodness,
the grace that is given to them in Holy Baptism to do truly good works. And
their condemnation will be greater than those who have never received
Baptism. “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of
righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy
commandment delivered unto them” (II Peter 2.21). “For if we sin deliberately
after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice
for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgement, and a fury of fire which will
consume the adversaries. A man who has violated the law of Moses dies
without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse
punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the
Son of God, and profaned the Blood of the Covenant by which he was
sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know Him Who said,
‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’ And again: ‘The Lord will judge His
people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews
10.26-31).

Seeker. What a bleak picture you paint! The unbaptized cannot do good, and
those who sin after baptism are destined for even worse condemnation!

Orthodox. Not quite. Although we cannot be baptized again for the remission
of sins, we can receive remission of sins in other ways: through prayer and
tears, through fasting and almsgiving, above all through the sacraments of
Confession and Holy Communion. God does not reject those who repent with
all their heart. As David says: “A heart that is broken and humbled God will
not despise” (Psalm 50.17).

Seeker. But is not such repentance possible for all men? Did not David repent
in the Psalm you have cited, and receive forgiveness from God?

Orthodox. Yes, but salvation does not consist only in the forgiveness of sins,
but also in acquiring holiness, that holiness “without which no man shall see
the Lord” (Hebrews 12.14), that holiness which is given only in the
sacraments of the Church and which can be lost unless we conduct an
unremitting ascetic struggle against sin. Moreover, original sin can only be remitted in the baptismal font.

**Seeker.** So not even David was saved?

**Orthodox.** Not even David was saved before the Coming of Christ. Even the Patriarch Jacob anticipated going to Hades (Sheol) after his death together with his righteous son Joseph: “I shall go mourning down to my son in Hades” (*Genesis* 37.35). For “all these [Old Testament righteous], though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us [the New Testament Christians], that apart from us [outside the New Testament Church] they should not be made perfect” (*Hebrews* 11.39-40).

**Seeker.** What is original sin?

**Orthodox.** A certain contagion that we receive by inheritance through our parents from Adam, who committed the original sin.

**Seeker.** How can we be responsible for Adam’s sin?

**Orthodox.** We are not responsible for it, but we are defiled by it.

**Seeker.** Even children?

**Orthodox.** Even children. For “even from the womb, sinners are estranged” (*Psalm* 57.3). And as Job says: “Who shall be pure from uncleanness? Not even one, even if his life should be but one day upon the earth” (*Job* 14.4 (LXX)).

Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: “Evil was mixed with our nature from the beginning... through those who by their disobedience introduced the disease. Just as in the natural propagation of the species each animal engenders its like, so man is born from man, a being subject to passions from a being subject to passions, a sinner from a sinner. Thus sin takes its rise in us as we are born; it grows with us and keep us company till life’s term”. That is why the Church has from the beginning practiced infant baptism “for the remission of sins”.

**Seeker.** It still seems unfair to me that anyone, let alone tiny children, should suffer for someone else’s sin.

**Orthodox.** God’s justice is not our justice. And remember: if it is unfair that we should suffer because of Adam’s sin, it is no less unfair that we should be redeemed because of Christ’s virtue. The two “injustices” are symmetrical and cancel each other out: “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (*Romans* 5.19).

**Seeker.** So it is impossible to be good outside the Church, because sin and the roots of sin are extirpated only in the Church?

**Orthodox.** More than that: only in the Church can sin be known. For only to the Church has the will of God been made known in its fullness. And if we do not know what the will of God is, we cannot repent properly of our transgression of His will. The Church is the only hospital in which we receive both the correct diagnosis of the disease and complete healing from it.

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1 The Massoretic text says: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.”
Seeker. Alright. But how, then, are miracles are done outside the Church, and even in non-Christian religions?

Orthodox. Miracles – if they are truly from God, and not from the evil one – are a proof, not (or not necessarily) of the goodness of the human miracle-worker, but of the mercy of God.

Seeker. So if a Catholic or an Anglican or a Hindu works a miracle, that is nothing, whereas if an Orthodox does it, it’s great!

Orthodox. I didn’t say that. What I said was that the working of a miracle, if it is of God, tells us first of all that God is merciful. Whether it also proves the goodness of the human miracle-worker (or of the recipient of the miracle) is quite another question, which requires careful examination.

I do not deny that true miracles can take place outside the Church. After all, God “maketh His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5.45). And when St. John forbade a man who was casting out demons in Christ’s name “because he followeth not us”, Christ did not approve of his action. “Forbid him not,” he said; “for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9.38-40).

On the other hand, the Lord also said: “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name cast out demons? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you, Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity!” (Matthew 7.22-23). So it is possible to work a miracle in Christ’s name, and yet be an evil man. And God may work the miracle through the evil man, not in order to testify to the man’s (non-existent) goodness, but purely out of compassion for the miracle’s recipient. After all, Judas worked miracles – but St. John the Baptist, the greatest born of woman, worked no miracles…

Nor must we forget that Christian-looking miracles and prophecies can be done through the evil one. Thus a girl spoke the truth about the Apostle Paul, exhorting people to follow him – but she spoke through a pythonic spirit which Paul exorcised (Acts 16.16-18). I believe that the vast majority of miracles worked in pagan religions such as Hinduism are from the evil one; for “all the gods of the heathen are demons” (Psalm 95.5).

Seeker. If even miracle-workers can be of the evil one, who can be saved?

Orthodox. One must always distinguish between the possession of spiritual gifts and salvation. “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you;” said the Lord, “but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10.20). “If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (I Corinthians 13.2).

Seeker. Ah now that’s where I agree with you! Love is the essential mark of the Christian. And I have to say that’s just what I find distinctly lacking in your exposition. Such pride to think that you Orthodox, and you alone, belong to the True Church! And such hatred to think that everyone except you is going to be damned!
Orthodox. But I didn’t say that!
Seeker. You did!
Orthodox. I said that the Church of Christ, by which I mean exclusively the Orthodox Church, is the only Ark of salvation. But I did not say that all those in the Ark will be saved, for they may cast themselves out of it by their evil deeds. And I did not say that those who are swimming towards the Ark but who were cut off from entering it before their death, cannot be saved. Who knows whether the Sovereign God, Who knows the hearts of all men, may not choose to stretch out His hand to those who, through ignorance or adverse circumstances, were not able to enter the Ark before the darkness of death descended upon them, but who in their hearts and minds were striving for the truth? “Charity hopeth all things” (I Corinthians 13.7).
Seeker. [ironically] How charitable of you! But this is more a pious hope than an article of faith for you, isn’t it?
Orthodox. Of course. From the point of dogmatic faith, we can and must assert that, as St. Cyprian of Carthage said, “there is no salvation outside the Church”. For the Lord Himself says, with great emphasis: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (John 3.5). And again: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless you eat of the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you have no life in you” (John 6.53). And the Apostle Peter says: “If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?” (I Peter 4.18).
Moreover, if we, arrogantly presuming to be more “merciful” than the Merciful Lord Himself, take it upon ourselves to “absolve” those living in false religions or heresies, we sin not only against dogmatic faith, but also against love. For then we make ourselves guilty of misleading them and leading them further into error by giving them the false hope that they can stay in their falsehood without danger to their immortal souls. We take away from them the fear of God and the spur to search out the truth, which alone can save them.
Seeker. And yet you spoke earlier about “ignorance and adverse circumstances”. Surely God takes that into account!
Orthodox. Of course He does. But “taking into account” is not the same as “absolving of all guilt”. Remember the parable of the negligent servants: “That servant who knew His master’s will, but did not make ready or act according to His will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating” (Luke 12.47-48). In other words, ignorance of the Lord’s will and of His truth can mitigate His sentence, but it cannot remove it altogether.
Seeker. Why? Did not the same Lord say: “If ye were blind, ye would have no sin” (John 9.41)?
Orthodox. Because we are never totally blind, and, being rational sheep made in the image of the Good Shepherd, always have some access to that “Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1.9). Thus the Apostle Paul says plainly that pagans who do not believe in the One Creator

3St. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Unity of the Church.
of the universe are “without excuse”; “for what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and divinity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Romans 1.19-20). God “did not leave Himself without witness” even among the pagans, “for He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14.17).

The Holy Fathers say that every man has creation outside him and conscience within to lead him away from falsehood and towards the Church, which is the third great witness to the truth, “the pillar and ground of the truth”, as St. Paul calls it (I Timothy 3.15). Creation and conscience alone cannot reveal the whole truth to him; but if he follows that partial revelation which creation and conscience provide, God will help him to find the fullness of truth in the Church. Nor is there any situation in life, however remote from, and opposed to, the Church, from which the Lord, Who wishes that all be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, cannot rescue the genuine seeker.

**Seeker.** But what if the pagan or the heretic has never met the truth in the Church, or has met only very sinful or ignorant representatives of the Church? Can he not then be said to be blind and ignorant, and therefore not sinning?

**Orthodox.** Everything depends on the nature and degree of the ignorance. There is voluntary ignorance and involuntary ignorance. If there were not such a thing as involuntary ignorance, the Lord would not have said on the Cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23.34). And His prayer was answered, for on the Day of Pentecost, Peter called on the Jews to repent, saying, “I know that you acted in ignorance” (Acts 3.17), after which thousands repented and were baptized. Again, the Apostle Paul “received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief” (I Timothy 1.13). But note that all these people responded to the truth when it was presented to them. This showed that their ignorance had been involuntary, and therefore excusable.

On the other hand, there is a hardness of heart that refuses to respond to the signs God gives of His truth, the signs from without and the promptings from within. This is voluntary ignorance. People who are hardened in this way do not know the truth because they do not want to know it. This stubborn refusal to accept the truth is what the Lord calls “the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 12.32), which will not be forgiven in this world or the next.

**Seeker.** Why can it not be forgiven?

**Orthodox.** Because forgiveness is given only to the penitent, and penitence is a recognition of the truth about oneself. However, if a man refuses to face the truth, and actively fights against it in his soul, he cannot repent, and so cannot be forgiven. In fighting against truth, he is fighting against the Holy Spirit of truth, Who leads into all truth (John 16.13). It is possible for a man to be sincerely mistaken about Christ for a while, and this can be forgiven him, as it was forgiven to the Apostle Paul. But if such ignorance is compounded by a rejection of the promptings to truth placed in the soul by the Spirit of truth, there is no hope. So the pagan who stubbornly remains in His paganism in
spite of the evidence of creation and conscience, and the heretic who stubbornly remains in his heresy in spite of the teaching of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, are both blasphemying against the Spirit of truth, and cannot be saved.

Seeker, So is there really no hope for the heretic?

Orthodox, While there is life there is hope. And there are many examples of people who have remained in heresy all their lives but have been converted to the truth just before their death. There is no hope only for those who do not love the truth. Such people the Lord will not lead to His truth, because they do not desire it. Rather, He will allow them to be deceived by the Antichrist “because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sendeth upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thessalonians 2.10-12).

Seeker, Alright. But I am still not convinced that only your Church is the True Church. In fact, I am not happy with the concept of “the One True Church” in general. It smacks of bigotry and intolerance to me.

Orthodox, You know, tolerance is not a Christian virtue. Love is.

Seeker, You amaze me! Is not tolerance a form of love? And is not all hatred forbidden for the Christian?

Orthodox, No. The Lord our God is a zealous God, and He expects zeal from us – zeal for the good, and hatred for the evil. “Ye that love the Lord, see to it that ye hate evil” (Psalm 96.11). What He hates most of all is lukewarmness: “I know your works: ye are neither cold nor hot. Would that ye were cold or hot! So, because ye are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth... So be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3.15-16, 19). St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote: “The Lawgiver of our life has enjoined upon us one single hatred. I mean that of the serpent, for no other purpose has He bidden us exercise this faculty of hatred, but as a resource against wickedness.”

Seeker, But that still means we are not allowed to hate human beings. Are we not meant to hate the sin and love the sinner? This is the kind of teaching that leads to burning heretics at the stake!

Orthodox, No. Neither St. Gregory nor any other saint of the Orthodox Church that I know of advocated persecuting people for their religious convictions. Christian love abhors using violence as a means of persuading people. But it does not go to the other extreme and ceases trying to persuade them. Nor, if they persist in their false teachings, does it hold back from protecting others from their influence! If we love the sinner and hate his sin, then we must do everything in our power both to deliver him from that sin and protect others from being contaminated by it.

Seeker, I think this is the kind of bigotry that comes from believing that one is in “the One True Church”. It is the source of religious persecution, the Inquisition, etc.

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4 St. Gregory of Nyssa, Letter XVII to Eustathia, Ambrosia and Basilissa.
Orthodox. The cause of religious persecution is not the claim to possess the truth, which all rational people who have thought out their beliefs claim, but human passions.

Seeker. What about Ivan the Terrible? What about most of the Orthodox emperors? Did they not discriminate against heresy?

Orthodox. Ivan was excommunicated by the Church, and was rather a persecutor of the Orthodox than an instrument of their persecuting others. As for the emperors’ discriminating against heresy, I am all in favour of that. It is irrational to place truth and falsehood on an equal footing. St. Theodosius of the Kiev Caves, one of the greatest saints who ever lived, said that by honouring others’ faiths we dishonour our own. Do our schools give equal honour to the theories of Ptolemy and Newton? Of course not!

Seeker. But that’s different! There we’re talking about scientific facts!

Orthodox. I don’t see any difference in principle. Our principle is: speak the truth at all times, reject falsehood at all times. If scientists do that in their sphere, where there is no certainty and “facts” are constantly being disputed by later investigators, why should we not do it in the incomparably higher and more important sphere of religious faith, whose incontrovertible facts have been communicated to us by the Truth Himself? For as St. Paul says about the Gospel: “I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1.12).

Seeker. And if everyone claims to have received a revelation from God?

Orthodox. Then we must patiently investigate who is telling the truth and who has been deceived by “the father of lies”. Just as scientists have methods for comparing different hypotheses and determining which (if any) is the correct one, so do we Orthodox Christians have methods of determining what is truth and what is falsehood in the religious sphere. And just as scientists will never accept that there can be more than one true explanation of an empirical phenomenon, so we will never accept that there can be more than one religious truth.

Seeker. Cannot different religious faiths each reveal part of the truth?

Orthodox. No. The Truth is One, and has been revealed to us by the Truth Himself: “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism” (Ephesians 4.4).

Seeker. So there is no truth at all in any of the non-Christian religions?

Orthodox. I didn’t say that. Satan likes to appear as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11.14); he mixes “truth with unrighteousness” (Romans 1.18). Thus with the bait of such fair-seeming ideals as “love”, “peace” and “freedom”, which correctly interpreted are indeed goods from God, he lures them into an abyss of falsehood. There is only one religion which contains “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth”. All the others, being parasitical on the One Truth, contain partial truths, but make even these partial truths false by association with falsehood, just as even a small dose of poison in a wholesome loaf makes the whole loaf poisonous.

Seeker. So there are partial truths in other religions, but no salvation?
Orthodox. Right. For as St. Peter said of Christ: “There is salvation in none other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4.12).

Seeker. What about the Muslims and the Jews? Do they not believe in the same God as we – the God of Abraham, their common ancestor?

Orthodox. The Lord said to the Jews: “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (John 8.39). And St. Paul said: “Know ye therefore that they which are of the faith” – that is, the faith in Christ – “are the children of Abraham” (Galatians 3.7). The God of Abraham is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ; Abraham himself looked forward to the Coming of Christ in the flesh – “Abraham saw My day and was glad” (John 8.56).

Seeker. Alright. But do not the Jews and Muslims also believe in the God of the Old Testament, Jehovah, Who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Orthodox. We believe that the great majority of the Old Testament Theophanies were in fact appearances of God the Son, not God the Father. Contrary to the belief of the Jehovah’s witnesses, the “Jehovah” of the Old Testament is Christ Himself; Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration to show that it is He Who appeared to them in the cloud and the fire and the still, small voice; it is He Who is the God of the Law and the Prophets.

In any case, since God is a Trinity of Persons, it is impossible rightly to believe in One of the Persons and not in the Others. For “whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (I John 2.23).

Seeker. But do not the Muslims believe in Christ after their fashion?

Orthodox. They believe that He is a prophet who is coming again to judge the world. But they do not believe in His Divinity, nor in His Cross and Resurrection – the central dogmas of our Faith. Moreover, they believe in the false prophet Mohammed, who contradicts Christ’s teaching in many respects. If they truly believed in Christ, they would not follow Mohammed’s teaching instead of Christ’s.

Seeker. But the Jews are the chosen people, are they not?

Orthodox. They were the chosen people, but then God rejected them for their unbelief and scattered them across the face of the earth, choosing the believing Gentiles in their place.

Seeker. But the religion of the Old Testament was the true religion, was it not? And insofar as they practise that religion, they are true believers, are they not?

Orthodox. The religion of the Old Testament was a true foreshadowing of, and preparation for, the full revelation of the Truth in Jesus Christ. But once the fullness of the Truth has appeared, it is impious to remain with the shadow; indeed, to mistake the shadow of the Truth for the Truth Himself is a grievous delusion. In any case, the Jews do not practise the Old Testament religion.

Seeker. What are you talking about?! Of course they do!

Orthodox. Since the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., it has been impossible for the Jews to practise the main commandment of their religion, which was to worship God with sacrifices in the Temple three times a year –
at Pascha, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Thus has the prophecy of the Prophet Hosea been fulfilled: “The children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim” (Hosea 3.4).

Seeker. What is their present religion then?

Orthodox. Not the religion of the Old Testament, but the religion of the Pharisees, which Christ rejected as being merely “the traditions of men”. Its relationship to the Old Testament is tenuous. Its real holy book is not the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, but the Talmud, a collection of the teachings of the Pharisees.

Seeker. And what does that teach?

Orthodox. The most extreme hatred of Christ and Christians. Not only does the Talmud deny the Divinity and Resurrection of Christ: it reviles Him as a sorcerer and a bastard, the son of a Roman soldier called Panthera and an unclean woman. Moreover, it teaches a double standard of morality: one for fellow Jews, quite another for the goyim, the Gentiles, who are not even accorded the dignity of fully human beings.

Seeker. But is this not anti-semitism?

Orthodox. Anti-semitism as a racist attitude of hatred for all Jews as such is of course contrary to the Christian Gospel. Nor can Christians approve of those cruelties that have been perpetrated against them (not the discrimination against their teaching, but the physical violence against their persons) down the centuries. But this in no way implies that Christians must participate in the campaign of whitewashing the Jews that has been continuing for nearly a century in both religious and non-religious circles. As the Gospels clearly indicate, the Jews killed Christ and brought His Blood upon themselves and upon their children. Nor has their hatred of Christ and Christians lessened down the centuries: anti-semitism is in large measure the reaction of Christians and Gentiles to the anti-Gentilism of the Talmud, which approves of all manner of crimes against Gentiles, including murder and extortion. In recent times, as Winston Churchill and many others have testified, the Jews were the leaders and inspirers of the anti-Christian and anti-monarchical revolutionary movement; they plotted the Russian revolution and put it into effect with the utmost ruthlessness – 95% of the leading Bolsheviks were Jews. (Of course, the Bolsheviks were atheist rather than Talmudic Jews. Nevertheless, the influence of the Talmud and the Rabbis on their hatred of Christian civilization cannot be denied.) The promise, in the same week of October, 1917, of a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine was a “coincidence” no discerning Christian can ignore, and whose significance for our times is immense. For the constant tradition of the Church has been that the Antichrist will be a Jew ruling from Jerusalem in a reclaimed State of Israel…

Seeker. But must we not love the Jews, even if they are our enemies?

Orthodox. Indeed, we must love our enemies and pray for them, as Christ commanded. In particular, we must pray that they will be converted and return to Christ, as St. Paul prophesied would happen in the last times. “For if
the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Romans 11.15).

Seeker. What you say makes sense, but I have one fundamental objection to everything you say.

Orthodox. What is that?

Seeker. You claim that this is Orthodoxy, but I know that it is not.

Orthodox. What do you mean?

Seeker. Your hierarchs participate in the ecumenical movement, which is based on principles completely contrary to the Orthodoxy you preach.

Orthodox. Actually, my hierarchs do not participate in the ecumenical movement. However, your mistake is understandable, because those large organizations and patriarchates which are associated in the public eye with Orthodoxy, such as the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Moscow Patriarchate, the Serbian Patriarchate, etc., do take part in the ecumenical movement. But we have no communion with them, because they have betrayed Orthodoxy.

Seeker. How can the leaders of Orthodoxy be said to have betrayed Orthodoxy?! It’s like saying that the Pope has betrayed Catholicism!

Orthodox. But he did! It was the Popes who in the second half of the eleventh century betrayed Orthodox Catholicism and the Orthodox Catholic Church, making it – or rather, that part of it which submitted it to them – into something quite different: the Roman (pseudo-) Catholic Church. In the same way, in the twentieth century, it is the leaders of the official Orthodox Churches who have betrayed Orthodoxy, making it into something quite different: “World Orthodoxy” or “Ecumenist Orthodoxy”.

You must remember that just as “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly” (Romans 2.28), but only he who belongs to “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6.16), that is, the Church of Christ, so he is not an Orthodox Christian who is one outwardly, but only he who confesses his Orthodoxy in word and deed. Fortunately, there are still Orthodox Christians who are so in truth, and not merely in appearance, and who have separated from the prevailing apostasy. And these, however few they are or will become, remain that Church against which the gates of hell will not prevail (Matthew 16.18), and of whom the Lord of the Church said: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12.32).

Seeker. Well, I am relieved to hear that. For I was convinced by your words, but was beginning to think that nobody practised that truth which I have come to believe in.

Orthodox. Welcome to the true Faith of Christ, brother! And do not fear: however small the Church on earth becomes, the Church in heaven is growing all the time, until the very end of the world. For “you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable Angels in festal gathering, and to the Assembly of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to a Judge Who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the sprinkled Blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel…” (Hebrews 12.22-24).
Holy Equals-to-the-Apostles Emperors Constantine and Helena.
2. CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX ECUMENISM

Introduction. The Papal Initiative.

On Forgiveness Sunday, 2000, according to the Orthodox Church calendar, the Pope of Rome issued an appeal for pardon for the sins of Catholics over the ages. “As the successor of Peter,” he writes in his Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, Incarnationis Mysterium, “I ask that in this year of mercy the Church, strong in the holiness which she receives from her Lord, should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters…. Christians are invited to acknowledge, before God and before those offended by their actions, the faults which they have committed… Let them do so without seeking anything in return… All of us, though not personally responsible and without encroaching on the judgement of God, who alone knows every heart, bear the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us.” Among the specific acts repented of by the Pope are the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. He also admitted that the Catholics had been unjust to ethnic and religious minorities, especially the Jews, women and natives of the Third World.

How are we Orthodox Christians to react to this declaration? Is it simply a political manoeuvre on the part of the world’s chief heretic, or is something deeper and more sincere contained in it? Can we refuse forgiveness to him who asks us for it?

Must we forgive? These are some of the questions elicited by this declaration by the Pope.

1. Our Sins and the Sins of our Fathers.

First of all, it is necessary to say that if we are talking about personal sins committed against us personally, then we must not only forgive him who asks us for forgiveness, whoever he might be and whatever faith he might confess, but we must forgive him before he asks for forgiveness: the Christian must immediately and “from the heart” forgive every one who has offended him. For “if you will not forgive men their sins,” said the Lord, “then your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6.15).

But can we forgive personal sins not committed against ourselves personally, but against our ancestors? Can, for example, an Orthodox Englishman forgive the Pope blessing the Norman invasion of England in 1066, which resulted in the destruction of 20% of her population and the complete annihilation of English Orthodox culture? Can an Orthodox Greek forgive the destruction of Constantinople during the fourth crusade in 1204? Can an Orthodox Russian forgive the persecution of the Orthodox by the Catholics in the 16th and 17th centuries or the support given by the Pope to the
revolution of 1917? Can an Orthodox Serb forgive the deaths of 750,000 Serbs at the hands of Catholic persecutors in Croatia in 1941?

This is a more complicated question, which demands a more detailed reply. On the one hand, insofar as it was our ancestors who perished first of all, it is up to them to forgive, not to us. And if amidst those who suffered there were some who died without forgiving their enemies, we can only pray for the forgiveness both of them and of their persecutors.

On the other hand, there is a definite sense in which we, being bound to our ancestors by bonds not only of blood but also of spiritual kinship, suffer together with them even to the present day. If the sins of the fathers affect their children, then exactly the same applies to their sufferings and offences: “The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Jeremiah 31.29). In this sense, actions directed at the redemption of the guilt on the part of the heirs of the persecutors can significantly lighten the bitterness felt by the descendants of those who suffered.

But, leaving psychological considerations to one side, can we demand repentance for sins committed against our ancestors? The answer to this question depends on the answer to the following: what is the motive eliciting this demand for repentance? If it is a desire to humiliate an opponent or in some way take revenge on him, then the answer will be negative, for “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Romans 12.19).

But if we are moved by love for justice, then the answer must be positive, for the love of justice is natural for man, created as he is in the image of the righteous God. Indeed, according to St. John of the Ladder, “God is called love, and also justice.” Thus the desire for justice, if it is not mixed with any sinful passion, is good and worthy of honour. This is evident from the words which may at first sight appear a bloodthirsty cry from the souls under the altar depicted in the Apocalypse: How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you not judge and be avenged for our blood on those living on the earth?” (Revelation 6.10). For “they cry out these words,” according to the English Orthodox Father, the Venerable Bede, “not out of hatred for enemies, but out of love of justice”.

Moreover, if the heirs of the persecutors come to recognize the sins of their fathers, then they thereby come closer to the truth and to their own salvation. And this is precisely the aspect that should interest Orthodox Christians first of all in the Pope’s declaration. Are we witnessing the return, albeit partial and not completely conscious, of the western papist church to the faith of our fathers?

6 St. Bede, On Genesis 4.10.
2. The Sins of the Papacy.

There are good grounds for adopting a sceptical and even cynical attitude to this. The Pope remains a potential threat to the salvation of millions of Orthodox Christians, having recently added to his many doctrinal sins the heresy of ecumenism. He promised his church a jubilee gift for the year 2000: reunion with the Orthodox, a gift which for the Orthodox would signify spiritual death and which, however painful it is to say it, the overwhelming majority of them have already accepted.

Moreover, the Pope’s repentance excludes that which is most important for the Orthodox: repentance not so much for the personal sins of the Roman Catholics as for the heresies of Roman Catholicism.

The Greek Old Calendarist Archimandrite Gregory of Dormition Skete, Colorado, U.S.A. has expounded those thoughts that in his opinion would constitute a more correct repentance on the part of the Pope:

“I, Pope John-Paul, would like to ask the forgiveness of the whole world for spreading my evil and destructive doctrine, which is called Roman Catholicism.

“Among the heresies I would like to renounce is the heresy of the Filioque, which destroys the theological understanding of the Trinity. I would also like to renounce the following heresies:

“our diabolical teaching on purgatory, which is similar to the teaching of Origen;

“the teaching on the immaculate conception which we have thought up;

“our use of statues, like the pagans and idol-worshippers;

“the ban on our clergy entering into marriage;

“our introduction of the papist calendar;

“our distortion of all the sacraments which we accepted when we were Orthodox – for example, our heretical practice of baptism by sprinkling, which is like the practice of the Protestants, and our use of unleavened bread, which is like the Jews;

“our teaching that I the Pope am infallible, a teaching that forms the foundation of all the above-mentioned sins, which thereby witness to the fact that I am not infallible.
“I would also like to repent of the fact that I have drawn the Orthodox patriarchs of our century into the new heresy of ecumenism.

“From all the above examples it is evident that I have fallen away from True Christianity, and therefore both my actions and those of my predecessors are like the actions of the pagans, like whom I in the name of ‘Christianity’ killed, burned and destroyed everything that I could and everyone that I could for the sake of spreading my false teachings.

“The list of such evil works includes the Inquisition, when innocent people were burned at the pillar of shame, which witnesses to my unchristian attitude to people; and the crusades, which ravaged the capital of Orthodox Byzantium, Constantinople; the invasion and conquest of America, as a result of which with my blessing the two main indigenous civilizations there were annihilated; the murder by dismemberment of the holy Martyr Peter the Aleut, an Orthodox Christian who suffered in San Francisco at the hands of my Jesuit monks because he did not want to convert to my disgusting faith; and in our century, my predecessor Pius XII’s blessing of forcible conversion in Croatia, during which 800,000 Orthodox were killed because they did not want to convert and be subject to my papal authority.

“From all the above it follows that I am in a wretched condition, and I intend to ask forgiveness. I intend to renounce this heretical teaching and accept Orthodox baptism…”

Approximately some such list of sins would be demanded from the Pope if his request for forgiveness were to correspond to the Orthodox world-view. But insofar as the present declaration of the Pope is far from this, it is difficult to quarrel with those who see in this act a purely political trap, yet another move in the ecumenical game, a new tactic in the papacy’s age-old attempts to draw the Orthodox into a false union with itself.

Some may object: but have not Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople already forgiven each other by means of the lifting of the anathemas in 1965? If the Pope and the Patriarch no longer have anything against each other, why should we renew the quarrel between them? Can an act of mutual lifting of anathemas really be “invalid”, when anathematising someone is so obviously an act of hatred?

No: an anathematisation of that which is truly false is an act of love, not hatred. How can it be otherwise when the Apostle Paul himself anathematises (I Corinthians 16.22, Galatians 1.8,9), and when the Church herself in her Seven Ecumenical Councils and on the Sunday of Orthodoxy anathematises all heretics?
It is necessary at this point to return to the distinction between personal sins and sins against the faith. We have the right and the duty to forgive personal sins committed against us, even if the offender does not ask for forgiveness. And if the original hurling of the anathemas in 1054 was caused by purely personal sins and passions, then the meeting of the hierarchs some 900 years later, could, if not remove that original sin, at any rate help to remove any residual bitterness passed down the generations. And it seems that this is how the hierarchs understood the act. Thus the epistle sent by the Pope to the Patriarch expressed his regret that the Church of Constantinople had been offended by the papal legates in 1054: “We deeply regret this, and all excommunications and anathemas that the legates placed upon Patriarch Michael Cerularius and upon the Holy Church of Constantinople we declare to be null and void”.

But if the “offence” is not (primarily, at any rate) a personal one, but a sin against the faith, then it can be healed only by repentance specifically for that dogmatic sin on the part of the sinner. But of such repentance there was not a trace in the meeting in 1965: dogmatic differences, the original and true cause of the schism, came into the discussion not at all. And yet sins against the faith remain unforgiven until the sinner has completely renounced them. For a sin against the faith is primarily a sin, not against man, but against God, since it is in essence blasphemy, an affirmation that God is a liar in His witness about Himself. In relation to such sins the words of David are especially applicable: “Against Thee only have I sinned” (Psalm 50.4). And if the heretic sins against God alone, then only God can forgive him. Or the Church of God, to which God has given the power to bind and to loose, that is, to discern whether a sinner has truly repented of his sin. That is why we, as individuals, cannot forgive a heretic his heresy, but only the Church - through baptism and anathematisation of his heresies if he was not a member of the Church in the first place, or confession if he is already baptised.

As regards anathemas against heresies, these can never be removed. For since God and His truth does not change, the sentence against that which contradicts this truth is also immutable. People can change; they can change from confessing heresy to confessing the truth; and so they can change from being under anathema to being freed from anathema. But the heresy itself remains under anathema unto the ages of ages.

3. False Forgiveness and Ecumenism.

It is significant that the papists began for the first time to ask for forgiveness from their “separated brethren” (the Orthodox), from the Jews and from others only when they accepted the heresy of ecumenism during the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. This permits us to suppose that there is a close link between ecumenism and the false understanding of forgiveness.
It is often said that the essence of ecumenism consists not in some particular heretical teaching, but in a false understanding of heresy in general. One reviewer of a book on the Anglican Reformation in *Church Times* remarked that the real heresy consists in the idea that there exists such a thing as heresy! In other words, heresy does not exist! But if heresy does not exist, then neither does truth. For heresy is simply the denial of a particular truth about God.

The strange thing is that the same ecumenists who are so indifferent to religious truth and falsehood, even denying that the latter exists, can be extremely zealous for what they consider to be the truth in other, non-theological matters. Only when the matter concerns Divine truth do they suddenly become amazingly “tolerant”, thereby confirming the truth of the apostolic words: “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (II Thessalonians 2.10).

This is particularly obvious in the case of Patriarch Athenagoras – the man who supposedly “lifted the anathemas” against the papacy in 1965. Fr. Basil Lourié writes: “Athenagoras … did not consider [the Latins] to be heretics. But his denial of their hereticalness was not a manifestation of his special love for them: Athenagoras did not recognize the existence of heresy in general! Having heard of a certain man who saw heresies everywhere, Athenagoras said: ‘I don’t see them anywhere! I see only truths, partial, reduced, sometimes out of place…”

And so we can define the essence of ecumenism as indifference to religious truth, or, in its extreme manifestations, the absence of faith in the existence of objective truth generally. In the words of Metropolitan Philaret of New York in his *Sorrowful Epistle* to Patriarch Athenagoras, ecumenism “places a sign of equality between error and truth”. This is the same indifference that was manifested by Pontius Pilate, when, standing in front of Truth Incarnate, he wearily asked: “What is truth?” – and would not stay for an answer...

But this is only one side of the question. Ecumenism also displays a striking indifference to justice. Again, the ecumenists, like everyone else, can be zealous in relation to justice in non-theological, especially political, matters – for example, the injustice of Third World debt or racism or sexism or some other form of discrimination. Moreover, they do not fear to accuse God Himself of injustice, as when the Anglican Bishop of Durham (Northern England) declared that if God permitted Auschwitz, he was a devil... But when we are talking about injustices committed in relation to Christians because they are Christians – for example, the persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union, - then they become suddenly silent. Here again we see a

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similarity with Pilate, who washed his hands after committing the greatest of all injustices, while claiming to carry out the duties of an impartial judge.

The most important value for the ecumenist is peace – not peace with God or with the true people of God, but peace with the world and the rulers of this world. And if truth and justice have to be sacrificed for the sake of this worldly peace, then so be it. Thus Pilate betrayed Truth and Justice for the sake of peace with, and out of fear of, the Jews. And thus do the present-day leaders of the ecumenical movement, for fear of the non-ecumenical confessions (primarily, Judaism and Islam), strive first of all to establish peace amongst themselves so as to be able to present a united front in their pursuit of a general peace with – or rather, capitulation before – their enemies, whom they fear because of their secular power. But “there have they feared where there is no fear” (Psalm 13.6); for it is not fitting to fear the enemies of God, friendship with whom is enmity with God (James 4.4). Whom alone they have to fear as being able “to destroy both soul and body in gehenna” (Matthew 10.28).

Where there is no consciousness of sin, or a distorted understanding of sin, a request for forgiveness is seen to be in essence a request for something else – perhaps the conclusion of a non-aggression pact, or an agreement on cooperation for the attainment of some common goal. “And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves” (Luke 23.12). Why? Because their mutual rivalry was less important than their mutual desire to placate the Jewish religious establishment, to whom Christ was to be thrown like meat to a hungry animal. In the same way the dogmatic differences between the Pope of Rome and the “Orthodox” ecumenists are less important to them than their retention of a place at the table of the world’s rulers – who are once again, as in the time of Christ, mainly Jewish.

4. Orthodox Herods and Catholic Pilates.

Let us continue for a time to draw out the parallels between Pilate and Herod, on the one hand, and Catholic and Orthodox ecumenism, on the other.

Were Pilate and Herod equally guilty in the eyes of God? Not at all. Christ spoke with Pilate, but refused to speak to Herod (Luke 23.9). Herod mocked Christ and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, thereby mocking His assertion that he was the king of the Jews (Luke 23.11). But Pilate wanted to know more about Christ’s claims to a kingdom, and, bringing Him out to the Jews, said, not without some genuine admiration: “Behold your King!” (John 19.14). And again he asked, not without some genuine fear: “Shall I crucify your King?” (John 19.15). Moreover, overcoming for once his fear of the Jews, he refused to remove the inscription on the Cross: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”. We have no evidence that Herod had any gnawings of conscience in handing
over Christ, Who was in Herod’s jurisdiction and Whom he could have released. But Pilate found no fault in Him and was searching for a way of releasing Him. To the end he retained a definite consciousness of his sin, and God had given him a further impulse to stand firm through his wife’s exhortation. And even after he had betrayed Him, his guilty conscience revealed itself in his washing his hands and saying: “I am innocent of the blood of this Righteous Man” (Matthew 27.24).

Just as Herod’s sin was greater than Pilate’s, so the crime of the Orthodox ecumenists is greater than that of the Catholic ecumenists. This assertion may shock many Orthodox zealots who are accustomed to see in Catholicism and the apostate West the root of all evil. But after some thought it becomes obvious that, in accordance with the principle: “to whom much is given, much is required”, greater responsibility is undoubtedly borne by those to whom the treasures of Orthodox Tradition have been entrusted than by those who have never been Orthodox.

The Orthodox ecumenists are like the Pharisees, who, having the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, shut up that Kingdom against men; for they neither go in themselves, nor suffer those that are entering to go in (Matthew 23.13). One of the most shameful documents in the history of Christianity is the resolution accepted by the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches in Constantinople on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1992. On that day the Orthodox triumphantly declare about their faith: “This is the Apostolic Faith! This is the Orthodox Faith! This is the Faith that supports the world!”, and anathematize all the heresies, including those of the Catholics and Protestants. And yet in their 1992 council these so-called Orthodox leaders officially renounced proselytism among the heretical Christians of the West! It was as if they said to the westerners “Yes, ours is the Apostolic Faith, and yes, we have just anathematized your heresies. But these are only words. The world does not need our faith. And the world need not fear our anathematisms. Remain where you are. Remain in your heresy. We will not try and convert you.”

Nine years later, the Moscow Patriarchate’s Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev) of Smolensk put it as follows: “In practice we forbid our priests to seek to convert people. Of course it happens that people arrive and say: ‘You know, I would like, simply out of my own convictions, to become Orthodox.’ ‘Well, please do.’ But there is no strategy to convert people.”

And this at a time when the Christians of the West are undergoing the deepest crisis in their history, when thousands of Western Christians, and especially Catholics, are turning their eyes to the Orthodox in the hope that they will extract them from the terrible dead-end in which they find themselves. Thus traditional Catholics brought up in accordance with the decrees of their “infallible” first bishop, that their Church is the one saving

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Church, and that their faith is the one saving faith, were profoundly shaken, in some cases even to the extent of mental disorder, to learn, during the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, that not only the Catholics, but also the Orthodox and even Protestants, Jews and Muslims belong to the People of God and can be saved, and that that which they considered to be heresy was no longer heresy, and that which they consider to be mortal sin was no longer mortal sin...

Is there a way out of this situation? One possibility is to declare, with the Swiss Cardinal Lefèbvre, that the Pope of Rome has fallen into heresy, that he is an anti-pope, and that the true Catholic Church is another place, among the Catholics who do not recognize the present Pope. But if the Pope is infallible, how can he fall into heresy? Of course, there were Popes who fell into heresy even before the rise of the papist heresy itself – Pope Honorius, for example, who was condemned by the Sixth Ecumenical Council. But the papists have always tried to explain away such examples because the idea of a heretical Pope actually undermines their faith at its very base. For if the Pope falls away from the truth, he is no longer Peter, no longer the rock on which the Church is built. And then the Catholics will have to look for their Catholic faith outside the (pseudo-) Catholic Church, which is an absurdity for them. For according to their papist faith, there can be no true faith, and no true Church, without the Pope. If the Pope falls, then the Universal Church falls with him⁹, and the gates of hell, contrary to the promise of the Saviour, have prevailed against her (Matthew 16.18).

Another possibility is to declare that the Roman see is temporarily vacant. But again: can the Church exist without Peter according to papist doctrine? If the Church is founded on the rock, and that rock is Peter and his successors, the Popes of Rome, how can the Church continue to exist without the rock?

A third possibility is to declare, together with the True Orthodox Christians, that the Roman Catholic Church is not only in heresy, but has been in heresy ever since she fell away from her true Mother, the Orthodox Church, to which her children must return if they want to receive the grace and truth that is in Christ. And, glory to God, many in the West, both Catholic and Protestant, are doing just that – to the extent that the Orthodox ecumenists are allowing them.¹⁰ In England, for example, Orthodoxy has doubled in size during the last decade.

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⁹It was for this reason that the Orthodox Pope Gregory I (known as “the Dialogist” in the East, and “the Great” in the West) refused the title of “universal” or “ecumenical”. See his Epistle 33.

¹⁰And sometimes they have not only not allowed them, but have expelled them. Thus in 1975 a group of Sardinian parishes, who had been received into the Moscow Patriarchate from Roman Catholicism, were ordered by their archpastor, Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh (who was himself ordered to do this by Metropolitan Juvenaly of Tula), to leave his Church. The reason, as the present writer was able to ascertain from Anthony himself, was: the Pope had laid it down as a condition of the success of his negotiations with the MP on the
But this growth in converts to Orthodoxy from the Western confessions has taken place not thanks to, but in spite of, the preaching of the official Orthodox Churches. For how often have potential converts to Orthodoxy been dissuaded from joining by the Orthodox hierarchs themselves! Even when already Orthodox, these neophytes from the West have often been made to feel like second-class citizens who cannot really know the mystery of Orthodoxy because of their “western mentality”.

Thus one English Orthodox Christian, on arriving at a Greek church one Sunday morning, was politely but firmly directed to an Anglican church, in spite of his protests that he was Orthodox. The explanation: “Orthodoxy is for Greeks and Russians: for the English there is Anglicanism…” In this way do the heresies of ecumenism and phyletism grow into each other, combining to shut the door on those searching for, and even those who have already found, the truth!

Something similar to the present crisis in the Roman Catholic church took place in the 14th-15th centuries, when for many years there were two popes, and once even three! In reaction to this crisis there arose the conciliar movement, which strove to return to the Orthodox teaching on authority in the Church, declaring that the highest authority in the earthly Church was not the Pope, but the Ecumenical Councils. Here was a wonderful opportunity for the Orthodox to support this beginning of a return to Orthodoxy, if not in the papacy itself, at least in a large portion of its (former) followers), and direct it to its consummation in the bosom of the Orthodox Church.

But this opportunity was missed largely for the same reason as it is being missed today: because the Orthodox leaders of the time, having lost the salt of True Orthodoxy themselves, were seeking a union with Roman Catholicism for political motives. Thus in 1438-1439, when the most representative council of the Western Church was convening in Basle in Switzerland, so as to resolve the problems of the Western Church on the basis of conciliarity, the Orthodox leaders preferred to meet the Pope in Florence and conclude a false union with him, betraying the purity of the Orthodox Faith for a mess of pottage. The victory of the Pope signified not only the fall of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (fortunatel, only temporarily), and of Constantinople itself a few years later, but also the crushing of the hopes of the conciliarists in Basle...

Of course, it could be argued that the conciliarists were not really ready for Orthodoxy, not really seeking it, which is why the Lord did not allow them to be united to it. That may be true. But it does not remove the responsibility of those Orthodox hierarchs then and now who put obstacles in the way of Ukrainian uniate question that these parishes return to him. After various adventures, these parishes were later admitted into communion with the Greek Old Calendar Church.
potential converts to the faith through their own lukewarmness about that faith.

Thus the Orthodox uniates of the fifteenth century, like the Orthodox ecumenists of the twentieth century, betrayed not only their Orthodox flock but also the potential flock to be gathered from those outside Orthodoxy. Through their refusal to carry out missionary work among the heterodox, in accordance with the Lord’s command to go out and make converts of all the nations (Matthew 28.19), they have in effect denied themselves the right to call themselves Orthodox. For as St. Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (+1054) said, he who honours the faith of another dishonours his own...

Since the “Orthodox” ecumenists refuse to carry out missionary work in view of their ecumenist convictions, why should they object if the True Orthodox take this burden upon themselves? But this is where the ecumenists show their true face. For while serving with and flatter the heretics, whose faith is far from Orthodoxy, they actively persecute the True Orthodox whose faith they supposedly share. They secretly kill their priests, send the secular powers to take away their churches and in the West deny their very existence. Like Herod, they claim that they, too, worship Christ in the true faith, but will not accompany the true seekers, the Magi, to Bethlehem, but will rather kill the innocents who bear witness to the existence of the True Body of Christ.

Thus in the 1970s, as reported in Church Times, an Australian journalist once asked Metropolitan Nicodemus of Leningrad about the existence of the Russian Catacomb Church. “Have they got a bank account?” asked the metropolitan (now exposed as KGB Agent “Sviatoslav” and a secret Catholic bishop!). The journalist had difficulty in replying. Nicodemus triumphantly concluded: “If it doesn’t have a bank account, then it doesn’t exist!”

Actually, from the point of view of the Orthodox Herods, this was a completely adequate answer. For to them the significance of a Church is defined, not by the strength of its Orthodox faith, but by its worldly strength – and worldly strength in the contemporary world is measured by the size of one’s bank account. From their point of view, a Church without a bank account is truly of no significance and can be swept off the face of the earth without the slightest torments of conscience.

On the other hand, if an unbeliever has a large bank account, then he is worthy of every honour and even of Orthodox baptism – as was granted, for example, to the mayor of Moscow Luzhkov. And what business is it of anyone’s that the mayor happens to be an unbeliever? For the sergianist concept of “economy”, this is a trivial problem. Did not Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk say, towards the end of the 1980s, that true ecumenism is the gathering together into one Church or religion “of all people of good will”, including even atheists?
In comparison with the cunning and spite of this “Orthodox Herodianism”, the “Pilatism” of the Catholics and Protestants looks almost innocent. At least they believe in their own faith, false though it is, with sufficient sincerity and conviction to want to convert others to it – and not in exchange for money, but at the cost of money. Thus the Vatican organization “Aid to the Church in Need” offered a yearly subsidy of $1000 to every priest in the Moscow Patriarchate!¹¹

Of course, such bribery cannot in any way be approved. But it is hardly worse than the sheer mercenariness of, for example, Archbishop Lev of Novgorod, who openly admits Protestants and Catholics to communion in his cathedral, his obvious motivation being, according to Liudmilla Perepiolkina, “the material benefit gained as a result of attracting foreign tourists, along with their dollars, pounds and marks, into the Patriarchate’s churches.”¹²

The truth is that many educated Roman Catholics look with sincere respect at their “separated brethren”, the Orthodox, and long for reunion with them, hoping that an injection of eastern blood may reanimate, as it were, the ailing body of their own church. For they know that the Orthodox Church is no less traditional than their own (in fact, much more so), and that it occupies precisely those lands in Greece and the Middle East that are the birthplace of Christianity. They would really prefer to be on the side of the Orthodox, forming a “united front” of Traditional Christianity against the ravages of modern secularism and atheism. Indeed, in the subconsciousness of the Catholics a question arises concerning the Orthodox Church: could this really be our real Mother? In the same way, Pilate secretly respected Christ, was half-persuaded by his wife not to harm “that Righteous Man”, Who, he suspected, might truly be the Son of God, and betrayed him only because the respect he felt for Him was outweighed by his fear of the Jews.

It goes without saying that the above paragraph in no way represents a justification of Roman Catholicism, nor a denial that it remains a most dangerous heresy. Indeed, the corruption and heresy of Roman Catholicism grows deeper every year, especially now that it has absorbed all manner of Protestant ideas into itself. However, “the Spirit blows where It wills” (John 3.8), and God can make sons of Abraham even out of the stoniest of hearts (Matthew 3.9). Who could have foreseen, during the savage persecutions under Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century, that the Roman Empire would very soon be converted to Christ and remain, in its Byzantine and Russian incarnations, the main support of Christianity right until the revolution of 1917? And if, as the famous novelist F. M. Dostoyevsky said, the heretical Roman papacy is the regeneration of the pagan Roman empire in a new form, who can be certain that the grace of God cannot again transfigure

¹¹ Liudmilla Perepiolkina, Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 214.
¹² Perepiolkina, op. cit., p. 122.
that organism, so that it suddenly, after centuries of cruel despotism and proud blindness, loses faith in itself, begins to investigate its past and beseech, albeit hesitantly and imperfectly at first, the forgiveness of its sins?

**Conclusion. The Unforgivable Sin.**

The Lord said on the Cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23.34). And many were forgiven and joined the Church after Pentecost, because “you did it through ignorance” (Acts 3.17). An important principle follows from this. To the extent that we remain in ignorance, to that degree we can hope for forgiveness from God, if we repent. Conversely, to the extent that we know that we are sinning, but still continue in that sin, to that degree we remain unforgiven, for forgiveness is given only to those who seek it through repentance.

Even the greatest sins can be forgiven if the sinner is truly, involuntarily ignorant. Thus the Apostle Paul wrote: “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief” (I Timothy 1.13; Acts 17.30). For our Great High Priest is truly the One Who “can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are led astray” (Hebrews 5.2).

However, there is such a phenomenon as voluntary, conscious ignorance. Thus the Apostle Paul says of those who do not believe in the One God, the Creator of heaven and earth, that they are “without excuse” (Romans 1.20), for they reject that which is evident to all through contemplation of creation. Similarly, the Apostle Peter says: “This they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old” (II Peter 3.5). Moreover, if someone says that he knows, when in fact he is ignorant, this is counted to him as conscious ignorance. For Christ said to the Pharisees: “If ye were blind, ye would have no sin; but now that ye say, We see, your sin abides” (John 9.41).

Voluntary ignorance is very close to conscious resistance to the truth, which, according to the word of God, will receive the greater condemnation. Thus those who will accept the Antichrist will accept him because “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. For this reason God will send them the working of deception, that they should believe in a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thessalonians 2.10-12).

And if it seems improbable that God should send someone the working of deception, let us recall that God allowed a lying spirit to enter into the lips of the prophets of King Ahab, because they prophesied to him only that which he wanted to hear (III Kings 22.19-24).

Voluntary, conscious resistance to the truth is “the sin unto death” (I John 5.16) or *the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*, which, according to the Lord’s
word, “will never be forgiven” (Matthew 12.31). Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) writes: “The Seventh Ecumenical Council in its fifth canon explains what a sin unto death is. Here, in the Saviour’s well-known words about this sin, it is not blasphemy in the usual sense of the word that is meant, but a conscious opposition to the truth, to which one’s soul bears witness, as the Lord said: ‘If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin’ (John 15.22). Here is an example of an unforgivable sin. The Lord first spoke about an unforgiven blasphemy in Mark 3.29, here the Evangelist explains: ‘Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit’ (Mark 3.30). As you see, there was no direct blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, but there was an opposition to evident truth.”

It is not that God does not want to forgive all, even the most terrible sins; he wishes that all should come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved (I Timothy 2.4). The point is that if a man stubbornly refuses to respond to the promptings of the Spirit of truth, Who “guides into all truth” (John 16.3) about God and man, he cannot come to repentance, which is based on a knowledge of the truth. And so he cannot receive forgiveness from the Truth. As Blessed Augustine said: “the first gift is that which concerns the forgiveness of sins... Against this free gift, against this grace of God speaks the impenitent heart. And so this impenitence is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.”

Voluntary ignorance can be of various degrees. There is the voluntary ignorance which refuses to believe even when the truth is staring at one in the face. This is the most serious form of ignorance, which was practiced by the Pharisees and heresiarchs. But the voluntarily ignorant can also be he who does not take the steps that are necessary to find the truth. This is less serious, but still worthy of punishment and is a characteristic of many of those who followed the Pharisees and heresiarchs.

Thus we read: “That servant who knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12.47-48).

A fitting commentary on this is provided by Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria: “Some ask: ‘Let us grant that the man who knew the will of his master and did not do it merited his punishment. But why was there punishment for the man who did not know the master’s will?’ He too was punished because he was able to learn the will of the master, but did not want

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to do so. Because of his laziness, he was the cause of his own ignorance, and he deserves punishment for this very reason, that of his own will he did not learn.”

And St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: “How can he who knew it not be guilty? The reason is, because he would not know it, although it was in his power to learn.”

And to whom does this distinction between different degrees of ignorance apply? According to St. Cyril, to false teachers and parents, on the one hand, and those who follow them, on the other. In other words, the blind leaders are subjected to a greater punishment than the blind who are led by them, but both the leaders and followers fall into a pit (Matthew 15.4).

In the light of this teaching, the greatest and least forgivable sinners in the present-day ecumenical movement are the Orthodox hierarchs. They know the truth; they know that the Orthodox Church, and only the Orthodox Church, is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3.15) and the only ark of salvation. Those who follow these false hierarchs are also guilty, albeit to a lesser degree, because although, in many cases, they may not know the truth as clearly and fully as their leaders, they can easily take steps to learn the truth, by more attentively studying the Holy Scriptures and Divine Services of the Church.

As for the Western heretics who partake in the ecumenical movement, some may know as much as their Orthodox colleagues and are therefore as guilty as they. But generally speaking, the western heretics must be considered to be less guilty than the Orthodox ecumenists. For while they have the Holy Scriptures, they do not have the God-inspired interpretation of the Scriptures that is to be found in the Holy Fathers and Divine services of the Orthodox Church. Moreover, their striving for union with the Orthodox is natural insofar as they feel themselves spiritually unfulfilled in their own churches and seek to satisfy that hunger in union with Orthodoxy. The tragedy – and it is a great tragedy for all concerned – is that when they seek the truth from the Orthodox, the Orthodox usually push them back to their own spiritual desert, saying that they are already in the truth. They seek bread, but are given a stone…

And so when we seek the causes of the present-day ecumenical catastrophe, let us not accuse the western heretics first of all. Paradoxical as it may seem, the further away a person is from the truth, the more forgivable and his blind wanderings in the sphere of theology. That who “sit on Moses’ seat”, and call themselves Orthodox and successors of the Holy Fathers – they are the ones who bear the greatest responsibility. They build the tombs of the prophets, the holy elders and hierarchs of Orthodoxy, and adorn the monuments of the righteous, the shrines of the new martyrs and confessors, and say that they

would not have taken part in the shedding of their blood. And yet by their betrayal of Holy Orthodoxy they witness against themselves that they are the sons of those who killed the martyrs (Matthew 23.29-31).

Holy Monk-Martyr Nectan of Hartland.
3. MEMORY AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

I will not assemble their assemblies of blood,
Nor will I make remembrance of their names through my lips.
Psalm 15.4.

The Holy Church has decreed the singing of “eternal memory” to all those who have died in the True Faith, and glorifies a number of them by enrolling them among the saints, specifying special days on which services are to be conducted in their honour. But she forbids the public commemoration of those who have died outside the faith, and even anathematizes certain of them – the heretics and heresiarchs. In this way she has a selective memory, a memory that reflects the memory of God Himself, who gives everlasting life to those who love Him but blots out those who betray Him from the book of life.

The false church, the “church of the evil-doers” (Psalm 21.16) also has a selective memory. She “forgets” the saints who have rebuked her, and casts out their name as evil. And she glorifies her own leaders, who have led her on the path to destruction. Sometimes, if the glory of the true saints cannot be hidden, she also “appropriates” them to herself – but carefully edits their words and deeds to ensure that their real message will not get through to the people. As for her own evil deeds and betrayals, these, too, are edited out…

Glasnost’ and Sergianism

Much of the past fifteen years in the history of the Russian Church has been a struggle between true memory and false memory. Fifteen years ago, Russia was in the throes of glasnost’, when Russians were learning, often with astonishment and horror, the full depth of the fall of their people and their official “church” in the Soviet period. The creation of such societies as Pamyat’ and Memorial symbolized the process that was taking place – the recovery of the people’s memory. But then, in June, 1990, the first major attempt to turn the clock back and the people back to the amnesiac state of Sovietism took place. Metropolitan Alexis (Ridiger) was elected as the new “patriarch” of Moscow. At a time when past cooperation with the KGB was being denounced in the newspapers and on the television, it was “forgotten” that this Alexis was a KGB agent whom the Furov report of 1974 had called the most pro-Soviet of all the bishops after the patriarch, and who had been prepared to report to the KGB even on his own patriarch! As if to confirm that, yes, he was that most pro-Soviet of all bishops, and therefore probably the least suitable person to lead the Russian Church into the new era, on July 4/17, 1990, the day of the martyrdom of Tsar Nicholas II, Alexis announced publicly that he was praying for the preservation of the communist party!
But of course, “Patriarch” Alexis did not reach his lofty rank by being stupid. And so after this gaffe he quickly recovered his balance, his sense of which way the wind was blowing; and there was no further overt support of the communists. True, he did attach his signature, in December, 1990, to a letter by 53 well-known political, academic and literary figures who urged Gorbachev to take urgent measures to deal with the state of crisis in the country, speaking of “… the destructive dictatorship of people who are shameless in their striving to take ownership of territory, resources, the intellectual wealth and labour forces of the country whose name is the USSR”. But the patriarch quickly disavowed his signature; and a few weeks later, after the deaths in Vilnius, he declared that the killings were “a great political mistake – in church language a sin”.

Then, in May, 1991, he publicly disagreed with a member of the hardline Soiuz bloc, who had said that the resources of the army and the clergy should be drawn on extensively to save the people and the homeland. In Alexis’ view, these words could be perceived as a statement of preparedness to use the Church for political purposes. The patriarch recalled his words of the previous autumn: the Church and the Faith should not be used as a truncheon. By June, the patriarch had completed his remarkable transformation from dyed-in-the-wool communist to enthusiastic democrat, saying to Yeltsin: “May God help you win the election”.

Still more striking was his apparent rejection of Sergianism. Thus in an interview granted to Izvestia on June 6 he said: “This year has freed us from the state’s supervision. Now we have the moral right to say that the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius has disappeared into the past and no longer guides us… The metropolitan cooperated with criminal usurpers. This was his tragedy…. Today we can say that falsehood is interspersed in his Declaration, which stated as its goal ‘placing the Church in a proper relationship with the Soviet government’. But this relationship – and in the Declaration it is clearly defined as being the submission of the Church to the interests of governmental politics – is exactly that which is incorrect from the point of view of the Church... Of the people, then, to whom these compromises, silence, forced passivity or expressions of loyalty that were permitted by the Church leadership in those days, have caused pain – of these people, not only before God, but also before them, I ask forgiveness, understanding and prayers.”

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19 “Patriarch Alexis II: I take on myself responsibility for all that happened”, Izvestia, № 137, June 10, 1991; Bishop Gregory Grabbe, "The Dogmatization of Sergianism (Dogmatizatsia Sergianstva)", Pravoslavnaia Rus (Orthodox Rus’), № 17 (1446), September 1/14, 1991, p. 5 ®.
And yet, in an interview given to Komsomolskaia Pravda only two months earlier, he had said: “The most important thing for the Church is to preserve itself for the people, so that they should be able to have access to the Chalice of Christ, to the Chalice of Communion... There is a rule when a Christian has to take on himself a sin in order to avoid a greater sin... There are situations in which a person, a Christian must sacrifice his personal purity, his personal perfection, so as to defend something greater... Thus in relation to Metropolitan Sergius and his successors in the leadership of the Church under Soviet power, they had to tell lies, they had to say that everything was normal with us. And yet the Church was being persecuted. Declarations of political loyalty were being made. The fullness of Christian life, charity, almsgiving, the Reigning icon of the Mother of God were also renounced. Compromises were made.” In other words, Sergianism, though sinful, was justified. It may have “disappeared into the past”, but if similar circumstances arise again, the “sacrifice” of personal purity can and should be made again!...

The patriarch showed that the poison of Sergianism was in him still during the attempted coup of August, 1991. When the Russian vice-president, Alexander Rutskoy, approached him on the morning of the 19th, the patriarch, like several other leading political figures, pleaded “illness” and refused to see him. When he eventually did issue a declaration – on the evening of the 20th, and again in the early hours of the 21st – the impression made was, in Fr. Gleb Yakunin’s words, “rather weak”. He called on all sides to avoid bloodshed, but did not specifically condemn the plotters.

As Jane Ellis comments: “Though Patriarch Alexis II issued statements during the coup, they were bland and unspecific, and he was widely thought to have waited to see which way the wind was blowing before committing himself to issuing them. It was rather the priests in the White House – the Russian Parliament building – itself, such as the veteran campaigner for religious freedom, Fr. Gleb Yakunin, as well as the Christians among those manning the barricades outside, who helped to overthrow the Communist Party, the KGB and the Soviet system.”

(During the 1993 attack on parliament he showed a similar indecisiveness. “He promised to excommunicate the first person to fire a shot, but when shooting... thundered around the ‘White House’, he forgot about his promise.”

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23 Sokolov, op. cit.
It was not until Wednesday morning that the patriarch sent his representative, Deacon Andrew Kurayev, to the Russian parliament building, by which time several dissident priests were already established there. And it was two priests of the Russian Church Abroad who celebrated the first supplicatory service to the New Martyrs of Russia on the balcony of the White House. Not to be outdone, the patriarchate immediately responded with its own prayer service, and at some time during the same day the patriarch anathematized all those who had taken part in organizing the coup.

By these actions the patriarch appeared to have secured his position vis-à-vis Yeltsin’s government, and on August 27, Yeltsin attended a memorial service in the Assumption cathedral of the Kremlin, at which the patriarch hailed the failure of the coup, saying that “the wrath of God falls upon the children of disobedience”. So in the space of thirteen months, the patriarch had passed from a pro-communist, anti-democratic to an anti-communist, pro-democratic stance. This lack of principle should have surprised nobody; for the essence of sergianism, the root heresy of the Moscow Patriarchate, is adaptation to the world, and to whatever the world believes and praises.

But the patriarch still remained a sergianist – only in a more subtle way, appearing to distance himself from sergianism while still insisting that it had to be done. Thus in 1991 he said: “A church that has millions of faithful cannot go into the catacombs. The hierarchy of the church has taken the sin on their souls: the sin of silence and of lying for the good of the people in order that they not be completely removed from real life. In the government of the diocese and as head of the negotiations for the patriarchate of Moscow, I also had to cede one point in order to defend another. I ask pardon of God, I ask pardon, understanding and prayers of all those whom I harmed through the concessions, the silence, the forced passivity or the expressions of loyalty that the hierarchy may have manifested during that period.”

This is similar to the statement of Metropolitan Nicholas (Corneanu) of Banat of the Romanian Patriarchate, who confessed that he had collaborated with the Securitate and had defrocked the priest Fr. Calciu for false political reasons, but nevertheless declared that if he had not made such compromises he would have been forced to abandon his post, “which in the conditions of the time would not have been good for the Church”. In other words, as Vladimir Kozyrev writes: “It means: ‘I dishonoured the Church and my Episcopal responsibility, I betrayed those whom I had to protect, I scandalized my flock. But all this I had to do for the good of the Church!’”

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24 He said that the Church had not supported the coup (although there is clear evidence that Metropolitans Philaret of Kiev and Pitirim of Volokolamsk supported it), but had "taken the side of law and liberty" (Report on the USSR, vol. 3, № 36, September 6, 1991, p. 82).


KGB Agents in Cassocks

One of the biggest fruits of glasnost’ – which did not, however, lead to a real ecclesiastical perestroika – was the confirmation in January, 1992 by a Russian parliamentary commission investigating the activities of the KGB that for several decades at least the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate had been KGB agents. The records of the fourth, Church department of the KGB’s Fifth Directorate revealed that Metropolitans Juvenal of Krutitsa, Pitirim of Volokolamsk, Philaret of Kiev and Philaret of Minsk were all KGB agents, with the codenames “Adamant”, “Abbat”, “Antonov” and “Ostrovsky” respectively.

This news was not, of course, unexpected. Konstantin Kharchev, Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs from 1984 to 1989, confirmed in 1989 that the Russian Orthodox Church was rigorously controlled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, especially its Ideological Department, and by the KGB.\(^\text{27}\)

Again, Victor Sheimov, a former KGB major with responsibilities for upgrading the KGB’s communications security system until his defection in 1980, described the Fifth Directorate as being “responsible for suppressing ideological dissent, running the Soviet Orthodox Church and laying the groundwork for the First Chief Directorate’s subversive promotion of favourable opinion about the country’s position and policy.” \(^\text{28}\) One of Sheimov’s jobs was to draft agents to infiltrate the “Soviet Orthodox Church”.

Again, in 1992 a former KGB agent, A. Shushpanov, described his experiences working in the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department of External Ecclesiastical Relations. He said that most of the people working there were in fact KGB agents.\(^\text{29}\)

But it was the revelations unearthed by the parliamentary commission that were the most shocking…

They included:- (i) the words of the head of the KGB Yury Andropov to the Central Committee sometime in the 1970s: “The organs of state security keep the contacts of the Vatican with the Russian Orthodox Church under control…”; (ii) “At the 6\(^{th}\) General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, the religious delegation from the USSR contained 47 (!) agents of the KGB, including religious authorities, clergy and technical personnel” (July, 1983); (iii) “The most important were the journeys of agents ‘Antonov’, ‘Ostrovsky’ and ‘Adamant’ to Italy for conversations with the

\(^{27}\) Kharchev, Argumenty i Fakty, 1992, № 8, p. 5 ®.

\(^{28}\) Sheimov, Tower of Secrets, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1993, p. 418.

\(^{29}\) Shushpanov, Moskovskie Novosti, 12 July, 1992, p. 20 ®.
Pope of Rome on the question of further relations between the Vatican and the Russian Orthodox Church, and in particular regarding the problems of the uniates” (1989).  

The parliamentary commission also discovered that Alexis himself was an agent with the codename “Drozdov”. It is now known that Alexis was recruited by the Estonian KGB on February 28, 1958; and in the 1974 Furov report to the Central Committee of the USSR he (together with his predecessor Patriarch Pimen) was placed in the category of those bishops who “affirm both in words and deeds not only loyalty but also patriotism towards the socialist society; strictly observe the laws on cults, and educate the parish clergy and believers in the same spirit; realistically understand that our state is not interested in proclaiming the role of religion and the church in society; and, realizing this, do not display any particular activeness in extending the influence of Orthodoxy among the population.”

Moreover, according to a KGB document of 1988, an order was drafted by the USSR KGB chairman to award an honorary citation to agent DROZDOV for unspecified services to state security. But these facts were not made public because, according to Fen Montaigne, “members of the parliamentary commission had told the patriarch that they would not name him as an agent if he began cleaning house in the church and acknowledging the breadth of cooperation between the church and the KGB. ‘So far, we have kept the silence because we wanted to give the patriarch a chance,’ said Alexander Nezhny, a journalist who said his comparison of the archives and church bulletins convinced him that Alexis II is indeed ‘Drozdov’…”


33 Andrew and Mitrokhin, op. cit., p. 650.

The parliamentary commission was immediately closed down by the President of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbalutov, at the insistence of Patriarch Alexis himself and the head of the KGB, E. Primakov. One of the commission’s members, Fr. Gleb Yakunin, “was accused of betraying state secrets to the United States and threatened with a private persecution. Father Gleb remained defiant. He wrote to the Patriarch in 1994: “If the Church is not cleansed of the taint of the spy and informer, it cannot be reborn. Unfortunately, only one archbishop – Archbishop Chrysostom of Lithuania – has had the courage publicly to acknowledge that in the past he worked as an agent, and has revealed his codename: RESTAVRATOR. No other Church hierarch has followed his example, however.

“The most prominent agents of the past include DROZDOV – the only one of the churchmen to be officially honoured with an award by the KGB of the USSR, in 1988, for outstanding intelligence services – ADAMANT, OSTROVSKY, MIKHAILOV, TOPAZ AND ABBAT. It is obvious that none of these or the less exalted agents is preparing to repent. On the contrary, they deliver themselves of pastoral maxims on the allegedly neutral character of informing on the Church, and articles have appeared in the Church press justifying the role of the informer as essential for the survival of the Church in an anti-religious state.

“The codenames I discovered in the archives of the KGB belong to the top hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate.”35

Keston News Service reviewed all the available documentary evidence from the various activities of the KGB and concluded that long-standing allegations that the Patriarch and other senior bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church collaborated with the KGB were based on fact.36 And, writing in 1995, John Dunlop concluded that “the overwhelming majority of the current one hundred and nineteen bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate were ordained to the episcopacy prior to August of 1991. This suggests that each of these bishops was carefully screened and vetted by both the ideological apparatus of the Communist Party and by the KGB.”37

In 1992, Archbishop Chrysostom of Vilnius declared to the Council of Bishops of the MP: “In our Church there are genuine members of the KGB, who have made head-spinning careers; for example, Metropolitan Methodius of Voronezh. He is a KGB officer, an atheist, a liar, who is constantly advised by the KGB. The Synod was unanimously against such a bishop, but we had to take upon us such a sin. And then what a rise he had!”

35 Andrew and Mitrokhin, op. cit., p. 661.
Memory Loss

At the same Council, a commission of eight MP bishops headed by Bishop Alexander of Kostroma was formed to investigate the charges of collaboration with the KGB. This commission has so far (12 years later) produced absolutely nothing. In view of the lack of a clear-out (chistka) of KGB hierarchs, it remains true that, as the saying went, “the MP is the last surviving department of the KGB” or “the second administration of the Soviet state”.

As the memory loss in church and society became greater and greater in the later 1990s, Patriarch Alexis felt ready to return to the theme of sergianism. In 1997, referring to the Church in the time of Patriarch Tikhon, he said: “The Church could not, did not have the right, to go into the catacombs. She remained together with the people and drank to the dregs the cup of sufferings that fell to its lot.” Patriarch Alexis here forgot to mention that Patriarch Tikhon specifically blessed Michael Zhizhilenko, the future Hieromartyr Maximus of Serpukhov, to become a secret catacomb bishop if the pressure on the Church from the State became too great. As for his claim that the sergianists shared the cup of the people’s suffering, this must be counted as conscious hypocrisy. It is well known that the Soviet hierarchs lived a life of considerable luxury, while lifting not a finger for the Catacomb Christians and dissidents sent to torments and death in KGB prisons!

On November 9, 2001, the patriarch threw off the mask of repentance completely, stating in defence of Sergius’ declaration: “This was a clever step by which Metropolitan Sergius tried to save the church and clergy. In declaring that the members of the Church want to see themselves as part of the motherland and want to share her joys and sorrows, he tried to show to those who were persecuting the church and who were destroying it that we, the children of the church, want to be loyal citizens so that the affiliation of people with the church would not place them outside the law. So this is a far-fetched accusation…”

But it is not enough to justify betrayal: the traitor himself has to be canonized. And it is the canonization of “Patriarch” Sergius, the author of the notorious declaration, that is the goal of the MP. For such an act would complete the

40 http://www.ripnet.org/besieged/rparocora.htm?
selective loss of memory that has been taking place since 1990 and complete
the justification of the “Soviet” church and its cooperation with the KGB.

However, such an act needs a lengthy preparation. The opponents – those
whose memory is not completely gone – have to be neutralised. A first step
was taken by the patriarch already in 1991, when he wrote: “I believe that our
martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed
Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for
us.” Then, in 1993, he said: “Through the host of martyrs the Church of
Russia bore witness to her faith and sowed the seed of her future rebirth.
Among the confessors of Christ we can in full measure name... his Holiness
Patriarch Sergius.”

It is as if he was contemplating a trade-off: if we recognize your martyrs,
then you must recognize ours – including Sergius himself. Of course, Alexis
still regarded the Catacomb martyrs as “uncanonical”. But he was prepared
to canonize them, thus introducing the concept of “uncanonical martyrs” into
the Church (!), so long as Sergius himself, their betrayer and persecutor, could
also be canonized eventually. However, by the time of the MP’s hierarchical
council in 2000, at which many Catacomb martyrs were canonized, the
patriarchate still did not feel able to canonise Sergius – probably because it
feared that it would prevent a union with ROCOR. But neither did it canonise
the leader of the Catacomb Church, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. This
suggested that a canonisation of the two leaders – the leader of the True
Church, and the leader of the false - was in the offing, but depended on the
success of the negotiations between the MP and ROCOR.

Those negotiations were officially launched in May, 2004, during the visit
of the leader of ROCOR, Metropolitan Lavr, to Russia. And the manner in
which they were launched is extremely significant. On May 15, the
anniversary of “Patriarch” Sergius’ death, Alexis demonstratively served a
panikhida for Sergius, and then, during a liturgy at Butovo, where thousands
of Catacomb Christians were martyred and sergianists killed in 1937, he had
this to say to his foreign guests: “Today is the 60th anniversary since the death
of the ever-memorable Patriarch Sergius. The time of the service of this
archpastor coincided with the most terrible years of the struggle against God,
when it was necessary to preserve the Russian Church. In those terrible years
of repression and persecutions there were more sorrows. In 1937 both those
who shared the position of Metropolitan Sergius and those who did not agree
with him suffered for the faith of Christ, for belonging to the Russian

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41 “In the Catacombs”, Soversheno Sekretno (Completely Secret), № 7, 1991; quoted by Fr. Peter
42 Quoted by Fr. Peter Perekrestov, “The Schism in the Heart of Russia (Concerning
Sergianism)”, Canadian Orthodox Herald, 1999, № 4.
43 “Equally uncanonical[that is, equally with the Russian Church Outside Russia] is the so-
called ‘Catacomb’ Church.” (Nedelia (The Week), № 2, 1, 1992; quoted by Fr. Peter Perekrestov,
Orthodox Church. We pay a tribute of respect and thankful remembrance to his Holiness Patriarch Sergius for the fact that he, in the most terrible and difficult of conditions of the Church’s existence in the 1930s of the 20th century led the ship of the Church and preserved the Russian Church amidst the stormy waves of the sea of life.”

And yet only the year before the MP apologist Sergius Fomin had written: “If Metropolitan Sergius, in agreeing in his name to publish the Declaration of 1927 composed by the authorities, hoping to buy some relief for the Church and the clergy, then his hopes not only were not fulfilled, but the persecutions after 1927 became still fiercer, reaching truly hurricane-force in 1937-38”. Clearly, Patriarch Alexis, “forgetting” historical facts and ignoring even the MP’s panegyrist’s of Sergius, is determined to justify even his most shameful acts, claiming that the “ever-memorable” Sergius indeed “saved the Church” by his agreements with the God-haters. There can be no doubt, therefore, that he remains a dyed-in-the-wool sergianist – that is, an adherent of the heresy that the Church of God, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3.15), can be saved by the lies of men. And there can similarly be no doubt that Metropolitan Lavr, in listening to this speech in respectful silence and without interjecting the slightest objection, is a sergianist, too.

The phenomenon of the loss of memory in the Moscow Patriarchate is inseparable from the loss of historical memory in Russia as a whole. In a chapter entitled “Memory”, the American historian of the Gulag, Anne Applebaum, has written movingly and truthfully about this: “Ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia, the country that has inherited the Soviet Union’s diplomatic and foreign policies, its embassies, its debts and its seat at the United Nations, continues to act as if it has not inherited the Soviet Union’s history. Russia does not have a national museum dedicated to the history of repression. Nor does Russia have a national place of mourning, a monument which officially recognizes the suffering of victims and their families. Throughout the 1980s, competitions were held to design such a monument, but they came to nothing. Memorial succeeded only in dragging a stone from the Solovetsky islands – where the Gulag began – and placing it in the centre of Dzerzhinsky Square, across from the Lubyanka.

“More notable than the missing monuments, however, is the missing public awareness. Sometimes, it seems as if the enormous emotions and passions raised by the wide-ranging discussions of the Gorbachev era simply vanished, along with the Soviet Union itself. The bitter debate about justice for the victims disappeared just as abruptly. Although there was much talk about it at the end of the 1980s, the Russian government never did examine or try the perpetrators of torture or mass murder, even those who were

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44 Ridiger, in A. Soldatov, “Sergij premudrij nam put’ ozaril (Sergius the all-wise has illumined our path”, Vertograd, № 461, 21 May, 2004, p. 4 ®.
45 Fomin, Strazh Domu Gospodnia (Guard over the House of the Lord), Moscow, 2003, p. 262 ®.
identifiable. In the early 1990s, one of the men who carried out the Katyn massacres of Polish officers was still alive. Before he died, the KGB conducted an interview with him, asking him to explain – from a technical point of view – how the murders were carried out. As a gesture of goodwill, a tape of the interview was handed to the Polish cultural attaché in Moscow. No one suggested at any time that the man be put on trial, in Moscow, Warsaw, or anywhere else.

“It is true, of course, that trials may not always be the best way to come to terms with the past. In the years after the Second World War, West Germany brought 85,000 Nazis to trial, but obtained fewer than 7,000 convictions. The tribunals were notoriously corrupt, and easily swayed by personal jealousies and disputes. The Nuremberg Trial itself was an example of ‘victors’ justice’ marred by dubious legality and oddities, not the least of which was the presence of Soviet judges who knew perfectly well that their own side was responsible for mass murder too.

“But there are other methods, aside from trials, of doing public justice to the crimes of the past. There are truth commissions, for example, of the sort implemented in South Africa, which allow victims to tell their stories in an official, public place, and make the crimes of the past a part of the public debate. There are official investigations, like the British Parliament’s 2002 inquiry into the Northern Irish ‘Bloody Sunday’ massacre, which had taken place thirty years earlier. There are government inquiries, government commission, public apologies – yet the Russian government has never considered any of these options. Other than the brief, inconclusive ‘trial’ of the Communist Party, there have in fact been no public truth-telling sessions in Russia, no parliamentary hearings, no official investigations of any kind into the murders or the massacres or the camps of the USSR.

“The result: half a century after the war’s end, the Germans still conduct regular public disputes about victims’ compensation, about memorials, about new interpretations of Nazi history, even about whether a younger generation of Germans ought to go on shouldering the guilt about the crimes of the Nazis. Half a century after Stalin’s death, there were no equivalent arguments taking place in Russia, because the memory of the past was not a living part of public discourse.

“The rehabilitation process did continue, very quietly, throughout the 1990s. By the end of 2001, about 4.5 million political prisoners had been rehabilitated in Russia, and the national rehabilitation commission reckoned it had a further half-million cases to examine. Those victims – hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions more – who were never sentenced will of course be exempt from the process. But while the commission itself is serious and well-intentioned, and while it is composed of camp survivors as well as bureaucrats, no one associated with it really feels that the politicians who
created it were motivated by a real drive for ‘truth and reconciliation’, in the words of the British historian Catherine Merridale. Rather, the goal has been to end discussion of the past, to pacify the victims by throwing them a few extra roubles and free bus tickets, and to avoid any deeper examination of the causes of Stalinism and its legacy.

“There are some good, or at least some forgivable, explanations for this public silence. Most Russians really do spend all of their time coping with the complete transformation of their economy and society. The Stalinist era was a long time ago, and a great deal has happened since it ended. Post-communist Russia is not post-war Germany, where the memories of the worst atrocities were still fresh in people’s minds. In the twenty-first century, the events of the middle of the twentieth century seem like ancient history to much of the population.

“Perhaps more to the point, many Russians also feel that they have had their discussion of the past already, and that it produced very little. When one asks older Russians, at least, why the subject of the Gulag is so rarely mentioned nowadays, they wave away the issue: ‘In 1990 that was all we could talk about, now we don’t need to talk about it any more.’ To further complicate things, talk of the Gulag and of Stalinist repression has become confused, in the minds of many, with the ‘democratic reformers’ who originally promoted the debate about the Soviet past. Because that generation of political leaders is now seen to have failed – their rule is remembered for corruption and chaos – all talk of the Gulag is somehow tainted by association.

“The question of remembering or commemorating political repression is also confused…. by the presence of so many other victims of so many other Soviet tragedies. ‘To make matters more complicated,’ writes Catherine Merridale, ‘a great many people suffered repeatedly; they can describe themselves as war veterans, victims of repression, the children of the repressed and even as survivors of famine with equal facility. There are plenty of memorials to the wartime dead, some Russians seem to feel: Will that not suffice?’

“But there are other reasons, less forgivable, for the profound silence. Many Russians experienced the collapse of the Soviet Union as a profound blow to their personal pride. Perhaps the old system was bad, they now feel – but at least we were powerful. And now that we are not powerful, we do not want to hear that it was bad. It is too painful, like speaking ill of the dead.

“Some – still – also fear what they might find out about the past, if they were to inquire too closely. In 1998, the Russian American journalist Masha Gessen described what it felt like to discover that one of her grandmothers, a nice old Jewish lady, had been a censor, responsible for altering the reports of foreign correspondents based in Moscow. She also discovered that her other
grandmother, another nice old Jewish lady, had once applied for a job with the secret police. Both had made their choices out of desperation, not conviction. Now, she wrote, she knows why her generation had refrained from condemning their grandparents’ generation too harshly: ‘We did not expose them, we did not try them, we did not judge them... merely by asking such questions each one of us risks betraying someone we love.’

“Aleksandr Yakovlev, chairman of the Russian rehabilitation commission, put this problem somewhat more bluntly. ‘Society is indifferent to the crimes of the past,’ he told me, ‘because so many people participated in them.’ The Soviet system dragged millions and millions of its citizens into many forms of collaboration and compromise. Although many willingly participated, otherwise decent people were also forced to do terrible things. They, their children, and their grandchildren do not always want to remember that now.

“But the most important explanation for the lack of public debate does not involve the fears of the younger generation, or the inferiority complexes and leftover guilt of those now ruling not only Russia, but also most of the other ex-Soviet states and satellite states. In December 2001, on the tenth anniversary of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, thirteen of the fifteen former Soviet republics were run by former communists, as were many of the former satellite states, including Poland, the country which supplied so many hundreds of thousands of prisoners for Soviet camps and exile villages. Even the Communist Party, former communists and their children or fellow travellers also continued to figure largely in the intellectual, media and business elites. The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, was a former KGB agent, who proudly identified himself as a ‘Chekist’. Earlier, when serving as the Russian Prime Minister, Putin had made a point of visiting the KGB headquarters at Lubyanka, on the anniversary of the Cheka’s founding, where he dedicated a plaque to the memory of Yuri Andropov.

“The dominance of former communists and the insufficient discussion of the past in the post-communist world is not coincidental. To put it bluntly, former communists have a clear interest in concealing the past: it tarnishes them, undermines them, hurts their claims to be carrying out ‘reforms’, even when they personally had nothing to do with past crimes. In Hungary, the ex-Communist Party, renamed the Socialist Party, fought bitterly against opening the museum to the victims of terror. When the ex-Communist Party, renamed the Social Democrats, was elected to power in Poland in 2001, it immediately cut the budget of the Polish Institute of National Memory, set up by its centre-right predecessors. Many, many excuses have been given for Russia’s failure to build a national monument to its millions of victims, but Aleksandr Yakovlev, again, gave me the most succinct explanation, ‘The monument will be built,’ he said, ‘when we – the older generation – are all dead.’”

Conclusion

This last quotation is long because every point it makes about the loss of memory and the corruption of memory in Russia as a whole can be paralleled in that microcosm of Russia today that is the Moscow Patriarchate.

If the Russian state and people want to keep silent about the past, then so does the MP – and for very similar reasons. If Putin the Chekist places a plaque to the memory of Yuri Andropov at the Lubyanka, then Alexis the Chekist goes one better by building a church inside the Lubyanka for the spiritual needs of the KGB agents who work in it. If Putin now raises a toast to Stalin, then priests of the MP write articles glorifying him (and Ivan the Terrible and Rasputin!). If Lenin still lies in his mausoleum, an object of veneration as before, the same is true of the founder of the Moscow Patriarchate, “Patriarch” Sergius. If a true and adequate monument to the victims of the Gulag will not be built until the older generation is dead, then the same is probably true about the holy martyrs and confessors of the Catacomb Church: not until the present rulers of the Church and State in Russia are dead or removed will they be given a fitting memorial...

A man is to a large extent constituted by his memory. If he forgets his past, he has to a large extent lost himself. The same applies to a nation. And to a Church. Therefore, lest the sleep of forgetfulness overtake us completely before that glorious day of the full restoration of memory comes, let us remember the words of the Lord: “Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons” (Deuteronomy 4.9).

For the sin of forgetfulness - both of the great deeds of God and His saints, and of the great iniquities of the devil and his followers - is indeed the sin unto death. And the path to life for those sitting by the waters of the Babylon of this world is the path of constant vigilance and memory: If I forget thee, O Jerusalem...


Forefeast of the Procession of the Honourable and Life-Giving Cross.
Hieromartyr Benjamin, Metropolitan of Petrograd, and those with him.
4. TEN REASONS WHY THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE IS NOT ORTHODOX

I. The Heretical Encyclical of 1920.

In January, 1920, Metropolitan Dorotheus, locum tenens of the patriarchal throne, and his Synod issued what was in effect a charter for Ecumenism. It was addressed “to all the Churches of Christ everywhere”, and declared that “the first essential is to revive and strengthen the love between the Churches, not considering each other as strangers and foreigners, but as kith and kin in Christ and united co-heirs of the promise of God in Christ.”

It went on: “This love and benevolent disposition towards each other can be expressed and proven especially, in our opinion, through:

“(a) the reception of a single calendar for the simultaneous celebration of the great Christian feasts by all the Churches;

“(b) the exchange of brotherly epistles on the great feasts of the single calendar.;

“(c) close inter-relations between the representatives of the different Churches;

“(d) intercourse between the Theological Schools and the representatives of Theological Science and the exchange of theological and ecclesiastical periodicals and writings published in each Church;

“(e) the sending of young people to study from the schools of one to another Church;

“(f) the convening of Pan-Christian conferences to examine questions of common interest to all the Churches;

“(g) the objective and historical study of dogmatic differences.;

“(h) mutual respect for the habits and customs prevailing in the different Churches;

“(i) the mutual provision of prayer houses and cemeteries for the funeral and burial of members of other confessions dying abroad;

“(j) the regulation of the question of mixed marriages between the different confessions;
“(k) mutual support in the strengthening of religion and philanthropy.” 47

The unprecedented nature of the encyclical consists in the fact: (1) that it was addressed not to the Orthodox Churches only, but to the Orthodox and heretics together, as if there were no important difference between them but all equally were “co-heirs of God in Christ”; (2) that the proposed rapprochement was seen as coming, not through the acceptance by the heretics of the Truth of Orthodoxy and their sincere repentance and rejection of their errors, but through various external measures and, by inference, the mutual accommodation of the Orthodox and the heretics; and (3) the proposal of a single universal calendar for concelebration of the feasts, in contravention of the canonical law of the Orthodox Church. There is no mention here of the only possible justification of Ecumenism from an Orthodox point of view – the opportunity it provides of conducting missionary work among the heretics. On the contrary, as we have seen, one of the first aims of the ecumenical movement was and is to prevent proselytism among the member-Churches.

II. The Uncanonical Election of Meletius Metaxakis.

In 1918 the traditionalist Archbishop Theocletus of Athens was uncanonically defrocked “for having instigated the anathema against [the Cretan Freemason] Eleutherios Venizelos”. Two years later, Theocletus was vindicated. But the damage was done. In his place another Cretan Freemason, Meletius Metaxakis, was enthroned as Archbishop of Athens in November, 1918. However, in November, 1920 he was defrocked “for uncanonical actions” and confined to a monastery on Zakynthos as a simple monk. But by December, 1921 he was Patriarch of Constantinople! How did this transformation of a defrocked monk into Patriarch of Constantinople take place?

Bishop Photius of Triaditsa writes: “Political circles around Venizelos and the Anglican Church had been involved in Meletius’ election as Patriarch. Metropolitan Germanus (Karavangelis) of the Holy Synod of Constantinople wrote of these events, ‘My election in 1921 to the Ecumenical Throne was unquestioned. Of the seventeen votes cast, sixteen were in my favour. Then one of my lay friends offered me 10,000 lira if I would forfeit my election in favour of Meletius Metaxakis. Naturally I refused his offer, displeased and disgusted. At the same time, one night a delegation of three men unexpectedly visited me from the “National Defence League” and began to earnestly entreat me to forfeit my candidacy in favour of Meletius Metaxakis. The delegates said that Meletius could bring in $100,000 for the Patriarchate and, since he had very friendly relations with Protestant bishops in England and America, could be useful in international causes. Therefore, international

interests demanded that Meletius Metaxakis be elected Patriarch. Such was also the will of Eleutherius Venizelos. I thought over this proposal all night. Economic chaos reigned at the Patriarchate. The government in Athens had stopped sending subsidies, and there were no other sources of income. Regular salaries had not been paid for nine months. The charitable organizations of the Patriarchate were in a critical economic state. For these reasons and for the good of the people [or so thought the deceived hierarch] I accepted the offer...’ Thus, to everyone’s amazement, the next day, November 25, 1921, Meletius Metaxakis became the Patriarch of Constantinople.

“The uncanonical nature of his election became evident when, two days before the election, November 23, 1921, there was a proposal made by the Synod of Constantinople to postpone the election on canonical grounds. The majority of the members voted to accept this proposal. At the same time, on the very day of the election, the bishops who had voted to postpone the election were replaced by other bishops. This move allowed the election of Meletius as Patriarch. Consequently, the majority of bishops of the Patriarchate of Constantinople who had been circumvented met in Thessalonica. [This Council included seven out of the twelve members of the Constantinopolitan Holy Synod and about 60 patriarchal bishops from the New Regions of Greece under the presidency of Metropolitan Constantine of Cyzicus.] They announced that, ‘the election of Meletius Metaxakis was done in open violation of the holy canons,’ and proposed to undertake ‘a valid and canonical election for Patriarch of Constantinople.’ In spite of this, Meletius was confirmed on the Patriarchal Throne.”

Two members of the Synod then went to Athens to report to the council of ministers. On December 12, 1921 they declared the election null and void. One of the prominent hierarchs who refused to accept this election was Metropolitan Chrysostom (Kavourides) of Florina, the future leader of the True Orthodox Church, who also tried to warn the then Prime Minister Gounaris about the dangers posed by the election of Meletius. The Sublime Porte also refused to recognize the election, first because Meletius was not an Ottoman citizen and therefore was not eligible for the patriarchate according to the Ottoman charter of 1856, and secondly because Meletius declared that he did not consider any such charters as binding insofar as they had been imposed by the Muslim conquerors.

On December 29, 1921, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece deposed Metaxakis for a series of canonical transgressions and for creating a schism, declared both Metaxakis and Rodostolos Alexandros to be schismatics and threatened to declare all those who followed them as similarly schismatic.

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48 Bishop Photius, "The 70th Anniversary of the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople", Orthodox Life, № 1, 1994, p. 41-42.
In spite of this second condemnation, Meletius was enthroned as patriarch on January 22, 1922; and as a result of intense political pressure his deposition was uncanonically lifted on September 24, 1922! Thus there arrived at the peak of power one of the men whom Metropolitan Chrysostom (Kavourides) called “these two Luthers of the Orthodox Church”. The other Orthodox Luther, Archbishop Chrysostom (Papadopoulos) of Athens, would come to power very shortly…

**III. The EP’s uncanonical annexation of vast territories belonging to the Russian and Serbian Churches.**

Meletius and his successor, Gregory VII, undertook what can only be described as a wholesale annexation of vast territories belonging to the jurisdiction of the Serbian and Russian Patriarchates. Basing his actions on a false interpretation of the 28th canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which supposedly gives all the “barbarian lands” into the jurisdiction of Constantinople, he and his successor created the following uncanonical autonomous and autocephalous Churches on the model of the “Greek Archdiocese of North and South America”:

1. **Western Europe.** On April 5, 1922, Meletius named an exarch for the whole of Western and Central Europe. By the time of Gregory VII’s death in November, 1924, there was an exarchate of Central Europe under Metropolitan Germanus of Berlin, an exarchate of Great Britain and Western Europe under Metropolitan Germanus of Thyateira, and a diocese of Bishop Gregory of Paris. In the late 1920s the Ecumenical Patriarch received into his jurisdiction the Russian Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris, who had created a schism in the Russian Church Abroad, and who sheltered a number of influential heretics, such as Nicholas Berdyaev and Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, in the theological institute of St. Sergius in Paris.

2. **Finland.** In February, 1921 Patriarch Tikhon granted the Finnish Church autonomy within the Russian Church. On June 9, 1922, Meletius uncanonically received this autonomous Finnish Church into his jurisdiction. The excuse given here was that Patriarch Tikhon was no longer free, “therefore he could do as he pleased” (Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky). This undermined the efforts of the Orthodox to maintain their position vis-à-vis the Lutherans. Thus under pressure from the Lutheran government, and in spite of the protests of Patriarch Tikhon, Patriarch Gregory allowed the Finnish Church to adopt the western paschalion. Then began the persecution of the confessors of the Old Calendar in the monastery of Valaam.

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49 “To imerologiakon skhism apo istorikis kai kanonikis apopseos exetazomenon (The calendar schism examined from an historical and canonical point of view)”, *Agios Agathangelos Esphigmenites (St. Agathangelos of Esphigmenou)*, № 131, May-June, 1992, p. 17 (G); Bishop Photius, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

“Even more iniquitous and cruel,” continues Metropolitan Anthony, “was the relationship of the late Patriarch Gregory and his synod towards the diocese and the person of the Archbishop of Finland. The Ecumenical Patriarch consecrated a vicar bishop for Finland, the priest Aava, who was not only not tonsured, but not even a rasophore. Moreover, this was done not only without the agreement of the Archbishop of Finland, but in spite of his protest. By these actions the late Patriarch of Constantinople violated a fundamental canon of the Church – the sixth canon of the First Ecumenical Council [and many others], which states, ‘If anyone is consecrated bishop without the consent of his metropolitan, the Great Council declares him not to be a bishop.’ According to the twenty-eighth canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, the patriarch cannot even place a bishop in his diocese without the approval of the local metropolitan. Based on precisely this same canon, the predecessors of Gregory vainly attempted to realize his pretensions and legalize their claims to control. This uncanonical ‘bishop’ Aava, once consecrated as bishop, placed a monastic klobuk on his own head, and thus costumed, he appeared in the foreign diocese of Finland. There he instigated the Lutheran government to persecute the canonical Archbishop of Finland, Seraphim, who was respected by the people. The Finnish government previously had requested the Ecumenical Patriarch to confirm the most illegal of laws, namely that the secular government of Finland would have the right to retire the Archbishop. The government in fact followed through with the retirement, falsely claiming that Archbishop Seraphim had not learned enough Finnish in the allotted time. Heaven and earth were horrified at this illegal, tyrannical act of a non-Orthodox government. Even more horrifying was that an Orthodox patriarch had consented to such chicanery. To the scandal of the Orthodox and the evil delight of the heterodox, the highly dubious Bishop Germanus (the former Fr. Aava) strolled the streets of Finland in secular clothes, clean-shaven and hair cut short, while the most worthy of bishops, Seraphim, cruelly betrayed by his false brother, languished in exile for the remainder of his life in a tiny hut of a monastery on a stormy isle on Lake Ladoga.”

On November 14/27, 1923, Patriarch Tikhon and the Russian Holy Synod, after listening to a report by Archbishop Seraphim decreed that “since his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon has entered upon the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church, the reason for which the Patriarch of Constantinople considered it necessary temporarily to submit the Finnish Church to his jurisdiction has now fallen away, and the Finnish eparchy must return under the rule of the All-Russian Patriarch.” However, the Finns did not return to the Russians, and the Finnish Church remains to this day within the

51 See Monk Gorazd, "Quo Vadis, Konstantinopol'skaia Patriarkhia? (Where are you going, Constantinopolitan Patriarchate?)", Prawoslavnaia Rus' (Orthodox Rus'), № 2 (1455), January 15/28, 1992, p. 9 (in Russian).
jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the most modernist of all the Orthodox Churches.

3. **Estonia.** In February, 1921 Patriarch Tikhon granted a broad measure of autonomy to the parts of the former Pskov and Revel dioceses that entered into the boundaries of the newly formed Estonian state. On August 28, 1922, Meletius uncanonically received this Estonian diocese of the Russian Church into his jurisdiction, under Metropolitan Alexander. The recent renewal of this unlawful decision by the present Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, nearly led to a schism between the Ecumenical and Russian patriarchates.

4. **Latvia.** In June, 1921 Patriarch Tikhon granted the Latvian Church a large measure of autonomy under its Latvian archpastor, Archbishop John of Riga, who was burned to death by the communists in 1934. In March, 1936, the Ecumenical Patriarch accepted the Church of Latvia within his own jurisdiction.

5. **Poland.** In 1921 Patriarch Tikhon appointed Archbishop Seraphim (Chichagov) to the see of Warsaw, but the Poles, whose armies had defeated the Red Army the year before, did not grant him entry into the country. So the patriarch was forced to bow to the Poles’ suggestion that Archbishop George (Yaroshevsky) of Minsk be made metropolitan of Warsaw. However, he refused Archbishop George’s request for autocephaly on the grounds that very few members of the Polish Church were Poles and the Polish dioceses were historically indivisible parts of the Russian Church.  

Lyudmilla Koeller writes: “The Polish authorities restricted the Orthodox Church, which numbered more than 3 million believers (mainly Ukrainians and Byelorussians). In 1922 a council was convoked in Pochayev which was to have declared autocephaly, but as the result of a protest by Bishop Eleutherius [Bogoyavlensky, of Vilnius] and Bishop Vladimir (Tikhonitsky), this decision was not made. But at the next council of bishops, which gathered in Warsaw in June, 1922, the majority voted for autocephaly, with only Bishops Eleutherius and Vladimir voting against. A council convoked in September of the same year ‘deprived Bishops Eleutherius and Vladimir of their sees. In December, 1922, Bishop Eleutherius was arrested and imprisoned in a strict regime prison in the monastery of the Camaldul Fathers near Krakow, from where he was transferred to Kovno in spring, 1923’.”

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54 For example, on October 22, 1919 the Poles ordered 497 Orthodox churches and chapels, which had supposedly been seized from the Catholics in the past, to be returned to the Catholic Church. See Danilushkin, *op. cit.*, p. 586.
55 Koeller, "Kommentarii k pis’mu Arkhiiepiskopa Rizhskago i Latvijskago Ioanna Arkhiiepiskopu Viljenskomu i Litovskomu Elevferiu ot 2 noabria 1927 g. (Commentary on the letter of Archbishop John of Riga and Latvia to Archbishop Eleutherius of Vilnius and
Two other Russian bishops, Panteleimon (Rozhnovsky) and Sergius (Korolev), were also deprived of their sees. The three dissident bishops were expelled from Poland.

In November, 1923, Metropolitan George was killed by an opponent of his church politics, and was succeeded by Metropolitan Dionysius “with the agreement of the Polish government and the confirmation and blessing of his Holiness Meletius IV [Metaxakis]”. Patriarch Tikhon rejected this act as uncanonical\footnote{Gubonin, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 320-321.}, but was unable to do anything about it. In November, 1924, Patriarch Gregory VII uncanonically transferred the Polish Church from the jurisdiction of the Russian Church to his own.

5. Hungary and Czechoslovakia. According to the old Hungarian law of 1868, and confirmed by the government of the new Czechoslovak republic in 1918 and 1920, all Orthodox Christians living in the territory of the former Hungarian kingdom came within the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarchate, and were served directly by Bishops Gorazd of Moravia and Dositheus of Carpatho-Russia.

However, on September 3, 1921, the Orthodox parish in Prague elected Archimandrite Sabbatius to be their bishop, and then informed Bishop Dositheus, their canonical bishop about this. When the Serbian Synod refused to consecrate Sabbatius for Prague, he, without the knowledge of his community, set off for Constantinople, where on March 4, 1923, he was consecrated “archbishop” of the newly created Czechoslovakian branch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which included Carpatho-Russia. Then, on April 15, 1924, the Ecumenical Patriarch established a metropolia of Hungary and All Central Europe with its see in Budapest - although there was already a Serbian bishop there.

“The scandal caused by this confusion,” writes Z.G. Ashkenazy, “is easy to imagine. Bishop Sabbatius insisted on his rights in Carpatho-Russia, enthusiastically recruiting sympathizers from the Carpatho-Russian clergy and ordaining candidates indiscriminately. His followers requested that the authorities take administrative measures against priests not agreeing to submit to him. Bishop Dositheus placed a rebellious monk under ban – Bishop Sabbatius elevated him to igumen; Bishop Dositheus gathered the clergy in Husta and organized an Ecclesiastical Consistory – Bishop Sabbatius enticed priests to Bushtin and formed an Episcopal Council. Chaos reigned in church affairs. Malice and hatred spread among the clergy, who organized into ‘Sabbatiites’ and ‘Dositheiites’.

\textit{\textsuperscript{56}}Gubonin, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 320-321.
“A wonderful spiritual flowering which gave birth to so many martyrs for Orthodoxy degenerated into a shameful struggle for power, for a more lucrative parish and extra income. The Uniate press was gleeful, while bitterness settled in the Orthodox people against their clergy, who were not able to maintain that high standard of Orthodoxy which had been initiated by inspired simple folk.”

In 1938 the great wonderworker Archbishop John Maximovich reported to the All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Church Abroad: “Increasing without limit their desires to submit to themselves parts of Russia, the Patriarchs of Constantinople have even begun to declare the uncanonicity of the annexation of Kiev to the Moscow Patriarchate, and to declare that the previously existing southern Russian Metropolia of Kiev should be subject to the Throne of Constantinople. Such a point of view is not only clearly expressed in the Tomos of November 13, 1924, in connection with the separation of the Polish Church, but is also quite thoroughly promoted by the Patriarchs. Thus, the Vicar of Metropolitan Eulogius in Paris, who was consecrated with the permission of the Ecumenical Patriarch, has assumed the title of Chersonese; that is to say, Chersonese, which is now in the territory of Russia, is subject to the Ecumenical Patriarch. The next logical step for the Ecumenical Patriarchate would be to declare the whole of Russia as being under the jurisdiction of Constantinople…

“In sum, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in theory embracing almost the whole universe, and in fact extending its authority only over several dioceses, and in other places having only a superficial supervision and receiving certain revenues for this; persecuted by the government at home and not supported by any governmental authority abroad; having lost its significance as a pillar of truth and having itself become a source of division, and at the same time being possessed by an exorbitant love of power – represents a pitiful spectacle which recalls the worst periods in the history of the See of Constantinople.”

IV. The EP’s communion with the Russian renovationist heretics and uncanonical deposition of ROCOR Bishops.

In 1922 the so-called “Living Church” came to power in Russia, deposed Patriarch Tikhon, and instituted a programme of modernistic reforms that was very close to those Meletius was to introduce. He promptly entered into communion with the schismatics. As the synod of the “Living Church” wrote to Meletius in 1925: “The Holy Synod [of the renovationists] recall with

57 Monk Gorazd, op. cit. At the beginning of the Second World War, Metropolitan Dositheus was imprisoned and tortured in Zagreb, and died on January 13, 1945 without returning to consciousness. See “Novij sviashchenno-ispovyednik Dosifej mitropolit Zagrebskij (New Hieroconfessor Dositheus, Metropolitan of Zagreb)”, Pravoslavnaja Rus’ (Orthodox Rus’), No 7 (1628), April 1/14, 1999, p. 3 (in Russian).
sincere best wishes the moral support which Your Beatitude showed us while you were yet Patriarch of Constantinople by entering into communion with us as the only rightfully ruling organ of the Russian Orthodox Church.”

Moreover, his successors Gregory VII and Constantine VI remained in communion with the “Living Church”.

Patriarch Gregory first called for Patriarch Tikhon’s resignation, and then demanded “that the Russian Metropolitan Anthony and Archbishop Anastasius, who were residing Constantinople at the time, cease their activities against the Soviet regime and stop commemorating Patriarch Tikhon. Receiving no compliance from them, Patriarch Gregory organized an investigation and suspended the two bishops from serving. He asked Patriarch Demetrius [of Serbia] to close down the Russian Council of Bishops in Sremsky-Karlovtsy, but Demetrius refused…”

Gregory then decided to send a special mission to Russia to investigate the church situation there.

Patriarch Tikhon wrote to Gregory: “Attached to the letter of your Holiness’ representative in Russia, Archimandrite Basil Dimopoulos, of June 6, 1924, no. 226, I received the protocols of four sessions of the Holy Constantinopolitan Synod of January 1, April 17, April 30 and May 6 of this year, from which it is evident that your Holiness, wishing to provide help from the Mother Great Church of Christ of Constantinople, and ‘having exactly studied the course of Russian Church life and the differences and divisions that have taken place – in order to bring peace and end the present anomalies’, .. ‘having taken into consideration the exceptional circumstances and examples from the past’, have decided ‘to send us a special Commission, which is authorized to study and act on the spot on the basis and within the bounds of definite orders which are in agreement with the spirit and tradition of the Church’.

“In your Holiness’ instructions to the members of the Mission one of the main points is your desire that I, as the All-Russian Patriarch, ‘for the sake of the unification of those who have cut themselves off and for the sake of the flock, should sacrifice myself and immediately resign from the administration of the Church, as befits a true and love-filled pastor who cares for the salvation of many, and that at the same time the Patriarchate should be abolished, albeit temporarily, because it came into being in completely abnormal circumstances at the beginning of the civil war and because it is considered a major obstacle to the reestablishment of peace and unity’. Definite instructions are also given to the Commission regarding which tendencies [factions] they should rely on in their work.

59 Cited in Bishop Photius, op. cit., p. 42.
60 See Monk Gorazd, op. cit.
“On reading the indicated protocols, we were in no small measure disturbed and surprised that the Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of the Constantinopolitan Church, should without prior contact with us, as the lawful representative and head of the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church, interfere in the inner life and affairs of the Autocephalous Russian Church. The Holy Councils... have always recognized the primacy in honour, but not in power, of the Bishop of Constantinople over the other Autocephalous Churches. Let us also remember the canon that ‘without being invited, bishops must not pass beyond the boundaries of their own jurisdiction for the sake of ordination or any other ecclesiastical affair.’ For that reason any attempt by any Commission without consulting me, the only lawful and Orthodox First-Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, and without my knowledge, is unlawful and will not be accepted by the Russian Orthodox peoples, and will bring, not pacification, but still more disturbance and schism into the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has suffered much even without this. This will be to the advantage only of our schismatics – the renovationists, whose leaders now stand at the head of the so-called (self-called) Holy Synod, like the former archbishop of Nizhegorod Eudocimus and others, who have been defrocked by me and have been declared outside the communion of the Orthodox Church for causing disturbance, schism and unlawful seizure of ecclesiastical power.

“I, together with the whole mass of Russian Orthodox believers, and with all my flock, very much doubt that your Holiness has, as you declare, ‘studied exactly the course of Russian church life’. I doubt it because You have not once turned to me for documentary explanations of who is the true and real cause of disturbance and schism.

“The whole Russian Orthodox people long ago pronounced its righteous word concerning both the impious meeting which dared to call itself a Council in 1923, and the unhappy leaders of the renovationist schism... The people is not with the schismatics, but with their lawful Orthodox Patriarch. Allow me also to be sceptical about the measure your Holiness suggests for pacifying the Church – that is, my resignation from the administration of the Church and the abolition, albeit temporary, of the Patriarchate in Rus’. This would not pacify the Church, but cause a new disturbance and bring new sorrows to our faithful Archpastors and pastors who have suffered much even without this. It is not love of honour or power which has forced me to take up the cross of the patriarchy again, but the consciousness of my duty, submission to the will of God and the voice of the episcopate which is faithful to Orthodoxy and the Church. The latter, on receiving permission to assemble, in July last year, synodically condemned the renovationists as schismatics and asked me again to become head and rudder of the Russian Church until it
pleases the Lord God to give peace to the Church by the voice of an All-Russian Local Council.”

Relations between Constantinople and the Russian Church continued to be very frosty. Constantine’s successor, Basil III, broke communion with the Living Church in 1929 – but then entered into communion with the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate of Metropolitan Sergius! When Metropolitan Peter came to power in Russia in April, 1925, he was presented a letter from Patriarch Basil III which called on the “Old Churchmen” to unite with the renovationists. His comment was: “We still have to check whether this Patriarch is Orthodox...” Metropolitan Sergius was also sceptical; he reacted to Constantinople’s recognition of the renovationists as follows: “Let them recognize them; the renovationists have not become Orthodox from this, only the Patriarchs have become renovationists!”

V. The EP’s false “Pan-Orthodox” Council of 1923 and acceptance of the uncanonical papist calendar in 1924.

At the beginning of 1923, a Commission was set up on the initiative of the Greek government to see whether the Autocephalous Church of Greece could accept the new calendar – the first step towards union with the West in prayer. The Commission reported that “although the Church of Greece, like the other Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, is inherently independent, they are nevertheless firmly united and bound to each other through the principle of the spiritual unity of the Church, composing one and one only Church, the Orthodox Church. Consequently none of them can separate itself from the others and accept the new calendar without becoming schismatic in relation to them.”

On February 3, Meletius Metaxakis wrote to the Church of Greece, arguing for the change of calendar at his forthcoming Pan-Orthodox Council “so as to further the cause, in this part of the Pan-Christian unity, of the celebration of the Nativity and Resurrection of Christ on the same day by all those who are called by the name of the Lord.”

Shortly afterwards, on February 25, Archimandrite Chrysostom Papadopoulos, was elected Archbishop of Athens by three out of a specially chosen Synod of only five hierarchs – another ecclesiastical coup d’état. During his enthronement speech, Chrysostom said that for collaboration with

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63 Goutzidis, op. cit., p. 76.
the heterodox “it is not necessary to have common ground or dogmatic union, for the union of Christian love is sufficient”.\textsuperscript{64}

As one of the members of the commission which had rejected the new calendar, Chrysostom might have been expected to resist Meletius’ call. But it seems that the two men had more in common than the fact that they had both been expelled from the Church of Jerusalem in their youth; for on March 6 Chrysostom and his Synod accepted Meletius’ proposal and agreed to send a representative to the forthcoming Council. Then, on April 16, he proposed to the Hierarchy that 13 days should be added to the calendar, “for reasons not only of convenience, but also of ecclesiastical, scientifically ratified accuracy”.

Five out of the thirty-two hierarchs – the metropolitans of Syros, Patras, Demetrias, Khalkis and Thera – voted against this proposal. Two days later, however, at the second meeting of the Hierarchy, it was announced that Chrysostom’s proposal had been “unanimously” approved, but “with absolutely no change to the Paschalion and Calendar of the Orthodox Church”. Moreover, it was decided that the Greek Church would approve of any decision regarding the celebration of Pascha made by the forthcoming Pan-Orthodox Council, provided it was in accordance with the Canons…\textsuperscript{65}

It was therefore with the knowledge that the Greek Church would support his proposed reforms that Meletius convened a “Pan-Orthodox Council” in Constantinople from May 10 to June 8, 1923, whose renovationist resolutions concerned the “correction” of the Julian calendar, a fixed date for Pascha, the second marriage of clergy, and various relaxations with regard to the clothing of clergy, the keeping of monastic vows, impediments to marriage, the transfer of Saints’ feasts from the middle of the week, and fasting.

However, hardly more than ten people, and no official representatives of the Patriarchates, turned up for the “Pan-Orthodox Council”, so discredited was its convener.\textsuperscript{66} And even Archbishop Chrysostom (Papadopoulos) had to admit: “Unfortunately, the Eastern Patriarchs who refused to take part in the Congress rejected all of its resolutions in toto from the very outset. If the Congress had restricted itself only to the issue of the calendar, perhaps it would not have encountered the kind of reaction that it did.”\textsuperscript{67}

In his “Memorandum to the Holy Synod of the Hierarchy of Greece” (June 14, 1929), Metropolitan Irenaeus of Kassandreia wrote that the council was not “Pan-Orthodox” but “anti-Orthodox”: “It openly and impiously trampled

\textsuperscript{64} Cited in Bishop Photius, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{65} Goutzidis, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 74-78.
\textsuperscript{66} However, an Anglican hierarch, Charles Gore of Oxford, was allowed to attend one of the sessions and was treated with great honour.
on the 34th Apostolic Canon, which ordains: ‘It behoves the Bishops of every
nation to know among them who is the first or chief, and to recognize him as
their head, and to refrain from doing anything superfluous without his advice
and approval… But let not even such a one do anything without the advice
and consent and approval of all. For thus will there be concord, and God will
be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit: the Father, the Son and the
Holy Spirit’. He replaced the Julian calendar with the Gregorian in spite of all
the prohibitions relating to it; he decided to supersede the Paschalion which
had been eternally ordained for the Orthodox Church by the decision of the
First Ecumenical Council, turning to the creation of an astronomically more
perfect one in the observatories of Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens; he
allowed clerics’ hair to be cut and their venerable dress to be replaced by that
of the Anglican Pastors; he introduced the anticanonical marriage and second
marriage of priests; he entrusted the shortening of the days of the fast and the
manner of their observance to the judgement of the local Churches, thereby
destroying the order and unity that prevailed in the Autocephalous Orthodox
Churches of the East. Acting in this way, he opened wide the gates to every
innovation, abolishing the distinctive characteristic of the Eastern Orthodox
Church, which is its preservation, perfectly and without innovation, of
everything that was handed down by the Lord, the Apostles, the Fathers, and
the Local and Ecumenical Councils.”

What made the council’s decisions still less acceptable was the reason it
gave for its innovations, viz., that changing the Paschalion “would make a
great moral impression on the whole civilized world by bringing the two
Christian worlds of the East and West closer through the unforced initiative
of this Orthodox Church…”

The council was rejected by the Alexandrian, Antiochian and Jerusalem
Churches, and by the Russian Church Abroad and the Serbian Church.
Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) called the calendar innovation “this
senseless and pointless concession to Masonry and Papism”.

That the adoption of the new calendar was an abomination in the sight of
God was clearly indicated by the great miracle of the sign of the cross in the
sky over the Old Calendarist monastery of St. John the Theologian in Athens
in September, 1925. In fact the new calendar had been anathematised by the
Eastern Patriarchs in three Councils, in 1583, 1587 and 1593, and synodically
condemned again in 1722, 1827, 1848, 1895 and 1904. By adopting it, the EP, as
the Commission of the Greek Church had rightly declared, became schismatic
in relation to the Churches keeping the Church calendar.

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68 Monk Paul, Neoimerologitismos-Oikoumenismos (Newcalendarism-Ecumenism), Athens, 1982,
pp. 72-73.
69 Dionysius Batistes, Praktika-Apophaseis tou en Kon/polei Panorthodoxou Synedriou 1923 (The
Decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923 in Constantinople), 1982, p. 57 (G).
VI. The participation of the EP in the World Council of Churches.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate was a founder-member of the WCC. It had participated in several ecumenical conferences with the Protestants since its official espousing of Ecumenism in 1920 and up to the founding congress of the WCC in Amsterdam in 1948. A.V. Soldatov has chronicled the progressive weakening in the Orthodox position during these years: “At the conference [of Faith and Order] in Geneva in 1920 the spirit of extreme Protestant liberalism gained the upper hand. It came to the point that when the Orthodox Metropolitan Stephen of Sophia noted in his report: ‘The Church is only there where the hierarchy has apostolic succession, and without such a hierarchy there are only religious communities’, the majority of the delegates of the conference left the hall as a sign of protest. At the next conference on Faith and Order [in Lausanne] in 1927, victory again went to the extreme left Protestants. The Orthodox delegation, experiencing psychological pressure at this conference, was forced to issue the following declaration: ‘in accordance with the views of the Orthodox Church, no compromises in relation to the teaching of the faith and religious convictions can be permitted. No Orthodox can hope that a reunion based on disputed formulae can be strong and positive... The Orthodox Church considers that any union must be based exclusively on the teaching of the faith and confession of the ancient undivided Church, on the seven Ecumenical Councils and other decisions of the first eight centuries.’ But the numerous speeches of the Orthodox explaining the teaching of the Church on the unity of the Church seemed only to still further increase the incomprehension or unwillingness to comprehend them on the part of the Protestant leaders of Ecumenism. This tendency was consistently pursued by the Protestants at the conferences in 1937 in Oxford and Edinburgh. Summing up this ‘dialogue’ at the beginning of the century, Fr. Metrophanes Znosko-Borovsky remarks: ‘The Orthodox delegates at Edinburgh were forced with sorrow to accept the existence of basic, irreconcilable differences in viewpoint on many subjects of faith between the Orthodox East and the Protestant West.’

“After the Second World War, the World Council of Churches was created. It is necessary to point out that the movements ‘Faith and Order’ and ‘the Christian Council of Life and Work’ were viewed by their organizers as preparatory stages in the seeking of possible modes of integration of ‘the Christian world’. The World Council of Churches differed from them in principle. It set out on the path of ‘practical Ecumenism’ for the first time in world history, declaring that it was the embryo of a new type of universal church. The first, so to speak founding conference of the WCC in Amsterdam chose as its motto the words: ‘Human disorder and God’s house-building’. At it, as Archbishop Vitaly remarks, ‘every effort was made to destroy the teaching on the One, True, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’. “70

70 Soldatov, “Pravoslavie i Ekumenizm (Orthodoxy and Ecumenism)”, Mirianin (The Layman), July-August, 1992, p. 8 (in Russian).
Among the rules of the WCC which bind every member is the following: “A church must recognize the essential interdependence of the churches, particularly those of the same confession, and must practise constructive ecumenical relations with other churches within its country or region. This will normally mean that the church is a member of the national council of churches or similar body and of the regional ecumenical organisation.”

Article I of the WCC Constitution reads: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures (sic) and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." And the Constitution also declares that the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to “visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe”.

Further, according to Section II of the WCC Rules, entitled Responsibilities of Membership, "Membership in the World Council of Churches signifies faithfulness to the Basis of the Council, fellowship in the Council, participation in the life and work of the Council and commitment to the ecumenical movement as integral to the mission of the church.”

In accepting these terms the Orthodox churches that entered the WCC clearly accepted a Protestant ecclesiology.

VII. The Apostasy of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras.

In 1949 there flew into Constantinople – on US President Truman’s plane – the second Meletius Metaxakis, the former Archbishop of North and South America Athenagoras, who in 1919 had been appointed secretary of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece by Metaxakis himself. 71 By an extraordinary coincidence Athenagoras was a former spiritual son of Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina, leader of the Greek Old Calendarists, so that the leaders of the opposing sides in the Church struggle in the early 1950s were, like David and Absalom, a holy father and his apostate son.

Patriarch Maximus was forced into retirement on grounds of mental illness and the 33rd degree Mason Athenagoras took his place. In his enthronement speech he went far beyond the bounds of the impious masonic encyclical of 1920 and proclaimed the dogma of ‘Pan-religion’, declaring: “We are in error and sin if we think that the Orthodox Faith came down from heaven and that the other dogmas [i.e. religions] are unworthy. Three hundred million men have chosen Mohammedanism as the way to God and further hundreds of

71 Pravoslavie ili Smert', № 1, 1997, p. 6 (in Russian).
millions are Protestants, Catholics and Buddhists. The aim of every religion is to make man better."^{72}

In 1960 the Orthodox Churches in the WCC met on Rhodes to establish a catalogue of topics to be discussed at a future Pan-Orthodox Council. “In the course of the debate on the catalogue,” write Gordienko and Novikov, “the Moscow Patriarchate’s delegation suggested the removal of some of the subjects (The Development of Internal and External Missionary Work, The Methods of Fighting Atheism and False Doctrines Like Theosophy, Spiritism, Freemasonry, etc.) and the addition of some others (Cooperation between the Local Orthodox Churches in the Realisation of the Christian Ideas of Peace, Fraternity and Love among Peoples, Orthodoxy and Racial Discrimination, Orthodoxy and the Tasks of Christians in Regions of Rapid Social Change)…

Besides working out the topics for the future Pre-Council, the First Conference passed the decision ‘On the Study of Ways for Achieving Closer Contacts and Unity of Churches in a Pan-Orthodox Perspective’, envisaging the search for contacts with Ancient Eastern (non-Chalcedonian) Churches (Monophysites), the Old Catholic, Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant Churches, as well as the World Council of Churches.”^{73}

In other words, the Orthodox henceforth were to abandon the struggle against Atheism, Freemasonry and other false religions, and were to engage in dialogue towards union with all the Christian heretics – while at the same time persecuting the True Orthodox and using ecumenical forums to further the ends of Soviet foreign policy in its struggle with the Capitalist West!

It is not recorded that the EP objected to this programme…

Athenagoras’ apostate course received a boost from the WCC’s General Assembly in New Delhi in 1961, which marked the decisive dogmatic break between “World Orthodoxy” and True Orthodoxy. If, until then, it could be argued, albeit unconvincingly, that the new calendarists had not apostatised, and that only a few of their leaders were ecumenist heretics, this could no longer be maintained after the summary statement signed by all the delegates at New Delhi, which declared, among other things: “we consider that the work of creating the One, Universal Church must unfailingly be accompanied by the destruction and disappearance of certain outmoded, traditional forms of worship”.

This was an outright challenge delivered to the Holy Tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church! And, having delivered it, the Orthodox delegates seemed to lose all restraint. After the New Delhi congress, convened,

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^{72} The newspapers *Khronos* (20 March, 1949) and *Orthodoxos Typos* (December, 1968), cited in Hieromonk Theodoretus (Mavros), *Palaion kai Neon (The Old and the New)*, p. 21.

^{73} “The Russian Orthodox Church in the System of Contemporary Christianity”, in A. Preobrazhensky (ed.), *The Russian Orthodox Church*, Moscow: Progress, 1988, p. 387.
appropriately enough, in the centre of the Hindu world, the ecumenical movement climbed into a higher gear, and even, within a decade or two, into the realm of “Super-ecumenism” – relations with non-Christian religions.

Already before the Delhi Assembly, in April, 1961, the Greek Archbishop James of North and South America (a Freemason of the 33rd degree) had said: “We have tried to rend the seamless robe of the Lord – and then we cast ‘arguments’ and ‘pseudo-documents’ to prove – that ours is the Christ, and ours is the Church… Living together and praying together without any walls of partition raised, either by racial or religious prejudices, is the only way that can lead surely to unity.” What could these “pseudo-documents” and “religious prejudices” have been if not the sacred Canons which forbid the Orthodox from praying together with heretics?

Then, in April, 1963, he said: “It would be utterly foolish for the true believer to pretend or to insist that the whole truth has been revealed only to them, and they alone possess it. Such a claim would be both unbiblical and untheological… Christ did not specify the date nor the place that the Church would suddenly take full possession of the truth.” This statement, which more or less denied that the Church is, as the Apostle Paul said, “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy, 3.15), caused uproar in Greece and on Mount Athos. However, Athenagoras supported James, calling his position “Orthodox”. From this time on, the two Masons went steadily ahead making ever more flagrantly anti-Orthodox statements. As we shall see, there was some opposition from more conservative elements in the autocephalous Churches; but the opposition was never large or determined enough to stop them…

At a meeting of the Faith and Order movement in Montreal in 1963, a memorandum on “Councils of Churches in the Purpose of God” declared: “The Council [WCC] has provided a new sense of the fullness of the Church in its unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. These marks of the Church can no longer be simply applied to our divided churches, therefore.”

Although this memorandum was not accepted in the end (Fr. George Florovsky objected to it in the plenary session), it showed how the WCC was encroaching on the Orthodox Church’s understanding of herself as the One Church. Indeed, it could be argued that the Orthodox participants had already abandoned this dogma. For as early as the Toronto, 1950 statement of the WCC’s Central Committee, it had been agreed that an underlying assumption of the WCC was that the member-churches “believe that the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own body”.

At the Second Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes, in September, 1963, it was unanimously agreed that the Orthodox should enter into dialogue with the Catholics, provided it was “on equal terms”. In practice, this meant that the Catholics should abandon their eastern-rite missions in Orthodox territories. The Catholics have never shown much signs of wishing to oblige in this, but they did help to make a dialogue easier by redefining the Orthodox, in Vatican II’s decree on Ecumenism, as “separated brethren” rather than “schismatics”.

In 1968 the Fourth General Assembly of the WCC took place in Uppsala. It considerably furthered the ecumenical movement, with the Orthodox, as the new general secretary Carson Blake joyfully pointed out, taking full part in all the sections and committees and not, as often in the past, issuing separate statements disagreeing with the majority Protestant view. Archbishop Vitaly (Ustinov) of Canada said to the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia: “At the opening of the Assembly an ecumenical prayer was read in the name of all those assembles: ‘O God our Father, You can create everything anew. We entrust ourselves to You, help us to live for others, for Your love extends over all people, and to search for the Truth, which we have not known...’ How could the Orthodox listen to these last words? It would have been interesting to look at that moment at the faces of the Orthodox hierarchs who had declared for all to hear that they, too, did not know the Truth. Every batyushka of ours in the remotest little village knows the Truth by experience, as he stands before the throne of God and prays to God in spirit and in truth. Even The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is completely subject to the censorship of the communist party, in citing the words of the prayer in its account of this conference, did not dare to translate the English ‘truth’ by the word ‘istina’, but translated it as ‘pravda’ [‘righteousness’]. Of course, everyone very well understood that in the given case the text of the prayer was speaking without the slightest ambiguity about the Truth. Perhaps the Orthodox hierarchs have resorted, in the conference, to the old Jesuit practice of reservatio mentalis, but in that case if all these delegates do not repent of the sin of communion in prayer with heretics, then we must consider them to be on the completely false path of apostasy from the Truth of Orthodoxy... Ecumenism is the heresy of heresies because until now each heresy in the history of the Church has striven to take the place of the true Church, but the ecumenical movement, in uniting all the heresies, invites all of them together to consider themselves the one true Church.”

VIII. The EP’s “Lifting of the Anathemas” on the Roman Papacy.

On January 5 and 6, 1964, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras met in Jerusalem and prayed together. This was a clear transgression of the canons concerning relations with heretics (Apostolic canon 45). Archbishop

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Chrysostom of Athens was reported as saying that “while the Pope is going to the Holy Land to kneel before the Saviour’s sepulchre, you (Athenagoras) are going to kneel before the Pope and bury Orthodoxy.”

Further intense activity led, on December 7, 1965, to the “lifting of the anathemas” of 1054 between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. The announcement was made simultaneously in Rome and Constantinople. It included the following words: “Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I with his synod, in common agreement, declare that: a. They regret the offensive words, the reproaches without foundation, and the reprehensible gestures which, on both sides, have marked or accompanied the sad events of this period [viz. In the 11th century]. B. They likewise regret and remove both from memory and from the midst of the Church the sentences of excommunication which followed these events, the memory of which has influenced actions up to our day and has hindered closer relations in charity; and they commit these excommunications to oblivion.”[76]

It should be pointed out, first, that in saying that the schism of 1054 was based on “reproaches without foundation”, the Patriarch was in effect saying that the Papacy was not, or never had been, heretical – although the Papacy had renounced none of its heresies, and Pope Paul VI had reasserted papal infallibility as recently as Vatican II. Secondly, while relations with excommunicated individuals or Churches can be restored if those individuals or Churches repent, anathemas against heresies cannot be removed insofar as a heresy remains a heresy forever.

In the journal *Ekklesia* Archbishop Chrysostom of Athens denied that the Patriarch had the authority to act independently of the other Orthodox Churches. And he said: “I am convinced that no other Orthodox Church will copy the Ecumenical Patriarch’s action.”[77] From this time, several monasteries and sketes on Mount Athos ceased to commemorate the Patriarch.

On December 15, 1965, Metropolitan Philaret, First-Hierarch of the ROCA, wrote to the Patriarch protesting against his action: “Your gesture puts a sign of equality between error and truth. For centuries all the Orthodox Churches believed with good reasons that it has violated no doctrine of the Holy Ecumenical Councils; whereas the Church of Rome has introduced a number of innovations in its dogmatic teaching. The more such innovations were introduced, the deeper was to become the separation between the East and the West. The doctrinal deviations of Rome in the eleventh century did not yet contain the errors that were added later. Therefore the cancellation of the mutual excommunication of 1054 could have been of meaning at that time, but now it is only evidence of indifference in regard to the most important errors, namely new doctrines foreign to the ancient Church, of which some,

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having been exposed by St. Mark of Ephesus, were the reason why the Church rejected the Union of Florence... No union of the Roman Church with us is possible until it renounces its new doctrines, and no communion in prayer can be restored with it without a decision of all the Churches, which, however, can hardly be possible before the liberation of the Church of Russia which at present has to live in the catacombs... A true dialogue implies an exchange of views with a possibility of persuading the participants to attain an agreement. As one can perceive from the Encyclical Ecclesiam Suam, Pope Paul VI understands the dialogue as a plan for our union with Rome with the help of some formula which would, however, leave unaltered its doctrines, and particularly its dogmatic doctrine about the position of the Pope in the Church. However, any compromise with error is foreign to the history of the Orthodox Church and to the essence of the Church. It could not bring a harmony in the confessions of the Faith, but only an illusory outward unity similar to the conciliation of dissident Protestant communities in the ecumenical movement.”

**IX. The EP’s Heretical “Thyateira Confession”**.

In 1975, Archbishop Athenagoras of Thyateira and Great Britain published, with the explicit blessing and authorisation of Patriarch Demetrius, his *Thyateira Confession*, which expressed the novel idea that the Church is a house without walls which anyone can enter freely and receive “eucharistic hospitality”. And he wrote: “Orthodox Christians believe that the following Churches have valid and true Priesthood or Orders. The Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, the Ethiopian, the Copto-Armenian and the Anglican. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Patriarchate of Romania and the Church of Cyprus half a century ago declared officially that the Anglican Church has valid Orders by dispensation and that means that Anglican Bishops, Priests and Deacons can perform valid sacraments as can those of the Roman Catholic Church.” This heretical confession was condemned by Metropolitan Philaret and his Synod.

**X. The EP’s Participation in “Super Ecumenism”**.

In the early 1980s inter-Christian ecumenism was succeeded by inter-faith ecumenism, or “super ecumenism”, with the EP, as usual, taking a leading role. Already in the WCC’s General Assembly at Nairobi in 1975, the Orthodox delegates, having signed an agreement to recognize the sacraments of the non-Orthodox delegates, had declared that “the Orthodox do not expect the other Christians to be converted to Orthodoxy in its historic and cultural reality of the past and the present and to become members of the Orthodox Church” – which gave the lie to their excuse that they were

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participating in the ecumenical movement “to witness to the non-Orthodox”.\textsuperscript{80}

Again, in 1980, the Ecumenical Press Service declared that the WCC was working on plans to unify all Christian denominations into a single new religion.\textsuperscript{81}

Then, in 1982, an inter-denominational eucharistic service was composed at a conference in Lima, Peru, in which the Protestant and Orthodox representatives to the WCC agreed that the baptism, eucharist and ordinations of all denominations were valid and acceptable.\textsuperscript{82}

But the greatest shock came in 1983, at the Vancouver General Assembly of the WCC. This was attended by representatives of every existing religion and began with a pagan rite performed by local Indians. The participation of Orthodox hierarchs in religious services with representatives of all the world’s religions required a rebuke – and a rebuke was forthcoming.

First, the Greek Old Calendarist Metropolitan Gabriel of the Cyclades attempted to address the Vancouver Assembly. But he was not allowed to speak by the ecumenists, who thereby demonstrated that they are “tolerant” and “loving” to every kind of blasphemy, but not to the expression of True Christianity. Then the Synod of the ROCA, also meeting in Canada, anathematised ecumenism, declaring: “To those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ’s Church is divided into so-called ‘branches’ which differ in doctrine and way of life, or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all ‘branches’ or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united in one body; and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, Anathema.”\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{80} “Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement”, Orthodox Christian Witness, October 27 / November 9, 1997, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{81} Newsletter of the Foreign Relations Department of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, January-March, 1981, p. 2.
The implication of this anathema was clear: since the EP was a fully participating member of the WCC, it was under anathema and deprived of the grace of sacraments. As I.M. has written: “There is no heresy without heretics and their practical activity. The WCC in its declarations says: The Church confesses, the Church teaches, the Church does this, the Church does that. In this way the WCC witnesses that it does not recognize itself to be simply a council of churches, but the one church. And all those who are members of the WCC are members of this one false church, this synagogue of satan. And by this participation in the WCC all the local Orthodox churches fall under the anathema of the ROCA of 1983 and fall away from the True Church....”

In 1990, a Declaration was agreed at Chambésy in Switzerland between a Joint Commission of theologians of the Orthodox (including the EP) and the Monophysites (called “Oriental Orthodox” in the documents), in which the Orthodox and Monophysites were called two “families of churches” (a phrase unknown to Orthodox ecclesiology).

Paragraph Four of the Declaration said: “The two families accept that the two natures [of Christ] with their own energies and wills are united hypostatically and naturally without confusion, without change, without division and without separation and that they are distinguished only in thought (ἐν θεώρα).”

This is already completely unacceptable from an Orthodox point of view, and represents a heretical, Monophysite formulation. The two natures and wills of Christ are not distinguishable “only in thought”, but also in reality. Paragraph Seven also speaks of the two natures being distinguishable “only in thought”, which implies, as Ludmilla Perepiolkina points out “an absence of this distinction in reality”.

Paragraph Five states: “The two families accept that the One Who wills and acts is always the single Hypostasis of the incarnate Logos”. However, as Perepiolkina again correctly points out, according to the teaching of St. Maximus the Confessor, “the concept of energy (activity) of nature is attributable only to nature as a whole, and not to the hypostasis. This teaching was affirmed at the Sixth Ecumenical Council. In the Chambésy Declaration, as it is evident from Paragraph Five, natural wills and energies in Jesus Christ are attributed to His Hypostasis. In other words, this Paragraph is a purely Monothelite formula”.

84 “Iskazhenie dogmata ‘O edinstve Tserkvi’ v ispovedaniakh very Sinodom i Soborom Russkoj Pravoslavnnoj Tserkvi Zagranitesj (The Distortion of the dogma ‘on the Unity of the Church’ in the confessions of faith by the Synod and Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad)” (in Russian).
85 Perepiolkina, Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 251.
86 Perepiolkina, op. cit., p. 252.
Paragraph Eight states: “The two families accept the first three Ecumenical Councils which form our common heritage. With regard to the four later Councils of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox affirm that, for them, points one through seven are also the teaching of these four later Councils, whereas the oriental Orthodox consider this affirmation of the Orthodox like their own interpretation. In this sense the oriental Orthodox respond positively to this affirmation.”

An unclear statement, about which one thing, however, is clear: the Monophysites do not commit themselves to accepting the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils in the way the Orthodox do, but only “positively respond to their affirmation”, which means nothing in dogmatic terms.

Paragraph Nine states: “In the light of our joint declaration on Christology and the joint affirmations mentioned above, we now clearly realize and understand that our two families have always loyally guarded the same and authentic Christological Orthodox Faith, and have maintained uninterrupted the apostolic tradition although they may have used the Christological terms in a different manner. It is that common faith and that continual loyalty to the apostolic tradition which must be the basis of our unity and communion.”

This is in flat contradiction to 1500 years of Orthodox Tradition. In this period all the Holy Fathers unambiguously affirmed that the Monophysites had not “loyally guarded the same and authentic Christological Orthodox Faith”, and were in fact heretics. But the modern ecumenists claim that all the six hundred and thirty holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, as well as all the Fathers of all the succeeding Council that condemned Monophyism, were wrong, and the whole controversy was simply based on some linguistic misunderstandings!

Paragraph Ten of the Declaration states: “The two families accept that all the anathemas and the condemnations of the past which kept us divided must be lifted by the Churches so that the last obstacle to full unity and communion of our two families can be removed by the grace and power of God. The two families accept that the lifting of the anathemas and the condemnations will be based on the fact that the Councils and the father previously anathematised or condemned were not heretics.”

So the Seven Ecumenical Councils need to be amended, say these “theologians”, and the anathemas against all the Monophysite councils and fathers, including the notorious heresiarchs Dioscurus, Timothy and Severus, lifted! This is a clear and explicit rejection of the Faith of the Seven Ecumenical Councils! Of course, the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches (with the exception of Jerusalem) have already implicitly rejected the Councils and the
Fathers by their communion in prayer and the sacraments with all sorts of heretics, and even pagans, the WCC General Assembly in Canberra in 1991 being perhaps the most extreme example. Nevertheless, it is a further and important stage to say explicitly that the Ecumenical Councils were wrong, that the Monophysites should not have been condemned, that they were Orthodox all these centuries although the Holy Fathers and all the saints of the Orthodox Church considered them to be heretics. This is not simply a failure to come up to the standards of the Ecumenical Councils: it is a renunciation of the standards themselves.

In essence, the Local Orthodox Churches, led by the EP, here placed themselves under the anathemas against Monophysitism from the Fourth Ecumenical Council onwards, and must be considered to be “semi-Monophysites”.

The ROCOR and the Greek Old Calendarists quickly condemned the Chambésy agreement. Nevertheless, in 1992 the patriarchate of Antioch entered into full, official communion with the Monophysites. There is every indication that the Moscow Patriarchate wants to go along the same path. The MP’s relations with the Armenian Monophysites are especially close.

Chambésy was followed by the Seventh General Assembly of the WCC in Canberra in 1991, in which the Orthodox delegates blasphemed against the Faith still more blatantly. Thus aboriginal pagans invited the participants to pass through a “cleansing cloud of smoke” uniting Aboriginal spirituality to Christian spirituality!

In March, 1992, the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches met in Constantinople and official renounced proselytism among Western Christians. Of course, this renunciation had been implicit in the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s statements since the encyclical of 1920. But it still came as a shock to see the “Church” renounced the hope of conversion and therefore salvation for hundreds of millions of westerners.

Union with the Monophysites proceeded in parallel with moves for union with the Catholics. In 1994 the Local Orthodox churches signed the Balamand agreement with the Catholics, in which the Orthodox and the Catholics were declared to be sister-Churches in the full sense, “two lungs” of the same organism (with the Monophysites as a “third lung”?). The Balamand

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87 Metropolitan Calliopius of Pentapolis, Prodosia tis Orthodoxias (Betrayal of Orthodoxy), Piraeus, 1991 (in Greek); O Pharos tis Orthodoxias (The Lighthouse of Orthodoxy), October, 1991, № 66, p. 120 (in Greek); Monk Isaac, "Commentary on the latest recommendations of the Joint Commission for theological dialogue between the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches", Orthodox Life, vol. 42, № 3, May-June, 1991; "Dossier sur les Accords de Chambésy entre Monophysites et Orthodoxes (Dossier on the Agreements of Chambésy between the Monophysites and the Orthodox)", La Lumière du Thabor (The Light of Tabor), № 31, 1991 (in French).
Agreement, which was signed on the Orthodox side by Moscow, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Romania, Cyprus, Poland and Finland, declared: “Catholics and Orthodox... are once again discovering each other as sister churches” and “recognizing each other as sister churches”. “On each side it is acknowledged that what Christ has entrusted to His Church – the profession of the apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, the apostolic succession of bishops, and, above all, the one priesthood celebrating the one Sacrifice of Christ – cannot be considered to be the exclusive property of one of our Churches.” The baptism of penitent papists into the Orthodox Church was prohibited: “All rebaptism (sic) is prohibited.” The Orthodox Church “recognizes the Catholic Church in her entirety as a sister Church, and indirectly recognizes also the Oriental Catholic Churches” (the Uniates). “Special attention should be given on both sides to the preparation and education of future priests with regard to the new ecclesiology, (that they may) be informed of the apostolic succession of the other Church and the authenticity of its sacramental life, (so that) the use of history in a polemical manner (may be avoided)”.

This was an official acceptance of the “branch theory” of the Church. There were protests in Greece and Mount Athos, but Patriarch Bartholomew forced the protestors to back down. This was the same Patriarch, the most senior in Orthodoxy, who said a few years later: “Orthodox Christian and modernist, Protestant and modernist, Jew and modernist, Catholic and modernist: however we worship, as long as we abide in our faith and unite it to our works in the world, we bring the living and always timely message of Divine wisdom into the modern world.” So the EP today combines the broadest welcome to almost all contemporary heresies and false religions while persecuting those who hold to the True Orthodox faith. To him and to those with him the Church proclaims: **Anathema!**

*July 28 / August 10, 2004.*

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88 Patriarch Bartholomew, Address at Emory University at the Presidential Medal award ceremony, October 31, 1997.
5. A LETTER TO AN ANGLICAN FRIEND ON HERESY

Dear C.,

I think it’s a little unfortunate that this conversation centres on the calendar question, because we can’t profitably discuss this question until we have agreed on certain basic principles. But let me say this much before turning to the more basic issues. The calendar question is not about astronomical accuracy: it is about unity of worship. Unity of worship between the Heavenly and the Earthly Church, and between all parts of the Earthly Church, has always been of great importance to the Orthodox. That is why it occupied the heads of the Churches in the second century (Rome and the East), at the First Ecumenical Council (where the basic rules of our calendar were established), the Synod of Whitby in 664 (unity between the Celts and Saxons), many Synods in East and West in the 16th-18th centuries (England waited 169 years before adopting the Gregorian calendar, and even then there were riots in the streets), and in modern times. If unity of worship is unimportant to you, then the calendar question will be unimportant to you. But it is important to us, and has been important to most of the Christian world for most of Christian history.

But let’s get down to basic principles. You haven’t answered my question about how you interpret the Scriptural passages I cited. So let me take the first: “If he refuses to hear even the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18.17). This passage indicates the great importance of the Divinely founded institution of the Church – that institution which St. Paul called “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy 3.15). The Lord says that we must obey the Church; St. Paul - that we cannot be in the truth without being in the Church. Now we cannot obey the Church unless we know where it is. So what are the marks of the Church? True faith and true worship. (Using more technically theological language, the Creed says they are Unity (or Singleness), Holiness, Catholicity and Apostolicity.) When quarrels arose over what was the true faith and worship of the Church, the bishops got together in Councils to thrash the matter out. When the Councils had reached a decision, all the bishops were required to sign a confession of faith expressing that decision. Those who refused, insofar as they were refusing to obey the Church, were treated, in accordance with the Lord’s words, “as heathen and tax collectors”. Of course, there were some “robber councils” – that is, councils at which heresy, rather than Orthodoxy, triumphed. But over the years and centuries seven particularly important Councils were accepted in both East and West (excluding the Monophysite and Nestorian “Churches”) as having particular authority. These define both the dogmatic faith and the canonical discipline of the Orthodox Church to this day.
Unfortunately, however, in the West since the rise of the Papacy, and especially since the Reformation, the Ecumenical Councils have been increasingly ignored, even despised. The result is that the West has not only lost unity of faith and worship within itself: it has also lost it with the Church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils – that is, the Church of the first millennium of Christian history. Now anyone can proclaim just about any kind of teaching, however far removed from Christianity, label it “Christian” and pass muster as a “Christian” and a member of the “Church” (you can be a member of the Methodist “Church” in England, for example, without even believing in God!).

Until the early twentieth century the Orthodox Church retained both its internal unity and its unity with the Early Apostolic Church through its faithfulness to the teachings of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, “the seven pillars of wisdom”. However, under the twin hammer blows of Communism and Ecumenism (“Ecocommunism”, as I have called it), the major part of the Orthodox Church has also fallen away. This should not surprise us: the Lord called His Church a “little flock” and put the rhetorical question: “When I come again, shall I find faith on the earth?” (Luke 12.40, 18.8). (Answer: not much.) But He also said that “the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church” (Matthew 16.18). So even in the last, most terrible times, when the vast majority of mankind will fall into the abyss, there will still be the opportunity for the lover of truth to find the One True Church, Christ’s “little flock”; and even in our terrible times there have been literally millions of martyrs for the truth, and great wonderworkers whom God has glorified with great signs and miracles on the earth. However, to those who “did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved,… God will send a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie” (II Thessalonians 2.11-12). They will include the “believers” of the last, “Laodicean” period of Church history, of whom the Lord says: “Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3.16).

Now the modern, lukewarm “believer” trots out a number of standard arguments against the view I have just propounded. I shall call them the “persecution” argument, the “linguistic” argument, the “doctrine doesn’t matter anyway” argument and the “God is merciful” argument.

1. The Persecution Argument. This may be stated as follows: If we become obsessed with doctrinal niceties, we’ll only end up killing each other without anyone coming any closer to the “truth”. This is the way to the Inquisition, to Auschwitz, etc.

Needless to say, arguments about fundamental truth do not always end in blood; and the fact that they do occasionally should not put us off from “the one thing necessary” – the search for the truth. In any case, as I have already indicated, the Orthodox Church believes that peaceful persuasion, not
physical persecution, is the right method for bringing people to a knowledge of the truth. That has been the method employed by all Orthodox missionaries and preachers in all ages. The teaching that heretics should be killed was first officially proclaimed, not by any Orthodox saint or council, but by Thomas Aquinas and the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, whence it entered the bloodstream of the Early Protestants and Anglicans. The Inquisition was a Catholic institution, and I know of no similar institution established by any Church authority in any Orthodox land.

Some physical persecution has been undertaken by secular authorities, it is true. For example, St. Constantine the Great exiled Arius and his followers after the First Ecumenical Council, and his example was followed by some other Orthodox emperors and kings. However, before condemning such an act, it would be worth asking why it was done.

Two possible answers suggest themselves. First, that, having failed with peaceful persuasion, the Emperor may have thought that a little physical and psychological suffering would humble the heretics and therefore dispose them to receive the truth, which always requires humility. This is an unlikely explanation in this case, but it should not be forgotten that “spare the rod and spoil the child” is a Biblical precept, and that God Himself often imposes physical sufferings on His people in order to bring them to their senses – there are many examples in the Bible from the Babylonian captivity to the plagues of the Book of Revelation.

More likely, the Emperor recognised that the Arians were beyond persuading, and that he exiled the heretics in order to protect those who were still Orthodox, but weak or immature in their thinking, from the corrupting influence of their teaching. Don’t forget that in the understanding of the Early Church, and of the Orthodox Church to this day, heresy is a disease which kills the soul, cuts it off from God; it is far worse in its effects than the worst of physical afflictions. That is why the apostles were so severe in relation to it. “If anyone preaches any other gospel to you that what you have received, let him be anathema” (Galatians 1.8). “A heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3.10). “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God… If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him” (II John 9-10).

2. The Linguistic Argument. How often have I heard the argument, even from very intelligent people: “These disputes were just about words; we mustn’t quarrel just about words; the truth cannot be wrapped up in linguistic definitions.” Of course, the truth cannot be “wrapped up” in words. But words can point to a truth – or a falsehood. “You obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered,” says St. Paul (Romans 6.17). Obviously he was talking about some teaching expressed in words.
Again, “hold fast the form of sound words you have heard from me,” he says (II Timothy 1.13). What is he talking about if not about some verbally expressed teaching of the faith? Again: “With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10.10). So our words matter: with them we confess the truth or heresy, unto salvation or damnation. By what other way, besides “the form of sound words” and “confession with the mouth”, do we distinguish truth from falsehood?

If words are vitally important to scientists and writers and lawyers, why should they be any the less important to theologians? To say that Christ is “of one substance” with the Father is to express a radically different idea from saying that Christ is “of a similar substance” to the Father, yet this enormous difference in ideas is expressed by the difference of only one letter (iota) in Greek (“homoousios” as opposed to “homoiousios”). As the Lord Himself said, “not one iota shall pass away…” In the fourth century, both learned people and simple people, both Orthodox and heretics, understood both the difference in these words and the enormous importance of the difference. Not now! Why? The answer to this question brings me to:

3. The “Doctrine Doesn’t Matter Anyway” Argument. For nearly nineteen centuries, Christians and heretics argued about truth and heresy, but they had this in common: they agreed that there was a difference, and that the difference was vitally important. What distinguishes 20th-century heretics from almost all previous ones is that they don’t even believe in the existence of heresy – or, if they do, they don’t believe it’s important. I once read a review in Church Times of a book on the wars between Anglicans and Catholics in sixteenth-century England. The reviewer said that both sides were equally right, and the “martyrs” on both sides were martyrs, even though they died for completely contradictory “truths”, because the only real heresy is the idea that there is such a thing as heresy. This is essentially the doctrine of ecumenism, which would unite every conceivable truth and heresy in a pan-cosmic religious stew in which everyone can believe as they like “because all paths lead to God”. But this is simply the abandonment of reason and objectivity in favour of complete subjectivism. And the Orthodox Church has officially defined it as “the heresy of heresies” because it combines all heresies in itself while denying the very existence of objective truth.

For if heresy doesn’t exist, then truth doesn’t exist either. And if the difference between truth and heresy is unimportant, then Christianity and religion in general are unimportant. Because if Christianity is anything at all, it is TRUTH. “Father, sanctify them by Thy truth”, said the Lord. But if anything goes, if anything is accepted as the truth, then where is the possibility of sanctification?
Or of salvation? Until our inglorious twentieth century, all those who called themselves Christians, heretics as well as true believers, accepted that in Christ alone is salvation, and that the way to salvation is through true, correct faith in Him — faith that is then expressed and confirmed by good works. Faith without works is dead, and works without true faith, as the Venerable Bede says, is also dead. It does not lead to salvation. Heretics are not saved themselves, and lead others to perdition.

Let us hear some apostolic testimonies on this subject. “Their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the faith, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some” (II Timothy 2.17-18). “As Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith” (II Timothy 3.8). “Rebuke them sharply, that they be sound in the faith” (Titus 1.13). “Heresies... and the like: of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practise such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God” (Galatians 5.20-21).

“There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord Who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction” (II Peter 2.1).

Do we need any more testimonies to the undeniable fact that heretics destroy themselves and those who listen to them, and that, as St. Paul said, “their mouths must be stopped” — by persuasion if they will listen, by expulsion from the Church if they will not. For they are blind leaders of the blind, as the Lord said — and both leaders and followers fall into a pit. They are dry branches who will be cut off from the True Vine and thrown into the fire, as the Lord again said.

But all this is too terrifying for some tender (St. Paul calls them “itching”) ears, and they want to change the Gospel to make it “nicer”. So we come to the following very nice “argument”:

4. The “God Is Merciful” Argument. God will not condemn heretics, goes the argument, for the simple reason that He is merciful. He is too compassionate to send His creature to hell. The very idea is so uncivilized! “Civilized” or not, it happens to be what we read in the Word of God — and what we read in the word of God inscribed on our hearts, our conscience, if only we read it honestly. Yes, God is merciful — to the merciful. But He is also just, and rewards every man according to his works. Yes, He gives the Truth — Himself — to those who love the truth. But the corollary is also true: those who do not love the truth He gives over to the father of lies, Satan. Sometimes this happens even in this life. Thus about one sinner St. Paul said: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the
destruction of the flesh” (I Corinthians 5.4-5). And St. Peter wasn’t exactly merciful to Ananias and Sapphira… As David says in the Psalms: “With the holy man wilt Thou be holy, and with the innocent man wilt Thou be innocent. And with the elect man wilt Thou be elect, and with the perverse wilt Thou be perverse…” (Psalm 17.25-26 (LXX)).

Any careful reader of the Gospel will agree that it is both the most comforting, and the most terrifying book ever written. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” “Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” “It is more difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven than…” “Depart from Me, I never knew you…” “You, Capernaum,… will be brought down to hell.” “Better were it for that man if he had never been born…”

Yes, God is merciful, because He gives us every opportunity to be saved, and warns us in every way against the path that leads to damnation. But we are unutterably foolish, because we want to rewrite the rules, as if we were the Judge and not the man standing in the dock. “Wait a minute, you can’t really mean that all who… will be damned!” “Okay, let Hitler and Stalin rot in hell, but we’re such nice people, I’m such a nice person…!”

What a shock death will be for the vast majority of mankind! And all because we do not want to believe what Christ has written with such clarity in His Gospel. We want dispensations for our lusts and passions, for our criminal indifference to the truth. We want to rewrite the Gospel, make it the Gospel according to Luther, or John-Paul II, or George Carey, which absolves all manner of heretics, all manner of evil perversions, all manner of betrayals of the One Saviour of mankind. But St. Paul consigns all those who preach a different Gospel to the terrible sentence of anathema. And what does the Apostle of love and mercy say in the very last chapter of God’s Word? “I testify to anyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book….” (Revelation 22.18).

With love,
Vladimir.

St. Edward the Martyr, King of England.
"None of the mysteries," writes Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, "of the most secret wisdom of God ought to appear alien or altogether transcendent to us, but in all humility we must apply our spirit to the contemplation of divine things." And so, in the Divine services of the Orthodox Church, we are constantly being drawn to contemplate the mysteries of our salvation - especially the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, but also those of the Holy Trinity, the creation of the world out of nothing, the Cross and the Resurrection, the Church, the Second Coming and the Terrible Judgement, man made in the image of God, eternal life and eternal damnation. By contemplating these mysteries, our faith is strengthened and deepened, we draw closer to God and His saints and further away from the abyss of unbelief and heresy.

However, there is a trend in contemporary heretical thought that seeks to use the concept of "mystery" to overturn faith in the mysteries and replace it by a false religious mysticism and a pseudo-intellectual mystification. This current of thought does not openly deny any of the mysteries of the faith - with the exception of the mystery of the Church, upon whose denial the whole of Protestantism is based. Rather, it loves to talk about "the eternal Christ" of St. John's Gospel (their favourite because it is so "mystical"), about "parousia" and "eternal life", about "transfiguration" and "deification" and "resurrection" - but in senses that are so alien to the Orthodox understanding that we have to use these terms in quotation marks. Characteristic of this current of thought is its blurring of the boundaries between psychology and religion, between experiences of the soul and dogmas of the faith. Characteristic, too, is its syncretism, its willingness, indeed determination, to identify Christian concepts with pagan (especially Buddhist) ones, and the Christian world-view with the scientific world-view - even those elements of the scientific world-view, such as evolutionism, which are most contrary to traditional, Orthodox Christianity.

When one asks the "mystifiers", as I shall call them, whether they believe, for example, that Jesus Christ is God, the Creator of the universe, one rarely gets a straight answer. Thus they may admit that Christ is "divine" - but not that He is "God", that "God is uniquely expressed in Christ" - but not that He created the universe. And then if one shows some dissatisfaction by this lack of clarity, one is told that one must not try to "analyze the mystery", that "words cannot express the mystery", with more than a hint that one is not "deep" or "mystical" or "apophatic" enough. And if one counters that the Apostles and Fathers of the Church, who invented the term "apophatic" and knew a great deal more about mysticism than any of us, were nevertheless quite prepared to make the clear and categorical statements of faith which the mystifiers are not prepared to make, one is gently chided for being too "dogmatic" and "rationalist". The unspoken assumption behind the mystifiers'
"argument" is that they, as educated people of the twentieth century, do not need the Apostles or Fathers to guide them any more; like the gnostics of all ages, they know better, they have a special insight into religious truth which does not need words and definitions, because "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must keep silent"...

The leaders in this heretical trend are the Anglicans. Beginning from the 1960s and the infamous book *Honest to God*, the Anglican Church has undergone a most astonishing doctrinal degeneration. All the basic truths of the faith have been denied, with astounding arrogance, from the highest pulpits in the land, and with minimal resistance from the so-called believers. The only issue which has produced any real rebellion has been the ordination of women as priests - and this drew from the archbishop of Canterbury the amazing reaction that those who believed in an exclusively male priesthood (that is, 99.9% of all Christians, Orthodox and heretical, before our present "enlightened" age) were "heretics"! In 1995, after an Anglican priest was (very belatedly) defrocked for saying that God "has no objective existence", 65 priests wrote an open letter to *The Times* protesting the decision on the grounds that it was a "violation of human rights"! It is in this "Church" of rampant liberalism, if not outright atheism, that the mystifiers have flourished and prospered.

But the roots of Anglican mystification go much deeper; we see it already in that issue which was at the heart of the Anglican Reformation - the Eucharist. The early Anglican Reformers, being true Protestants, denied that the sacrament of the Eucharist is the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and truly His Body and Blood - and they were prepared to be burned at the stake for this denial. However, since King Henry VIII remained a Catholic at heart, the first Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, Cranmer, was forced to conceal his Protestant tendencies and devise a form of words which could be interpreted in either a Catholic or Protestant sense. Thus was invented the first mystification of modern times - the doctrine of the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. The Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church could take it to mean that Christ is "truly present" in His Body and Blood in the Eucharist. The Low Church wing could take it to mean that Christ is not present literally and physically, but only spiritually and symbolically. And the broad mass of believers in the middle could take refuge from the necessity of choosing between the two, mutually incompatible doctrines by saying simply that it was an inexplicable mystery.

Of course, the Eucharist is a great mystery. Of course, one cannot say how this, or any of the other great mysteries of the faith takes place, nor subject them to scientific analysis. But that is no reason for deliberate doctrinal ambiguity, for making a mystification out of the mystery. The Apostles and the
Fathers of the Church were so conscious of the mystery of the Eucharist that it was the one doctrine of the Church which was not proclaimed from the rooftops, and which was hidden even from catechumens until after they had actually partaken of it. But this is no way preventing them, when necessity (in the form of the appearance of heresy) presented itself, of proclaiming the mystery clearly and unambiguously - and of making the acceptance of the definitions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils the touchstone of true belief in, and passport to participation of, the mysteries.

That is why the Orthodox Church chants: "The preaching of the Apostles and the doctrines of the Fathers confirmed the one Faith of the Church. And wearing the garment of truth woven from the theology on high, she rightly divideth and glorifieth the great mystery of piety." And again: "The choir of the holy Fathers, which hath gathered from the ends of the earth, hath taught the single essence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and hath carefully committed to the Church the mystery of theology." The Church "rightly divides" the great mystery of piety from the mystery of iniquity by uttering God-inspired definitions of the faith which are immediately recognized by those who truly believe as expressing their own faith. But those who are outside the Church, to whom the mystery of theology has not been committed, instinctively feel that this definition does not express what they believe; and so, if they are honest, they openly reject it, and if they are dishonest, they resort to mystification.

Mystification like the following, which is to be found in the theological novel Mystical Paths by the Anglican writer Susan Howatch: "He paused again, and in that silence I heard the sentence resonate as the footsteps of mysticism and Gnosticism echoed and re-echoed in the classic Christian corridor. Then I saw Truth as a multi-sided diamond with the themes of heresy and orthodoxy all glittering facets of a single reality, and beyond the facets I glimpsed that mysterious Christ of St. John's Gospel, not the Jesus of history but the Christ of Eternity who is turn pointed beyond himself to the Truth no human mind could wholly grasp..." As if Truth were on a par with heresy, or Gnosticism could co-exist with "classic" Christianity, or "the Christ of Eternity" were not at the same time "the Jesus of history"!

This passage comes in the middle of a "healing" session conducted by an Anglican priest, which actually describes a psychic seance. And this leads us to another important fact concerning the mystifiers: that in rejecting the mystery of theology as defined by the Seven Ecumenical Councils, they lay themselves open to a false and demonic mysticism. Hence the speaking in tongues and emotional outpourings and "healings", the inter-faith services and homosexual marriages and calling up of dead spirits by women "priests". For just as Orthodox faith and obedience to all the teachings of the Orthodox Church is the only entrance to true mysticism, so heresy and mystification is the immediate passport to false mysticism, to spiritual deception and,
ultimately, to possession by demonic spirits. And such possession can spread from individuals and groups of individuals to whole churches and nations, as we see in the Russian revolution (which was preceded by the spread, not only of Marxism, but also of Theosophy) and in the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s (which was preceded by the widespread practice of occultism).

But the true mystics, such as St. John and St. Paul, were the sworn enemies of all kinds of heresy, mystification and pseudo-mysticism. Thus St. John says: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John, 10-11). And St. Paul says: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith" (II Corinthians13.5), and: "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (I Corinthians 14.33), and: "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Timothy 4.1).

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The Greek word for "mystery" means literally that which is shut or closed or hidden. Thus St. Paul was speaking of a mystery when he said that he was "caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Corinthians 12.4). These words are hidden from us because we are not worthy, we are not in a spiritual condition to receive them.

But this is not to say that mysteries cannot, in any circumstances, be understood. On the contrary, that which is hidden from some in some circumstances can be opened and revealed to others. Such was the mystery of the Divinity of Christ, which was revealed to the Apostle Peter, as the Lord Himself declared: "Blessed art Thou, Peter, Bar Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it [the mystery] unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven" (Matthew 16.18). As Blessed Theophylact, archbishop of Bulgaria, comments: "He calls Peter blessed for having received knowledge by divine grace. And by commending Peter, He thereby shows the opinion of other men to be false. For He calls Him 'Bar Jona', that is, 'son of Jona', as if saying, 'Just as you are the son of Jona, so am I the Son of My Father in heaven, and of one essence with Him.' He calls this knowledge 'revelation', speaking of hidden and unknown things that were disclosed by the Father."

In this sense, all true believers in the Divinity of Christ are "mystics"; for to them has been made known "the mystery of His will", they have been given "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephesians1.9,17). And indeed, "all men" are called "to see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might by known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3.9-10). Thus the mystery is
made known by the Father to the Church, which in turn makes it known both to men and to the ranks of the angels.

From this it should be clear that the mysteries of God are neither radically unknowable, nor is it impossible to express them in words - although the understanding of the words, and the communication of the mystery, is impossible without grace, the sending of the Holy Spirit from the Father. Without grace the mystery will remain hidden; for faith is a gift of grace (Ephesians 2.8).

But words, too, are important; for they show us whether a man has truly received the mystery or not. Just as Christ is called the Word of God because He reveals to us the mystery of the Father, so the words of our confession of faith reveal the presence of the mystery of Christ in us. For "I believed, and therefore I spoke" (Psalm 115.1). And "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10.10).

And that is why the words and definitions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils must be accepted by all true Christians. For they are not foolish attempts to express the inexpressible, as the mystifiers would have it, but living words from the Word, "the garment of truth woven from the theology on high." Therefore St. Paul says: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 1.13).

It follows that those who refuse to give a clear and unambiguous confession of faith, but rather resort to mystification on the basis of a supposed reverence for "the mystery", are in fact strangers to the mystery of Christ and partakers of "the mystery of iniquity" (II Thessalonians 2.7). They will not express the right confession because they do not have it - although they are not slow to express their judgement of those who do have it. To them, therefore, we can with justice say: whereof you cannot speak - because you do not believe it - thereof you should keep silent...
7. BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

The very beginning and foundation of the Christian life is the mystery of Holy Baptism. The Christian enters the Church through Baptism, and without Baptism it is impossible to be saved. As the Lord Himself said: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3.6). Again: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16.16). And again: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28.19-20).

If Christ Himself has laid it down as a condition of our salvation that we follow His teachings, and especially the teaching on Baptism, how foolish are we if we ignore His words! And if Christ Himself, Who alone was sinless and did not need Baptism, consented to be baptised at the hands of St. John the Forerunner, saying: "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3.15), of what condemnation shall we not be found worthy if we ignore His example and introduce a righteousness of our own making?! And yet in the Christian world today we are witnessing a radical corruption of both the doctrine and the practice of Holy Baptism.

This corruption comes from different historical sources: the rejection of full triune immersion - from Catholicism, the rejection of water baptism in favour of a so-called "baptism of the Spirit" - from Protestantism, the rejection of the very necessity and efficacy of baptism - from Ecumenism. Let us consider each of these in turn.

1. How is Baptism performed? The Greek word βαπτίζειν means "to immerse repeatedly". Therefore a baptism which is performed with only one immersion (as is done by the Baptists) or with no immersions but only sprinkling or pouring (as is done by the Catholics, the Anglicans and many Protestant sects) is not Baptism in the proper meaning of the word. The 50th Canon of the Holy Apostles declares: "If any bishop or priest does not form three immersions, but a single immersion, that given into the death of the Lord, let him be deposed. For the Lord did not say, 'Baptize ye into My death', but, 'Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'."

Threefold immersion represents both the Triune Divinity and the three-day Death, Burial and Resurrection of the Lord. To be immersed only once signifies to die in the Lord's Death, but not to rise in His Resurrection. It is as if the rebirth which is to be accomplished by Holy Baptism were aborted, or - a stillbirth.

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According to the 84th Canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, a person who does not know or cannot demonstrate that he was correctly baptized must without hesitation be baptized. Hence the practice, in the True Church, of baptizing Catholics and Protestants when they turn to the True Faith. Although this is sometimes called "rebaptism", this is a misnomer, because, as we have seen, "baptism" that is not by three immersions is not in fact baptism at all.

2. In what does Baptism consist? If the Catholics cut short the rite of Holy Baptism and therefore abort it, the Protestants of the contemporary "born again" variety eliminate it entirely. The Lord said that Holy Baptism is "by water and the Spirit". But the "born again Christians" first divide the indivisible concept of the One Baptism into two, by distinguishing between a "water baptism" and a "baptism of the Holy Spirit", and then reject "water baptism" altogether - or allow it as an optional extra to "the real thing", the so-called "baptism of the Holy Spirit".

What is this "baptism of the Holy Spirit"? Although clear theological descriptions or definitions are hard to come by, it seems to be a conversion experience, apparently quite sudden and independent of any rite. On receiving this conversion experience the believer suddenly considers himself saved and in need of nothing else.

Now a true conversion experience is, of course, of great significance for the salvation of the believer. If baptism is a birth, then the genuine conversion experience is the moment of conception. It is, as Fr. Gregory Williams puts it, "the spark of divine life [which] has been present in you [the baptized] from the moment of your conception, the Holy Spirit calling you to life eternal".90

But a conception that is not allowed to reach its fullness in birth, which is considered to be both conception and birth, is no conception at all, but a phantom pregnancy. And the Protestant doctrine that denies the necessity of full birth "by water and the Spirit" - that is, through the full rite of triune immersion carried out by a duly ordained priest - may be considered to be a (fully reliable) contraceptive device which prevents the conception of real Christians in the womb of their mother, the Church. It is of such "phantom Christians", who have either never been truly reborn in the Spirit or have never given birth to Christ in truly spiritual works that that great father of the Gentile Churches, the Apostle Paul, says: "I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (Galatians 4.19).

St. Paul himself had the archetype of all true conversion experiences in his famous encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus. But what does the

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Other examples could be multiplied. Thus when the eunuch receives his "conversion experience" through the Apostle Philip, he says: "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptised?" And he was baptized - by immersion; for "they both went down into the water" (Acts 8.36-38). Again, although Apollos was "fervent in the Spirit, and spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord" (Acts 18.26), he had only had the baptism of John, and so had to be baptized "by water and the Spirit". Again, when the centurion Cornelius and his household had been converted, the Apostle Peter said: "Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit as we have?" (Acts 10.47). Now at first sight this might seem to prove the Protestants' point in that Cornelius received the Holy Spirit before baptism. But it in fact proves just the opposite; it proves that the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given in faith (and, in this case, the speaking of tongues), far from making the still greater gift of Baptism unnecessary, rather makes it mandatory.

3. What does Baptism do? Baptism is the participation of the individual Christian in the Death and Resurrection of Christ (Romans 6.3-11). The baptized person receives the forgiveness of all his sins, both personal and generic; he is reborn to a new and holy life; he has put off the old Adam and put on the new Adam, Christ; he is a new creature. This rebirth is absolutely necessary for salvation because "flesh and blood", i.e. the "old nature which is corrupt through deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4.22), "cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven" (I Corinthians 15.50).

The gift of faith alone without Baptism cannot, as the Protestants claim, lead us into the Kingdom of heaven; for the man with faith alone can see the goal of the Kingdom and can strive for it, but is prevented from entering because he has not received the redeemed and regenerated human nature which is given through the sacraments, and especially the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist. Faith without works is dead, and the first work of faith is the reception of the sacraments in accordance with Christ's command. Baptism washes the believer clean, clothing him in a robe of light; Chrismation gives him a new spirit, sealing him with the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the Eucharist gives him the Body and Blood of Christ, of which the Lord said: "Verily, verily I say unto you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you" (John 6.53).

In the Life of St. Martin of Tours by Sulpicius Severus we read of a certain catechumen who died without baptism while the saint was away. On his return, the saint, fearful concerning the lot of his spiritual son, resurrected him so as to baptize him. In reply to those who questioned him about his experiences after death, the catechumen said that he had been taken to a dark
and gloomy dungeon - he had not been granted to enter Paradise because of his unbaptized state.

Now the ecumenists like to talk about rebirth, enlightenment, resurrection - all those images and symbols that we associate with Baptism. But they give them a meaning which is quite contrary to Orthodox Christianity. For there is no question, for the ecumenists, of crucifying the old man with all his lusts and fallen desires, and putting on the new man who is "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4.24). Rather, the goal of life for them is to give the fullest possible freedom and expression to the old man in his fallen nature, oriented as it is entirely to this-worldly pleasures and pursuits. Holiness as an ideal is completely foreign to them; they recognize no saints, and no ascetic struggle, unless it be the purely secular "sanctity" and struggles of such figures as Che Guevara or Martin Luther King.

Again, the World Council of Churches recognizes the baptisms of all its constituent churches. But what can this mean if, on the one hand, baptism for its "born-again" members, as we have seen, does not even involve water or a rite of any kind, and, on the other hand, it is proclaimed that all religions lead to God? For if Jews and Muslims and Buddhists, who do not have baptism and do not even believe in Christ, are equally on the way to God with the Christians, the only conclusion must be that neither Baptism nor Christ Himself are necessary for salvation. The Apostle proclaims "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism" (Ephesians 4.5). But the new ecumenist gospel is: many lords, any kind of faith, and no baptism...

St. Paul teaches that before Baptism "we all lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2.3). But in the Spirit-filled water of Baptism we received mercy instead of wrath, light out of darkness, life after death. For those, however, who attempt to separate the water from the Spirit in a purely "spiritual" baptism, the living water of the Spirit, too, has run dry (John 7.38-39). For, as the Lord said to the prophet, "they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2.13). And those who attempt to deny the need for real rebirth, for a new Spirit of holiness that cannot abide with the spirit of this world, have fallen victim to a quite different, unholy and lying spirit, like those false prophets of whom the Prophet Michaeas said: "Lo, the Lord has allowed a lying spirit to enter the mouths of all these your prophets..." (III Kings 22.23)

8. A REVIEW OF “THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ECUMENISM”

The Struggle against Ecumenism by the Holy Orthodox Church in North America (Boston, Mass., 1998) has two aims, the first explicitly stated and the second implicit. The first is to provide a history of the True Orthodox Church of Greece, the so-called “Old Calendarists”, in its struggle against the heresy of Ecumenism from 1924 to 1994. The second is to provide an apologia on behalf of the “Auxentiite” branch of the Greek Old Calendarist Church, and in particular of its North American affiliate centred in Boston and calling itself the Holy Orthodox Church in North America. In its first, major aim this book must be judged to have succeeded; it is probably the best book on its subject to have appeared in English, and quite possibly in any language. With regard to its second aim, however, the present reviewer remains unconvinced that the book has proved its case.

The heresy of Ecumenism was first officially proclaimed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in its Encyclical, “To the Churches of Christ wheresoever they may be”, dated 1920. In addition to recognizing the Catholics and Protestants as “fellow-heirs” of Christ with the Orthodox, this Encyclical made a number of proposals of a renovationist character, including the introduction of the new, papal or Gregorian calendar, all with the aim of bringing union between the Orthodox and the western heretics closer. That is why the introduction of the new calendar is regarded as the first concrete step (apart from the 1920 Encyclical itself) in the introduction of the heresy of Ecumenism.

In 1924, the new calendar was introduced into the State Church of Greece, and later in the same year into the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Romania. This provoked the emergence of the Old Calendarist movement in Greece, Romania and some other places where the Ecumenical Patriarchate had jurisdiction (e.g. the Russian monastery of Valaam, which was on the territory of the Finnish Church, which had been granted autonomy by Constantinople). From 1924 to 1935 the movement had a predominantly lay character, consisting of several hundred thousand Greek laymen and women with only a few priests (mainly hieromonks from Mount Athos) and no bishops. In 1935, however, three bishops from the new calendar State Church of Greece (two of them consecrated before 1924) returned to the Old Calendar and consecrated four new bishops. They then proclaimed that the State Church had fallen into schism and was deprived of the grace of sacraments.

The years 1935 to 1937 probably represented the peak of the Greek Old Calendarist Church, with a united and rapidly expanding membership that posed a serious threat to the official church. In 1937, however, after persecution from the State Church had reduced the number of Old Calendarist bishops to four, a tragic schism took place between two factions that came to be called the “Florinites” (after their leader, Metropolitan
Chrysostomos of Florina) and the “Matthewites” (after Bishop Matthew of Bresthena) respectively. The “Florinites” declared that the new calendarists were only “potentially” and not “actually” schismatics, and still retained the grace of sacraments. The “Matthewites” considered that this was a betrayal of the 1935 confession and broke communion with the “Florinites”.

By the late 1940s the Florinites had only one bishop (Metropolitan Chrysostomos) but the majority of the clergy and laity, while the Matthewites had two bishops (Matthew and Germanos, the latter of whom was in prison). Attempts at union between the two factions foundered not only on the question of grace, but also on Metropolitan Chrysostomos’ refusal to consecrate any more bishops (even after Bishop Germanos had rejoined him). So in 1948, fearing that the Old Calendarist Church would again find itself without bishops, Bishop Matthew was persuaded (not immediately, but only after several years of pressure from his supporters) to consecrate some bishops on his own, the first of whom was Bishop Spyridon of Trimythus (Cyprus).

At this point the authors of *The Struggle against Ecumenism* make their first error of fact. On page 64 they write: “The saintly Spyridon of Trimithus spent the last years of his life in seclusion, refusing to celebrate as a hierarch because he had repented of being consecrated in this completely uncanonical way [that is, by one bishop alone].” This is not true. In 1981 Bishop Spyridon's closest disciple, Abbot Chrysostomos of Galactotrophousa monastery, near Larnaca, Cyprus, told the present reviewer a very different story – which is supported by the letters to him of Bishop Spyridon himself. He said that shortly after starting to serve as the only Old Calendarist bishop in Cyprus in 1949, Bishop Spyridon was exiled from the island to Greece by the British acting at the behest of the new calendarists. After some years, the Matthewite Synod decided to replace Spyridon as bishop in Cyprus. They invited Monk Epiphanius to Greece and ordained him to the priesthood. Then, in 1957 an election took place in Cyprus at which Fr. Epiphanius was elected to the episcopate, which was followed by his consecration in Greece. All this took place, however, without the blessing of the still-living Bishop of Cyprus, Spyridon, who refused to recognize Bishop Epiphanius. And he told his disciples on Cyprus, including Abbot Chrysostomos (who had been his candidate for the episcopate), not to serve with Bishop Epiphanius. Meanwhile, he entered into seclusion in Greece and did not serve with the Matthewites as a protest. After some time Abbot Chrysostomos entered into communion with Bishop Epiphanius, for which he was punished by his spiritual father, Bishop Spyridon. So he again broke communion with Epiphanius. The Matthewites responded by defrocking Abbot Chrysostomos (although he was simply following the command of his spiritual father), but did not touch Bishop Spyridon until his death in 1963. A few years ago, shortly before his death, Abbot Chrysostomos’ defrocking was rescinded by
the Matthewite Synod. When his remains were exhumed they were discovered to be partially incorrupt...

In spite of this error the schism between the Florinites and the Matthewites is in general treated with admirable fairness by the authors of “The Struggle against Ecumenism”. This is important, not only because the schism still exists (and has now been transposed onto Russian, American and West European soil), but also because existing accounts in English are heavily biassed in favour of the Florinites. But the Boston authors, while in general inclining towards the Florinites (as does the present writer), not only note that “Bishop Matthew’s integrity, personal virtue, and asceticism were admitted by all” (his relics are very fragrant, and he was a wonderworker both before and after his death in 1950), but also give reasons for supposing that a union between Chrysostomos and Matthew could have been effected if it had not been for the zeal without knowledge of certain of Matthew’s supporters. They also do not conceal the fact that in 1950 Metropolitan Chrysostomos repented of his confession of 1937 and returned to his confession of 1935, declaring that the new calendarists were deprived of sacraments. In fact, this remained the official confession of faith of all factions of the Greek Old Calendarist Church until the appearance of the “Synod of Resistors” led by Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili and Oropos in 1984…

The Boston authors continue their history of the Old Calendarist movement by relating how the Florinites, after the death of Metropolitan Chrysostomos in 1955, eventually received a renewal of their hierarchy through the Russian Church Abroad in the 1960s, and how the Matthewites also achieved recognition by the Russian Church Abroad in 1971. Again, the treatment of this phase in the history is objective and fair. Especially valuable is the translation of all the relevant documents in full and with a helpful commentary.

The rest of the book is mainly devoted to a defence of the Florinite Archbishop Auxentius of Athens, who was defrocked by a Synod composed of the majority of the Florinite bishops in 1985. The Boston authors do not hide the fact that Auxentius made many mistakes; but their account of these mistakes, and especially of his trial in 1985, is sketchy and biassed. They write: “Some of His Beatitude’s mistake were notable, while others were debatable… His errors were often mistakes made in good faith, often on the advice of clergy who wittingly or unwittingly misled him.” (pp. 125, 129). However, it is one thing for the Boston authors to try and see extenuating factors alleviating the guilt of their archpastor – charity (and the canonicity of their own ecclesiastical position) demanded that. But it is another to slander those other Orthodox bishops who tried to introduce canonical order into the Church in the only canonical way open to them – by a hierarchical trial conducted according to the holy canons. Whatever the personal virtues of Auxentius, in the opinion of the present reviewer the Boston authors have not
succeeded in demonstrating that his defrocking in 1985 was not canonical and just.

The second half of the book consists of a number of useful appendices on various topics related to Ecumenism.

In conclusion, this book can be recommended both as a history of the Greek Old Calendarist Church and as a good introduction to the ecclesiological issues surrounding the great heresy of our time, Ecumenism. However, for those seeking to find a clear answer to the question: which of the many Greek Old Calendarist jurisdictions is the most canonical and true?, this book will provide a mixture of light and darkness. Such seekers will have to conduct further research, and investigate other points of view.
This is an instructive and moving book, big both in its length (over 1000 pages) and in its significance. The subject is the life of the American-born member of the Russian Church Abroad, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, who died in 1982 at the age of 48 after an amazingly productive life as a missionary and church writer. A man of Fr. Seraphim’s stature would be worthy of a biography whatever age he lived in or country he came from. But his life is of particular significance for our particular age and our particular culture.

First, he represents one of the few, very few westerners who, having brought up in our spiritual Babylon, have not only converted to the True Faith of Orthodoxy, but have brought forth much spiritual fruit. This should lead us westerners to study his life with particular attention; for, as Fr. Damascene points out, Fr. Seraphim vaulted many of the hurdles that present such difficulties to the Orthodox western convert, and his life and writings offer many valuable “tips” for the convert. Coming from a typically Protestant background, he seemed set for a brilliant academic career as a Chinese expert. But his agonized striving for the truth led him to reject the vanities of academe, and after a brief descent into the hell of nihilism and the self-indulgent life-style of the San Francisco hippy culture, his soul was resurrected in the light of Orthodox Christianity.

Secondly, Fr. Seraphim’s brilliant and cultured mind, illumined by true faith and honed on the writings of the Holy Fathers, produced book-length studies of various theological topics that have deservedly acquired “classic” status. Fr. Damascene quotes at length from his works on the soul after death, the western saints, eastern religions, Blessed Augustine, evolution and other topics, in which Fr. Seraphim’s contribution is second to none. However, on one topic – the “jurisdictional issue” and the Soviet Moscow Patriarchate in particular – Fr. Seraphim’s opinions do not reflect the consensus of the Holy Fathers of our time, and Fr. Damascene’s uncritical acceptance of Fr. Seraphim’s position here shows a certain bias.

Thirdly, Fr. Seraphim did not only speak and write about the faith: he also put it into practice: as a monk and co-founder of the Brotherhood of St. Herman of Alaska in Platina, California, as a missionary, and as a priest and spiritual father. Much of the value of this book resides in the accounts given by his spiritual children and his co-struggler, Fr. Herman, that witness to his quiet wisdom and warm charity. And this reviewer, for one, has no difficulty in believing the accounts at the end of this book of his appearances to, and intercession for, his spiritual children after his death.

So in turning now to the opinions of Fr. Seraphim which are likely to prove less enduring and solidly based, we are in no way disputing his reputation as
one of the truly righteous men of his century. Like Blessed Augustine, whom he so ably defended, he made errors while remaining Orthodox. And so of him we say, as St. Photius said of St. Augustine: “We embrace the man, while rejecting his errors.”

The one major question on which, in the reviewer’s opinion, Fr. Seraphim was wrong was the jurisdictional issue, or, if we accept that “there are no such things as jurisdictions, only the Church”, the question: Where is the True Church? While accepting that inter-faith and inter-Christian ecumenism were heresies, as also the policy of submitting to atheist political power that is called sergianism, Fr. Seraphim did not accept that the Orthodox Churches which practiced these heresies officially were heretical and deprived of the grace of true sacraments. Again, there is a remarkable similarity here to St. Augustine, who rejected the Donatists as schismatics while accepting their sacraments.

Fr. Seraphim had not always been a “liberal” on this question, as early issues of his monastery’s publication, The Orthodox Word, demonstrate. However, from the mid-1970s another influence began to bear on his views on the subject: the “zealot” rejection of the sacraments of the ecumenist Orthodox on the part of the “Hartford” monastery, a pseudonym for the Greek-American Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Boston. Finding the Boston monastery and its “super-correct” followers lacking in charity and the true warmth of Orthodox piety, and quite rightly rejecting their views on other subjects such as the soul after death, Fr. Seraphim over-reacted, in the present reviewer’s opinion, by adopting the “liberal” position rejected by Boston.

Another factor that influenced his conversion to the liberal position on this matter was the so-called “rebaptism” controversy. Boston, with the blessing of Metropolitan Philaret, first-hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, had baptized several converts to Orthodoxy who had been received into the Russian Church Abroad without baptism. Fr. Seraphim considered this practice over-zealous and harmful (he himself had been received from Protestantism by chrismation only).

Now since the “rebaptism” controversy started, as Fr. Damascene says, in England in 1976, and since the present reviewer was the first to be “rebaptised” there, it may not be out of place for him to correct Fr. Damascene on certain points of fact in this connection.

First, the English converts were not “rebaptised” since they had never received baptism in any Orthodox jurisdiction (Anglican sprinkling is not baptism in any sense). Secondly, in asking for baptism, they had not acted at the instigation of the Boston monastery, but at the promptings of their own conscience; nor, contrary to what Fr. Damascene writes, was Archbishop
Nicodemus of Great Britain, who granted the converts’ request, in any way influenced by Boston. Thirdly, neither Archbishop Nicodemus nor the converts insisted that everyone else in a similar situation to theirs should be baptized, or that they had been outside the Church before their baptism (for they had previously been received into the ROCOR by confession). Now it may be that Fr. Seraphim felt that he and others who had been received into the ROCOR by “economy”, i.e. without baptism, would now be forced to accept “rebaptism”, which would explain Fr. Damascene’s vehemence against the “rebaptism” in England. However, we can only reaffirm that neither Archbishop Nicodemus nor the priest who baptized us nor we ourselves had any such ideas.

What is true is that we asserted that when we moved from the Moscow Patriarchate to the ROCOR, we moved from a heretical “church” into a true one, and that the chrismation we received in the MP was graceless. This opinion Fr. Seraphim contested on several grounds: (1) Hieromartyr Cyril of Kazan had accepted the sacraments of the MP in 1934; (2) the ROCOR had not made any declaration on the subject, and (3) there were still supposedly great confessors in the MP – for example, Fr. Demetrius Dudko. Let us look briefly at each of these arguments.

1. Metropolitan Cyril expressed his opinion with great caution and admitted that he might be being over-cautious. Moreover, he asserted – this is an important point always passed over by the “liberal” tendency – that those who partook of the sacraments of the MP knowing of its evil partook to their condemnation. In any case, Metropolitan Cyril’s opinion was expressed in 1934, when the schism of the MP was incomplete, since both sides still commemorated Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa. It is extremely unlikely that Metropolitan Cyril would have continued to maintain what he admitted might be an over-cautious position after the death of Metropolitan Peter and the completion of the schism in October, 1937. Moreover, already in March, 1937 he wrote a letter in which, while not expressly saying that the MP was graceless, he noted that it was “renovationist in essence” and that enough time had passed for people to evaluate its nature and leave it. And by his death in November, 1937, according to Catacomb sources, he had come to full agreement with the “zealot” position of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd on this point before they were shot together in Chimkent. Can there be any doubt what his opinion would be now, when the MP has added, among many other crimes, the “heresy of heresies”, ecumenism, to its original sin of sergianism?

2. It is true that the whole ROCOR Synod made no declaration on this subject. But individual leaders did – and they were not speaking only for themselves. For example, in his encyclical of 1928 Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev declared in the name of his whole Synod that the leaders of the MP were schismatics and apostates. This declaration was quoted by Metropolitan Philaret in his 1969 encyclical on the American Metropolia, and
in 1977 the same Metropolitan Philaret told the present writer in the presence of witnesses that he should remain faithful to the anathema of the Catacomb Church against the MP. Other members of the ROCOR Synod who adopted this zealot position were Archbishop Averky of Jordanville, Archbishop Nicodemus of Great Britain, Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, Archbishop Andrew of Rockland, Protopresbyter Michael Polsky and Professor Andreyev, the last three of whom had all been members of the Catacomb Church. Even Fr. Seraphim himself once compared the sergianists and ecumenists to the iconoclasts, who were graceless heretics.

The position of the Catacomb confessors on this question is critical, since they knew the MP at first-hand and were in the best position, canonically speaking, to judge it. Among the martyr-hierarchs about whose zealot views there can be no doubt we can mention Bishop Maximus of Serpukhov (who said that the Catacomb Church had formally anathematized the MP), Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, Archbishop Andrew of Ufa, Archbishop Theodore of Volokolamsk and the four bishops who attended the Ust-Kut Council of 1937. Again, Fr. Ishmael Rozhdestvensky, whose life was translated by Fr. Seraphim, forbade his spiritual children even to look at churches of the MP.

3. Fr. Seraphim defended Fr. Demetrius out of a sense of deep compassion. Now compassion, when purified, is a great virtue. But it should not be allowed to hinder sober and dispassionate judgement, and there is no doubt that Fr. Seraphim allowed his heart (“the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17.9)) to cloud his judgement in this matter.

Let us consider the facts. Fr. Demetrius was a priest of the Soviet church who refused the invitation of the Catacomb Church to join it. He was an ecumenist – he revered the Pope and asked his blessing on his work, and those who published the English edition of Our Hope told the present reviewer that they had had to edit out large amounts of ecumenist material from the work. And he was a sergianist – under pressure from the authorities, he once told a 15-year-old spiritual son of his to return to the Komsomol. In 1980 he publicly recanted of his anti-Soviet activities on Soviet television. When the ROCOR first accepted parishes on Russian soil in 1990, he stubbornly refused to join it, although there was now far less danger in doing so. And towards the end of his life (he died in June, 2004) he became an ardent advocate of the canonization of – Stalin!

When speaking about Fr. Demetrius, Fr. Seraphim’s usual discernment seems to have deserted him. Thus he wrote that Fr. Demetrius’ “fiery, urgent preaching hasn’t been heard in Russia and probably the whole Orthodox world since the days of St. John of Kronstadt” (p. 859) – an amazing exaggeration which placed Fr. Demetrius above Patriarch Tikhon and other great preachers among the true martyrs and confessors of Russia. Again, he
often said that he was in the same Church as Fr. Demetrius, quoting his words: “The unity of the Church at the present time consists in division” (p. 863), as if to assert that the obvious division between the MP and the ROCOR either did not exist or was of little significance.

When Fr. Demetrius “repented” before Soviet power in 1980, thereby fulfilling the prediction of Metropolitan Philaret, who stated quite bluntly that he would fall because he was not in the True Church, there was much talk about the danger of “gloating”. But nobody gloated. Fr. Demetrius’ fall was clearly a matter of profound sorrow, not triumphalism. But neither Fr. Demetrius nor anyone else was served by denying that it was a fall – which is what many liberals tried to assert. The present reviewer heard from a spiritual son of Fr. Demetrius, now a priest of the True Church inside Russia, that he was never the same after his public recantation. And, as was noted above, in his later years he actually became an ardent supporter of the worst aspect of the MP, its worship of Stalin. For the fact is that his house was built on sand, the sand of Soviet communism, and this alone is the reason why he fell (Matthew 7.27).

However much compassion he felt for Fr. Demetrius, Fr. Seraphim was wrong to hold him up as a role model and “confessor”. First, because he did not belong to the True Church and did not confess the True Faith (which is not to say, of course, that he did not sometimes write good things). And secondly, because to glorify a priest of the Soviet church, however courageous, is to undervalue the podvig of the true confessors of the Catacomb Church. If it is possible to be a “martyr” and “confessor” while belonging to a false church and confessing heresy, why should anyone take the trouble and undergo the danger of joining the True Church? But many thousands, even millions, did just that, preferring death to doing what Fr. Demetrius did; and we must recognize that their position was not only canonically “correct”, but the only Christian way.

To take just one example: in the 1970s, at precisely the time that Fr. Demetrius was preaching his fiery sermons, the Catacomb hierarch Gennadius (Sekach) was living near Novy Afon in the Caucasus. The Soviet hierarch Ilia of Sukhumi (a KGB agent since 1962 and now “patriarch” of the official Georgian church), hearing of his whereabouts through spies, offered Gennadius a comfortable place in the Soviet church organization. Gennadius refused, saying that if he accepted the offer he “would lose everything”. Ilia then denounced him to the KGB, who put him prison in Georgia and tortured him till the blood flowed...

Gennadius was a true confessor - and Fr. Seraphim devoted a chapter to him in his book Russia’s Catacomb Saints. But then why did he devote another chapter to Dudko, who did everything Gennadius refused to do? How could they both be confessors?!
The present reviewer’s position may perhaps be criticized as being “over-
logical” and “super-correct”, demonstrating typically convert pride and lack
of compassion. Certainly, he can recognize many of the traits Fr. Seraphim
identifies as being typical of the convert mentality in himself. But God forbid
that we should ever devalue the podvig of the true confessors by glorifying
false ones – that is not the path of true humility and compassion. For let us
make no mistake: if we glorify pseudo-confessors, we both injure them (by
confirming them in their heresy or schism), and may end up falling away
from the truth ourselves. Which is precisely what happened, tragically, to
some of Fr. Seraphim’s fellow strugglers after his repose…

Fr. Seraphim himself, in spite of his errors, remained in the True Church
until his death, and deserves to be remembered among the true confessors.
Indeed, the present reviewer believes that if he had lived to witness the
ROCOR’s Anathema against Ecumenism in 1983, and the extraordinary
pagan festivals of the ecumenists in Vancouver in 1983, Assisi in 1986 and
Canberra in 1991, not to mention the unias of the Orthodox ecumenists with
the Monophysites at Chambesy in 1990 and with the Roman Catholics at
Balamand in 1994, he would have returned to his earlier, more zealous
position and the common mind of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic
Church on this question. For there is only One Church, just as there is only
one true confession of the Faith; and all those who deny that fact, such as the
present-day Moscow and Ecumenical Patriarchates, have no part in that Faith
and that Church, according to the sacred canons and dogmas.

To recognize this in a humble and obedient spirit is not to be “super-
correct” or pharisaical, but correct and Orthodox; for “Orthodoxy” means
“correct belief”. Moreover, it is to be truly compassionate; for “the greatest act
of charity,” as St. Photius the Great says, “is to tell the truth”. It follows that if
we arrogantly mock the need for such correctness while glorying in our
“Orthodoxy of the heart” – which none of the Holy Fathers did – we run the
risk of condemnation. For, as the Lord Himself said: “Whosoever therefore
shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall
be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven…” (Matthew 5.19).

St. John Maximovich.
10. QUO VADIS, SCIENCE?

I am Thy slave and the son of Thy handmaid, a man who is weak and short-lived, with little understanding of judgement and laws; for even if one is perfect among the sons of men, yet without the wisdom that comes from Thee he will be regarded as nothing...

For a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind. We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labour; but who has traced out what is in the heavens, and who has learned Thy counsel, unless Thou give him wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from on high?

Wisdom of Solomon 9.5-6, 15-17.

Only Christianity is a reliable and useful philosophy. Only thus and for this reason can I be a philosopher.

St. Justin the Philosopher.

Introduction

What is the truth about science? Is it, as its worshippers claim, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Or are there other truths that both stand independent of science and contradict it, both in its general assumptions and in some of its most cherished and universally accepted hypotheses? To what extent can we trust scientists? What is the relationship between science and faith, and can we expect any change in that relationship in the future?

Such questions cannot be avoided by any Orthodox Christian who has a conscious attitude towards his faith. For science is now more powerful than ever; it transforms the external conditions of man’s existence at an ever-accelerating rate, and generates an ever-growing army of servants with ever-increasing demands for money and resources. So unquestioned is the dogma that the well-being of mankind depends on scientific progress more than anything else that science may be said to rule governments and their budgets rather than being ruled by them. One of the two greatest powers of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union, fell in the 1980s largely because it bankrupted itself in the arms race, which was a struggle for scientific and technological superiority. The one that survived, the United States, retains its military, political and cultural power largely because it is able to attract more top-grade scientists from all over the world, and do more scientific research in every field, than any other state – at the price of the largest federal deficit in history.

But these material and external effects of science pale into insignificance beside its spiritual, internal effects: the corrosive effect of the scientific worldview on all traditional religions, and its self-exaltation above all other faiths as their ultimate arbiter and judge.
Bertrand Russell once wrote: "Almost everything that distinguishes the modern world from earlier centuries is attributable to science, which achieved its most spectacular triumphs in the seventeenth century." Michael Polanyi confirms this judgement: "Just as the three centuries following on the calling of the Apostles sufficed to establish Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, so the three centuries after the founding of the Royal Society sufficed for science to establish itself as the supreme intellectual authority of the post-Christian age. 'It is contrary to religion!' - the objection ruled supreme in the seventeenth century. 'It is unscientific!' is its equivalent in the twentieth."

At first, from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries, the scientific world-view coexisted in an increasingly uncomfortable and schizoid manner with various forms of the Christian and other traditional religious world-views. But it has ended, in the twentieth century, by more or less completely banishing Christianity from the minds of "educated" men, whether or not they still call themselves "Christian". Science has indeed become the god of our age, worshipped both by scientists and by non-scientists, both in the democratic West and in the non-democratic East. Indeed, one of the most powerful arguments for the superiority of democracy and the market economy over other forms of politico-economic organization is that it promotes science, which in turn promotes peace, prosperity and democracy: authoritarian forms of government are rejected because they undermine the free flow of ideas and criticism that fosters the scientific enterprise. There is no getting away from the influence of science: even the power of prayer to produce healings is now subject to controlled scientific experiments.

The cult of science was described in dark, almost apocalyptic colours by Dostoyevsky: "Half-science," says one of his characters, "is that most terrible scourge of mankind, worse than pestilence, famine, or war, and quite unknown till our present century. Half-science is a despot such as has never been known before, a despot that has its own priests and slaves, a despot before whom everybody prostrates himself with love and superstitious dread, such as has been inconceivable till now, before whom science trembles and surrenders in a shameful way."

Dostoyevsky was careful to distinguish between science and "half-science", or what we would now call "scientism". This implies that he saw science as a legitimate pursuit, but one in danger of subjection to its parasite or counterfeit, "half-science".

How can this be?

92 Polanyi, "The Two Cultures", Encounter, 1959, № 13, p. 61.
The Foundations of Science

Science obviously contains some measure or kind of truth, otherwise it would not have such formidable predictive power or generate such wonderful technologies. It has therefore been a natural and laudable quest on the part of educated Christians to try and find some way of resolving the apparent contradictions between science and Christianity. Indeed, this is a necessity of our faith. For if the universe is one and created by one God, we must believe that the truths of the faith and the final conclusions of science (if such there can ever be) are compatible. To believe otherwise leads to a kind of epistemological Manichaeism postulating two kinds of mutually impenetrable universes which cannot be comprehended from a single viewpoint, or, alternatively, to a kind of solipsistic Buddhism according to which one of the two realms is considered to be illusory.

Thus Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: “Even though revealed knowledge is higher than natural knowledge, still we know that there can be no conflict between true revelation and true natural knowledge. But there can be conflict between revelation and human philosophy, which is often in error. There is thus no conflict between the knowledge of creation contained in Genesis, interpreted for us by the Holy Fathers, and the true knowledge of creatures which modern science has acquired by observation; but there most certainly is an irreconcilable conflict between the knowledge contained in Genesis and the vain philosophical speculation of modern scientists, unenlightened by faith, about the state of the world in the Six Days of Creation.”

That human philosophy (philosophy as the world knows it) and natural philosophy (science) are often in error and in conflict with the revealed truth of the Scriptures is not surprising if we consider the different origins of the two kinds of knowledge.

The knowledge that science gives can be compared to the light of the sun that we know, which was created on the fourth day of creation; whereas the knowledge contained in the Scriptures and Tradition of the Church can be compared to that original light which flooded the universe on the very first day at the Lord’s word: “Let there be light!” The light of the sun lights up only one planet among the millions of planets in the universe; it is itself only one out of millions of stars in millions of galaxies. Moreover, the knowledge it gives us only illumines a part of the planet’s surface; for much of the time it is covered with clouds or completely obscured by night. As for what is under or beyond the earth, that remains completely unillumined by it. However, the light created at the beginning of creation, though we can only guess at its nature, was certainly such as to reveal the whole of material reality without casting any shadows or leaving any nook or cranny unillumined.

Science became useful only with the fall of man; it is a method of reasoning carried out by fallen men with fallen faculties and with strictly limited and earthly aims. As we shall see in more detail later, it cannot give real knowledge of the unfallen world, neither the world of unfallen spirits nor the world that will be after the restoration at the Second Coming of Christ. It is of limited use for limited men – that is, men who use only their fallen faculties; and when the true light of knowledge comes, as we see it come in the lives of the saints, the truly enlightened ones, it ceases to have any use at all.

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, who had a thorough training in physics, mathematics and engineering, writes: “You ask what is my opinion of the human sciences? After the fall men began to need clothing and numerous other things that accompany our earthly wanderings; in a word, they began to need material development, the striving for which has become the distinguishing feature of our age. The sciences are the fruit of our fall, the production of our damaged fallen reason. Scholarship is the acquisition and retention of impressions and knowledge that have been stored up by men during the time of the life of the fallen world. Scholarship is a lamp by which ‘the gloom of darkness is guarded to the ages’. The Redeemer returned to men that lamp which was given to them at creation by the Creator, of which they were deprived because of their sinfulness. This lamp is the Holy Spirit, He is the Spirit of Truth, who teaches every truth, searches out the deep things of God, opens and explains mysteries, and also bestows material knowledge when that is necessary for the spiritual benefit of man. Scholarship is not properly speaking wisdom, but an opinion about wisdom. The knowledge of the Truth that was revealed to men by the Lord, access to which is only by faith, which is inaccessible for the fallen mind of man, is replaced in scholarship by guesses and presuppositions. The wisdom of this world, in which many pagans and atheists occupy honoured positions, is directly contrary according to its very origins with spiritual, Divine wisdom: it is impossible to be a follower of the one and the other at the same time; one must unfailingly be renounced. The fallen man is ‘falsehood’, and from his reasonings ‘science falsely so-called’ is composed, that form and collection of false concepts and knowledge that has only the appearance of reasons, but is in essence vacillation, madness, the raving of the mind infected with the deadly plague of sin and the fall. This infirmity of the mind is revealed in special fullness in the philosophical sciences.”95 And again he writes: “The holy faith at which the materialists laughed and laugh, is so subtle and exalted that it can be attained and taught only by spiritual reason. The reason of the world is opposed to it and rejects it. But when for some material necessity it finds it necessary and tolerates it, then it understands it falsely and interprets it wrongly; because the blindness ascribed by it to faith is its own characteristic.”96

95 Bishop Ignatius, Sochinenia (Works), volume 4, letter № 45 (in Russian).
St. Basil the Great said: “At all events let us prefer the simplicity of faith to the demonstrations of reason.” These words should be our guide whenever science – or, as happens more often, philosophy clothed in “half-scientific” arguments - appears to contradict faith. That science could ever really refute faith is the opinion only of those who do not know what faith is, who have not tasted of that knowledge which comes, not from the fallen faculties of fallen men applied to the most limited and circumscribed of objects, but from God Himself.

The scientific world-view proclaims that the only reliable way of attaining non-mathematical truth is by inferences from the evidence of the senses. This principle, the principle of empiricism, was first proclaimed by Francis Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605). It rejects the witness of non-empirical sources - for example, God or intuition or so-called “innate ideas”. The reverse process - that is, inferences about God and other non-empirical realities from the evidence of the senses - was admitted by the early empiricists, but rejected by most later ones.

Thus in time empiricism became not only a methodological or epistemological, but also an ontological principle, the principle, namely, that reality not only is best discovered by empirical means, but also is, solely and exclusively, that which can be investigated by empirical means, and that non-empirical reality simply does not exist.

By contrast, the Christian Faith makes no radical cleavage between empirical and non-empirical truth, accepting evidence of the senses with regard to the existence and activity of God and the witness of God Himself with regard to the nature of empirically perceived events.

In accordance with this difference in the kinds of truth they seek, there is a difference in spirit between science (in its more “advanced”, materialist form) and faith. The spirit of true religion is the spirit of the humble receiving of the truth by revelation from God; it does not preclude active seeking for truth, but recognizes that it will never succeed in this search if God on His part does not reveal it. For Wisdom “goes about seeking those worthy of her, and She graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought” (*Wisdom* 6.16). Science, on the other hand, is supremely self-reliant…

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97 St. Basil, Homily 1 on the *Hexaemeron*.
98 The transition from the early to the later empiricism is marked by David Hume’s *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (1747), in which he writes: “While we argue from the course of nature and infer a particular intelligent cause which first bestowed and still preserves order in the universe, we embrace a principle which is still uncertain and useless. It is uncertain because the subject lies entirely beyond the reach of human experience. It is useless because… we can never on that basis establish any principles of conduct and behaviour.”
Moreover, there is a Faustian spirit in science, a striving for power over nature, rather than simply knowledge of it, which is incompatible with the true religious spirit. Thus Bacon thought that the “pure knowledge of nature and universality” would lead to power - “knowledge is power”, in his famous phrase - and to “the effecting of all things possible”. This is even more true of modern scientists, who place no limits to the powers of science.

Bacon compared science to the knowledge Adam had before the fall – “the pure knowledge of nature and universality, a knowledge by the light whereof man did give names unto other creatures in Paradise, as they were brought to him”. “This light should in its very rising touch and illuminate all the border-regions that confine upon the circle of our present knowledge; and so, spreading further and further should presently disclose and bring into sight all that is most hidden and secret in the world.” “God forbid,” he wrote, “that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world: rather may He graciously grant to us to write an apocalypse or true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on His creatures.”

As J.M. Roberts writes, Bacon “seems to have been a visionary, glimpsing not so much what science would discover as what it would become: a faith. ‘The true and lawful end of the sciences’, he wrote, ‘is that human life be enriched by new discoveries and powers.’ Through them could be achieved ‘a restitution and reinvigorating (in great part) of man to the sovereignty and power... which he had in his first creation.’ This was ambitious indeed – nothing less than the redemption of mankind through organised research; he was here, too, a prophetic figure, precursor of later scientific societies and institutes.”

This striving for power by wresting the secrets of nature indicates a kinship between science and magic, if not in their methods, at any rate in their aims. And while Erasmus’ humorous critique of scientists in the early fifteenth century could not be applied to their early twenty-first century successors without qualification, he unerringly pointed to a common spirit between science of all ages and magic: “Near these march the scientists, reverenced for their beards and the fur on their gowns, who teach that they alone are wise while the rest of mortal men flit about as shadows. How pleasantly they dote, indeed, while they construct their numberless worlds, and measure the sun, moon, stars, and spheres as with thumb and line. They assign causes for lightning, winds, eclipses, and other inexplicable things, never hesitating a whit, as if they were privy to the secrets of nature, artificer of things, or as if they visited us fresh from the council of the gods. Yet all the while nature is

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100 Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, Book I, 1, 3.
101 Bacon, *The Interpretation of Nature*, proemium.
laughing grandly at them and their conjectures. For to prove that they have
good intelligence of nothing, this is a sufficient argument: they can never
explain why they disagree with each other on every subject. Thus knowing
nothing in general, they profess to know all things in particular; though they
are ignorant even of themselves, and on occasion do not see the ditch or the
stone lying across their path, because many of them are blear-eyed or absent-
minded; yet they proclaim that they perceive ideas, universals, forms without
matter, primary substances, quiddities, and eccentrics – things so tenuous, I
fear, that Lynceus himself could not see them. When they especially disdain
the vulgar crowd is when they bring out their triangles, quadrangles, circles,
and mathematical pictures of the sort, lay one upon the other, intertwine them
into a maze, then deploy – and all to involve the uninstructed in darkness. Their
fraternity does not lack those who predict future events by consulting the
stars, and promise wonders even more magical; and these lucky scientists
find people to believe them.”

C.S. Lewis writes: “There is something which unites magic and applied
science while separating both from the wisdom of earlier ages. For the wise
men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality,
and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic
and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes
of men: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique,
are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious – such as
digging up and mutilating the dead.”

Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: “Modern science was born [in the Renaissance]
out of the experiments of the Platonic alchemists, the astrologers and
magicians. The underlying spirit of the new scientific world view was the
spirit of Faustianism, the spirit of magic, which is retained as a definite
undertone of contemporary science. The discovery, in fact, of atomic energy
would have delighted the Renaissance alchemists very much: they were
looking for just such power. The aim of modern science is power over nature.
Descartes, who formulated the mechanistic scientific world view, said that
man was to become the master and possessor of nature. It should be noted
that this is a religious faith that takes the place of Christian faith.”

Faith, on the other hand, does not seek power over nature, but obedience
to God. It relies on no other ultimate authority than the Word of God Himself
as communicated either directly to an individual or, collectively, to the
Church, “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy 3.15), which
preserves and nurtures the individual revelations.

104 Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, in Charles H. George, 500 Years of Revolution: European Radicals
105 Lewis, quoted in Fr. Seraphim Johnson, “A Sane Family in an Insane World”.
106 Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, Not of this World: The Life and Teachings of Fr.
The Fallibility Principle

Science is in principle fallible, not only because scientists are fallen human beings, but also because the only way in which they progress in their work is by showing that the work of earlier scientists is fallible. It is not simply that they add to the work of earlier scientists, discovering facts that were concealed from their predecessors: they actively try and disprove the currently reigning hypotheses. No hypothesis can ever be proved beyond any possible doubt, and science advances by the systematic application of doubt to what are thought to be weak points in its hypothetical structure. This was seen already by John Donne, who said: “the new philosophy [science] calls all in doubt”. And in the twentieth century it was confirmed by Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn and others: verifiability equals disprovability.

Now this is a paradox if ever there was one: that truth is truth only if it can, in principle, be proved to be not true! And yet this is the very corner-stone of the scientific method and the scientific world-view! Of course, scientists try and soften the force of this paradox. Even if we cannot be certain about the truth of any scientific hypothesis, they say, we can be sure that our present hypotheses are closer to the truth than those of our predecessors. And the proof of that is that science works: our science is truer than Aristotle’s because we can fly to the moon and explode atomic bombs, whereas he couldn’t.

And yet the paradox is not so easily disposed of, nor the destructive effects of the scientific world-view so easily forgiven. And by “destructive” here I do not mean the obviously destructive effects of atomic bombs, or of the pollution of the atmosphere caused by space flights, carbon gas emissions, etc. Science can defend itself against the charge of this kind of destructiveness by arguing, with greater or lesser plausibility, that it is not responsible for the use that is made of its discoveries. Knowledge is good in itself, or at least not evil: it is the use made of knowledge by irresponsible men that is evil. However, much more serious and fundamental than this is the charge that the principle of systematic and universal doubt that lies at the foundation of the modern scientific world-view is simply false, that there are certain very important truths we can be completely certain of, which we cannot and must not doubt, and that the enthroning of the scientific world-view in the heart of man actually makes it impossible for man to acquire these truths.

Faith is the opposite of doubt; it is defined by the apostle as “the certainty of things not seen” (Hebrews 11.1). Doubt has no place within the true religion, but only when one is still outside it, in the process of seeking it, when different religious systems are being approached as possible truths, that is, as hypotheses. Having cleaved to the true religion by faith, the religious believer

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advances, not by subjecting his faith to doubt, but by *deepening that faith*, by ever deeper immersion in the undoubted truths of religion.

When the differences between science and faith are viewed from this perspective, the perspective of Orthodox Christianity, there are seen to be important differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. For from this perspective, Catholicism is more “religious”, and Protestantism – more “scientific”. For Protestantism arose as a protest against, and a doubting of, the revealed truths of the Catholic religion. From an Orthodox point of view, some of these doubts were justified, and some not. But that is not the essential point here. The essential point is that Protestantism arose out of doubt rather than faith, out of negation rather than assertion, and, like Descartes in philosophy, *placed doubt at the head of the corner of its new theology*.

How? First, by doubting that there is any organization that is “the pillar and ground of the truth”, any collective vessel of God’s revelation. So where is God’s revelation to be sought? In the visions and words of individual men, the Prophets and Apostles, the Saints and Fathers? Yes; but – and here the corrosive power of doubt enters again – not all that the Church has passed down about these men can be trusted, according to the Protestants. In particular, the inspiration of the post-apostolic Saints and Fathers is to be doubted, as is much of what we are told of the lives even of the Prophets and Apostles. In fact, we can only rely on the Bible – *Sola Scriptura*. After all, the Bible is *objective*; everybody can have access to it, can touch it and read it; can analyse and interpret it. In other words, it corresponds to what we would call *scientific evidence*.

But can we be sure even of the Bible? After all, the text comes to us from the Church, that supposedly untrustworthy organization. Can we be sure that Moses wrote *Genesis*, or Isaiah *Isaiah*, or John *John*, or Paul *Hebrews*? To answer these questions we have to analyze the text, subject it to scientific verification. Then we will find the *real* text, the text we can really trust, because it is the text of the *real* author. But suppose we cannot find this real text? Or the real author? And suppose we come to the conclusion that the “real” text of a certain book was written by tens of authors, none of whom was the “inspired” author, spread over hundreds of years? Can we then be sure that it is the Word of God? But if we cannot be sure that the Bible is not the Word of God, how can we be sure of anything?

Thus Protestantism, which begins with the doubting of authority, ends with the loss of truth itself. Or rather, it ends with a scientific truth that accepts religious truth only to the extent that it is “confirmed by the findings of science“. It ends by being a branch of the scientific endeavour of systematic doubt, and not a species of religious faith at all.
If we go back to the original error of Protestantism, we will find that it consists in what we may call a \textit{false reductionist} attitude to Divine Revelation. Revelation is given to us in the Church, “the pillar and ground of the truth”, and consists of two indivisible and mutually interdependent parts – Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. Scripture and Tradition support each other, and are in turn supported by the Church, which herself rests on the rock of truth witnessed to in Scripture and Tradition. Any attempt to \textit{reduce} Divine Revelation to one of these elements, any attempt to make one element essential and the other inessential, is doomed to end with the loss of Revelation altogether. The Truth is one irreducible whole.

Where does the false reductionist attitude come from? Vladimir Trostnikov has shown that it goes back as far as the 11th century, to the nominalist thinker Roscelin. Nominalism, which had triumphed over its philosophical rival, universalism, by the 14th century, “gives priority to the particular over the general, the lower over the higher”. As such, it is in essence the forerunner of reductionism, which insists that the simple precedes the complex, and that the complex can always be reduced, both logically and ontologically, to the simple.\textsuperscript{108}

Thus the Catholic heresy of nominalism gave birth to the Protestant heresy of reductionism, which reduced the complex spiritual process of the absorption of God’s revelation in the life of the Church to the unaided rationalist dissection of a single element in that life, the book of the Holy Scriptures. As Trostnikov explains, the assumption – against all the evidence – that reductionism is true has led to a series of concepts which taken together represent a summation of the contemporary world-view: that matter consists of elementary particles which themselves do not consist of anything; that the planets and all the larger objects of the universe arose through the gradual condensation of simple gas; that all living creatures arose out of inorganic matter; that the later forms of social organization and politics arose out of earlier, simpler and less efficient ones; that human consciousness arose from lower phenomena, drives and archetypes; that political rulers must be guided, not from above, but from below, by their own subjects...

We see, then, why science, like capitalism, flourished in the Protestant countries. Protestantism, according to Landes, “gave a big boost to literacy, spawned dissent and heresies, and promoted the skepticism and refusal of authority that is at the heart of the scientific endeavor. The Catholic countries, instead of meeting the challenge, responded by closure and censure.”\textsuperscript{109}

However, it is misleading to make too great a contrast between science-loving, democratic religion and science-hating authoritarian religion. Much confusion has been generated in this respect by Galileo’s trial, in which, so it is said, a Pope who falsely believed that the earth was flat and that the sun circled the earth persecuted Galileo, who believed on empirical evidence that the earth circled the sun. Other scientists persecuted by the Catholics, it is said, were Copernicus and Bruno. But the truth, as Jay Wesley Richards explains, was different. “First of all, some claim Copernicus was persecuted, but history shows he wasn’t; in fact, he died of natural causes the same year his ideas were published. As for Galileo, his case can’t be reduced to a simple conflict between scientific truth and religious superstition. He insisted the church immediately endorse his views rather than allow them to gradually gain acceptance, he mocked the Pope, and so forth. Yes, he was censured, but the church kept giving him his pension for the rest of his life.”

“Indeed,” writes Lee Strobel, “historian William R. Shea said, ‘Galileo’s condemnation was the result of the complex interplay of untoward political circumstances, political ambitions, and wounded prides.’ Historical researcher Philip J. Sampson noted that Galileo himself was convinced that the ‘major cause’ of his troubles was that he had made ‘fun of his Holiness’ – that is, Pope Urban VIII – in a 1632 treatise. As for his punishment, Alfred North Whitehead put it this way: ‘Galileo suffered an honorable detention and a mild reproof, before dying peacefully in his bed.’

Richards continues. “[Bruno] was executed in Rome in 1600. Certainly this is a stain on [Roman Catholic] church history. But again, this was a complicated case. His Copernican views were incidental. He defended pantheism and was actually executed for his heretical views on the Trinity, the Incarnation, and other doctrines that had nothing to do with Copernicanism.”

In fact, neither Holy Scripture, nor the Holy Fathers, nor even the Roman church as a whole denied the idea of a spherical earth. “The truth is,” writes David Lindberg, “that it’s almost impossible to find an educated person after Aristotle who doubts that the Earth is a sphere. In the Middle Ages, you couldn’t emerge from any kind of education, cathedral school or university, without being perfectly clear about the Earth’s sphericity and even its approximate circumference.”

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111 Strobel, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
112 Richards, in Strobel, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
113 Cf. Isaiah 40.22: “It is He Who sits above the circle of the earth”.
Let us now turn to some of the ways in which the scientific enterprise has run aground in modern times, beginning with the new physics.

Since the time of Galileo a certain degree of counter-intuitiveness has come to be seen as an essential ingredient of "real" science; for science progresses by challenging accepted assumptions. And yet there is a very large difference between the counter-intuitiveness (to some in the 16th century) of an earth circling the sun and the plain nonsensicality of, for example, a universe in which time can go backwards! But this is one of things that some modern physicists are saying: since physics expresses all its laws in time-reversible equations, there is no reason in principle why time should not go backwards – and so no reason in principle (according to some of the more melodramatic writers) why one should not be able to go back in time and kill one’s own father!

To these writers we are tempted to say: you can't be serious! But many of them are being perfectly serious – and the idea of time-travel has now entered, through Hollywood, into the consciousness of a whole younger generation. So we have to take this phenomenon, if not these ideas, seriously.

Humility is required here, as in all spheres of knowledge. If our knowledge of physics and mathematics is as limited as the present writer's, then we are not in a position to argue with the scientists on their own ground. So should we retire from the fray hurt and simply bow down before the scientists' superior knowledge?

Many Christians have been prepared to do just that. But, bearing in mind Dostoyevsky's warning about “half-science”, we should be more careful. After all, if these scientists are right, we shall have to change, not only our ideas about the physical universe, but also our ideas about just about everything else, including God, freewill, morality and the human person. And since we have "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1.3) of our traditional beliefs in these spheres, we have good reason to pause.

For it would be false humility, even irrational, to abandon well-established beliefs out of respect for a tiny group of men, whose work extremely few understand (it is said that only about six people in the world fully understand “string theory”, for example, with its eleven dimensions of reality), and who are themselves far from agreed about how their results should be interpreted. If Einstein could not believe that God plays with dice, why should we? We know that these scientists are wrong in some of their wilder judgements - they must be wrong; the problem is discerning why, or rather how they are wrong.
But we are being too alarmist, we are told. These problems are simply temporary inconsistencies in the scientific picture of the world that will eventually be removed as science progresses and new theories are constructed. Thus the problems relating to the nature of time, we are told, will eventually be overcome in the unified field theory, the so-called TOE or "Theory of Everything".

This touching faith in the new physics is reminiscent of those biologists who say: although nobody has actually seen the evolution of a new species, "it is only a matter of time"; eventually (perhaps in a few million years) we shall see it. Thus time is the great healer of the wounds of modern science. And yet that is simply to place a non-religious faith and hope (in the eventual omniscience of science) in place of solid hypotheses based on firm evidence.

The problem is that physics, far from gradually removing all anomalies and contradictions in our understanding of the world, seems to be throwing up still more intractable ones. Thus quantum physics undermines not only the category of time, but also the category of substance; in fact, it undermines the very notion of objective reality. For the quantum wave function that is the fundamental unit of the modern physicist's universe is not a thing or an event, but a spectrum of possible things or events. Moreover, it exists as such only while it is not being observed. When the wave function is observed (by a physical screen or living being), it collapses into one and one only of the possibilities that define it. Thus the price of the birth of reality in this way is the destruction of the fundamental unity of reality!

But still more mind-bending anomalies are to come. Thus according to Everett, "the universe itself is described by a wave-function which contains the ingredients of any outcome. His interpretation carries with it a bizarre implication - that innumerable 'parallel' universes, each as real as our own, all exist independently. Your wildest dreams may be fulfilled within these other worlds. With every measurement made by an observer, who is by definition within a universe, the entire universe buds off an uncountable multitude of new universes (the 'many worlds'), each of which represents a different possible outcome of the observation (for example, a living or a dead cat)."  

Some people optimistically think that the new physics vindicates belief in God. Thus, after believing for decades in the (quasi-Hindu) "steady state" theory, physicists now believe in the (quasi-Christian) "big bang" theory, which appears to admit the possibility, not only that the universe had a beginning, but that its beginning was God, "the Beginning of every beginning" (1 Chron. 29.12). For it is only natural to ask: What caused the Big Bang? And since a material cause of the whole material universe is excluded, and since every beginning in time must have a cause, it follows that the cause of the universe must be immaterial – that is, God.

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Again, scientists have discovered that there are about 10 constant physical
and chemical values – for example, the distance of the earth from the sun –
which, if altered even to the slightest degree, would immediately make life on
earth impossible. The combination of these 10 values in one place at one time
would seem to be an enormous – in fact, unbelievable - coincidence. The most
natural explanation is that it is in fact no coincidence, but that these 10 values
have been precisely calibrated by a Creator in order that there should be life –
and specifically, human life - on earth (the anthropic principle).

Of course, these facts do point to the existence of a Creator God. However,
we must never underestimate the ability of scientists to refuse to accept the
obvious conclusion if that conclusion involves the existence of a Being higher
than themselves. Thus when we point out the extraordinary non-coincidence
of the 10 constant physical and chemical values that make life on earth
possible, the scientists resort to the innumerable parallel universes argument.
It probably is a coincidence, they say, if we suppose that our universe is just
one out of billions and billions of other universes, in one of which the values
of these 10 constants as we find them in our universe is bound to occur by
chance. And yet there is no reason whatsoever for believing that there are
billions and billions of other universes other than the scientists’ need to reject
the hypothesis of God...

Again, if we say that God must have caused the Big Bang, they reply: “And
who caused God? (and who caused the Creator of God?, etc., etc.)” If we say:
“But God has no cause”, then they reply: “Why not? Everything has a cause”.
However, those who reply in this way are making what the linguistic
philosophers call a “category mistake”. Empirical causality, as Kant pointed
out in his Critique of Pure Reason, is one of the basic categories (the others are
substance and time) by which we order the flux of sensory experience. The
category of empirical causality can be applied to any segment of space-time.
But it cannot be applied to space-time as a whole, because, while the effect here
will be spatiotemporal, the cause will be outside space-time. And a fortiori it
cannot be applied to a supposed Creator of the Creator of space-time.

But are we not contradicting ourselves here? Did we not agree that God,
Who is immaterial and outside space-time, is the Cause of the spatiotemporal
universe? There is no contradiction here if we carefully distinguish between
three types of causality: empirical, human and Divine.

Let us begin with empirical causality, which is the weakest, most
insubstantial form of causality. For, strange as it may seem, we never actually
see an empirical causal bond. What we see is events of class A being regularly
followed by events of class B. We then infer that there is something forcing this
sequence of events, or making it happen; and this we call causality. But, as
David Hume pointed out, we never actually see this force, this bond uniting A
and B: we only see regular sequences of events. We say that A causes B, but all we actually ever see is events of classes A and B in regular, predictable succession to one another, not the force that joins A to B.

In fact, our only direct experience of causality is when we cause our own actions. Thus when I decide to open the door, I have a direct experience of myself making my hand go towards the door-knob and turn it. This experience of causality is quite different from watching events of class A “causing” events of class B in empirical nature. I do not see the exercise of my will being constantly followed by the opening of doors. I know by direct, irrefutable, non-sensory (what the philosophers call phenomenological) experience that the cause of that door opening was I. This is the second type of causality, human causality; and our knowledge of it, unlike our knowledge of any empirical causality, is both direct and certain.

Moreover, - and this, as we shall see, is a very significant point for the so-called science of psychology – I know that my decision to open the door was uncaused in the scientific, empirical sense. Even if a man were standing behind me with a gun and ordering me to open the door, this would not take away from the uncaused nature of my action. It might explain why I decided to open the door at that moment; but, as the philosophers have demonstrated, to give the reasons for an action is not the same as describing the causes of an event; to confuse reasons with causes is another “category mistake”. Only if the man with a gun took away my power of decision – that is, hypnotized me to open the door, or took hold of my hand and placed it on the door-knob and then turned my hand, would it be true to say that my action was caused. Or rather, then it would no longer be my action, for my action can only be the free result of my will: it would be the action of another person, he would be the cause (the uncaused cause) of the action.

Both human and empirical causality are caused by God, Who brings all things into being out of nothing. Thus it is the Divine Causality which causes events of type A to be followed always (or almost always – the exception is what we perceive to be miracles) by events of type B: He is the Cause of all empirical causation. But Divine Causality is closer to human causality, in Whose image it was made, insofar as It, too, is (a) empirically uncaused, and (b) personal, whereas every empirical cause is (a) empirically caused (because God has caused it to be so), and (b) impersonal.

We experience Divine Causality in moments of grace. It has this effect on human causality that it does not violate the latter’s free and uncaused nature; It informs it without compelling it. Thus when a saint speaks under the influence of God’s grace, he retains complete control over his own words while submitting to the influence of God’s Word. This is incomprehensible within the scientific world-view. But since the scientists cannot see even the empirical causes they postulate, why should this concern us?…
**The Fallibility of Science: (2) The New Biology**

Let us take as another example of the radical fallibility of science Darwin's theory of evolution. One of the few encouraging developments in the modern world is the gradual undermining, from many directions, of the hitherto unchallenged pseudo-dogma of Darwinism. However, long before modern scientists began to doubt it (and it is still only a minority that doubts), it was considered false by the saints both on empirical grounds and, much more importantly, because it conflicted with the dogmas of the Christian faith and morality.

It is sometimes supposed that the saints disdained to speak of science as being a lower form of knowledge irrelevant to questions of faith. But this is not so. That they were not afraid to discuss science on its own terms, the terms of empirical evidence, is indicated by the following conversation between Elder Nectarius of Optina (+1928) and one of his spiritual children, who sorrowfully remarked to her friend in his reception room:

"I don't know, perhaps education is altogether unnecessary and only brings harm. How can it be reconciled with Orthodoxy?"

The elder, coming out of his cell, rejoined: "Once a man came to me who simply couldn't believe that there had been a flood. Then I told him that on very high mountains in the sand are found shells and other remains from the ocean floor, and how geology testifies to the flood, and he came to believe. You see how necessary learning is at times." And again the elder said: "God not only permits, but demands of man that he grow in knowledge. However, it is necessary to live and learn so that not only does knowledge not ruin morality, but that morality not ruin knowledge."117

Thus in answer to the question how Orthodox could be reconciled with “education”, i.e. modern science, the elder pointed, on the one hand, to the geological evidence for the flood of Noah - the fossil evidence on which Darwinism rests can much more easily be explained by the flood than by Darwinism itself. However, he did not linger on this evidence. More important, in his view, was the effect that scientific hypotheses like Darwinism had on morality. For, as St. Nectarius' fellow-elder at Optina, St. Barsanuphius (+1912) said: “The English philosopher Darwin created an

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117 *Zhitia prepodobnykh Startsev Optinoj Pustyny* (The Lives of the Holy Elders of Optina Desert), Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1992 (in Russian). According to another version, the elder said: 'God not only allows, He demands that a man grow in knowledge. There is no stopping place in God's creation, everything moves, and even the angels do not remain in one rank, but ascend from step to step, receiving new revelations. And even if a man has studied for a hundred years, he must still go on to ever new knowledge... You must work - years pass unnoticed while you work.' And as he spoke these words, 'his face became unusually bright, so that it was difficult to look at it.' (*Zhitia, op. cit.*, p. 337 (in Russian)).

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entire system according to which life is a struggle for existence, a struggle of the strong against the weak, where those that are conquered are doomed to destruction and the conquerors are triumphant. This is already the beginning of a bestial philosophy…” 118

More important still is the incompatibility of Darwinism with certain cardinal dogmas of the Christian faith. Thus the consistent Darwinist must believe: (i) that God did not create the heavens and the earth, or that if He did, He did it through death, the destructive forces of mutation and natural selection (but “God did not create death” (Wisdom 1.13); (ii) that the species came into being through chance (St. Basil says that anyone who believes in chance is an atheist119); (iii) that death was not the result of sin, as Scripture says (Romans 5.19), but existed even before sin was possible; (iv) that man, being only matter, does not have free will, and therefore cannot be judged; and (v) that man does not have an immortal soul, but is wholly the product of chance forces operating on matter.

St. Nectarios of Aegina wrote: “The followers of pithecogeny [the derivation of man from the apes] are ignorant of man and of his lofty destiny, because they have denied him his soul and Divine revelation. They have rejected the Spirit, and the Spirit has abandoned them. They withdrew from God, and God withdrew from them; for, thinking they were wise, they became fools… If they had acted with knowledge, they would not have lowered themselves so much, nor would they have taken pride in tracing the origin of the human race to the most shameless of animals. Rightly did the Prophet say of them: ‘Man being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the dumb beasts, and is become like unto them.’” 120

It is amazing how many so many Christians fail to see the incompatibility of Darwinism with Christian dogma and morality. Or perhaps they see it, but suppress this perception because of the choice it will then place before them: to accept the modern world-view and reject Christianity, or vice-versa. They prefer the muddled and impossible compromise of “theistic evolution”, choosing to believe that God somehow works through death and chance, that He could not or would not make His creation perfect from the beginning, but had to go through billions of years of bloody experiments before He “hit upon” the world as it is now!121 Or perhaps they are seduced by the perspective of infinite progress through unending evolution that Darwinism offers, as one Masonic writer puts it: “First a mollusc, then a fish then a bird,

119 St. Basil the Great, Homily on Avarice.
120 St. Nectarios, Sketch concerning Man, Athens, 1885.
121 Thus Pope John Paul II believes in Darwinism, making an exception only for the soul of man, which he believes was created directly by God.
then a mammal, then a man, then a Master, then a God". In any case, it must be firmly understood: it is impossible to be a Christian and a Darwinist.

It is important to remind ourselves at this point that science is hypothetical in essence; it proclaims no certainties; what is declared to be a self-evident law of nature in one generation is denounced as false in the next. Moreover, several of the major hypotheses of science appear to contradict each other, at least in the opinion of significant sections of the scientific community - for example, the time-reversible laws of quantum physics and the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Darwinism also contradicts this latter law, since evolution involves the build-up of complexity and information rather than its inexorable loss, as the Second Law says.

In fact, Darwinism is essentially a fairy-tale dressed up in scientific language. As A. N. Field writes: ‘With oaks to be seen sprouting from acorns, grubs turning into butterflies, and chickens pecking their way out of eggs, it is not surprising that human fancy from an early date toyed with the notion of one kind of living thing being transformed into some other kind. This idea has been the stock-in-trade of folk-lore and fairy tales in all ages and all lands. It was the achievement of Charles Darwin to make it the foundation of modern biological science.”

However, as Field goes on to say, a major difficulty is encountered by the Darwinists at the very outset of their argument: “There is… not a shred of evidence of any living thing ever evolving into some different kind of living thing capable of breeding but infertile with its parent stock. All that breeding experiments have produced is mere varieties fertile with their parent stock, or else sterile hybrids, incapable of breeding, such as the mule produced by a cross between horse and donkey.”

Darwin admitted as much in a private letter to Dr. Bentham on May 22, 1863: “In fact belief in Natural Selection must at present be grounded entirely on general considerations… When we descend to details, we can prove that no one species has changed (i.e. we cannot prove that a single species has changed); nor can we prove that the supposed changes are beneficial, which is the groundwork of the theory.” Nearly 150 years, this statement is still true. Moreover, developments in genetics and molecular biology have placed further vast obstacles in the way of the possibility of natural selection. It seems that the “ignorant” St. Basil was right after all: “Nothing is truer than that each plant produces its seed or contains some seminal virtue; this is what

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122 J.D. Buck, *The Genius of Freemasonry*, p. 43; quoted in Vicomte Léon de Poncins, *Freemasonry and the Vatican*, London and Chumleigh: Britons Publishing Company. Buck goes on: “The theologians who have made such a caricature or fetish of Jesus were ignorant of this normal, progressive, higher evolution of man” (p. 29).

is meant by ‘after its kind’. So that the shoot of a reed does not produce an olive tree, but from a reed grows another reed, and from one sort of seed a plant of the same sort always germinates. Thus all that has sprung from the earth in its first bringing forth is kept the same to our time, thanks to the constant reproduction of kind.”

Since this is the case, there is no need to concede to the scientific world-view more than it claims for itself (in the mouths of its more honest and intelligent spokesmen). Otherwise we fall into the trap which so many non-scientific Christians have fallen into of immediately accepting the latest scientific fashion and adapting one's faith to it, only to find that science has moved on and left their "modernised faith" as an out-of-date relic. This has been the fate of the "Christian Marxists" and "theist evolutionists", who in trying slavishly to adapt Christianity to the latest and least credible fashion in science show themselves to be neither Christians nor scientists. What we must always remember is that, whatever its many and undoubted achievements, science is a fallible enterprise conducted by sinful men. Therefore scientists individually and collectively are not immune from deception, and we Christians should not be cowed by their supposedly superior knowledge from subjecting their conclusions to criticism.

This is especially the case with regard to the new biology, because in this field, at any rate, there is a growing minority of fully qualified scientists who reject the Darwinist myth. They point to a vast number of facts that contradict Darwinism: not only the familiar one of the missing links in human evolution, but such facts as the impossibility of generating even a single-cell organism out of a primitive biochemical soup, the impossibility of assembling the elements of a cell into working order one by one (they all have to be present simultaneously and in exactly the right relationship to each other), the impossibility of understanding the evolution of sexually differentiated species from asexual ones (since the vastly complicated differences between the male and the female of the new species have to be emerge, in perfect working order, in a single generation), the circularity and radical unreliability of the Darwinist methods of dating rocks and fossils, the fact of the universal flood as witnessed in the folklore of all peoples, etc., etc. “Creationism” is not, as many suppose, the imposition of Protestant fundamentalism into the realm of pure science, but simply honest science.

And if elements of heretical Protestantism have crept into some creationist work, these are easily separated from the science, like wheat from the chaff. There is no reason why the great bulk of creationist work – as well as all conventional science that does not rest on Darwinist assumptions - could not be absorbed into a new project of “Orthodox creationism”, which will be honest both to God and to science, being interested in truth alone...

124 St. Basil the Great, *Homily 5 on the Hexaemeron.*
The modern scientific project of encompassing the whole universe from the primal matter of the Big Bang to all the planets and galaxies and all the species of plants and animals in a single explanatory framework, that is, in a single causal nexus, would surely be judged to have failed if it stopped short at man. After all, while earlier generations of men wished to demonstrate that man is a “fifth essence” separate from the four natural essences of fire, earth, water and air, and not included in the causal nexus of the material universe, modern scientists think just the opposite. They have an enormous respect for matter as the origin of all things, and the fount of the evolutionary ascent of man; and they wish to be included in that evolutionary ascent at all costs – even at the cost of denying the existence of their own souls!!25

The hub of the scientific project in its application to man is what is sometimes called the Artificial Intelligence or "AI" hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, mental states are to be identified with brain states, which in turn can be described exclusively in terms of computer states. The crucial test of this hypothesis would be to build a robot whose behaviour would simulate the behaviour of a man in every way. If the behaviour of the robot were indistinguishable from what we recognize as the behaviour of a man, then we would be forced to admit that the robot is a man. And then we would be forced to the further conclusion that man is the product of evolution: the last link in the chain would be complete.

However, the philosopher John Searle has argued that however accurately a machine could mimic the behaviour of an intelligent human being, it cannot be said to understand what it is doing. And he proves his contention by describing an imaginary "Chinese room" experiment. Suppose a person is locked in a room and is given a large amount of Chinese writing. Suppose, further, that he understands not a word of Chinese, but is given a set of instructions in a language he does understand which teaches him to correlate one set of Chinese symbols with another. If the rules correlating input and output are sufficiently complex and sophisticated, and if the man becomes sufficiently skilled in manipulating them, then it is possible to envisage a situation in which, for any question given him in Chinese, the man will be able to give an appropriate answer also in Chinese in such a way that no-one would guess from his answers that he knows not a word of Chinese!!26

125 The transition between the old and the new concept of man may perhaps be seen best in Hamlet, where the superiority of man to the natural world is indeed extolled, and man himself is called a “quintessence”, but a quintessence – “of dust”: What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason how infinite in faculty! In form, in moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?…

Thus scientists will never be able to explain their own thought processes by purely scientific means - by building a model of the brain on a computer. For such functions as "understanding meaning" and "intending" cannot be simulated on a machine, no matter how sophisticated. As Michael Polanyi writes: "These personal powers include the capacity for understanding a meaning, for believing a factual statement, for interpreting a mechanism in relation to its purpose, and on a higher level, for reflecting on problems and exercising originality in solving them. They include, indeed, every manner of reaching convictions by an act of personal judgement. The neurologist exercises these powers to the highest degree in constructing the neurological model of a man - to whom he denies in this very act any similar powers."  

This conclusion reached by philosophical thought is confirmed by the findings of mathematicians. Thus the Oxford professor Roger Penrose, relying on the work of other mathematicians such as Godel and Turing, has given some excellent reasons for not believing that minds are algorithmic, i.e. mechanistic entities. For example, there are certain necessary mathematical truths which are seen to be true but cannot be logically deduced from the axioms of the system to which they belong; that is, although we know that they are true, we cannot prove them to be true. This suggests that the seeing of mathematical truths is a spontaneous, uncaused, yet completely rational act. Penrose believes that mathematical truths are like Platonic ideas, which exist independently both of the mind and of the physical world. Whether or not he is right in this, he has clearly demonstrated that mathematical thinking cannot be described or explained in deterministic terms. And if mathematical thinking, the most rigorous and logical of all kinds of thought, is free and not determined, the same must be true of scientific thought in general.

It follows that if psychologists try to deny that thinking is free, they cut the ground from under their own feet and deprive their own thought of any credibility. For let us suppose that the thinking of psychologists is in fact determined by certain natural laws. The question then arises: if that is so, what reason do we have for believing that their reasoning is rational and true? For if a man speaks under some kind of compulsion, we conclude either that he does not understand what he is saying, or that he is lying, or that he is telling the truth "by accident", as it were. In any case, we attach no significance to his words; for free and rational men believe only the words of free and rational men.

Now just as rational thought presupposes freedom, so does responsible action. The whole of morality and law is based on the premise that the actions of men can be free, although they are not always so. If a man is judged to have committed a criminal offence freely, then he is blamed and punished accordingly. If, on the other hand, he is judged to have been "not in his sound

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mind", he is not blamed and is sent to a psychiatric hospital rather than a prison. If we could not make such distinctions between various degrees of freedom, civilized society would soon collapse.

Now, as we have seen, free will is a completely different kind of causality from empirical causality. Unlike empirical causality, it is not inferred, but directly perceived by the cause himself. As such, we can be certain about our human causality, whereas empirical causality can never be more than a subject of conjecture or hypothesis.

Free will is only faintly discerned at the subconscious level of human life, where we feel that we are being pushed and pulled in a dark sea of desires and aversions, of attractions and repulsions, over which we have little control. In this context we can see that it was no accident that psychology should have begun its section of the scientific enterprise at the beginning of the twentieth century with the psychoanalytical study of the subconscious and of those pathological states in which free will and rationality appear to be suspended. For, with his freewill and rationality removed, man can be more easily treated as if he were just a biological organism, subject to the same empirical laws as other biological organisms.

However, even psychoanalysis was forced to introduce the concept of the ego – that is, the person, the seat of free will and rationality. For insofar as a man feels himself to be the victim of subconscious forces that he cannot yet conceptualize or control, he also feels himself to be distinct from them, and therefore potentially able to resist them. Moreover, at the higher level of consciousness, this feeling of passive "victimization" is translated into active attention to objects and resistance to (some) desires; Prometheus bound becomes Prometheus unbound, at least in relation to some elements of his mental life.

The phenomenon of attention is of particular interest here because it is at the same time the sine qua non of all perception and thought and the first real manifestation of freedom of the will, the will being bound at the lower, subconscious level. As the Russian religious philosopher S.L. Frank points out, some element of will is present in all perception and thought insofar as it is not imposed by either the environment or the subconscious. Even if our attention is involuntarily drawn to an object, the perception of it as occupying a definite place in the objective world requires an effort of will directing our cognitive faculties upon it. Thus my attention may be involuntarily drawn by a bright light or a pretty face - at this moment I am under the control of subconsciously registered images, sensations and desires. But immediately I try to perceive where and what it is that has attracted my attention, I am displaying freedom of will.129

However, it is above in all in the experience of resisting one or other of our desires that we become conscious that our will is free. This freedom is only relative insofar as the resistance to one desire is conditioned by submission to another, stronger one. But introspection reveals that in any struggle between two desires at the conscious level there is always a third element, the ego, that chooses between them, however under pressure by one of the desires the ego may feel itself to be. It is in the hesitation before choice that we become conscious of our freedom. And it is in the consciousness that we could have chosen differently that we become conscious of our responsibility.

Empirical psychology cannot provide us with knowledge of the workings of our free will insofar as it is dominated by the dogma of scientism, which excludes specifically human, as opposed to empirical causality. In the most extreme manifestation of psychological scientism, behaviourism, even the word "action" is removed from the scientific vocabulary and replaced by the word "behaviour", which has fewer connotations of free will and choice. According to the behaviourists, our “behaviour” is exclusively determined by biological drives and learned conditional reflexes. Fortunately, behaviourism is now generally admitted to have been a mistake; but we must not underestimate the continued influence of scientific modes of thought in psychology. If the mechanistic model of the behaviourists is simply replaced by the computer models of the cognitive scientists, then we are no nearer the truth now than we were in the 1950s.

It is not only free will and rationality that empirical psychology cannot comprehend. Consider, for example, the important phenomenon of falling in love. Frank writes: "What can so-called empirical psychology observe in it? First of all it will fall on the external, physical symptoms of this phenomenon - it will point out the changes in blood circulation, feeding and sleep in the person under observation. But remembering that it is, first of all, psychology, it will pass over to the observation of 'mental phenomena', it will record changes in self-image, sharp alterations in mental exaltation and depression, the stormy emotions of a pleasant and repulsive nature through which the life of a lover usually passes, the dominance in his consciousness of images relating to the beloved person, etc. Insofar as psychology thinks that in these observations it has expressed, albeit incompletely, the very essence of being in love - then this is a mockery of the lover, a denial of the mental phenomenon under the guise of a description of it. For for the lover himself all these are just symptoms or consequences of his feeling, not the feeling itself. Its essence consists, roughly, in a living consciousness of the exceptional value of the beloved person, in an aesthetic delight in him, in the experience of his central significance for the life of the beloved - in a word, in a series of phenomena characterizing the inner meaning of life. To elucidate these phenomena means to understand them compassionately from within, to recreate them sympathetically in oneself. The beloved will find an echo of himself in artistic descriptions of love in novels, he will find understanding in a friend, as a
living person who has himself experienced something similar and is able to enter the soul of his friend; but the judgements of the psychologist will seem to him to be simply misunderstandings of his condition - and he will be right.\textsuperscript{130}

A description of love in terms of drives, stimuli and learning will invariably miss out the most important element, the element that makes love love - the perception of another person \textit{as a person}. Nor is it simply the one-way perception of another as a person that is important: it is the \textit{mutual} perception that the other is perceiving oneself in the same way. This is the fact of \textit{inter-personal communion}, which enables two people to relate to each other not as subjects and objects but as inter-penetrating subjects whose knowledge of each other, though from different points of view, is identical, and though taking place in space and time seems to transcend space and time. Heron has described this fact as follows: "My awareness of myself is in part constituted by my awareness of his awareness of me, and my awareness of him is in part constituted by my awareness of his awareness of me."\textsuperscript{131}

I am not here talking simply about empathy, which is another basic psychological phenomenon that transcends empirical science. Empathy lies at the root of art, and has been described by one Russian scientist as "a necessary and most important, although not the only condition of creativity in any sphere of human activity".\textsuperscript{132} But empathy is a one-way relationship, like art itself: here we are talking rather about mutual and simultaneous empathy which creates a new content as well as form of consciousness.

Thus two people in relation to each other as people are like two mirrors placed opposite each other. That which is reflected in mirror A is mirror B, and that which is reflected in mirror B is mirror A. The "knowledge" that each has is therefore objective and subjective at the same time; in fact, the objectivity and subjectivity of the vision or visions are logically and chronologically inseparable. But this amounts to a radically different kind of knowledge from that of scientific, empirical knowledge, which Frank calls "object consciousness".\textsuperscript{133} For whereas object consciousness entails a radical separation between a spaceless and timeless subject and a spatial (if material) or temporal (if mental) object, person consciousness entails an equally radical identity-in-diversity of subject and object which we may simply call \textit{communion}.

\textsuperscript{130} Frank, \textit{op. cit}, pp. 43-44.


\textsuperscript{133} Frank, \textit{op. cit}. 119
Frank describes communion as follows: "When we speak to a person, or even when our eyes meet in silence, that person ceases to be an 'object' for us and is no longer a 'he' but a 'thou'. That means he no longer fits into the frame-work of 'the world of objects': he ceases to be a passive something upon which our cognitive gaze is directed for the purposes of perception without in any way affecting it. Such one-sided relation is replaced by a two-sided one, by an interchange of spiritual activities. We attend to him and he to us, and this attitude is different from - though it may co-exist with - the purely ideal direction of attention which we call objective knowledge: it is real spiritual interaction. Communion is both our link with that which is external to us, and a part of our inner life, and indeed a most essential part of it. From an abstract logical point of view this is a paradoxical case of something external not merely coexisting with the 'inward' but of actually merging into it. Communion is at one and the same time both something 'external' to us and something 'inward' - in other words it cannot in the strict sense be called either external or internal.

"This can still more clearly be seen from the fact that all communion between 'I' and 'thou' leads to the formation of a new reality designated by the word 'we' - or rather, coincides with it."

The fact is that human beings can relate to themselves and each other not only in the scientific, "I-it" mode, but also in the artistic "I-thou" mode, and in what we may call the religious "I-we" mode. It follows that if psychologists are to truly understand their subject, and not dehumanize man by pretending that he exists only on the "I-it" mode of our limited scientific understanding, then they must be prepared to ascend to the "I-thou" and "I-we" modes, and understand him in these, more intimate and at the same time more comprehensive and universal modes. For how can we understand the humanity of another man if we do not exert our own humanity to its fullest extent?

In the Steven Spielberg film Artificial Intelligence a boy who is in fact a robot is rejected by his human "parents" because the son whom they lost is brought to life and begins to be jealous of the "brother" robot who had been constructed to replace him. The robot makes it his life's mission to find his "mother" again and prove to himself that she loves him just as much as her "real", human son. In the course of the film, humanity destroys itself, and only the robots are left "alive". With the help of some fellow-robots, and some DNA preserved from a wisp of his mother’s hair, the robots are able to bring the mother to life again for a single day. And so the boy-robot is at last able to enjoy the supreme pleasure of hearing her say that she loves him...

The “message” of the film (for this writer, if not for Spielberg) is by no means that robots will one day be just as human as real human beings. It is rather that scientific advances in artificial intelligence, and in the knowledge of man’s genetic and physiological make-up, will never penetrate to the heart of man’s mystery, which is the capacity to love, freely and not in order to fulfill a biological desire, but simply because an object worthy of love exists. For, as Hamlet says:

You would play upon me;
You would seem to know my stops;
You would pluck out the heart of my mystery;
You would sound me from my lowest
note to the top of my compass.
And there is much music, excellent voice,
in this little organ.
Yet cannot you make it speak...

Science and the Word of God

The study of science gives us many reasons for believing in God. After all, “since the creation of the world”, says St. Paul, “His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead”; which is why those who do not believe in the Creator God “are without excuse” (Rom. 1.20). This leads many to believe that science and the Word of God must be compatible.

If they mean by “science” real science, science unaffected and unpolluted by scientism and “half-science”, then they are right. But modern science has long ago been hijacked, as it were, by a project that actually has nothing to do with real science: the project, namely, to prove that empirical reality, the reality studied by the scientists, is the only reality, and that scientific truth is the only truth. It is therefore naïve to expect that science as it is presently practised in most universities and laboratories will be found to be compatible with the Word of God. In the end, in spite of all attempts to reconcile the one with the other, glaring contradictions will remain, because it is not only in theological science that the truth is unattainable without the help of God. In every sphere the full truth can be found only with the help of the Truth Himself, that is, God, and will remain hidden unless the Truth Himself is invoked.

Thus one fact clearly proclaimed by the Word of God is that the sun and all the heavenly bodies were created after the earth. This fact is in no way compatible with any modern hypothesis put forward by godless science about the origin of the solar system. And it would dishonest of us to try to “reinterpret” that fact to make it “fit” with modern physics in the way that the theistic evolutionists try to make Genesis’s seven days of creation somehow “fit” with the million-year epochs of Darwinist time.
Instead of trying to reinterpret or allegorise the Word of God to make it fit with godless science, we should heed the words of St. Basil the Great: “I know the laws of allegory, though less by myself than from the works of others. There are those truly who do not admit the common sense of the Scriptures, for whom water is not water, but some other nature, who see in a plant, in a fish, what their fancy wishes, who change the nature of reptiles and of wild beasts to suit their allegories, like the interpreters of dreams who explain visions in sleep to make them serve their own ends. For me grass is grass; plant, fish, wild beast, domestic animal, I take all in a literal sense. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. Those who have written about the nature of the universe have discussed at length the shape of the earth. If it be spherical or cylindrical, if it resemble a disc and is equally rounded in all parts, or if it has the form of a winnowing basket and is hollow in the middle; all those conjectures have been suggested by cosmographers, each one upsetting that of his predecessor. It will not lead me to give less importance to the creation of the universe that the servant of God Moses is silent as to shapes; he has not said that the earth is a hundred and eighty thousand furlongs in circumference; he has not measured into what extent of air its shadow projects itself while the sun revolves around it, nor state how its shadow, casting itself upon the moon, produces eclipses. He has passed over in silence, as useless, all that is unimportant for us. Shall I then prefer foolish wisdom to the oracles of the Holy Spirit? Shall I not rather exalt Him Who, not wishing to fill our minds with these vanities, has regulated all the economy of Scripture in view of the edification and the making perfect of our souls? It is this that those seem to me not to have understood, who, giving themselves up to the distorted meaning of allegory, have undertaken to give a majesty of their own invention to Scripture. It is to believe themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and to bring forth their own ideas under a pretext of exegesis. Let us hear Scripture as it has been written…”

One may object that the book of Genesis was not written as a scientific textbook, so it is useless to cite anything from it as if it contradicted any scientific hypothesis. Now it is, of course, true that Genesis is not a scientific textbook – as St. Basil himself points out. But at the same time, as the same saint pointed out, it is not allegory, and it does describe facts. And if these facts, whether expressed in scientific language or not, contradict the hypotheses of modern science, such as the fact that the earth was created before the sun, or that man was created separately from the other species, or that there was once a universal flood which destroyed the old world and laid down the fossils that we see now, then there is no way of getting round this for the honest, truly believing Christian. We either believe the Word of God, or we believe modern godless science.

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136 St. Basil the Great, Homily 9 on the Hexaemeron.
The problem with trying to reconcile the Word of God with modern godless science is that in our joy at finding certain points of concord, or apparent concord, between the two, we may subconsciously accept certain ideas of science which are definitely heretical. Thus the anthropic principle in physics can be interpreted to imply that God created the universe in precisely such a way that man should be able to study and understand it, which is clearly what Christians believe. However, it may also be interpreted in a quite different way more in accordance with Hindu ideas about the divinity of man; for according to Marek Kohn, the principle "seems to be on the verge of substituting man for God, by hinting that consciousness, unbound by time's arrow, causes creation"!137 In fact, the eastern idea that every man is by nature a god gains credence from both from the Darwinist idea that we are evolving into gods, and from the physicists' idea that our consciousness causes creation.

These parallels between ideas in modern science and eastern religions suggest that the strange path that science is treading may be connected with the general penetration of western civilisation by these religions. For centuries, Christians have believed that there are clear and important differences between the Creator and creation, matter and spirit, time and eternity, freedom and determinism, man and animal, soul and body, life and death. But in the twentieth century, the age of relativity and relativism, all these terms have melted into each other; under the combined onslaught of modern science and eastern religion, the distinctions which are so basic to our understanding of ourselves and the world we live in have tended to disappear in a pantheist, panpsychic or panmaterialist soup.

However, the recognition that all these alarming intellectual and spiritual trends are related makes the task of resisting them only a little easier. For even if we reject eastern religion as false and satanic, and suspect that the god of this world has also had a hand in blinding some scientists, we cannot say the same about science in general. We have to explain both how science has gone wrong and why it still manages to get so many things right...

One obvious way in which science has gone wrong is by drastically narrowing a priori the range of date it examines, eliminating from its field of observation the vast sphere of phenomena that we call religious. Concealment of data which conflicts with one's hypothesis is usually considered dishonest science. And yet in relation to religion it has been practised on a massive scale by most of the scientific community for centuries. Even when scientists do deign to study religion, their methods and conclusions are often blatantly biassed and unscientific. This was obvious with regard to the "achievements" of Soviet "scientists" as they tried to explain, for example, the incorruption of the relics of the Russian saints: but western scientists have been hardly less biassed, if usually more sophisticated than their Soviet counterparts.

137 Kohn, “Joyfully back to Church?”, New Statesman and Society, May 1, 1992, p. 32.
Of course, some "miracles" are contrived, just as some religious beliefs are superstitious; and science can do a genuine service to the truth by exposing these frauds.\textsuperscript{138} But the existence of some frauds does not undermine religion in general, any more than the existence of quack doctors undermines genuine medicine. Moreover, science itself has not been immune from quackery of its own in its eagerness to explain away the phenomena of religion. Particularly useful to it in this respect has been the concept of psychosomatic illness and psychology in general. But psychology is the least developed of the sciences; and, as we have seen, there are strong reasons for disputing whether it can ever be a genuinely empirical science.

We must also remember that, as Sir Peter Medawar writes, "it is logically outside the competence of science to answer questions to do with first and last things."\textsuperscript{139} For any such answers must be in principle unverifiable insofar as no man observed the beginning of the universe and no man can see its end. As the Lord said to Job: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding” (Job 38.4). Science, however, - or rather, false science - denies any such limits to its competence; and so, by the just judgement of God, it proceeds further and further away from the knowledge of the greater mysteries of the universe - of God, of the soul, of the origins and destiny of creation, - while puffing itself up by its knowledge of the lesser mystery of how to build a rocket to the moon.

To understand the first and last things we have to resort to another method, that of faith; for, as St. Paul says, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5.7). In this sphere we cannot walk by sight, because, as Fr. Seraphim Rose writes, "the state of Adam and the first-created world has been placed forever beyond the knowledge of science by the barrier of Adam’s transgression, which changed the very nature of Adam and creation, and indeed the very nature of knowledge itself. Modern science knows only what it observes and what can be reasonably inferred from observation... The true knowledge of Adam and the first-created world – as much as is useful for us to know – is accessible only in God’s revelation and in the Divine vision of the saints."\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{138} Thus Professor I.M. Andreyev writes: "Only with a superficial knowledge do there arise false contradictions between faith and knowledge, between religion and science. With a deeper knowledge these false contradictions disappear without a trace... A broad, scientific and philosophical education not only does not hinder faith in God, but makes it easier, because the whole arsenal of scientific-philosophical thought is natural apologetic material for religious faith. Moreover, honest knowledge often has a methodical opportunity to uncover corruptions of faith and exposing superstitions, whether religious or scientific-philosophical." ("Christian Truth and Scientific Knowledge", The Orthodox Word, March-April, 1977)

\textsuperscript{139} Medawar, in John Tailor, When the Clock struck Zero, London: Picador, 1993, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{140} Rose, in Hieromonk Damascene (Christensen), Father Seraphim Rose: His Life and Works, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2003, pp. 542-543.
Walking by faith does not mean ignoring the evidence of our senses or the methods of logical reasoning. Thus the central truth of our Faith, the Resurrection of Christ, was verified by the Apostle Thomas in a simple scientific experiment involving the sense of touch. And the main physical evidence of the Resurrection, the Turin Shroud, has been subjected to analysis by scientists from practically every discipline from botany to astrophysics - and remains inexplicable by any other hypothesis (a recent carbon-14 analysis of its age conducted with the aim of refuting its authenticity turned out to be based on false presuppositions.\footnote{Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Rus’), № 7, 1993, p. 16 (in Russian); Orthodoxie, № 60, September, 1994, pp. 33-34 (in French).}

And yet millions of people confronted by these "many infallible proofs" do not believe; they cannot make the for us eminently logical deduction that the man who fulfils so many prophecies in His own life must be "my Lord and my God" (John 20.28). They cannot do this because, while science and logic confirm the Resurrection of Christ, the Person they point to is an unseen reality Who cannot be contained within the confines of the senses and logic and therefore represents a challenge to their carnal nature. Thus their seeing and reasoning are not mixed with faith, which is, in St. Paul's words, "the reality (Greek hypostasis: literally "substance") of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen" (Hebrews 11.1).

When a man, following the evidence of his senses and the reasoning of his logical mind, penetrates, through faith, beyond the veil of the senses to the Logos Himself, He receives further revelations about things not seen in accordance with his spiritual level. He learns about the creation of the world in the beginning, and its judgement at the end, about angels and demons, the souls of men and the logoi of all created beings. Nature becomes for him, in the words of St. Anthony the Great, "a book in which we read the thoughts of God". Only those "thoughts" are not mathematical formulae describing the structure of matter or space-time. Rather, they express the essential nature and purpose for which each thing was created, its place in the structure of the universe as a whole and in eternity.

**Conclusion: Two Approaches to Nature**

The scientific approach to nature may be described as analytic and reductionist; the Christian approach as analogical and symbolic. The essence of the one approach is mathematical and quantitative; of the other - spiritual and qualitative.

The two approaches are compatible; there is no reason why one cannot go up the great ladder of Being at one moment and go down it at another. At the same time, they are not on a par with each other; for while the analogical approach ascends from one level of reality to a higher one which is closer to
Absolute Reality, the analytical approach sheds, as it were, dimensions of reality, as it descends lower. Thus by reducing psychology and the social sciences to neurophysiology analytical science loses the reality of freewill and consciousness; by reducing biology to chemistry it loses the elan vital; and by reducing chemistry to quanta it loses, time, substance and causality.

Indeed, the analytical approach reduces itself to absurdity by claiming that there is nothing else than these "no-things" - the ultimate statement of nihilism. This is what happens when qualities are redefined as quantities, when the analytical approach is adopted on its own without any reference to the truths and dimensions of reality revealed by the analogical approach. That is how we come to have theories which deny the arrow of time while trying to describe its supposed beginning (the Big Bang) and end (the Big Crunch); and theories about the origin of life which are based on destruction (mutation) and death (natural selection); and theories about the neurological nature of mind which, if they were true, would deprive us of any reason for believing in the truth of any theories whatsoever - for why should I believe that the chance product of one set of neuronal firings is "truer" than any other?

Reductionism leads to nihilism and absurdity: the opposite process reveals an ever-increasing fullness of reality leading to God Himself. “In nature, in this visible world, various forces function, and the lowest of them yield to the higher: the physical yields to the chemical, the chemical to the organic, and finally, all of them together to the highest of all, the spiritual. Without the intervention of the higher forces, the lower forces would function in a homogeneous, immutable order. But the higher forces alter, and sometimes even suspend the actions of the lower. In such a natural subordination of the lower forces to the higher, not one of the laws of nature is changed. Thus, for example, a physician changes the progression of a disease, a man changes the face of the earth by digging of canals, and so on. Cannot God cause the same thing to a boundlessly greater extent?”

Orthodox Christianity is not against science that stays humbly within its limits, which recognises that the universe is not an isolated system, but one that is open to the God Who created it, Who preserves it and all its parts in existence, and Who sustains every one of its laws by His Providence until the day when He will come to judge it, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Peter 3.10).

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143 Elder Barsanuphius of Optina, Kelejnye Zapiski (Cell Notes), Moscow, 1991, p. 16 (in Russian).
Orthodoxy declares that there is nothing more real than God, that all things "live and move and have their being in Him" (Acts 17.28), and that things lose reality when they begin to move away from Him and cease to reflect His light. Some things reflect God more fully and therefore partake in more dimensions of His reality. Christ is His perfect, consubstantial Image and Name; for He "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature, upholding the universe by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1.3). Men are also images of God, though not consubstantial ones; and their ability to use the word in science, art and religion in order to describe and understand the universe is a true reflection of the power of the Word of God.

Indeed, Adam's "naming" of the animals in Paradise may be seen as the beginning of true, analogical science; for through it, in St. Ambrose's words, "God granted [us] the power of being able to discern by the application of sober logic the species of each and every object, in order that [we] may be induced to form a judgement on all of them."144 Again, Nicetas Stethatos writes, God made man "king of creation", enabling him "to possess within himself the inward essences, the natures and the knowledge of all beings".145

Lower levels of being do not have the power of the word and can therefore symbolise higher levels less fully and deeply. And yet in Christ and the Church, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1.22), even the lowliest wave-function acquires reality and meaning and the ability to partake in some measure in the Providence of God.

The proof of the primordial unity of the universe, and the guarantee of its eternal unity, is the Incarnation of Christ. For when the Word became flesh, He that is absolutely immaterial and unquantifiable took on matter and was as it were "quantised". Thus in His one and indivisible Person was united the Godhead, mind, soul, body, atoms and quanta.

We might call this the First Law of Analogical Thermodynamics. It is the Law of the conservation of matter and life and meaning in the Light and Life and Logos of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, the unity of the universe has been threatened by man, who, misusing the freedom and rationality given him in the image of God's absolute Freedom and Rationality, has turned away from God to the lower levels of reality. Thus instead of contemplating all things in symbolic and symbiotic relation to the Word and Wisdom of the universe, he has considered them only in relation to himself, the observer and user; instead of offering nature up to God in eucharistic thanksgiving, he has dragged it down to the level of his own self-centred desires. As a result, both he and nature

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144 St. Ambrose of Milan, On Paradise, 11.
have disintegrated, and not only abstractly, in the systems of scientists and philosophers, but concretely, in history; for there has been a progressive seepage or dissipation of reality and meaning from the universe separating man from God, then man from woman, the soul from the body, and all the elements of nature from their original moorings.

In scientific terms, this seepage or disintegration or expanding chaos is expressed in the second law of thermodynamics, the best verified law in the whole of science. We might call it the Second Law of Analogical Thermodynamics. In theological language it is known as original sin or, in St. Paul's words, "the bondage of corruption", under which the whole of creation has been groaning to the present day (Romans 8.21-22).

The thesis of the First Law, and the antithesis of the Second Law, require a Third Law which restores or recreates the order that was in the beginning. This Third Law began to operate at the Incarnation of Christ, when human nature was recreated in the image and likeness of God, but with a new energy that took it onto a higher plane, the plane of deification. This Third Law is in fact no law at all, in the sense of a constraint upon nature, but rather "the law of liberty" (James 2.12), "the glorious liberty of the sons of God" (Romans 8.22), the law of grace...

We fell through partaking of the tree of knowledge prematurely, before partaking of the tree of life. We began to analyse and reduce and kill and consume before we had acquired real, stable life in Christ. God did not say that knowledge was evil, nor that Adam and Eve would not acquire a certain kind of knowledge by partaking of the forbidden tree; but since this knowledge was not a knowledge of life grounded in life it became a knowledge of death that brought in death.

Science has repeated this original fall, coming to the bitter and senseless and deadly conclusion that all life has evolved through a struggle to the death, being constructed out of ghostly spectra of possibilities that disappear on encountering the first dawn of knowledge. The universe, according to science, is indeed, as Macbeth said, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". Science can only come to life again by coming into contact with the true Light, Christ, "in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2.3).

Science and faith can come to a single, mutually consistent understanding of the universe. But only if science takes the absolute truths revealed by faith as its starting point, and not the fallen mind of man. Scientific method that does not attempt to compete with faith but is grounded in faith will lead to the truth, the whole truth. Let us hope and pray that, grounded in this way in absolute truth, a resurrection of science will take place.
But in the meantime let us not be deceived by "antitheses of science falsely so called" (I Timothy 6.20). Let us "continue in the faith grounded and settled", taking care lest any man rob us "through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 1.23, 2.8). For the words of St. Basil the Great about the "half-scientists" of his day are no less relevant in our own: "Have not those who give themselves up to vain science the eyes of owls? The sight of the owl, piercing during the night time, is dazzled by the splendour of the sun. Thus the intelligence of these men, so keen to contemplate vanities, is blind in the presence of the true Light..."¹⁴⁶

January 1/14, 2005.
St. Basil the Great.

(Revised and greatly expanded from the article, “An Orthodox Approach to Science”, in Orthodox America, vol. XV, no. 5 (137), January, 1996, pp. 6-7, 10; and in Russian in Pravoslavnaiia Tver’ (Orthodox Tver), №№ 5-6-7 (54-55-56), May-June-July, 1998, pp. 20-21)

¹⁴⁶ St. Basil, Homily 8 on the Hexaemeron.
11. ABORTION, PERSONHOOD AND THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL

The origin of the soul has never been a subject of major controversy in Orthodoxy as it has been in Catholicism. Thus the argument between creationists and traducianists, which was the subject of several papal bulls, has not received a final resolution in Orthodox dogmatics. The creationist view is that each individual soul is separately created by God; while the traducianist view, in the words of Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, is that it “is created from the souls of a man’s parents and only in this general sense constitutes a new creation of God”.147 But “how the soul of each individual man originates is not fully revealed in the word of God; it is 'a mystery known to God alone' (St. Cyril of Alexandria)148, and the Church does not give us a strictly defined teaching on this subject. She decisively rejected only Origen's view, which had been inherited from the philosophy of Plato, concerning the pre-existence of souls, according to which souls come to earth from a higher world. This teaching of Origen and the Origenists was condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council.”149

However, the dramatic changes that modern science has created in man's image of himself have elicited attempts to define the Church's teaching on the soul more precisely. Darwinism, in particular, has elicited some development in the thinking of Orthodox theologians. Thus when the Russian Bishop Theophan the Recluse (+1894) was suspected of coming close to Darwinism because he said that the soul of man is like the soul of the animal, he replied: "We have in us the body, then the soul, whose origin is in natural generation, and finally the spirit, which is breathed in by God. It is said that man is a rational animal. To be an animal means not only to have flesh, but also the whole animal life. Only man possesses in himself the νοος, that is, the spirit. So man is a spiritualized animal."150

147 Pomazansky, Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1984, p. 129.
148 The full quotation from St. Cyril is as follows: “This mystery of the incarnate Word has some similarity with human birth. For mothers of ordinary men, in obedience to the natural laws of generation, carry in the womb the flesh which gradually takes shape, and develops through the secret operations of God until it reaches perfection and attains the form of a human being; and God endows this living creature with spirit, in a manner known only to Himself. As the prophet says, ‘He forms a man’s spirit within him’ (Zachariah 12.1).” (Epistle One to the Monks of Egypt)
149 Pomazansky, op. cit., pp. 128-129.
150 Thomas Spidlik, La Doctrine Spirituelle de Théophane le Reclus (The Spiritual Doctrine of Theophan the Recluse), Rome: Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 1965, p. 6 (in French). Compare St. Ambrose of Optina: You ask how you can bring into agreement the books: the Orthodox Confession and Theology of Macarius in relation to the origin of souls. Read yourself question 28 in the first book and *7 in the second volume of the second and you will see that the well-known priest did not at all say, as you aver, that the souls come from their parents by the natural order alone. Peter Moghila says that after the complete formation of the members of the body from human see the soul is given by God; while in Macarius’ Theology it says that
Other Greek theologians, reacted still more strongly against Darwinism, pointing out that Darwinism is incompatible with the Church's teaching on the purposiveness of creation and the immortality of the soul (first and fifth anathemas of the *Order of the Week of Orthodoxy*). Thus in the works of St. Nectarios of Aegina (+1920), we find twenty arguments for the immortality and rationality of the soul, and a very robust rejection of Darwinism: "The followers of pithecogeny [the derivation of man from the apes] are ignorant of man and of his lofty destiny, because they have denied him his soul and Divine revelation. They have rejected the Spirit, and the Spirit has abandoned them. They withdrew from God, and God withdrew from them; for, thinking that they were wise, they became fools... If they had acted with knowledge, they would not have lowered themselves so much, nor would they have taken pride in tracing the origin of the human race to the most shameless of animals. Rightly did the Prophet say of them: 'Man, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them' (Psalm 48.21 (LXX))."\(^\text{151}\)

In the twentieth century it is especially the debate over abortion that has elicited further thinking on this subject. The abortionists try to justify the murder of human foetuses by arguing that the foetus is not fully a person at the moment of conception or for some time thereafter. In response to this, Orthodox apologists have shown, on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, that life and "personhood" begin at conception. Thus Presbytera Valerie Brockman writes: "Human life, personhood, development begin at conception and continue until death. There are no magic humanizing events, such as quickening or passage through the birth canal. There are no trimester milestones, no criteria for independence."\(^\text{152}\)

Now a compromise between the pro- and anti-abortion positions is sometimes sought in the gradualist argument that there is no definite time when the foetus has personhood and when it does not, but personhood develops gradually, so that in early stages of pregnancy the foetus is less personal and in later stages more personal. This viewpoint is sometimes expressed by saying that foetuses are “potential persons”. Thus “according to this viewpoint,” writes Gareth D. Jones, “there is no point in development, no matter how early on, when the embryo or foetus does not display some

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elements of personhood—no matter how rudimentary. The potential is there, and it is because of this that both the embryo and the foetus have a claim to life and respect. This claim, however, becomes stronger as foetal development proceeds, so that by some time during the third trimester the claim is so strong that the consequences of killing a foetus are the same as those of killing an actual person—whether child or adult.”

However, all gradualist arguments run up against the powerful moral argument concerning the injustice of abortion, which is the same regardless when the abortion takes place. Thus in his Second Canon, St. Basil the Great states that a woman who deliberately aborts her child is a murderess, “for here there is involved the question of providing justice for the infant”. For insofar as the foetus would have developed into a full-grown man in normal circumstances, he must be considered to have been deprived of life whether the abortion took place early or late in pregnancy.

To this the gradualist may reply: “Even though the deprivation is the same in the two cases, the ‘patient’ is not the same. For in the case of early abortion, the foetus is, say, a ‘half-person’, whereas in the other it is, say, a ‘quarter-person’. So the injustice is not the same, just as it is not the same injustice to deprive a dog of life as it is to deprive a man.”

In order to counter this argument, we have to demonstrate that personhood cannot be quantified or divided. In other words, we have to show that the whole concept of a young foetus being a lower form of life than an older foetus is invalid. There is no such thing, therefore, as a ‘half-person’ or ‘quarter-person’.

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One approach to this problem is to identify personhood with the image of God in man, as is done by the Russian Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky.

Now the image of God has been identified with various faculties of man’s spiritual nature, such as mind, reason and free will. However, St. Gregory of Nyssa asserts that “the image is not in part of our nature, nor is the grace in any one of the things found in that nature”. This idea has been taken up in our time by Lossky and others, who assert that the image of God is not to be identified exclusively with any single faculty or ability. Still less, a fortiori, can it be identified with properties or faculties that can be physically observed and measured by doctors or scientists.

154 St. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Making of Man, 16. Cf. St. Epiphanius of Cyprus: “Church doctrine believes that man was created according to the image of God, but does not define precisely in what part of his essence the image of God exists... There is no need at all to define or affirm in what part of us that which is in the divine image is effectuated” (Against Heresies, 70, 2: P.G. 42:341).
Thus Lossky writes: “The image cannot be objectified, ‘naturalized’ we might say, by being attributed to some part or other of the human being. To be in the image of God, the Fathers affirm, in the last analysis is to be a personal being, that is to say, a free, responsible being. Why, one might ask, did God make man free and responsible? Precisely because He wanted to call him to a supreme vocation: deification; that is to say, to become by grace, in a movement as boundless as God, that which God is by nature. And this call demands a free response; God wishes that this movement be a movement of love...

“A personal being is capable of loving someone more than his own nature, more than his own life. The person, that is to say, the image of God in man, is then man’s freedom with regard to his nature, ‘the fact of being freed from necessity and not being subject to the dominion of nature, but able to determine oneself freely’ (St. Gregory of Nyssa). Man acts most often under natural impulses. He is conditioned by his temperament, his character, his heredity, cosmic or psycho-social conditioning; and his dignity consists in being able to liberate himself from his nature, not by consuming it or abandoning it to itself.”

But, the gradualist may object: “It is precisely the foetus that least shows this ability to liberate oneself from one’s nature; it is completely dominated by natural impulses.”

However, in Jeremiah we read: “The word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee. I appointed thee to be a prophet to the nations’” (1.4-5). On which Brockman comments: “Jeremiah is treated by God as a personal being and was sanctified before birth. Surely this indicates that the sanctity of human life and personhood extend back to the time in the womb.”

Again, in Luke we read the words of St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist, when the Virgin Mary visited her: “As soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy” (1.44). St. John, even as a foetus, felt joy, an emotion very close to love, at the presence of the incarnate God. The fact that we cannot imagine the mental and spiritual processes of a foetus, still less of fetuses in relation to each other, should not prevent us, as Christians, from accepting the evidence of Holy Scripture. Let us not forget, moreover, that Christ Himself was a Divine Person from before


156 Brockman, op. cit., p. 25.
eternity, and did not cease to be that Person when He Himself became a foetus in the Virgin’s womb. Thus the encounter between the Lord and St. John the Baptist in Elizabeth’s house was a fully personal meeting between two “whole persons”, in spite of the fact that neither had yet been born…

We may compare a foetus to a comatose or sleeping person, to whom we do not refuse the status of personhood just because he is not exhibiting the signs of sentient and/or conscious life at that moment. Thus a person who is asleep or in a coma is still a person, and to kill a person in such a state is still considered murder. Even in those cases when permission is given to kill a person who is in an irreversible coma by turning off his life-support machine, the usual justification given is not that the patient is no longer a person and can therefore be disposed of as being sub-human, but that he cannot now “enjoy” his personhood.

Of course, an adult who becomes comatose is different from a foetus in that he has already shown signs of a fully personal life over a long period. However, from the materialist point of view, leaving aside the differences in levels of brain and autonomic nervous system activity between a foetus and a comatose adult, it is difficult to see how a fundamental, qualitative distinction between the two can be made. Both would appear – again, from a materialist point of view - to be lacking certain fundamental features of personhood, such as consciousness and the ability to communicate with other persons.

And if the materialist says that the foetus is only a “potential person”, whereas the comatose adult is an “actual person” who has temporarily lost, or is failing to display, some elements of his nature, then we may justifiably challenge him to give an operational definition of this distinction. How can something be “actual” when it is not being actualized? Cannot we say that a foetus, too, is an “actual person” who is temporarily failing to display certain elements of his nature?

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Another approach to the problem is from the direction of the soul/body distinction. Now most pro-abortionists explicitly or implicitly deny the existence of the soul except in the Aristotelian-Aquinas-evolutionist sense of an “emergent function” of the body. This allows them to look on the unborn as on people whose “souls” have not fully emerged, and so can be treated as if they were just bodies, matter which has not reached its full degree of development or evolution. The Orthodox, however, while not going to the opposite, Platonist-Origenist extreme of identifying the person exclusively with the soul, nevertheless assert that man is, in St. Maximus’ words, a “composite” being made up of two separate and distinct natures from the beginning.
Thus St. Basil the Great writes: “I recognize two men, one of which is invisible and one which is hidden within the same – the inner, invisible man. We have therefore an inner man, and we are of dual make-up. Indeed, it is true to say that we exist inwardly. The self is the inner man. The outer parts are not the self, but belongings of it. For the self not the hand, but rather the rational faculty of the soul, while the hand is a part of man. Thus while the body is an instrument of man, an instrument of the soul, man, strictly speaking, is chiefly the soul.”

Again, St. John of Damascus writes: “Every man is a combination of soul and body... The soul is a living substance, simple and without body, invisible to the bodily eyes by virtue of its peculiar nature, immortal, rational, spiritual, without form, making use of an organized body, and being the source of its powers of life and growth and sensation and generation... The soul is independent, with a will and energy of its own.”

Since the soul is distinct from the body, the Orthodox have no difficulty conceiving of it as existent, active and conscious even while the body is an undeveloped foetus or showing few signs of life; for, as Solomon says, “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (Song of Solomon 5.2). Moreover, since the soul is not a function of the body, but the cause of its activity, the death or comatose state of the body is no reason for believing that the soul, too, is comatose or dead. For “the dust shall return to the earth as it was, but the spirit to God Who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12.7).

As for the question when the soul is joined to the body, this is answered by St. Maximus the Confessor in the context of a discussion of Origenism as follows: “Neither [soul nor body] exists in separation from the other before their joining together which is destined to create one form. They are, in effect, simultaneously created and joined together, as is the realization of the form created by their joining together.” “For if,” he writes in another place, “the body and the soul are parts of man, and if the parts necessarily refer to something (for it is the whole which has the full significance), and if the things which are said to ‘refer’ are everywhere perfectly simultaneous, in conformity with their genesis - for the parts by their reunion make up the whole form, and the only thing that separates them is the thought which seeks to discern the essence of each being, - then it is impossible that the soul and the body, insofar as they are parts of man, should exist chronologically

one before the other or one after the other, for then the logos (of man), in relation to which each of them exists, would be destroyed.\textsuperscript{160}

Another argument put forward by St. Maximus is that if nothing prevented the soul and body from changing partners, one would be forced to admit the possibility of metempsychosis, or reincarnation. However, the fact of their creation simultaneously and for each other, thereby forming a single logos, rules out the possibility; for created beings cannot violate their logoi – that is, their essential nature in the creative plan of God. Even the separation of the soul from the body at death, and the dissolution of the body into its constituent elements, does not destroy this logical unity; for the soul is always the soul “of such-and-such a man”, and the body is always the body “of such-and-such a man”.\textsuperscript{161}

St. John of Damascus sums up the matter: “Body and soul were formed at the same time, not first the one and then the other, as Origen so senselessly supposes.”\textsuperscript{162}

The above conclusion is not affected by the view one may take on the traducianist versus creationist controversy. Whether the soul of an individual man comes from the souls of his parents (the traducianist view), or is created by God independently of his parents (the creationist view), it remains true that it comes into existence as a new, independent soul at the same time as his body, that is, at conception. And since the new soul is already in existence at the time of conception, abortion is the killing of a complete human being made up of both soul and body, and therefore must be called murder.

\textsuperscript{160} St. Maximus, \textit{Ambigua}, II, 7, P.G. 91:1100C6-D2; quoted by Congourdeau, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 697.


\textsuperscript{162} St. John of Damascus, \textit{An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith}, II, 12.
12. ORTHODOXY, FEMINISM AND THE NEW SCIENCE OF MAN

"There is nothing new under the sun," said the wise Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1.9). And truly, there is nothing new either in the sexual so-called revolution of the 1960s, or in the horrific scientific experiments on the human reproductive system of the 1990s (whether performed by humans or "aliens"). The former was foreshadowed by the depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the latter - by the giants born from the unnatural unions of the sons of God (perhaps fallen angels) with the daughters of men. Orthodox Christians will not have been seduced by either, knowing that their end is the same - wholesale destruction from the face of the Lord.

However, there is something at least relatively new, and potentially much more seductive, in the new theory of man that has been built up on the basis of these sexual and scientific "revolutions". This new humanism is much more radical than the humanism of the early modern period, although it shares the same basic presuppositions. The basic tenet of humanism in all its periods is that man is autonomous and can control his own destiny without recourse to God, Who either does not interfere in human affairs (Deism) or does not in fact exist (atheism).

From the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries humanism asserted that man could control his own destiny, and ultimately human nature itself, by controlling his environment. The genetic inheritance of man was assumed to be relatively immutable; but that did not matter, because education and environmental manipulation were thought to be capable of producing all the changes necessary to make man as an individual, and society as a whole, "without spot or wrinkle". The most characteristic result of this old-style humanism in the theoretical field was the American B.F. Skinner's behaviourist psychology, which reduced most of human life to operant conditioning; and in the practical sphere - the Soviet Gulag and Homo Sovieticus.

163 Now the giants were upon the earth in those days; and after that when the sons of God were wont to go in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them, those were the giants of old, the men of renown (Gen. 6.2-5). The Fathers of the Church interpreted this passage in two ways. According to Lopukhin, the majority of the Jewish and Christian interpreters of antiquity, including Justin the Philosopher, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Ambrose and others understood the term "sons of God" to mean "angels" - that is, the fallen angels or demons. But an equally impressive array of Fathers, including John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian, Blessed Theodoret, Cyril of Jerusalem, Blessed Jerome and Blessed Augustine understood the term to denote the men of the line of Seth, while the "daughters of men" referred to the women of the line of Cain; so that the event described involved an unlawful mixing between the pious and the impious human generations (Tolkovnia Bibli, St. Petersburg, 1904-1907 / Stockholm, 1987, volume 1, pp. 44-45).

For a good discussion of this passage, see Henry Morris, The Genesis Record, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978,
This first, what we might call masculine phase of humanism ended in 1953 with the death of Stalin and the discovery of DNA by Watson and Crick. This discovery meant that now not only the environment, but also the genes of man could be in principle manipulated and controlled. However, neither science nor the moral climate of the humanist world was yet prepared to see the path to total control which, according to the humanist model of man, this discovery opened up. For if man is the interaction of his genes and his environment, with no "intervening variables" such as human freewill or Divine grace, then the possibility of manipulating both genes and environment is equivalent to the possibility of a control of man and society far more totalitarian in principle even than the Soviet experiment that was just beginning to run out of steam.

The event which began to change the moral climate in the desired direction was the discovery of the female contraceptive pill and the subsequent revolution in the role of women in society, which is why we might call this the feminine phase of humanism. If the driving force of the earlier, masculine phase had been the will to power, then the driving force of this later, more radical, feminine phase has been the lust for pleasure. For the discovery of the pill opened up a new prospect - that of maximising sexual pleasure while minimising any unpleasant consequences in the shape of pregnancies.

But democracy demanded that the fruits of this revolution should not be enjoyed only by heterosexuals, and so homosexuals, too, won that recognition of their activities as natural and moral which all monotheist, and even many pagan societies have always refused them.

The feminization of western civilization continued apace with the rise of feminism, and the appearance of women priests. Perhaps this was the fulfilment of the vision of St. John of Kronstadt, which though considered by some to be inauthentic, is nevertheless full of profoundly prophetic images: "O Lord, how awful! Just then there jumped onto the altar some sort of abominable, vile, disgusting black woman, all in red with a star on her forehead. She spun round on the altar, then cried out in a terrible voice like a night owl through the whole cathedral: 'Freedom!' and stood up. And the people, as if out of their minds, began to run round the altar, rejoicing and clapping and shouting and whistling."

With the last vestiges of tradition in Christian thought and worship swept aside, the stage was set for a really new, really radical stage in the revolution: the abolition of sexuality. The Soviets, to the applause of western liberals, had tried, and to a large extent succeeded, in abolishing religion, the nation, the law and the family. But sexuality remained as one of the last bastions of

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normal human life, and therefore a potential nest of counter-revolution, as was recognized by Zamyatin in his novel *We* and by Orwell in *1984*.

And so it has been left to the capitalism of the 1990s to carry through this, one of the last steps of the revolution. Its executors, appropriately enough, have been the scientists, the high priests of humanism. What they appear to be saying is that: (i) sexuality, and sexual orientation, is largely in the genes; therefore (ii) sexuality, and sexual orientation, can be predicted and, if necessary, changed before birth through genetic therapy; (iii) men can become women, and women can become men; (iv) hybrid species can be created, and (v) sexuality is unnecessary from a reproductive point of view, because human beings can be cloned from a single adult cell.

Of course, the latter statement has not yet been experimentally proved (and, as I shall argue, it could never in fact be proved). Nor is there any lack of voices warning against the dangers of such an experiment. But in spite of all these warnings there seems to be an implicit acceptance, not only that the cloning of human beings is possible, but that it must come sometime.

If (and it is a very big "if", as we shall see) the cloning of human beings were possible, then man would potentially be master of his destiny in a quite new sense. Although the original building blocks of human nature, the cell and its components, would still come to him ready-made (creation ex nihilo remains the only feat which man still feels compelled to concede to God alone), he would then be able to manipulate the building blocks in such a way as to make human beings to order, having whatever physical or psychological characteristics he chose. Frankenstein already seems crude compared to what scientists can theoretically do comparatively soon.

It has often been observed that science, far from being the domain of the purely disinterested observation of nature, is often closely connected with moral or religious impulses - more often than not, immoral and irreligious ones. Thus the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was closely linked to a falling away of faith in Divine Revelation and a corresponding increase of faith in man's ability to discover the truth by means of his own intellect, unaided by the Divine Logos. The Darwinian revolution of the nineteenth century was likewise closely linked to the desire to prove the autonomy of man and his ineluctable progress to ever great moral and spiritual heights - again, by his own (or rather, Blind Chance's) efforts alone. Now the genetic revolution of the late twentieth century has raised man's autonomy to godlike status; for having reduced all life to "the selfish gene" it has claimed mastery of the gene itself - all for the sake of the lowest and most selfish of aims. In this way has the native heresy of the British Isles, Pelagianism, which denies original sin and over-emphasizes the power of man's unaided freewill, come to find its most developed and dangerous
expression in the worship of science in the Anglo-Saxon countries, and from there - throughout the world.

Each stage of the scientific-humanist revolution has seemed to justify one part of man's fallen nature as being in fact unfallen. The Newtonian physics of the seventeenth century established the credentials of science as such, and therefore of the power of the mind, which since Thomas Aquinas had been declared to be unfallen. The Darwinian biology of the nineteenth century justified man's aggression at the individual level and cut-throat competition at the level of corporations and nations; for did not the law of the survival of the fittest demonstrate that only the aggressive and merciless survive, and that the meek not only do not inherit the earth but are exterminated from it? Finally, the Watsonian genetics of the twentieth century has justified even the basest of man's desires by demonstrating to him that he can't help it, there's nothing to be ashamed of, because it's all in our genes anyway. And if for some hedonistic reason (it couldn't be a moral reason, for how can one moralize about Mother Nature?) he doesn't like the inherited pattern of his own desiring, he can modify it by a mixture of surgery and gene and hormone therapy.

The immediate reaction of Orthodox Christians to this is, of course, one of horror that human beings should seek to play God and seriously contemplate such experiments in the re-creation of human nature as make Hitler's eugenics look like child's play by comparison. An intellectual response might proceed from two cardinal tenets of Orthodox anthropology: (1) the immortality and relative immateriality of the soul; and (2) the immorality of any attempt to change the nature of sexuality insofar as the latter symbolizes immutable and eternal relationships in the Divine order of things.

Let us briefly consider each of these. (1) Whereas the body was made from the earth, the soul was made from God's inbreathing and therefore does not perish with the body. As Solomon says: "The dust returneth to the earth, as it was, and the soul returneth to God Who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12.7). The soul thus freed from the body is fully conscious. This is shown by the Prophet Samuel's speaking to King Saul from beyond the grave (1 Kings 28.11-19). For "even after he had died he prophesied and revealed to the king his death" (Sirach 46.20).

This being so, the cloning of a human being, assuming it were possible, would be a cloning only of his physical nature, his body, and not of his soul. Souls cannot be cloned, for they are not material. Even if the clone spoke and acted just like a human being, it or he would be at best a different human being, with a different soul, just as twins born from the same fertilized egg are nevertheless two different human beings with two different souls. At worst it might not be a human being at all, but a demon inhabiting a human body that had no human soul. And if this seems fantastic, we may recall the opinion of...
the well-known Lutheran researcher into the occult, Dr. Kurt Koch, who in the 1970s claimed that so-called "resurrections from the dead" in Indonesia were in fact cases of demons entering into corpses and "resurrecting" them.

For true resurrection from the dead, and therefore also true cloning, can be accomplished only by God, because while men have a certain power over flesh alone, God is the Lord both of spirits and of flesh, and only He can either send a spirit into a newly-formed body or reunite it with a dead one.

This point is well illustrated in one of the homilies of St. Ephraim the Syrian on the last days, in which the one thing which the Antichrist is shown to be incapable of doing is raising the dead: "And when 'the son of perdition' has drawn to his purpose the whole world, Enoch and Elias shall be sent that they may confute the evil one by a question filled with mildness. Coming to him, these holy men, that they may expose 'the son of perdition' before the multitudes round about him, will say: 'If you are God, show us what we now ask of you. In what place do the men of old, Enoch and Elias, lie hidden?' Then the evil one will at once answer the holy men: 'If I wish to seek for them in heaven, in the depths of the sea, every abode lies open to me. There is no other God but me; and I can do all things in heaven and on earth.' They shall answer the son of perdition: 'If you are God, call the dead, and they will rise up. For it is written in the books of the Prophets, and also by the Apostles, that Christ, when He shall appear, will raise the dead from their tombs. If you do not show us this, we shall conclude that He Who was crucified is greater than you; for He raised the dead, and was Himself raised to heaven in great glory.' In that moment the most abominable evil one, angered against the saints, seizing the sword, will sever the heads of the just men." 165

We may rest assured, therefore, that no man, not even the Antichrist, will ever be able to create a new human being possessed of both soul and body from one cell of another human being - although he may well be able to create what seems to be a true clone; for in those days "by great signs and wonders he will lead astray, if it were possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24).

(2) It is striking that so many of the "advances" in the modern science of man have been made in connection with experiments on sexuality. We have seen one reason for this - the sudden general slackening of morals in the western world in the 1960s, which gave science the task of pandering to the newly liberated desires of the people. But there is another and profounder reason connected with the fact that, from an early age, sexuality is felt to be at the deepest, most intimate core of the child's personality.

Thus the greatest, most wounding insult you can give to a young boy is to say that he is a "sissy" or like a girl. A boy would rather be dead than be seen

wearing pink or having a close friendship with a girl. And similarly with girls. And although psychologists and educators have had some success in bringing dating down to an unnaturally early age, they have failed completely to make boys play with dolls or make girls like typically boyish pursuits. For boys will be boys, and girls - girls.

Why should this be? After all, is it not the case that in Christ there is "neither male nor female" (Gal. 3.28), which would seem to imply that sexual differentiation is not a fundamental, eternal category? And did the Lord not say that there would be no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven, but that the saved would be like the sexless angels?

On the other hand, is it conceivable that Christ should ever be anything other than male in His humanity? Or the Mother of God female? And is not the very idea of a change of sex repugnant to us, which implies that there is something deeper to sexuality than meets the eye, something more than merely a set of biological differences.

Let us then consider the question: what is the significance of sexual differentiation?

Genetics tells us that the essential difference between men and women consists in the possession by men of one X and one Y chromosome, whereas women possess two X chromosomes. This might at first suggest that men have something "extra" which women do not have. However, neither biology nor theology has ever pinpointed what that something "extra" might be. Nor is it at all clear that the interaction of one X and one Y chromosome makes for a superior creature to the product of the interaction of two X chromosomes. In any case, genetics, like all the sciences, studies nature after the Fall, and cannot tell us anything directly about nature before the Fall, still less what the deeper purpose of sexual differences might be in Divine Providence.

Nevertheless, it can provide some intriguing pointers; and the biological evidence suggests that sexual differences are deep in some respects and superficial in others. Thus chromosomal masculinity or femininity appears to be present at birth and relatively immutable. On the other hand, many sexual differences, including the external genitalia, can be changed and even reversed from one gender to the other by hormone therapy and surgery - but without changing the patient's feeling of who, sexually speaking, he or she really is.\(^\text{166}\)

Could this contrast between "deep" and "superficial" sexual differences reflect a contrast between sexual differences before the Fall and sexual differences after the Fall?

Before the Fall there was Adam and Eve, male and female; and this
difference was "deep" in the sense that it existed from the beginning and will
continue to exist, presumably, into eternity. But after the Fall further, more
"superficial" differences were added to enable mankind to reproduce in a
fallen world. In the same way, the eye was refashioned after the Fall,
according to St. John Chrysostom, to enable it to weep.

This means that sexuality was there from the beginning, and that the
essence of the relationship between the sexes is an essential part of human
nature, but that human reproductive anatomy and physiology as we them
know today - including the painfulness of childbirth itself - were
superimposed upon the unfallen image. This idea of the "superimposition" of
sexual differences upon the original image was developed by, among others,
St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Maximus the Confessor. It may also be that some
of the particularities of women that Holy Scripture refers to - their domination
by men (Gen. 3.16) and their being "the weaker vessel" in terms of emotional
control (I Peter 3.7) - belong to these more superficial characteristics that were
added only after the Fall and can therefore be overcome in Christ.

This brings us to the complaints of the feminists. First, there is the
complaint that women are not treated as equal to men. Now Holy Scripture
and Tradition agrees with the feminists that women are essentially equal to
men, being made, like them, in the image of God, and to that extent should be
treated equally. However, if "equal treatment" means "same
treatment", then
Orthodoxy disagrees. For men and women have always been different, both
before and after the Fall, and these differences entail that women should have
a different place in society from men.

The "deep", antelapsarian differences between men and women cannot be
changed, and the attempt to change them is disastrous, both for men and for
women. The "superficial", postlapsarian differences between men and women
can be changed, not in the sense that sex-change operations are permissible
(the Church forbids self-mutilation), but in the sense that the fallen character
of relationships between men and women can be overcome in Christ.
Marriage in Christ is one of the ways in which sexuality is stripped of its
superficiality, going from the Fall to Paradise: the other is monasticism, in
which a man becomes a eunuch, spiritually speaking, for the Kingdom of
heaven's sake (Matt. 19.12).

Let us try and define this "deeper", antelapsarian nature of sexuality.

St. Paul gives us the clue: "I want you to understand," he writes, "that the
head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the
head of Christ is God... A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the
image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For man was
not made from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for 
woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a veil on 
her head" (I Cor. 11.3.7-10).

In other words, the relationship between man and woman in some respect 
reflects and symbolizes the relationship between God the Father and God the 
Son, on the one hand, and God the Son and mankind, on the other. Each of 
these is a hierarchical relationship, which is compared to that between the head 
and the body. Thus while God the Father is equal to God the Son in essence, 
which is why He says: "The Father and I are one" (John 10.30), the Son 
nevertheless obeys the Father, the Origin of the Godhead, in all things, which 
is why He says: "My Father is greater than all" (John 10.29). In the same way, 
man and woman are equal in essence, but the woman must "be subject to her 
husband in all things" (Eph. 5.24). By contrast, the relationship between God 
the Son and mankind would at first sight appear to be different from these 
insofar as the Divinity is not equal in essence to humanity. However, the 
Incarnation of the Son and the Descent of the Holy Spirit has effected an 
"interchange of qualities", whereby God the Son has assumed humanity, and 
humanity has become "a partaker of the Divine nature" (II Peter 1.4) - as the 
Fathers put it, "God became man so that men should become gods". Therefore 
the originally unequal relationship between God and man has been in a 
certain sense levelled by its transformation into the new relationship between 
Christ and the Church, which can now be described, similarly, in terms of the 
relationship between head and body.

Now we can see that the very "primitive", very human relationship 
between head and body, or between male and female, has within itself the 
capacity to mirror and illumine for us, not only the supremely important, and 
more-than-merely-human, relationship between Christ and the Church, but 
also - albeit faintly, "as through a glass darkly" - the more-than-Divine, intra-
Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son. Thus the male-female 
relationship, and even the basic structure of the human body, is an icon, a 
material likeness, of the most spiritual and ineffable mysteries of the universe. 
For just as the head (the man) is lifted above the body (the woman) and rules 
her, but is completely devoted to caring for her, so does Christ love the 
Church, His Body, and give His life for her - all in obedience to His Head, the 
Father, Who "so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever 
believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3.16). That is 
why the relationship between man and woman is not accidental or superficial, 
still less fallen, but holy - and the entrance into the Holy of Holies. And that is 
why, according to the holy canons, the sacrament of marriage can only be 
celebrated on a Sunday, the eighth day, which symbolizes eternity; for even if 
there will be no marrying or giving in marriage in eternity, marriage will 
forever symbolize that eternal relationship of love between Christ and the 
Church which underpins the whole of reality, both temporal and eternal.
From this perspective we can see that the psychological differences between man and woman correspond precisely to the differences in spiritual function between Christ and the Church, and that these differences were implanted in human nature from the beginning precisely in order to mirror the spiritual relationships. The man is more intellectual, because he, like Christ, must lead and take the initiative; the woman is more emotional, because she, like the Church, must respond to him in love. The man is more aggressive, because he, like Christ, must wage war on the devil; the woman is more sensitive and intuitive, because she, like the Church, must be sensitive to the will of her husband.

Of course, these natural, unfallen differences have been corrupted by the Fall: men tend to be crude and boastful, women - weak-willed and easily led by all kinds of influences. If the man must still lead the woman in the Fall, this is not because he is less fallen than her, or less in need of being led by his Head, but because obedience to the hierarchical principle at all levels is the only way out of the Fall. For only if the woman obeys the man, and the man obeys Christ, as Christ obeyed the Father, can grace work to heal the fallen nature of mankind. This is not to say that the woman must obey the man in any circumstances; for if he disobeys Christ, and demands that she follow him in his disobedience, she must disobey him out of obedience to Christ. In this case the hierarchical principle has been violated at one level (the level of the man), but remains intact at another (the level of the woman).

It should be obvious - but needs saying, in view of the blasphemous things that are being said by today's modernist theologians - that the fact that the relationship between man and woman mirrors the relationships between Christ and the Church in no way implies that God is subject to sexual passion, or that He is masculine (or feminine) in essence. We are not projecting human sexuality onto God. The point is rather the reverse: that sexuality was created by God in order that man should understand, even in the depths of his physical being, the fundamental pattern and dynamic that holds the universe together in God. This pattern is unity-in-hierarchy, and the dynamic is the attraction of complementaries on one level of hierarchy into unity on a higher level. The initiative in the attraction of complementaries comes from the male pole. The male seeks out the female, and the female responds to the male. Having united they become "a new creature" on a higher plane of existence, that of Christ, Who in relation to the newly formed dyad is Himself the male partner and the initiator of the whole process on the lower plane, so that the human monads become a dyad only in the third, Divine Monad. That is why Christ, on becoming man, had to become male. For, as the fairy-tales of all lands testify, it is the man who saves, the woman who is saved; it is the man whose masculine strength and courage destroys the destroyer, it is the woman whose extraordinary beauty and grace inspires him to such feats. So when God came to save mankind from the power of the devil, he necessarily came as a man to save His woman...
Of course, when we speak of "necessity" here, we are not speaking of physical necessity; nor are we placing any limitations on God, for Whom all things are possible. We are simply responding to the clues God has given us in the universe to show why it had to be so; we are recognising that there is a spiritual necessity in what actually took place. We are recognising that a drama reflects the mind of a dramatist, and that the Divine Actor of the Drama of our salvation would never allow Himself to give a performance in life which did not exactly match the conception of the Divine Dramatist, which did not perfectly embody the canons of Divine Beauty.

Now there is another sacrament that, like marriage, almost precisely mirrors the relationship between Christ and the Church - that of priesthood. The priest (and especially the bishop) is the head of his flock as Christ is the Head of the Church, and the priest must lay down his life for his flock as Christ laid down His life for the Church. There is even a sense in which the priest may be said to be the husband of his flock, which may be the reason why there is a canon (unfortunately, very often violated today) forbidding bishops to move from one diocese to another.

Just as Christ had to be born a male, so the icon of Christ, the bishop, and his representative, the priest, must be a male. For "since the beginning of time," as St. Epiphanius of Cyprus says, "a woman has never served God as a priest". If the priest is a woman, the iconic relationship between Christ the Saviour and Great High Priest and the priesthood is destroyed.

As Bishop Kallistos (Ware) writes: "The priest is an icon of Christ; and since the incarnate Christ became not only man but a male - since, furthermore, in the order of nature the roles of male and female are not interchangeable - it is necessary that a priest should be male. Those Western Christians who do not in fact regard the priest as an icon of Christ are of course free to ordain women as ministers; they are not, however, creating women priests but dispensing with priesthood altogether..."

"It is one of the chief glories of human nature that men and women, although equal, are not interchangeable. Together they exercise a common ministry which neither could exercise alone; for within that shared ministry each has a particular role. There exists between them a certain order or hierarchy, with man as the 'head' and woman as the partner or 'helper' (Gen. 2.18); yet this differentiation does not imply any fundamental inequality between them. Within the Trinity, God the Father is the source and 'head' of Christ (I Cor. 11.3), and yet the three Persons are essentially equal; and the same is true of the relationship of man and woman. The Greek Fathers,

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although often negative in their opinion of the female sex, were on the whole absolutely clear about the basic human equality of man and woman. Both alike are created in God's image; the subordination of woman to man and her exploitation reflect not the order of nature created by God, but the contra-natural conditions resulting from original sin. Equal yet different according to the order of nature, man and woman complete each other through their free co-operation; and this complementarity is to be respected on every level - when at home in the circle of the family, when out at work, and not least in the life of the Church, which blesses and transforms the natural order but does not obliterate it...

"Men and women are not interchangeable, like counters, or identical machines. The difference between them... extends far more deeply than the physical act of procreation. The sexuality of human beings is not an accident, but affects them in their very identity and in their deepest mystery. Unlike the differentiation between Jew and Greek or between slave and free - which reflects man's fallen state and are due to social convention, not to nature - the differentiation between male and female is an aspect of humanity's natural state before the Fall. The life of grace in the Church is not bound by social convention or the conditions produced by the Fall; but it does conform to the order of nature, in the sense of the unfallen nature as created by God. Thus the distinction between male and female is not abolished in the Church."168

The perverseness of female "priesthood" is somewhat similar to the perverseness of homosexual "marriage". In both cases, the "innate preaching" of Christ's Incarnation that is implanted in our sexual nature, instead of being reinforced and deepened by the sacraments of the Church, is contradicted and in effect destroyed by a blasphemous parody of them.

That is why such things are felt to be unnatural by men and condemned as abominations by God. And if scientific humanism seeks to redefine what is natural, let us recall that such humanism, according to Fr. Seraphim Rose, is *subhumanism*. It is "a rebellion against the true nature of man and the world, a flight from God the center of man's existence, clothed in the language of the opposite of all these."169

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168 Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 83, 84-85, 80.
169 Fr. Seraphim, quoted by Monk Damascene, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
13. A DIALOGUE BETWEEN AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
AND A RATIONALIST ON THE BODY AND BLOOD OF
CHRIST

Orthodox. My friend, I would like to ask you a question: what do you understand by the words: “We are saved by the Blood of Christ”?
Rationalist. That we are saved by the Sacrifice of Christ Crucified, whereby He washed away our sins in His Blood shed on the Cross.
Orthodox. I agree. And how precisely are our sins washed away?
Rationalist. By true faith, and by partaking of the Holy Mysteries of the Church with faith and love, and especially the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist.
Orthodox. Excellent! So you agree that in the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ we partake of the very same Body that was nailed to the Cross and the very same Blood that was shed from the side of the Saviour?
Rationalist. Er, yes…
Orthodox. I see that you hesitate, my friend. Is there something wrong in what I have said.
Rationalist. Not exactly… However, you must be careful not to understand the Mystery in a cannibalistic sense.
Orthodox. Cannibalistic? What do you mean, my friend? What is cannibalistic here?
Rationalist. Well, I mean that we must not understand the Body of Christ in the Eucharist to be a hunk of meat. That would be close to cannibalism – to paganism.
Orthodox. You know, the early Christians were accused of being cannibals by their enemies. However, cannibals eat dead meat. In the Mystery we do not partake of dead meat, but of living flesh, the Flesh of the God-Man. It is alive not only through Its union with His human Soul, but also through Its union with the Divine Spirit. And that makes It not only alive, but Life-giving.
Rationalist. Still, you mustn’t understand this in too literal a way. Did not the Lord say: “The flesh is of little use; it is the spirit that gives life” (John 6.63)?
Orthodox. Yes indeed, but you must understand this passage as the Holy Fathers understand it. St. John Chrysostom says that in these words the Lord was not referring to His own Flesh (God forbid!), but to a carnal understanding of His words. And “this is what carnal understanding means – looking on things in a simple manner without representing anything more. We should not judge in this manner about the visible, but we must look into all its mysteries with internal eyes.”

Rationalist. If you think about the Flesh of Christ carnally, you are thinking about It as if it were just flesh, separate from the Divine Spirit. But we must have spiritual eyes to look beyond – to the invisible reality.
Rationalist. But this is just what I mean! You are reducing a spiritual Mystery to something carnal, material. But we are not saved by matter!

\footnote{St. John Chrysostom, Homily 47 on John, 2.}
Orthodox. St. John of Damascus did not agree with you. “I do not worship matter,” he said, “but I worship the Creator of matter Who became matter for my sake and Who, through matter, accomplished my salvation!”[171]

Rationalist. But “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15.50).

Orthodox. Fallen flesh and blood is what the Apostle means. But if our fallen flesh and blood is purified and transfigured by the incorrupt Body and Blood of Christ, then our bodies will be raised in glory at the Second Coming and we will be able to enter the Kingdom – in our bodies. Indeed, the Lord makes precisely this link between eating His Flesh and the resurrection of the body: “He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6.54).

Rationalist. Nevertheless, the Lord’s Body in the Sacrament is different from ours…

Orthodox. In purity – yes, in essence – no. For, as St. John of the Ladder says, “The blood of God and the blood of His servants are quite different – but I am thinking here of the dignity and not of the actual physical substance.”[172]… But let me understand precisely what you mean. Are you saying that when we speak of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, we are speaking not literally, but metaphorically or symbolically?

Rationalist. No, of course not! I believe that the Consecrated Gifts are the True Body and Blood of Christ!

Orthodox. I am glad to hear that. For you know, of course, that the metaphorical or symbolical understanding of the Mystery is a Protestant doctrine that has been condemned by the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Thus St. John of Damascus writes that “the Lord has said, ‘This is My Body’, not ‘this is a figure of My Body’; and ‘My Blood’, not ‘a figure of My Blood’.”[173]… So are you saying that the bread and wine are in some sense transfigured or “spiritualized” at the consecration through their union with the Divine Spirit of Christ, “penetrated” by the Spirit, as it were, so that we can then call them the Body and Blood of Christ, although they do not cease to be bread and wine?…

Rationalist. Er, let me think about that…

Orthodox. Well, while you’re thinking let me remind you that the Eastern Patriarchs in their Encyclical of 1848 also condemned this teaching, which is essentially that of the Lutherans. It is also very close to the Anglican idea of the “Real Presence” of Christ in the Eucharist – although it is notoriously difficult to say precisely what the Anglicans believe. And you will remember that the Anglicans and Catholics killed each other during the Anglican Reformation precisely because the Catholics had a realistic understanding of the sacrament, whereas the Anglicans, being Protestants, did not. A recent Anglican biography of the first Anglican archbishop, Cranmer, has demonstrated that he was a Zwinglian in his eucharistic theology.

Rationalist. You know, I think that you are misrepresenting the Anglican position. Fr. X of the Moscow Theological Academy has told me that the Orthodox teaching coincides with that of the Anglicans, but not with that of the Catholics.

Orthodox. Really, you do surprise me! I knew that your Moscow theologians were close to the Anglicans, the spiritual fathers of the ecumenical movement and masters of doctrinal double-think, but I did not know that they had actually embraced their doctrines! As for the Catholics – what do you find wrong with their eucharistic theology?

Rationalist. Don’t you know? The Orthodox reject the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation!

Orthodox. I do not believe that the Orthodox reject transubstantiation. We dislike the word “transubstantiation” because of its connotations of Aristotelian philosophy and medieval scholasticism, but very few people today – even Catholics – use the word in the technically Aristotelian sense. Most people mean by “transubstantiation” simply the doctrine that the substances of bread and wine are changed into the substances of Body and Blood in the Eucharist, which is Orthodox. The Eastern Patriarchs in their Encyclical write that “the bread is changed, transubstantiated, converted, transformed, into the actual Body of the Lord.” They use four words here, including “transubstantiated”, to show that they are equivalent in meaning. In any case, is not the Russian word “presuschestvenie” a translation of “transubstantiation”? It is important not to quarrel over words if the doctrine the words express is the same.

Rationalist. Nevertheless, the doctrine of transubstantiation is Catholic and heretical.

Orthodox. If that is so, why has the Orthodox Church never condemned it as heretical? The Orthodox Church has on many occasions condemned the Catholic heresies of the Filioque, papal infallibility, created grace, etc., but never the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist.

Rationalist. It’s still heretical. And I have to say that I find your thinking very western, scholastic, primitive and materialist!

Orthodox. Perhaps you’ll find these words of the Lord also “primitive and materialist”: “Unless you eat of My Flesh and drink of My Blood, you have no life in you” (John 6.53). And these words of St. John Chrysostom written in his commentary on the Lord’s words: “He hath given to those who desire Him not only to see Him, but even to touch, and eat Him, and fix their teeth in His Flesh, and to embrace Him, and satisfy their love…” 174 Was St. John Chrysostom, the composer of our Liturgy, a western Catholic in his thinking?

Rationalist. Don’t be absurd!

Orthodox. Well then… Let’s leave the Catholics and Protestants and get back to the Orthodox position. And let me put my understanding of the Orthodox doctrine as concisely as possible: at the moment of consecration the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ in such a way that there is no longer the substances of bread and wine, but only of Body and Blood.

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**Rationalist.** I accept that so long as you do not mean that there is a physico-chemical change in the constitution of the bread and wine?  
**Orthodox.** But can there not be a physico-chemical change?! Are not bread and wine physical substances?  
**Rationalist.** Yes.  
**Orthodox.** And are not human flesh and blood physico-chemical substances?  
**Rationalist.** Yes…  
**Orthodox.** And is not a change from one physico-chemical substance into another physico-chemical substance a physico-chemical change?  
**Rationalist.** Here you are demonstrating your western, legalistic, primitive mentality! All Aristotelian syllogisms and empty logic! The Orthodox mind is quite different: it is mystical. You forget that we are talking about a Mystery!  
**Orthodox.** Forgive me for offending you. I quite accept that we are talking about a Mystery. But there is a difference between mystery and mystification. If we are going to speak at all, we must speak clearly, with as precise a definition of terms as human speech will allow. The Fathers were not opposed to logic or clarity. Illogicality is no virtue!  
**Rationalist.** Alright… But the fact remains that the change is not a physico-chemical one, but a supernatural one. It says so in the Liturgy itself!  
**Orthodox.** I agree that the change is supernatural in two senses. First, the instantaneous change of one physical substance into another is obviously not something that we find in the ordinary course of nature. Of course, bread and wine are naturally changed into flesh and blood through the process of eating and digestion. But in this case the change is effected, not by eating, but by the word of prayer — and it’s instantaneous. For, as St. Gregory of Nyssa points out, “it is not a matter of the bread becoming the Body of the Word through the natural process of eating: rather it is transmuted immediately into the Body of the Word.”175 Secondly, the change is effected by a supernatural Agent — God. So what we have is the change of one physico-chemical substance into another through a non-physical, supernatural Agent, the Spirit of God.  
**Rationalist.** If I were to accept your western logic, I should have to believe that the Body of Christ is composed of proteins and enzymes and such things, and that the Blood of Christ contains haemoglobin!  
**Orthodox.** Well, and what is impious about that?  
**Rationalist.** It is the height of impiety! My faith is not based on scientific molecular analysis!  
**Orthodox.** Nor is mine.  
**Rationalist.** But you have just admitted that the Body and Blood of Christ contain proteins and enzymes and haemoglobin!  
**Orthodox.** Well, does not human flesh and blood contain such elements?  
**Rationalist.** Yes, but these words are scientific terms that were unknown to the Fathers. You don’t seriously think that in order to understand the Mystery, you have to have a degree in biology?!  
**Orthodox.** Not at all.

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Rationalist. So you accept that the Blood of Christ does not contain haemoglobin…
Orthodox. No I don’t. Your argument is a non-sequitur. I believe by faith alone – not by molecular analysis, nor by any evidence of the senses – that the consecrated Gifts are human Flesh and Blood united to the Divine Spirit. Biologists tell me – and no one, as far as I know, disputes this – that human blood contains haemoglobin. So it seems eminently reasonable to believe that the Blood of Christ also contains haemoglobin. Of course, this fact was discovered, not by faith, but by scientific research, so it does not have the certainty – or the importance – attaching to revelations of faith. But if we suppose that human blood contains haemoglobin, and if we accept that Christ’s Blood is human, then it follows that Christ’s Blood also contains haemoglobin. Or do you think that Christ is not fully human and does not have fully human flesh and blood like ours?
Rationalist. There you go with your syllogisms and empty logic again! Always trying to catch me out! I never said that Christ’s Blood was not human!
Orthodox. Nevertheless, you seem to have great trouble accepting the consequences of that statement.
Rationalist. They are consequences for you, but not for me. Thus you, but not I, are committed to the consequence that a molecular analysis of the Blood of Christ would reveal haemoglobin.
Orthodox. Not so… I think it was Vladimir Lossky who said that hypothetical situations are not a fitting subject of theological discourse, which deals only in absolute realities. However, let us follow your thought experiment through for a moment. I do not know, of course, what would happen if anyone – God forbid! – were so blasphemous as to perform such a molecular analysis. Nevertheless, if God allowed him to do it, and to analyze the results, I expect that they would indicate that the consecrated Gifts are bread and wine, not flesh and blood, and so contain no haemoglobin.
Rationalist. Now you’re the one who’s being illogical! One moment you say that Christ’s Blood contains haemoglobin, and the next you say that a physico-chemical analysis would reveal no haemoglobin!
Orthodox. Precisely, because the reality revealed by faith is not the appearance revealed to the fallen senses, of which science is simply the organized extension. Faith, as St. Paul says, “is the certainty of things unseen” (Heb. 11.1); science is an uncertain apprehension of things seen. In the case of the Mystery we see and taste one thing; but the reality is something quite different. God veils the reality from our senses; and no amount of scientific observation can discern the reality if God chooses to hide it.
Rationalist. Why should he do that?
Orthodox. He does this in order that we should not be repelled by the sight and taste of human flesh and so refrain from partaking of the Saving Mystery. As Blessed Theophylact says, “Since we are weak and could not endure raw meat, much less human flesh, it appears as bread to us although it is in fact
flesh”. It is absolutely essential to realize that we cannot understand our senses here – even if aided by a microscope. In fact, when it comes to the Mystery, all sense-perception, of any kind, must be discarded; it can be seen by faith alone.

**Rationalist**, Of course, I agree with that.

**Orthodox**, So what’s your problem?

**Rationalist**, I don’t have a problem. You have a problem, a very serious one.

**Orthodox**, What’s that?

**Rationalist**, A diseased imagination, what the Greeks call “plani” and the Russians – “prelest”. Instead of simply receiving the sacrament in faith, you are imagining that it is composed of all sorts of things – molecules, proteins, haemoglobin, etc. This is western rationalism!

**Orthodox**, No, I can sincerely assure you that I don’t use my imagination in any way when approaching the Mystery. And forgive me, but I think it is you who are infected with rationalism, insofar as you have such difficulty in accepting what the Church plainly teaches.

**Rationalist**, My advice to you is: when you approach the Mystery, just believe the words of the priest that this is the True Body and Blood of Christ, and don’t feel or think or imagine anything else.

**Orthodox**, Thank you for your advice. I shall try to follow it in the future, as I have followed it in the past.

**Rationalist**, You are not being honest. You do use your imagination, the intellectual imagination of the scientist; you think of haemoglobin, proteins, molecules, etc.

**Orthodox**, There’s no point arguing about this. How can I convince you? You know, I think the difference between us is not that I use imagination and you don’t, but that I rely on faith alone and entirely reject the evidence of my senses while you waver between what the Church teaches and what your senses tell you. I believe, contrary to the evidence of my senses, that the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist is exactly the same Body and Blood as that which He received from the Virgin, in which He walked on this earth, and in which He was crucified on the Cross. You, on the other hand, whether you admit it or not, think that it is in some sense the same Body and Blood but in another not the same, because it looks and tastes different.

**Rationalist**, You’ll have difficulty proving that!

**Orthodox**, Will I? Well, just let me try by putting a few questions to you.

**Rationalist**, Go ahead.

**Orthodox**, Now I am going to talk about blood with haemoglobin in it, not because I think that blood having haemoglobin is such an important fact, but simply because it enables me to identify whether you are referring to the same kind of blood as I. Agreed?

**Rationalist**, Okay.

**Orthodox**, Right then. First question: Did the Holy Virgin have human blood with haemoglobin in it?

**Rationalist**, Very likely.

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Orthodox. Second question: Was the Blood which the Lord Jesus Christ receive from the Virgin blood with haemoglobin in it?
Rationalist. If the Virgin had that blood, then the Lord had the same blood.
Orthodox. Good. Now the third question: Did the Lord on the Cross shed human Blood with haemoglobin in it?
Rationalist. I think I see what you’re leading to…
Orthodox. Please answer the question: yes or no?
Rationalist. Yes, of course.
Orthodox. Fourth question: Bearing in mind that, as St. John Chrysostom says, “that which is in the chalice is the same as that which flowed from Christ’s side”, is that which is in the chalice human blood with haemoglobin in it?
Rationalist. You have convinced me! I did see them as different, but now I agree with you!
Orthodox. Not just with me, brother: with the Church, which is the Body of Christ insofar as it is composed of members who have partaken of the Body of Christ. For, as a recently canonized saint of the Church, St. John Maximovich, wrote: “Bread and wine are made into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy… How is the Body and Blood of Christ at the same time both the Church and the Holy Mystery? Are the faithful both members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and also communicants of the Body of Christ in the Holy Mystery? In neither instance is this name ‘Body of Christ’ used metaphorically, but rather in the most basic sense of the word. We believe that the Holy Mysteries which keep the form of bread and wine are the very Body and the very Blood of Christ… Christ, invisible to the bodily eye, manifests Himself on earth clearly through His Church, just as the unseen human spirit manifests itself through the body. The Church is the Body of Christ both because its parts are united to Christ through His Divine Mysteries and because through her Christ works in the world. We partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, in the Holy Mysteries, so that we ourselves may be members of Christ’s Body, the Church.”
Rationalist. Yes, I agree with the Body about the Body, I agree with the Church!
Orthodox. Glory to God! “What is so good or so joyous as for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 132.1).

(Pentecost, 1998; revised Pentecost, 2004)

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177 St. John Chrysostom, Homily 24 on I Corinthians.
14. A REPLY TO DAVID BERCOT ON THE MOTHER OF GOD

David Bercot is a continuing Anglican who has produced a number of cassettes on spiritual themes. In several of these, he criticizes the position of the Orthodox Church from the point of view of what he considers the classical Anglican via media – that is, a position midway between Protestantism, on the one hand, and Orthodoxy and Catholicism, on the other. Bercot claims that he was very sympathetic to Orthodoxy, but was put off by the attitude of the Orthodox to the Mother of God, which he considers to be clearly contrary to the teaching of the Pre-Nicene Church. The following is a reply to Bercot in defense of the Orthodox teaching.

I come now to Bercot’s third tape, on Mary, the Mother of God. I find this the most interesting of Bercot’s tapes so far, not because it is correct – I think it contains the same mixture of true and demonstrably false statements as in the earlier tapes – but because it points to a certain mystery of Divine Providence which has been little inquired into. This is the mystery of why the veneration of the Mother of God, though present in the Early Church, acquired, relatively suddenly, such a great impetus and development in the fifth century.

For I accept that there is little written evidence for the veneration of Mary in the Early Church. I do not accept that there is absolutely no evidence, as Bercot claims, even in the writings of the early Fathers. For example, St. Gregory the Wonderworker, a pupil of Origen and the apostle of Cappadocia, composed hymns in praise of the Holy Virgin which are just as “extravagant” as those of later Byzantine Fathers. Moreover, Bercot completely ignores the evidence from unwritten Tradition – the iconography of the early Church (in the Roman catacombs, for example), and liturgical tradition – which does, in a quiet way, point to the great honour in which Mary was held by the early Christians. And I firmly reject Bercot’s rejection of the oral traditions concerning Mary’s earthly life and assumption to heaven, which, while committed to writing only in the fifth century, witness to a strong oral tradition in the Church of Jerusalem since the first century. This points to a characteristically Protestant flaw in all of Bercot’s reasoning: his reliance only on written evidence – the Holy Scriptures, or the writings of the Pre-Nicene Fathers, while completely ignoring all the evidence from art and oral tradition.

Having said that, I accept that the veneration of Mary takes a huge leap – not in dogmatic development, but in sheer volume and extravagance of expression – in the fifth century. Why? Bercot offers a typically modernist, psychologising explanation: the post-Nicene Christians felt a need for a more feminine, less wrathful God, so they elevated Mary to divine status on the analogy of the Great Earth Mother. I find this explanation absurd. Does he mean to say that the whole Church, from the Celts of Britain to the Copts of Egypt, suddenly and without external pressure, abandoned its belief in the Trinitarian God and went back to paganism?! Let us remember that, to my knowledge, nobody throughout the whole Christian world objected to the
post-Nicene veneration of Mary except a few western heretics who denied the
virginity of Mary and were refuted in Blessed Jer ome’s two books against
Jovinian already in the fourth century. It follows that if Bercot is right, the
Saviour’s promise that the Church would prevail against the gates of hell
even to the end of the world is wrong, and the whole Church fell away from
the truth in the fifth century, only to be recreated by a few continuing
Anglicans 1500 years later!

I offer another explanation. It is only a hypothesis, and I may well be
wrong. But I think it fits the fact much better than Bercot’s explanation, while
removing the necessity of concluding that the whole Church apostasised in
the fifth century – a conclusion that Bercot does not draw explicitly, but which
must be drawn if his argument is correct.

The first point that needs to be made is that the growth in the public
veneration of Mary coincided with the debates over the term “Theotokos”
(Birth-Giver of God) at the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus in 431. That
Council decreed that henceforth hymns to Christ and the Saints should
always conclude with a hymn to the Mother of God, a rule that is followed to
this day in the liturgical practice of the Orthodox Church. The Council’s
decree naturally stimulated a great deal of hymnography and iconography
glorifying the Mother of God. This does not mean that the cult of Mary
became more important than that of Christ, as Bercot quite wrongly asserts –
a cursory examination of the liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church
demonstrates that all services begin with prayers to one or other of the
Persons of the Holy Trinity (Vespers and Mattins, for example, begin with a
prayer to the Holy Spirit), and that prayers to God are far more frequent than
prayers to the Mother of God and the Saints, especially in the central service
of the Divine Liturgy. But it is certainly true that the veneration of the Mother
of God became more prominent, in the sense of more public, after the Third
Ecumenical Council.

However, the decrees of the Third Council provide only a partial
explanation of the facts. We still need to explain why the pre-Nicene Fathers
said so little about the Mother of God, and in language that was so restrained
by comparison with what came later. I think that the explanation is to be
found in a principle that we find exemplified throughout the history of Divine
Revelation: the principle, namely, that while the whole truth has been
committed to God’s people from the time of the apostles, certain aspects of
that truth are concealed from the outside world at certain times because a
premature revelation of them would be harmful to the acceptance of the
Christian Gospel as a whole.

Let us take as an example the most cardinal doctrine of the Church, the
document of the Holy Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is implicit even in the
first chapter of Genesis, where we read of the Father creating the material and
noetic worlds through His Son, the Word of God, and with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, Who broods like a bird over the waters of the abyss. And in the creation of man the multi-Personed nature of God is clearly hinted at in the words: “Let Us make man in Our image…” (Gen. 1.27). And yet the mystery is only gradually revealed in the course of the Old Testament, and becomes fully explicit only on the Day of Pentecost in the New.

Let us take another example: the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. In the Synoptic Gospels this mystery is only partially revealed, more emphasis being attaché to the full Humanity of Christ. In the Gospel of John, however, the veil is lifted with the words: “In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh” (John 1.1, 14), and it is clearly explicit in the Epistles and in Revelation. So why did the Synoptic Evangelists not declare the mystery openly? Because they did not know it, as the Arians and modern heretics such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses would have us believe? Of course not! The mystery is there, in Matthew, Mark and Luke, for all those with ears to hear and eyes to see. So why is it not made explicit in them as it is in John?

As always, the Holy Fathers provide us with the answer. They explain that John wrote his Gospel later, after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., not in order to correct the earlier Gospels, which were flawless in themselves, but in order to “fill in the gaps” which they had left unfilled under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The first three Evangelists faithfully reflect the general sequence of Christ’s teaching in not immediately and explicitly proclaiming His Divinity, for which the people (and even the apostles themselves) were not yet ready. Another reason was that, as St. Paul says, “none of the princes of this world knew [this], for had they known [it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2.8). This is confirmed by St. Ignatius the God-bearer, a disciple of St. John, who says that certain facts were concealed from the devil, such as the virginity of Mary, because, had he known them, he would not have stirred up the Jews to kill Christ and so bring about the salvation of the world. Moreover, we see from Acts that the earliest sermons of St. Peter and St. Stephen also did not emphasize the Divinity of Christ, but rather concentrated on His being the Messiah. One step at a time: for the Jews, it was necessary to demonstrate that Christ was the Messiah before going on (in private, perhaps) to the deeper mystery of His Divinity. St. Matthew, who wrote in Hebrew for the Jews, undoubtedly followed this method under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And the same applies to Saints Mark and Luke, who, though not writing exclusively for the Jews, had to take the Jewish religious education of many of their readers into account. After the fall of Jerusalem, however, when the power of the Jews had been broken, and when Christian heretics such as Cerinthus arose, openly denying the Divinity of Christ, a more explicit affirmation of the mystery became necessary. And that was what St. John – who fled from a bath-house in which he was washing in

179 St. Ignatius, Epistle to the Ephesisans, 19, 1.
order not to remain under the same roof as Cerinthus - provided in his writings.

Now let us turn to the mystery of Mary, the Mother of God. As St. John of Damascus points out, the mystery of Mary is the mystery of the Incarnation, and the glory of Mary derives wholly from the glory of her being chosen to be the Mother of God. All the titles and honour we ascribe to her do not add to, but express that original glory; they are a direct consequence of her being, in the words of St. Photius the Great, “the minister of the mystery”. For only a being of surpassing holiness could have given her flesh to the All-Holy Word of God, becoming the new Eve, as Saints Justin and Irenaeus point out, to Christ’s new Adam.

But just as the glory of Christ Himself was temporarily concealed for the sake of the more effective long-term propagation of the Gospel, so the glory of Mary was concealed - from the world, but not from the Church - until the time when it was safe to reveal it, that is, when idolatry had been destroyed and the dogmas of the Divinity of Christ and of the Mother of God had been defined in theologically precise terms. Until that time, however, such a revelation would have been dangerous, for in a world in which paganism was still strong, and female goddesses, as Bercot points out, were common, many would have seen Christ and His Mother as two gods – the Christian equivalent of Jupiter and Juno. And indeed, as Bercot again rightly points out on the basis of the writings of St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, in the fourth century there existed a heresy which consisted in the worship of the Mother of God and the offering of sacrifices to her. That is why the apostles and their successors preached to the truths of the faith to the pagan world in a definite order, with each successive stage beginning only when the previous stage was firmly established in the minds of their hearers. First came the teaching about God, then about the Incarnation of the Word and the Redemption through Christ; then about the Church and the sacraments; and then about the Mother of God.

The Church displayed a similar reticence with regard to another of her cardinal doctrines - that of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. When the Lord first expounded this mystery, many even of His disciples left Him (John 6.66). It is not surprising, therefore, that the Church should have refrained from preaching this doctrine from the roof-tops, and kept it even from the catechumens, or learners, until after they had actually partaken of the sacrament. And as with the Divinity of Christ, so with the sacraments, the Church’s teaching is only sketchily outlined in the Synoptic Evangelists, but more fully expounded later, in the Gospel of John. In both cases, the Church’s early reticence was not the product of some kind of esotericism in the Gnostic sense, but a prudent desire to give her children the meat of the Word only

181 St. Photius the Great, *Homily on the Nativity of the Virgin.*
after they have been strengthened on the milk, the rudiments of the Gospel. For to entrust people with the holy mysteries before they are ready for them is like giving pearls to “swine”—they will trample on them by interpreting them in their own swinish, carnal way. Thus the doctrine of the Mother of God, while always known to the Church, was not preached openly until the world had become solidly Christian.

An illustration of the wisdom of this principle is found in the life of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of St. Paul and first bishop of Athens. When he first met the Mother of God, as he confesses in a letter, he was so struck by her extraordinary, other-worldly beauty, that he was tempted to think that she was in fact a goddess. It was not until the apostles took him aside and explained that she was not herself Divine by nature, but the created Mother of the pre-eternal Creator, that he abandoned his error. If such a holy man as Dionysius was tempted to make such an error, we can imagine what would have been the consequences if the apostles had openly preached the Mother of God to the pagan world! And we see in modern Roman Catholic Mariolatry what happens to the understanding of Mary even among Christians when those Christians have lost the salt of the grace of God.

If the Catholics have become like the pagan Greeks in their Mariolatry, the Protestants have embraced the opposite, Jewish error in refusing to see anything special in the Holy Virgin, even denying her holiness and virginity. To be fair to Bercot, he never descends to such blasphemy, and is willing to accept both her virginity and her exceptional blessedness. He does not even object to the term Theotokos, or Mother of God, although, revealingly, he never uses it himself.

But Bercot displays a definite Protestant bias and superficiality in his interpretation of those passages in the Gospel in which Christ speaks to or about His Mother. In all these passages (Matt. 12.46-50; Luke 2.48-49, 8.19-21; John 2.4, 19.26-27), Bercot sees Christ as “putting down” His Mother, as if He needed to suppress an incipient rebellion on her part, an attempt to impose her will upon Him. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although the Orthodox do not believe in the absolute sinlessness of the Mother of God, at any rate before Pentecost, and admit that she may have had moments of doubt, hesitation or imperfect comprehension, there can be no question of any conflict between her and her Son. Christ was not so much rebuking His Mother in these passages, as teaching a general truth which the carnally and racially-minded Jews very much needed to absorb: the truth, namely, that closeness to God depends, not on racial affiliation, but on spiritual kinship. Moreover, when He said, “My Mother and My brethren are those who hear the word of God and keep it” (Luke 8.21), He was not excluding His physical Mother from the category of those close to Him. On the contrary, it was precisely because she, more than anyone, knew the word of God and kept it,
thereby acquiring spiritual kinship with God, that Mary was counted worthy to give birth to God in the flesh.

That is also why Christ entrusted the Holy Virgin to St. John at the foot of the Cross. This was actually a very surprising thing for the Lord to do, for the Virgin did have a family – the sons of Joseph referred to above – and the normal custom in the East would have been for them to take her into their care. But here again, as often in the Gospel, the Lord indicates that spiritual kinship, kinship in the Church, is higher and deeper than kinship after the flesh or in law.

Bercot makes another error of interpretation when he says that Mary was not one of the first witnesses of the Resurrection. The oral tradition of the Church, confirmed in the writings of St. Gregory Palamas\(^\text{182}\), affirms that Mary was in fact the very first person to see the Risen Christ, being none other than the person whom the Evangelists call “Mary, the mother of James and Joses” (Matt. 27.56) and “the other Mary” (Matt. 27.81, 28.1). For the sons of Joseph, the Betrothed of Mary, were James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, Simon, the second bishop of Jerusalem, Jude, one of the twelve apostles, and Joses; which meant that Mary was in law, if not by blood, their mother, “the mother of James and Joses”. St. Matthew conceals her identity in this way for the same reason that the inner greatness Mother of God is concealed throughout the first centuries of the Christian preaching: because it was dangerous to reveal her great glory and pre-eminent closeness to Christ before the doctrine of Christ Himself, perfect God and perfect Man, had been firmly established in the world through the Ecumenical Councils. Moreover, if it had been said that the first witness of Christ’s Resurrection had been His Mother, the Jews would have seized on this to pour scorn on the fact, saying: “What trust can we place in the visions of an hysterical woman, crazed with grief over the death of her only son?”

Bercot is again wrong in asserting that the Lord was rebuking Mary at the marriage of Cana, when He said: “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” (John 2.4). If Mary was really sinning by asking the Lord to intercede for the married couple, why did He then fulfil her request and change the water into wine? According to St. Gaudentius of Breschia, the Lord was not rebuking the Virgin, but drawing her mind forward to the mystery of the Cross: “This answer of His does not seem to me to accord with Mary’s suggestion, if we take it literally in its first apparent sense, and do not suppose our Lord to have spoken in a mystery, meaning thereby that the wine of the Holy Spirit could not be given to the Gentiles before His Passion and Resurrection, as the Evangelist attests: ‘As yet the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified’ (John 7.39). With reason, then, at the beginning of His miracles, did He thus answer His Mother, as though He said: ‘Why this thy hasty suggestion, O Woman? Since the hour of My Passion and Resurrection is not

\(^{182}\text{St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 18, on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers.}\)
yet come, when - all powers whether of teaching or of divine operations being then completed – I have determined to die for the life of believers. After My Passion and Resurrection, when I shall return to My Father, there shall be given to them the wine of the Holy Spirit.’ Whereupon she too, that most blessed one, knowing the profound mystery of this answer, understood that the suggestion she had just made was not slighted or spurned, but, in accordance with that spiritual reason, was for a time delayed. Otherwise, she would never have said to the waiters, *Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*”

Bercot displays a similar obtuseness when discussing the fact that Mary was not present at the Last Supper. Since the Passover meal was a family occasion, he says, Mary’s absence shows that the Lord was “putting her in her place” and placing his bonds with the apostles above all carnal bonds. Well, it is true, as we have seen, that the Lord often emphasizes the superiority of spiritual bonds to carnal ones. But Mary was most closely related to Him, as has already been said, both spiritually and by blood.

In any case, the Last Supper did not require the presence of Mary for a quite different reason. At this Supper the Lord introduced the fundamental sacrament of the New Testament Church, the Eucharist, and Himself performed the sacrament as the eternal High Priest of the New Testament, being a priest not after the order of Levi, but of Melchizedek. He as the Priest offered Himself as the Victim to Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit as the Receivers of the Sacrifice. And He wished the apostles to be present because they also were to be priests according to this new and higher order, and would themselves offer the same Sacrifice of Christ’s Body and Blood, saying: “Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee…” But Mary, being a woman, was not and could not be a priest.

Not that Mary’s ministry was any less important than the apostles’. On the contrary: without the ministry of the Virgin at the Incarnation neither Christ’s ministry at the Cross and Resurrection, nor that of the apostles after Pentecost, would have been possible. For if the apostles, through the priestly gift bestowed on them, multiplied the Church to the ends of the earth, the Virgin, having given birth to the High Priest Himself, and having been made the Mother of His closest disciple at the Cross, may be said to have given birth to the Church as a whole, to be the Mother of the Body of which He is the Head to all generations. Indeed, in a deeper sense the Virgin is not only the Mother of the Church but the Church herself; for if Christ is the New Adam and the Head of the Church, and Mary is the New Eve and “flesh of His flesh”, then

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through the mystery of marriage the Virgin (i.e. the New Eve or the Church) is the Body and Bride of Christ…

It is in the context of this mystical relationship between Christ and the Holy Virgin that we must understand the extraordinary epithets that the Church bestows on her, such as mediatress and Queen of Heaven.

At this point, however, it is important to distinguish the Orthodox position from that of the Roman Catholics and from that of certain Orthodox who have been infected by the Romanist point of view. Contrary to the Romanist teaching, the Holy Virgin was conceived in original sin, and therefore was as much in need of salvation as any other mortal. Moreover, as St. John Chrysostom says, it is possible that she committed some actual sins, although these could only have been minor ones resulting from her less that perfect knowledge of the ministry of her Son before she received complete enlightenment at Pentecost. The salvation of the world was effected by Christ alone, the only Mediator between God and man, for He alone is both God and man. At the same time, Christ could not have become man without the cooperation of a human being who was both humble enough to receive the Word of God into her flesh without being destroyed by Him, and believing enough to consent to the mystery without doubting: “Be it unto me according to they word” (Luke 1.38). For, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow says, “In the days of the creation of the world, when God was uttering His living and mighty ‘Let there be’, the word of the Creator brought creatures into the world. But on that day, unparalleled in the life of the world, when divine Miriam uttered her brief and obedient: ‘Be it unto me’, I hardly dare to say what happened then – the word of the creature brought the Creator into the world.” In this sense, the Virgin, too, can be called a mediatress insofar as she mediated our salvation. To say, as Bercot does, that Christ could have effected the salvation of the world in some other way if the Virgin had refused is to indulge in idle hypothesizing which illumines nothing. For the fact is that the Virgin did not refuse and God did not choose another person or another method.

Now, having entered into such an extraordinarily intimate union with God, and with such enormous consequences for the whole of created being, who can doubt that the Virgin has become deified, “a partaker of the Divine nature”, as St. Peter puts it (II Peter 1.4), “on the border between the created and uncreated natures”, as St. Gregory Palamas puts it? And, this being so, who can doubt that all her petitions are granted by God, that her “mediation” before God, in the sense of intercession for mankind, is always heard? It is not that what she demands she always gets, as the Romanists blasphemously say; for that would imply that the creature can dictate to the Creator, the pot to the Potter. No: the Virgin is always heard by God because, being in complete harmony with His will, she never asks for anything that is contrary to His will.

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184 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 14, on the Annunciation, 15.
Like the perfect wife, she both knows the will of her Husband and wills it herself, so that she neither compels Him nor is herself compelled by Him “Whose service is perfect freedom”. For “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (II Cor. 3.17).

Where there is such perfect spiritual union and freedom, the distinctions between Master and servant, even Creator and creature, become, if not less real than before, at any rate less prominent. The Protestants are very jealous to preserve God’s rights and sovereignty; but they forget that God Himself “emptied Himself” of His Divine rights, and became a servant to His own creatures, so that they should acquire His rights and privileges. As the Fathers say: “God became man, so that men should become gods.” And the word “gods” means what it says – the saints truly become gods by grace: “I said: ye are gods, and all of your sons of the Most High” (Psalm 81.6; John 10.34). For if the Holy Scripture calls Christians now, before they have become completely freed from sin, “brothers” and “friends” and “sons of God”, of what great “weight of glory” will they not be accounted worthy when they are completely freed from sin, in the life of the age to come? And if this is true of all the saints, how can it be denied of the Virgin Mother of God, she who even at the beginning of her ministry was already “full of grace”, and who by offering herself as “the minister of the mystery” made it possible for all men to become gods? And if, as St. Paul says, the saints shall judge angels (I Cor. 6.3), how can it be hyperbole to say that she, the mother of all the saints in the spiritual sense, is “more honourable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim”? Indeed, if Christ, the New Adam, is the King of Heaven, how can she, the New Eve, be denied her rightful side at His side as the Queen of Heaven? For it is of her that the Prophet David spoke: “At Thy right hand stood the queen, arrayed in a vesture of inwoven gold, adorned in varied colours” (Psalm 45.8).

The mystery of Mary is the mystery of the deification of man. The path she traversed from humility on earth to glory in the heavens is the path that all Christians hope to traverse. And while it was God’s will that she should remain in the background until the ministry of her Son should be completed and firmly established in the world through the teaching of the Fathers, so it is God’s will now that her glory should be revealed and all generations call her blessed (Luke 1.48); that all men should see the hope that is set before them and strive for it with redoubled zeal. And to that end God has bestowed on her the grace of miracles and the fulfillment of all the godly petitions that men address to her, as is witnessed by thousands upon thousands of Christians in all countries and generations. Only the blindest bigot could deny all these witnesses, or ascribe them all to the workings of Satan. Or rather, only one who is blind to the true depth of the mystery of which she was the minister, would seek to detract from the glory of the Virgin...
Let me end, then, with a witness from the Early, Pre-Nicene Church, that of St. Gregory the Wonderworker: “Thy praise, O most holy Virgin, surpasses all laudation, be reason of the God Who took flesh and was born of three. To thee every creature, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, offers the meet offering of honour. For thou has indeed been shown forth to be the true cherubic throne, thou shinest as the very brightness of light in the high places of the kingdoms of intelligence, where the Father, Who is without beginning, and Whose power thou hadst overshadowing thee, is glorified; where also the Son is worshipped, Whom thou didst bear according to the flesh; and where the Holy Spirit is praised, Who effected in thy womb the generation of the Mighty King. Though thee, O thou who art full of grace, is the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity known in the world. Together with thyself deem us also worthy to be made partakers of thy perfect grace in Jesus Christ, our Lord, with Whom and with the Holy Spirit, be glory to the Father, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”185

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185 St. Gregory the Wonderworker, Homily 3, On the Annunciation.
15. AN ORTHODOX APPROACH TO ART

To those who, like the present writer, have derived such pleasure and benefit from the great classics of world art and literature, such as Bach and Beethoven, Rembrandt, Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky, it would seem obvious that art, and the artistic faculty, are implanted in man by God to bring him closer to Himself. At the same time, it is no less evident that the great mass of contemporary “culture” not only does not bring anyone closer to God, but is in fact an instrument - a very powerful instrument - of the devil. How are to understand these antipodes of the artistic spirit? Under what conditions does art ascend to God, and – descend to the devil? How, and to what extent, can a Christian take part in the cultural life of his age?

Man the Artist

God reveals Himself first of all as the Creator – in the words of the Symbol of faith, the “Maker” or “Poet” (Ποιητής) of all things visible and invisible. In a sense, therefore, man, as being in the image of God, is also a poet, a creator – not as an incidental or minor aspect of his being, not as a mere “talent”, but essentially, by virtue of the image of God that is in him. And he makes things both visible and invisible. The visible things are the works of his own hands, and his own visible actions. The invisible things are his inner thoughts and feelings. His aim is to bring all that is his, visible and invisible, into one harmonious whole which will be a beautiful likeness of his Creator. It is, with the help of God, to make himself into what the Russians call a prepodobniй, a being “very like” his Creator - in other words, a saint. Thus man is a work of art created by God in order to mirror Himself. But with this difference from “ordinary” art, that the Artist has given to His creature a share in that artistic work, enabling him to correct the faults that the fall has introduced into it, to shape himself into a truly beautiful likeness of God.

The image of God, according to Christian thought, is man's rationality and freewill, which is made in the image of God's absolute Reason and Freedom. The likeness of God is the virtuous life, which makes us like God in His perfect Goodness. We all have the image of God - that is, we are all free and rational; but sin has destroyed the likeness of God in us. The aim of the Christian life, therefore, is to restore the original likeness. This process of restoring the likeness is compared to a painter's restoration of an old portrait whose original features have become overlaid by dirt. As St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "Just as painters transfer human forms to their pictures by means of certain colours, laying on their copy the proper and corresponding tints, so that the beauty of the original may be accurately transferred to the likeness, so... also our Maker also, painting the portrait to resemble His own beauty,
by the addition of virtues, as it were with colours shows in us His own sovereignty."\textsuperscript{186}

That is why prayer, the Christian’s main path to Godlikeness, is called "the science of sciences and art of arts". For, as Colliander writes, "the artist works in clay or colours, in words or tones; according to his ability he gives them pregnancy and beauty. The working material of the praying person is living humanity. By his prayer he shapes it, gives it pregnancy and beauty: first himself and thereby many others."\textsuperscript{187}

Artists themselves, even secular ones, have often sensed this truth. Thus when the poet W.B. Yeats wrote:

\begin{quote}
Gather my soul
Into the artifice of eternity,
\end{quote}

the word “artifice” was highly appropriate, insofar as the poet was hoping that his soul would be worked upon by God in such a way as to make a truly artistic offering, fit for entrance into eternity.

The Russian religious philosopher S. L. Frank writes: “Man is in one respect a creature in exactly the same sense as the rest of the world: as a purely natural being, he is part of the cosmos, a part of organic nature; in man’s inner life this fact finds expression in the domain of involuntary mental processes, strivings and appetites, and in the blind interplay of elemental forces. But as a personality, as a spiritual being and ‘an image of God’ man differs from all other creatures. While all other creatures are expressions and embodiments of God’s particular creative ideas, man is a creature in and through which God seeks to express His own nature as spirit, personality and holiness. An analogy with human artistic creativeness will make the point clearer.

“In poetry (and to some extent, by analogy with it, in other arts) we distinguish between epic and lyric works, between the artist’s intention to embody some idea referring to the objective content of being, and his intention to express his own self, to tell of his own inner world, and as it were to make his confession. The difference, of course, is merely relative. The poet’s creative personality involuntarily makes itself felt in the style of an ‘objective’ epic; on the other hand, a lyric outpouring is not simply a revelation of the poet’s inner life as it actually is, but an artistic transfiguration of it, and therefore inevitably contains an element of ‘objectivisation’. With this proviso, however, the difference between the two kinds of poetry holds good.

\textsuperscript{186} St. Gregory of Nyssa, \textit{On the Making of Man}, 5.
“Using this analogy we may say that man is, as it were, God’s ‘lyric’ creation in which He wants ‘to express’ Himself, while the rest of creation, though involuntarily bearing the impress of its Creator, is the expression of God’s special ‘objective’ ideas, of His creative will to produce entities other than Himself. The fundamental point of difference is the presence or absence of the personal principle with all that it involves, i.e. self-consciousness, autonomy, and the power of controlling and directing one’s actions in accordance with the supreme principle of the Good or Holiness…”

Man as a work of art is like an unfinished symphony. All the essential elements or content are there, implanted by God at conception; but the development and elucidation of that content into a perfect form remains incomplete – and God calls on us to complete it. Without that development and completion man is a still-born embryo. But man as an artist works on this unfinished material and brings it to perfection, to a true likeness of God, “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4.13). Thus man as artist works on himself as work of art in order to reveal the harmony latent in God’s original design.

The Motives of the Artist

Why do artists create? There are broadly three answers to this question: the classical, the romantic and the pornographic. The classical answer is: “to create a thing of beauty” – and, if the artist is religious, he may add: “to the glory of God”. The romantic answer is: “to express myself”. It is highly unlikely that he will add: “to the glory of God”, because it is not at all obvious, whether he is religious or not, how expressing himself will contribute to the glory of God. The pornographic “artist” works for commercial gain, and nothing else. His aim is neither to create a work of beauty, nor to express himself, but to elicit certain reactions in his clientèle – reactions for which they are prepared to pay him.

The classical artist is the least self-centred, the least influenced by fallen emotions and purposes, and the most open to the workings of grace; which is why the works of classical artists such as Bach and Handel are recommended by spiritual fathers for people living in the world. It is a different matter with what we may loosely call “the romantic artist”. The question arises: is the romantic artist condemned to express either his own fallen self or even the demonic forces that express themselves in his fallen nature? Regrettably, the answer must be: yes, to the extent that he subscribes to the romantic ideology of self-expression. Some romantic artists, such as Beethoven and Bruckner, were nevertheless able to “classicise” their work, making it capable of being to the glory of God and not of the artist himself; but they were the exceptions.

For if the artist is honestly expressing his own nature, since that nature is fallen, he will undoubtedly be expressing its fallenness. As Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovskiy) of New York writes: “If you want to look deeper into the soul of this or that writer, read his works more attentively. In them, as in a mirror, is clearly reflected his own spiritual character. He almost always creates his heroes according to his own image and likeness, often putting into their mouths the confession of his heart.” But since even the best impulses of the fallen man are more or less corrupted, such corruption cannot fail to be perceived by the sensitive listener, viewer or reader.

That is why romantic art is so much better at expressing evil in all its forms than good. “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh” – and the heart is corrupt in man from his youth, being “deceitful above all things”. As Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov wrote, speaking of the romantic artists of his day: “People who are endowed with talent by nature do not understand why they have been given this gift, and there is nobody who can explain this to them. Evil in nature, and especially in man, is so masked that the morbid enjoyment of it entices the young man, and with the whole warmth of his heart he gives himself to lies hidden by a mask of truth… Most talents have striven to represent human passions extravagantly. Evil in every possible variation is represented by singers, by painters, by music. Human talent in all its power and unfortunate beauty has developed in the representation of evil; in the representation of good it is generally weak, pale, strained…”

Nevertheless, writes Metropolitan Anastasy, “the word has its ethics: the latter demands that it be pure, honourable and chaste. Where this rule is not observed, where language is the plaything of passions or chance moods, where it is bought or sold or people simply lightmindedly take their pleasure in it, there begins the adultery of the word, that is, the betrayal of its direct and lofty purpose.” But where the rule is observed, it follows that the verbal expression even of one’s fallen emotions has value if it is done precisely and honestly, without any attempt to embellish or glorify them.

Exact expression has a moral value in itself, because it is telling the truth about oneself. Moreover, the process of expressing an emotion in art changes it, “objectivising” and in a sense transfiguring it.

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191 Metropolitan Anastasy, op. cit., p. 30.
For example: if I feel angry, and then write a poem about my anger, the process of trying to analyze and express my anger in words actually changes the nature of that anger, masters or controls it in a certain sense. As Shakespeare put it in Sonnet 77:

*Look what thy memory cannot contain*
*Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find*
*Those children nurs’d, deliver’d from thy brain,*
*To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.*

In this sense the process of artistic creation is a little like the confession of sins. Only in confession we do not simply express or control our sins; confession is not just psychotherapy. We also *sorrow* over them and *judge* them in the sight of God, so that He may *destroy* them and therefore *change* the content of our souls.

Thus one can create good, if not great art from base materials. By objectifying that baseness and conveying it exactly to his audience, the artist to a certain degree “takes the sting” out of the baseness. It is in this context that we can see how the imaginative faculty, which in the ascetic life is invariably associated with deception, can be used in the service of truth. Shakespeare described this process in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as follows:

*The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,*
*Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;*
*And as imagination bodies forth*
*The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen*
*Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing*
*A local habitation and a name.*

Before the imagination has produced its work, the content of the artist’s mind is “unknown”. But as his work comes into being, so does the content of his mind become known to him, for now it has “shape” and “a local habitation and a name”. Thus by giving an objective, sensual correlate to his emotions, the artist is enabled to know them and judge them.

This is the paradox of good art, that in creating images that do not exist in nature it puts up “a mirror to nature”, in Hamlet’s words. But such good, truthful art can become great only if the fallen content of the art is not only accurately expressed but also correct *judged*, so that a revulsion from it and a striving for something higher is also conveyed to the listener. If that is achieved, then the material is no longer base and the work is like David’s 50th Psalm, being not merely the expression of emotion, and not even psychotherapy, but *confession and repentance.*
An example of art that is striving towards confession and repentance, but does not quite reach it, is Shakespeare’s Sonnet 144:

\[
\begin{align*}
Two \ loves \ I \ have, & \ of \ comfort \ and \ despair, \\
Which \ like \ two \ angels \ do \ suggest \ me \ still; & \\
The \ better \ angel \ is \ a \ man \ right \ fair, & \\
The \ worser \ spirit \ a \ woman \ colour’d \ ill. & \\
To \ win \ me \ soon \ to \ hell, \ my \ female \ evil & \\
Tempteth \ my \ better \ angel \ from \ my \ side, & \\
And \ would \ corrupt \ my \ saint \ to \ be \ a \ devil, & \\
Wooing \ his \ purity \ with \ her \ foul \ pride. & \\
And \ whether \ that \ my \ angel \ be \ turn’d \ fiend, & \\
\text{Suspect \ I \ may, \ yet \ not \ directly \ tell;} & \\
But \ being \ both \ from \ me, \ both \ to \ each \ friend, & \\
I \ guess \ one \ angel \ in \ another’s \ hell. & \\
Yet \ this \ shall \ I \ ne’er \ know, \ but \ live \ in \ doubt, & \\
Till \ my \ bad \ angel \ fire \ my \ good \ one \ out. & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The artist is here struggling to evaluate his feelings for two people – and theirs for each other. He recognizes the fallenness of his emotions, and theirs, which is why he describes them in terms of angels and demons, purity and pride. And yet he fails to evaluate precisely what is going on, and so the sonnet suffers from a certain obscurity. It is obscure to him, and therefore also to us. Fallen passion has not yet been mastered sufficiently to produce great art.

As St. Nectarius of Optina says, in addition to ordinary art, "there is also greater art - the word of life and death (the Psalms of David, for example). But the way to this art lies in the personal struggle of the artist. This is the path of sacrifice, and only one out of many thousands reach the goal."

The true artist seeks the truth about himself. He is like Sophocles’ Oedipus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Born \ as \ I \ am, \ I \ shall \ be \ none \ other \ than} & \\
\text{I \ am, \ and \ I \ shall \ know \ me \ who \ I \ am.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

However, in seeking the truth about himself, the true artist will inevitably, again like Oedipus, come up against the truth about the higher powers that rule his nature and his destiny. In other words, artistic truth, consistently pursued, leads to religious truth.

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And so “in the soul of the artist,” says St. Barsanuphius of Optina, “there is always a streak of monasticism, and the more lofty the artist, the more brightly that fire of religious mysticism burns in him”.193

We see this progression in several of the greatest artists. Thus Shakespeare’s last play, The Tempest, is also his most religious, in which he seeks to “drown” his “so potent art”, in the far subtler, deeper and more lawful art of the Creator:

But this rough magic
I here abjure; and, when I have required
Some heavenly music (which even now I do),
To work mine end upon their senses, that
This airy charm is for, I’ll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I’ll drown the book.

And the very last words he wrote before his voluntary retirement were words on the ultimate impotence of “pure” art, and the need for God’s mercy:

Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon’d be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

The Case of Gogol

This trend is most marked, as we would expect, in Orthodox Christian writers – in Pushkin, for example, in Gogol, and in Dostoyevsky.

In his later years, under the influence of such men as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, Pushkin came closer to the Orthodox Faith. And both his poetry and his ideal of art became deeper as a result. Ivan Andreyev writes: “The essence of the ‘theory’ of Pushkin and Zhukovsky (it was not formally clothed into a system, but but practically and unerringly carried forward in life and creativity) consisted in the following. The poet had to be completely free in the process of his creativity. No social or moral or even religious ‘orders’ could be presented to him. But the poet as a person had spiritually to grow without ceasing, that is, become perfect in a religio-moral sense, remembering

the ideal of Christian morality: ‘Be ye perfect, even as your Heavenly Father is perfect’. And if he were to grow himself, his creativity would grow with him.”

The case of Gogol is particularly interesting. During the last part of his life, under the influence of the Rzhev Protopriest Fr. Matthew Konstantinovsky, then Elder Macarius of Optina and towards the end also of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, he gradually turned away from writing altogether and even burned his best work.

Many blame Fr. Matthew for this, rightly or wrongly. He is reported to have said: “Artistic talent is a gift of God…. True, I advised [Gogol] to write something about good people, that is, to depict people of positive types, not negative ones.”

Some churchmen did not share the ascetic approach to his art of Gogol and his spiritual fathers. Thus Archimandrite Feodor (Bukharev), as Robert Bird writes, “in his famous ‘Letters to Gogol’ elaborated a markedly different approach to the religious significance of artistic creativity. Archimandrite Feodore regretted the way that Gogol, who had once ‘unconsciously’ followed Christ in his ‘powerful and free creative work’, had fallen under the influence of the ‘slavish fearfulness and mercilessness’ of Father Matvei Konstantinovsky, who rejected everything that ‘did not openly bear the imprint of Christ’. Writing of his own appreciation of the irreligious Belinsky, Archimandrite Feodor wrote: ‘He gave to these texts his own thought, and I understood them in the proper way, and in accordance with this I understood his entire discourse. And therefore it turned out that, by following the system of his thoughts, which distorted Christ’s truth, I in my own mind developed a living system of Christ’s truth itself.’ Summing up this hermeneutic model, Archimandrite Feodor noted that he ‘no longer stopped at the mere letter of the texts which are studied in theological scholarship,’ but rather sought to engage their theological spirit in dialogue with non-religious authors. From this general premise Bukharev concluded that any genuine literary or intellectual work can inspire a Christian: ‘another tendency of thought and

195 Fr. Matthew “unhesitatingly directed Gogol to Elder Macarius of Optina, stating that this was what his heart was searching for. Elder Macarius made a profound impression on Gogol, who under the Elder’s influence drastically changed his liberal thinking and was converted to age-old, traditional Orthodoxy. When he wrote his famous Correspondence with Friends, Gogol so stirred up liberal society against himself that the leading literary salons totally disgraced and dismissed him. Elder Macarius, however, continued to have a close relationship with the great writer, and even wrote a whole critique of his last work (found later among his books).” (Fr. Leonid Kavelin, Elder Macarius of Optina, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1995, pp. 285-286).
discourse, without explicitly recognizing Christ as its leading principle, nonetheless can be under His invisible leadership and be led by Him to be of direct use to faith and love for Christ’s truth.’ Significantly, Archimandrite Feodor’s work was not approved for publication by Metropolitan Philaret. Philaret alleged that Bukharev saw the mere ‘flickering of the light’.”

Gogol came to believe that his work would be harmful because of the imperfection of its creator; as he put it, “One should not write about a holy shrine without first having consecrated one’s soul”; and in 1845 he burned the second half of his masterpiece, Dead Souls.

But he could not keep away from writing, which was his life, and in 1851 he began again the second part of Dead Souls, which was highly praised by those friends to whom he read it... However, on the night of 11th to 12th February, 1852, he burned the manuscript of the second part of Dead Souls for the second time. Then he made the sign of the cross, lay down on the sofa and wept...

The next day he wrote to Count A.N. Tolstoy: “Imagine, how powerful the evil spirit is! I wanted to burn some papers which had already long ago been marked out for that, but I burned the chapters of Dead Souls which I wanted to leave to my friends as a keepsake after my death.”

“What were the true motives,” asks Andreev, “for the burning of the completed work which Gogol had carefully kept, accurately putting together the written notebooks and lovingly rebinding them with ribbon? Why did Gogol burn this work, with which he was himself satisfied, and which received an objective and very high evaluation from very competent people who had great artistic taste? Let us try to answer this complex and difficult question.

“In his fourth letter with regard to Dead Souls, which was dated ‘1846’ and published in his Correspondence, Gogol gives an explanation why he for the first time (in 1845) burned the chapters of the second part of his poem that he had written.

“‘The second volume of Dead Souls was burned because it was necessary. ‘That will not come alive again which does not die’, says the Apostle. It is necessary first of all to die in order to rise again. It was not easy to burn the work of five years, which had been produced with some painful tension, in which every line was obtained only with a shudder, in which there was much that constituted my best thoughts and occupied my soul. But all this was

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197 Bird, op. cit., pp. 31-32. “Sushkov speaks of Philaret’s strict rejection of ‘non-classical comedies, immoral operas, non-historical novels, bloodthirsty dramas […] There is no need to mention stories, vaudevilles, erotic, mythological and other poems without inner content, without thought, without feeling’” (Bird, op. cit., pp. 34-35).
burned, and moreover at that moment when, seeing death before me, I very much wanted to leave at any rate something after me which would remind people of me. I thank God that He gave me strength to do this. Immediately the flame bore away the last pages of my book, its content was suddenly resurrected in a purified and radiant form, like a phoenix from the ashes, and I suddenly saw in what a mess was everything that I had previously considered to be in good order. The appearance of the second volume in that form in which it was would have been harmful rather than useful.’... ‘I was not born in order to create an epoch in the sphere of literature. My work is simpler and closer: my work is that about which every person must think first of all, and not only I. My work is my soul and the firm work of life.’...

“Such was the motivation for the first burning of Dead Souls in 1845.

“But this motivation also lay at the root of the second burning of the already completed work – but now much deeper, depending on the spiritual growth of Gogol.

“In his Confession of an Author written after Correspondence, Gogol for the first time seriously began to speak about the possibility of rejecting his writer’s path in the name of a higher exploit. With striking sincerity he writes (how much it would have cost him!): ‘It was probably harder for me than for anybody else to reject writing, for this constituted the single object of all my thoughts, I had abandoned everything else, all the best enticements of life, and, like a monk, had broken my ties with everything that is dear to man on earth, in order to think of nothing except my work. It was not easy for me to renounce writing: some of the best minutes in my life were those when I finally put on paper that which had been flying around for a long time in my thoughts; when I am certain to this day that almost the highest of all pleasures is the pleasure of creation. But, I repeat again, as an honourable man, I would have to lay down my pen even then, if I felt the impulse to do so.

“I don’t know whether I have had enough honour to do it, if I were not deprived of the ability to write: because – I say this sincerely – life would then have lost for me all value, and not to write for me would have meant precisely the same as not to live. But there are no deprivations that are not followed by the sending of a substitute to us, as a witness to the fact that the Creator does not leave man even for the smallest moment.’...

“From the last thought, as from a small seed, during the years of Gogol’s unswerving spiritual growth, there grew the decision to burn his last finish work and fall silent.

“The burning before his death of the second part of Dead Souls was Gogol’s greatest exploit, which he wanted to hide not only from men, but also from himself.
“Three weeks before his death Gogol wrote to his friend Zhukovsky: ‘Pray for me, that my work may be truly virtuous and that I may be counted worthy, albeit to some degree, to sing a hymn to the heavenly Beauty’. The heavenly Beauty cannot be compared with earthly beauty and is inexpressible in earthly words. That is why ‘silence is the mystery of the age to come’.

“Before his death Gogol understood this to the end: he burned what he had written and fell silent, and then died.

“Gogol died on 21 February, 1852.”

Shortly before he died, Gogol expressed the attitude of the truly godly writer to his work in a letter to Optina: “For Christ’s sake, pray for me. Ask your respected Abbot and all the brothers, and ask all who pray more diligently there, to pray for me. My path is hard. My work is of such a kind that without the obvious help of God every minute and every hour, my pen cannot move. My power is not only minimal but it does not even exist without refreshment from Above…”

The Inspiration of the Artist: (1) The Demonic

So is an artist unable to depict any but dead souls, until his own soul has come to life under the influence of grace? And does the artist, if he is fully consistent in the pursuit of his calling, inevitably end up in a monastery? Before answering these questions, it is necessary to inquire more deeply into the inspiration of the artist.

It has been the conviction of artists since earliest times that in creating their works they are not merely expressing the contents of their own souls, but are

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Andreev, op. cit., pp. 180-182. St. Barsanuphius of Optina expressed a similar view. “Gogol,” he said, “wanted to depict Russian life in all of its multifaceted fullness. With this goal he began his poem, Dead Souls, and wrote the first part. We know in what light Russian life was reflected: the Plyushkins, the Sobakevitches, the Nosdrevs and the Chichikovs; the whole book constitutes a stifling and dark cellar of commonness and baseness of interests. Gogol himself was frightened at what he had written, but consoled himself that this was only scum, only foam, which he had taken from the waves of the sea of life. He hoped that in the second volume he would succeed in portraying a Russian Orthodox man in all his beauty and all his purity.

“How was he to do this? Gogol did not know. It was at about this time that his acquaintance with Elder Macarius [of Optina] took place. Gogol left Optina with a renewed soul, but he did not abandon the thought of writing the second volume of Dead Souls, and he worked on it.

“Later, feeling that it was beyond his power to embody in images that Christian ideal which lived in his soul in all its fullness, he became disappointed with his work. And this is the reason for his burning of the second volume of Dead Souls...” (Victor Afanasyev, Elder Barsanuphius of Optina, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, pp. 483-484).

Kavelin, op. cit., p. 286.
under the influence of some super-human “muse”. “People often try,” writes Metropolitan Anastasy, “to approximate genius to holiness as ‘two phenomena’ which, in the words of one thinker, ‘go beyond the bounds of the canonical norms of culture’. The kinship between them is based on the fact that the genius is usually given wings by inspiration that Plato called ‘divine’: this is the true breathing of the Divinity in man, which distributes its gifts to each, where and to the degree that it wants. The ancient pagan philosophers, poets and artists, beginning with Socrates and Phidias, vividly felt within themselves the presence of this or that higher power overshadowing them during the time of their creativity. Not in vain did the latter fall face down before one of his best compositions in reverent emotion. The same feeling was given also to other highly gifted people in recent times.”

At the same time it must not be forgotten that the “divinity” involved may be evil as well as good. Therefore the following words of the Moscow Patriarchal theologian Igumen Ioann (Ekonomtsev) must be taken with a great deal of caution: “Creativity in essence... is our likeness... to God”. He calls on us to reject our superstitious fear of the possibly demonic nature of creativity, for “true creation is always from God, even if the author himself does not recognize this and even if we are times find it seductive and dishonourable... The condition of creative ecstasy is a condition of deification, and in this state it is no longer man who creates, but the God-man”.

Ekonomtsev is here reiterating the false “dogma” of the Romantic era – the moral and spiritual superiority of the artist. Imagination for the Romantics was much more than the ability to fantasise, as Jacques Barzun writes: “Out of the known or knowable, Imagination connects the remote, interprets the familiar, or discovers hidden realities. Being a means of discovery, it must be called ‘Imagination of the real’. Scientific hypotheses perform that same office; they are products of imagination.

“This view of the matter explains why to the Romanticists the arts no longer figured as a refined pleasure of the senses, an ornament of civilized existence, but as one form of the deepest possible reflection on life. Shelley, defending his art, declares poets to be the ‘unacknowledged legislators of the world’. The arts convey truths; they are imagination crystallized; and as they transport the soul they reshape the perceptions and possibly the life of the beholder. To perform this feat requires genius, because it is not a mechanical act. To be sure, all art makes use of conventions, but to obey traditional rules and follow set patterns will not achieve that fusion of idea and form which is properly creation. It was Romanticist discussion that made the word creation regularly apply to works of art...

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200 Metropolitan Anastasy, op. cit., p. 31.
201 Ekonomtsev, “Pravoslavie, Vizantia, Rossia” (Orthodoxy, Byzantium, Russia); quoted in Liubomudrov, op. cit., p. 25.
“Those Romanticist words, recharged with meaning, helped to establish the religion of art. That faith served those who could and those could not partake of the revived creeds. To call the passion for art a religion is not a figure of speech or a way of praise. Since the beginning of the 19C, art has been defined again and again by its devotees as ‘the highest spiritual expression of man’. The dictum leaves no room for anything higher and this highest level is that which, for other human beings, is occupied by religion. To 19C worshippers the arts form a treasury of revelations, a body of scriptures, the makers of this spiritual testament are prophets and seers. And to this day the fortunate among them are treated as demigods…”

The word “creation” was understood by the Romantics almost literally, as the activity of God creating ex nihilo. This meant, however, that Romantic art was not only a path to truth: it created truth. Thus, as Sir Isaiah Berlin writes, “whatever the differences between the leading romantic thinkers – the early Schiller and the later Fichte, Schelling and Jacobi, Tieck and the Schlegels when they were young, Chateaubriand and Byron, Coleridge and Carlyle, Kierkegaard, Stirner, Nietzsche, Baudelaire – there runs through their writings a common notion, held with varying degrees of consciousness and depth, that truth is not an objective structure, independent of those who seek it, the hidden treasure waiting to be found, but is itself in all its guises created by the seeker. It is not to be brought into being necessarily by the finite individual: according to some it is created by a greater power, a universal spirit, personal or impersonal, in which the individual is an element, or of which he is an aspect, an emanation, an imperfect reflection. But the common assumption of the romantics runs counter to the philosophia perennis in that the answers to the great questions are not to be discovered so much as to be invented. They are not something found, they are something literally made. In its extreme Idealistic form it is a vision of the entire world. In its more familiar conduct – aesthetics, religious, social, moral, political – a realm seen not as a natural or supernatural order capable of being investigated, described and explained by the appropriate method – rational examination or some more mysterious procedure – but as something that man creates, as he creates works of art; not by imitating, or even obtaining illumination from, pre-existent models or truths, or by applying pre-existent truths that are objective universal, eternal unalterable; but by an act of creation, the introduction into the world of something literally novel – the unique expression of an individual and therefore unique creative activity, natural or supernatural, human or in part divine, owing nothing to anything outside it (in some versions because nothing can be conceived as being outside it), self-substantive, self-justified, self-fulfilling. Hence that new emphasis on the subjective and ideal rather than the objective and the real, on the process of creation rather than its effects, on motives rather than consequences; and, as a necessary corollary of this, on the quality of the vision, the state of mind or soul of the acting agent – purity of heart, innocence of intention, sincerity of purpose.

rather than getting the answer right, that is, accurate correspondence to the ‘given’. Hence the emphasis on activity, movement that cannot be reduced to static segments, the flow that cannot be arrested, frozen, analysed without being thereby fatally distorted; hence the constant protest against the reduction of ‘life’ to dead fragments, of organism to ‘mere’ mechanical or uniform units; and the corresponding tendency towards similes and metaphors drawn from ‘dynamic’ sciences – biology, physiology, introspective psychology – and the worship of music, which, of all the arts, appears to have the least relation to universally observable, uniform natural order. Hence, too, celebration of all forms of defiance directed against the ‘given’ – the impersonal, the ‘brute fact’ in morals or in politics – or against the static and the accepted, and the value placed on minorities and martyrs as such, no matter what the ideal for which they suffer.”

As Adam Zamoyski notes, this rebelliousness common to the revolution and romantic art brought them closer together. This was especially obvious during the “July Days” revolution in France in 1830. ‘“People and poets are marching together,’ wrote the French critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve in 1830. ‘Art is henceforth on a popular footing, in the arena with the masses.’ There was something in this. Never before or since had poetry been so widely and so urgently read, so taken to heart and so closely studied for hidden meaning. And it was not only in search of aesthetic or emotional uplift that people did so, for the poet had assumed a new role over the past two decades. Art was no longer an amenity but a great truth that had to be revealed to mankind, and the artist was one who had been called to interpret this truth, a kind of seer. In Russia, Pushkin solemnly declared the poet’s status as a prophet uttering the burning words of truth. The American Ralph Waldo Emerson saw poets as ‘liberating gods’ because they had achieved freedom themselves, and could therefore free others. The pianist and composer Franz Liszt wanted to recapture the ‘political, philosophical and religious power’ that he believed music had in ancient times. William Blake claimed that Jesus and his disciples were all artists, and that he himself was following Jesus through his art. ‘God was, perhaps only the first poet of the universe,’ Théophile Gauthier reflected. By the 1820s artists regularly referred to their craft as a religion, and Victor Hugo represented himself alternately as Zoroaster, Moses and Christ, somewhere between prophet and God.”

The close affinity of romantic art with the revolution permits us to speculate whether some of the more famous and powerful works of romantic art were actually inspired by the devil.

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For example, let us take the operas of Wagner, or Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring. Very fine music, the products of real genius - of that there can be no doubt. But extremely dangerous spiritually. Speaking very schematically, we could say that Wagner's Ring cycle is Nazism in music (which is why Hitler loved it so), just as The Rite of Spring is Bolshevism in music (Lenin's favourite music was Beethoven's Appassionata sonata, but he thought it was not useful, because it made one want to stroke people's heads!).

Much of modern pop music is satanic in origin. Fortunately, however, it is also bad art, so it has less influence on those who love good art - which is one very good reason for educating people in good art. However, bad art of this kind can still influence people at a subconscious level, because it introduces the demons. We are seeing terrifying examples of this in the West today.

The children of an American missionary in Africa were once playing pop music with the window open. Soon the local witch doctor visited the missionary and asked him: "I did not know that you had renounced your God, Christ." "But I haven't." "But the music you are playing is the music we use to call up our gods..." The missionary immediately went and destroyed the records his children were playing...

Sometimes even the most "spiritual" and classical of music can be corrupting. For example, Mozart's Requiem. Everyone agrees that this is beautiful, profound music. But the emotion it conveys is that of a soul in despair, a soul facing death and hell - and Mozart died while composing it. We know that Mozart did not live a good life, and that his last opera, The Magic Flute, which was composed just before his Requiem, was actually a Masonic opera. So he had good reason to fear death and what awaited him after death. So the emotion is deep, and the expression of it perfect, as we would expect from such a master. But is it good for our souls to experience feelings of despair, even if they are artistically controlled and mastered?

Sometimes even “Orthodox” music may fall short insofar as it elicits fallen emotions in the listener. Thus St. Barsanuphius of Optina said of one setting of the Paschal Canon of St. John of Damascus, “that kind of melody can evoke only tears of despair, rather than a joyful state. No, sing it the ancient way.”

As we have seen, art is good as art (if not in any other way) if it is the exact, truthful expression of the emotional contents of the artist's mind, whether the content itself is good or bad, profound or superficial. It is great if the expression, or form, is accurate, and the content is good rather than bad, profound rather than superficial. But there is also art that is bad as art in that it fails to express its content clearly. And there is art that is good as art but evil in every other way because its content is evil, and its inspiration - from the devil.

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205 Afanasyev, op.cit., p. 453.
The Holy Scriptures tell us that David was able to drive away the evil spirit from Saul by playing his harp (I Kings (I Samuel) 16.23). Again, when King Joaram of Israel, King Joasaphat of Judah and the king of Edom were undertaking a common expedition against the Moabites, they asked the Prophet Elisha to reveal to them the will of God concerning the outcome of the war. “Bring me a minstrel,” said the prophet. “And it came to pass that when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon him” (IV Kings (II Kings) 3.15). Again, “one of the greatest contemplative minds of Christianity, St. Gregory the Theologian, was at the same time a religious poet. His verses are mainly filled with a lyrical mood. ‘Exhausted by illness,’ he writes, ‘I found in poetry joy, like an old swan talking to himself in the sounds of his wings.’ At the same time he wanted through his poetic compositions to give ‘young people’ and all those who most of all love ‘the art of words as it were a pleasant remedy, something attractive and useful in persuasion’.”

These examples show art can be mixed with grace; it expresses not simply the contents of a fallen soul, but a soul striving for God and placing everything “under God’s gaze”. For, as St. Nectarius of Optina said: “One can practise art like anything else, but everything must be done as under God’s gaze.”

Now this would seem to contradict the word of St. Barsanuphius of Optina: “Some say that science and art, especially music, regenerate a man, granting him lofty aesthetic delight, but this is not true. Under the influence of art, music, singing, etc., a man does indeed experience delight, but it is powerless to regenerate him.” Again, replying to the composer Paschalov who said that music tore him away from everything earthly and he experienced great sweetness listening to the great classical composers, the elder said: “Nevertheless, this aesthetic sweetness cannot take the place of religion.”

But there is no real contradiction here. Art in and of itself, as simply the expression in words or colours or sounds of a mental content that produces aesthetic delight, cannot regenerate the soul, and cannot take the place of religion. But if that art is the expression of confession and praise, of prayer and thanksgiving, then it is no longer merely art, but religious art, and partakes of the regenerative grace of God.

206 Metropolitan Anastasy, op. cit., p. 106.
207 Metropolitan Anastasy, op. cit., p. 104.
208 Zhitia Prepodobnykh Startsev Optinoj Pustyni, op. cit.
209 Afanasyev, op. cit., p. 651.
210 Afanasyev, op. cit.
Even in the writings of secular poets we find inspired works whose inspiration is godly.

Consider, for example, Shakespeare’s famous Sonnet 116:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth’s unknown, although his height be taken.
Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle’s compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

It is not certain whether Shakespeare is writing here from a personal experience of the true, undying love he describes, or his imagination of it. In any case, his sympathy for this ideal is clearly unfeigned, and gives to the whole sonnet a note of clarity, profundity and truth.

Or consider Fyodor Tiutchev’s “Our Age”, in which he describes the unbelief of the intelligentsia contemporary to him from the point of view of a true believer:

Not flesh, but spirit is today corrupt,
And man just pines away despairingly.
He strives for light, while sitting in the dark,
And having found it, moans rebelliously.
From lack of faith dried up, in fire tossed,
The unendurable he suffers now.
He knows right well his soul is lost, and thirsts
For faith – but ask for it he knows not how.
Ne’er will he say, with prayers and tears combined,
However deep before the closed door his grief:
“O let me in, my God, O hear my cry!
Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!”

A famous example of secular artistic inspiration bordering on the sacred and Divine is Dostoyevsky’s “Pushkin Speech”, which took place fifty years after the “July Days” and represented the Divine opposite of that demonic manifestation. Metropolitan Anastasy writes: “However accustomed people are to crawling in the dust, they will be grateful to every one who tears them
away from the world below and bears them up on his powerful wings to the heavens. A man is ready to give up everything for a moment of pure spiritual joy and bless the name of him who is able to strike on the best strings of his heart. It is here that one must locate the secret of the amazing success attained by the famous speech of Dostoyevsky at the Pushkin festival in Moscow. The genius writer himself later described the impression produced by him upon his listeners in a letter to his wife: ‘I read,’ he writes, ‘loudly, with fire. Everything that I wrote about Tatiana was received with enthusiasm. But when I gave forth at the end about the universal union of men, the hall was as it were in hysterics. When I had finished, I will not tell you about the roars and sobs of joy: people who did not know each other wept, sobbed, embraced each other and swore to be better, not to hate each other from then on, but to love each other. The order of the session was interrupted: grandes dames, students, state secretaries – they all embraced and kissed me.’ How is one to call this mood in the auditorium, which included in itself the best flower of the whole of educated society, if not a condition of spiritual ecstasy, to which, as it seemed, our cold intelligentsia was least of all capable? By what power did the great writer and knower of hearts accomplish this miracle, forcing all his listeners without distinction of age or social position to feel themselves brothers and pour together in one sacred and great upsurge? He attained it, of course, not by the formal beauty of his speech, which Dostoyevsky usually did not achieve, but by the greatness of the proclaimed idea of universal brotherhood, instilled by the fire of great inspiration. This truly prophetic word regenerated the hearts of people, forcing them to recognize the true meaning of life; the truth made them if only for one second not only free, but also happy in their freedom.”

Here we see the transition from aesthetic to religious emotion. The difference between the two is similar to the difference between a concert-hall and a church. Religious emotion unites one man with everyone else in the church in a way that never happens in the concert-hall. In the concert-hall, you may be deeply moved, and your neighbour may be moved, too, so that you both communicate in a certain sense with the soul of the composer. But the communication with the composer is one-way; you do not communicate with other listeners; and, of course, God may or may not be in the emotion communicated. Orthodox art, however, - and we may call Dostoyevsky’s “Pushkin Speech” a special kind of Orthodox art - is much more than one-way communication; it is living communion, making the hearts of the listeners one both with each other and with the Divine Composer.

211 Metropolitan Anastasy, op. cit., pp. 9-10. Thus to the end of his life the Slavophile writer Ivan Aksakov remained under the influence of the Speech. As Dostoevsky wrote: “Aksakov (Ivan) ran onto the stage and declared to the public that my speech was not simply a speech but an historical event! The clouds had been covering the horizon, but here was Dostoevsky’s word, which, like the appearing sun, dispersed all the clouds and lit up everything. From now on there would be brotherhood, and there would be no misunderstandings” (in I. Volgin, Poslednij God Dostoevskogo (Dostoevsky’s Last Year), Moscow: Sovietskij Pisatel’, 1986, p. 267 (in Russian)).
The word “culture” comes from “cult”, reminding us that the original context of cultural productions was religious worship. And it is in religious worship that art, music, architecture and poetry all find their true home and most potent expression. And most of all, of course, in the worship of the true religion, Orthodox Christianity.

Thus “when the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir is likened to ‘a merchant seeking the good pearl’, this comparison in relation to him acquires an especially deep meaning. Like a wise inventor, he searched for a long time for the true and pure and valuable pearl, trying out various religions until he found it in Eastern Orthodoxy. He determined the value of this pearl by the sign of its beauty. In the latter was revealed for him and for his ambassadors the superiority of the Orthodox Faith, and this, of course, was not only the perception of external aesthetics, in which Byzantium was so rich, giving in its art a synthesis of the best artistic achievements of East and West, but above all of the spiritual beauty which shone from under the external forms of the majestic ecclesiastical art of Byzantium. Both in the church singing, and in the iconography, and in the architecture of the Orthodox Church there is a special rhythm which serves to reflect the eternal heavenly harmony. The Church masters not only had to sharpen their work, but also their very spirit, in order rise to the heights, to hear there the heavenly music and bring it down to earth. Impressed upon all of our ecclesiastical splendour, to this day it serves as an immediate revelation of the truth of Orthodoxy. Its language is much more understandable for everyone than the language of abstract theological concepts, and through it first of all the Orthodox Church realizes her mission in the world.”

Conclusion: The Music of the Soul

Only God is a true Creator, in that only He can create out of nothing. Man is a creator only derivatively, in that he creates out of something already there, rearranging and reforming elements that have already been created by God. And yet in that rearranging and reforming of his nature, a nature distorted and disturbed by sin, lies the whole meaning of his existence. For to the extent that he succeeds in reforming his created nature in accordance with the Divine Archetype, man allows the Uncreated Light of God Himself to shine through his nature. Man the artist becomes man the supreme work of art, man the likeness of God.

The purpose of art in its original, true context and designation is to help man in the work of harmonising the warring elements of his soul, to find “the music of the soul”. For “rest for the soul,” says St. Barsanuphius of Optina, “equals blessedness, which equals music, the harmony of all the powers of the

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212 Metropolitan Anastasy, op. cit., p. 101.
213 Metropolitan Anastasy, op. cit., p. 107.
soul.” “The instrument [of the soul] is there, the piano is open and ready, a row of white keys is before us, but there is no piano player. Who is the Player? God. We must labor ascetically, and the Lord will act according to His promise: ‘We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him’ (John 14.23). He will come unto us and play our instrument (Batiushka tapped me lightly on the chest).” 214

Since the Renaissance, and especially since the Romantic movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, art has been abstracted from its original function and context in religion. This has allowed a new, often demonic content to enter into it. Nevertheless, insofar as secular art strives towards harmony (which, unfortunately, cannot be said of much modern art), it can help the soul that is sunk in disharmony and spiritual warfare to a limited extent.

However, at a certain point, when the soul is already beginning to hear the sounds of the Divine Harmony consistently, it will lose its need and taste for the harmonies of secular art. Thus St. Brendan the Navigator was once seen putting cotton into his ears at a concert of the Irish bards. When asked why he did this, he said: “If you had heard the music of the angels, you would not delight in this music.” Again, St. Barsanuphius said of himself: “When I was in the world, I loved opera. Good, serious music gave me pleasure and I always had a subscription – a seat in the orchestra. Later on, when I learned of different, spiritual consolations, the opera ceased to interest me. When a valve of the heart closes the receptivity of worldly enjoyments, another valve opens for the reception of spiritual joys...” 215

For the man for whom this other valve has opened, only the art of the Orthodox Church, and the music of prayer, will be delightful. “This music [of prayer],” says St. Barsanuphius of Optina, “is often spoken of in the Psalms: ‘The Lord is my strength and my song...’ (Ps. 117.14); I will sing and I will chant unto the Lord’ (Ps. 26.7); ‘I will chant to my God as long as I have my being’ (Ps. 103.35). This singing is inexpressible. In order to receive it people go to monasteries, and they do receive it: one after five years, another after ten, a third after fifteen, and a fourth after forty. May God grant you, too, to receive it; at least you’re on the road to it.” 216

However, on the path to this consistent dwelling in the music of the soul, there will be days when even the music and words of the Orthodox Church fail to move us. For, as Shakespeare put it in The Merchant of Venice:

214 Afanasyev, op. cit, pp. 716, 712.
215 Afanasyev, op. cit, pp. 440-441.
216 Afanasyev, op. cit, p. 712. Cf. “The Six Psalms is a spiritual symphony, the life of the soul, which embraces the whole soul and grants it the most sublime delight. People don’t understand this. Their hearts are stony. But music helps them feel all the beauty of the Six Psalms.” (p. 110).
Such harmony is in immortal souls,
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

And so we have to work ascetically on ourselves in order to feel the grace of
the words or music in our souls deeply and constantly.

The Lord said to the Pharisees: "Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye cannot hear My word... He that is of God heareth God's words" (John 8.43, 47). God's artistic word works on the soul only if the soul itself has been made receptive to it, refashioned in accordance with His likeness, the likeness of Him Who is the Maker-"Poet" of heaven and earth. We have to have the word in us if we are to hear the Word coming from outside us; we have to have harmony in our souls if we are to hear the Harmony of the heavens.

(January 1/14, 2006; adapted and greatly expanded from "Letter to a Nun on Music", published in Orthodox America, November-December, 1996)
16. A REPLY TO DAVID BERCOT ON THE HOLY ICONS

David Bercot is a continuing Anglican who has produced a number of cassettes on spiritual themes. In several of these, he criticizes the position of the Orthodox Church from the point of view of what he considers to be the classical Anglican via media – that is, a position halfway between Protestantism, on the one hand, and Orthodoxy and Catholicism, on the other. Bercot claims that he was very sympathetic to Orthodoxy, and was even preparing to join the Orthodox Church, but was put off by the attitude of the Orthodox to the Mother of God and the holy icons, which he considers to be clearly contrary to the teaching of the Pre-Nicene Church. The following is a reply to Bercot in defence of the Orthodox teaching on icons.

My reaction to Bercot’s fourth tape, on icons, is similar to my reaction to his lecture on the Mother of God. He fails to understand that in the first three centuries of the Church’s life, paganism was still the dominant religion, so that certain doctrines which were part of the apostolic tradition, but which the pagans would almost inevitably misinterpret if presented to them before they had acquired a firm faith in Christ, had to be “played down” or “kept under wraps” in the public teaching of the Church until paganism was finally defeated in the fourth century. One such doctrine was the Orthodox veneration of the Mother of God; another was the Orthodox veneration of icons, which pagans clearly were likely to confuse with their own worship of idols.

Let me begin with Bercot’s argument that since the distinction between proskynesis (veneration, obeisance, bowing) and latreia (worship) is not found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, and since the prohibition of idol-worship in the Second Commandment uses the word proskynesis rather than latreia, the distinction cannot be used to justify the veneration, as opposed to the worship, of icons.

It is true that the verbal distinction between proskynesis and latreia is not clearly made in either the Old or the New Testaments. But this in no way proves that the real distinction between the honour and veneration shown to holy people and objects, on the one hand, and the absolute worship given to God alone, on the other, does not exist and is not implicit in the sacred text. Thus in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, while the words latreia and proskynesis are used, as always, indiscriminately to refer to the worship of God and the veneration of holy people, the angel is careful to admonish John not to treat him, the angel, as he would God, Whom alone he is commanded to worship (22.9).

Holy Apostles Convent writes: “The proskynesis given by a Christian to an icon is ontologically the same reverence he ought to give his fellow Christians, who are images of Christ; but it is ontologically different from the latreia which is due to God alone. It was St. John of Damascus who developed the
word *latreia* to indicate the absolute worship of which only God is worthy. He describes the relative veneration given to the Theotokos, saints, or sacred objects (the Cross, relics, icons, books) by the word *proskynesis*. At the writing of the Septuagint such distinctions were not strictly observed. *Latreia* was seldom used and *proskynesis* was used to describe everything from worship of God to paying respect to a friend. Although modern usage of these terms (worship and veneration, etc.) are often interchanged as synonyms, it has been critical to maintain their exact Orthodox use, consistent with the explanation of St. John of Damascus, since the iconoclast controversy. Although St. John the Theologian freely uses both ‘worship’ (*latreia*) and ‘make obeisance’ (*proskynesis*) with relation to God, he never speaks of offering ‘worship’ (*latreia*) for anyone or anything outside of the Deity (cf. Rev. 7.15, 22.3). Note that the KJV translates the Greek word *prokynesis* with ‘worship’ and *latreia* with ‘serve’. (Cf. St. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, 9-11)."  

It quite often takes time for real theological distinctions to acquire precise verbal equivalents. Thus the early Fathers made little distinction between *ousia* (essence) and *hypostasis* (person); but from the later fourth century such a distinction became essential to the development of precision in Trinitarian and Christological theology. In the same way, the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council made use of the clear distinction made by St. John of Damascus between *proskynesis* and *latreia* in order to expose the falsehood of the iconoclast heresy. As Bercot rightly says, we must not become prisoners of words, but penetrate to the realities behind the words. And the fact is that, whatever imprecisions of terminology may have existed at that time, the Old Testament Jews most certainly did make a practical distinction between veneration and worship. They venerated and bowed down to certain physical objects and people, while worshipping God alone. And they neither venerated nor worshipped the idols of the pagans.

The Jews’ veneration of certain holy objects was central to their spiritual life, and was never at any time confused with idolatry. Was not the ark considered to be holy and the dwelling-place of God? And did not God confirm the veneration in which it was held by striking dead Uzzah, who had handled it without sufficient reverence? Again, did not Abraham and David bow down to men and angels? And did not God command Solomon to build a temple with images in it, so that “he overlaid the cherubim with gold and carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms” (I Kings 6.28-29)? And yet, if Bercot is right, and we cannot make any distinction between worship and veneration, this must be counted as impious idol-worship!

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God not only blessed sacred art – that is, art whose products were deemed to be sacred – in the Old Testament. He clearly attached great importance to it by sending down grace upon the artist. Thus of Belzalel He said: “I have filled him with the Spirit of God with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting and in carving wood, for work in every craft” (Exodus 31.2-4). According to tradition, Christ Himself sent an image of Himself to King Abgar of Edessa, who treated it with great reverence. In the early Church, grace was given to specially commissioned artists, such as the Evangelist Luke, who painted several icons that have survived to the present day. According to British tradition, St. Joseph of Arimathaea brought an icon of the Mother of God to Glastonbury, where it remained until it was destroyed by Protestant iconoclasts in the 1520s. We know from Eusebius’ History of the Church that the woman with an issue of blood whom Christ healed built a statue of Him which worked miracles for many years and was never condemned as idolatry by the Church. Archaeological excavations have unearthed Christian iconography from very early times. And of course the Roman catacombs are full of icons.

This evidence shows that in the early Church the tradition of iconography was present in embryo. What prevented the embryo from growing quickly into the fully mature adult of later Byzantine iconography was not any theological objection to sacred art as such, but, as we have said, the still living tradition of pagan idolatry. If we read the Wisdom of Solomon, chapters 12 to 15, we see that pagan idolatry involved: (i) the worship of inanimate objects as gods; (ii) the rejection of the true and living God; and (iii) various kinds of immorality (child sacrifice, temple prostitution) associated with the cult of the false gods. On all three counts, the veneration of icons must be sharply distinguished from pagan idolatry: (i) icons are neither gods, nor worshipped. (ii) they lead us closer to, rather than away from, the true God; and (iii) they have no connection with immoral practices, but rather stimulate purity and chastity. And yet there is no doubt that if the iconoclasts of the 8th and 9th centuries, and the Protestants of the 16th century, failed to understand the distinction between icon-veneration and idol-worship, there must have been a similar temptation for pagan converts to the Faith in the early centuries.

“Just because the pagans used [images] in a foul way,” writes St. John of Damascus, “that is no reason to object to our pious practices. Sorcerers and magicians use incantations and the Church prays over catechumens, the former conjure up demons while the Church calls upon God to exorcise the demons. Pagans make images of demons which they address as gods, but we make images of God incarnate, and of His servants and friends, and with them we drive away the demonic hosts.”

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On one point, however, the Orthodox Christians and the pagans are, paradoxically, closer to each other than either are to the iconoclasts and Protestants. For both agree, contrary to the latter, that matter can become spirit-bearing. An image can become a channel of the Holy Spirit, as in Christian iconography, or a channel of the evil spirit, as in witchcraft. The spittle of Christ, the shadow of Peter and the handkerchief of Paul all worked miracles because the Holy Spirit was in them; and all the sacraments involve material objects – water, oil, bread and wine. Similarly, the objects used by Satanists and witches also work “miracles” through the evil spirit that is in them; and their “sacraments”, too, always have a material element. The Protestants, on the other hand, while not rejecting sacraments altogether, diminish their significance and the material element in them. Thus whereas the Lord clearly decrees that baptism is “through water and the spirit”, “born again Christians” usually dispense with the “water” part altogether, thinking they can receive the Spirit without it.

Since we are made of soul and body, the Word took on a soul and a body in order to save the whole of us – soul and body. Therefore the flesh and matter are no barrier to worship in the Spirit: rather, flesh and matter must become spiritualized, filled with the Spirit, in order to commune with the immaterial. And to this end the Flesh of the incarnate of God is given to us in the Eucharist.

It follows that it is not the materiality of icons as such that is critical, but the use to which they are put. The pagans, as St. John of Damascus said, use material images for evil uses, to commune with evil spirits. The Orthodox, however, use them for good uses, to commune with the One True God.

Bercot is guilty of serious distortion in his discussion of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. He says, for example, that almost all the Christians in the eighth century were Christians in name only. What an astonishingly sweeping and unjust judgement! Since he is an Anglican, let me point out that the seventh and eighth centuries were the golden age of the English Church, an age of the most abundant sanctity which has not been equaled English history since then. And as the Venerable Bede witnesses, icons were definitely used in worship. Thus when St. Augustine and his fellow missionaries set foot for the first time on English soil, they were preceded by an icon of Christ; and St. Benedict Biscop imported icons from Rome to Northumbria.

Again, Bercot claims that the Church at that time was completely dominated by the emperors – a false cliché which is proved by the simple fact that vast numbers of Christians, bishops, priests, monks and laypeople, were driven into exile or tortured precisely because they refused to accept the emperor’s iconoclasm. Let him read the bold language St. Theodore the Studite used to the emperor of his time – a boldness not, sadly, employed by
the Anglicans against that other iconoclast “emperor” and founder of the Anglican church, Henry VIII.

Again, he claims that the icon-venerators were just as cruel to their opponents as the iconoclasts to them. In fact, an unprejudiced reading of the history of the time makes it clear that the persecutions were directed exclusively against the icon-venerators, and were every bit as cruel as those of the pagan Roman emperors. This shows that an evil spirit possessed the iconoclasts, just as an evil spirit possessed the Protestant Anglicans who destroyed the monasteries and images and relics of the saints in sixteenth-century England.

The veneration of icons was the common practice of the whole Church in both East and West for the first millennium of Christian history at least. Consider, for example, the thoroughly Orthodox reasoning of the English Abbot Aelfric, who lived in about 1000: “Truly Christians should bow down to the holy cross in the Saviour’s name, because we do not possess the cross on which He suffered. However, its likeness is holy, and we always bow down to it when we pray, to the mighty Lord Who suffered for men. And that cross is a memorial of His great Passion, holy through Him, even though it grew in a forest. We always honour it, to honour Christ, Who freed us by it with His love. We always thank Him for that in this life.”

Iconoclasm is a recurrent temptation in the history of the Church. Since the devil hates God, he hates all those who are filled with the grace of God, and all those holy things which are channels of His grace. That is why he inspired the Muslims and the iconoclasts, the Bogomils and the Albigensians, the Protestants and the Masons and the Soviets, to destroy icons and crosses and relics and churches. And that is why the Church anathematizes the iconoclasts and iconoclasm as a most dangerous heresy. For let us not think that we do God service while destroying those things in which God dwells and through which He helps us to come close to Him. If we think that God cannot dwell in material things, or work miracles through holy icons and relics, then by implication we are denying the reality of the Incarnation, in which God not only worked through matter, but became flesh. That is why the main argument in defence of icons is based on the reality of the Incarnation. If the immaterial Word was made flesh, and seen and touched, why cannot we make images of His human body, and touch and kiss them? And if the burning of the national flag is considered treason by those who love their country, why should not the destroying or dishonouring of the holy icons be considered blasphemy by those who love their Lord?

As St. Basil the Great says, “the honour accorded to the image passes to its prototype”, so that the icon is a kind of door (St. Stephen the Younger) opening up into the world of the Spirit. This is not a pagan principle, as Bercot claims; and if the pagans have something analogous, it only goes to show that in this, as in many other ways, false religion simply apes the true. To put it in a more philosophical way, we may say that this is the principle of the symbolical or analogical nature of reality, whereby lower-order realities reflect and participate in higher-order realities, as the light of the moon reflects and participates in the light of the sun. The Catholic West began to lose this symbolical understanding of reality when Charlemagne rejected the veneration of icons at the council of Frankfurt in 794; and the Protestant West lost it entirely when it replaced symbolic truth with scientific truth, the appreciation of qualities with the analysis of quantities. In this respect, the Protestant-scientific revolution represents not so much the triumph of reason over superstition as the beginning of a descent into something even lower than paganism, as Dostoyevsky pointed out - the descent into atheism, the complete loss of faith in spiritual reality. Correspondingly, the return to icon-veneration in the West would represent the beginning of a return to true faith, the faith that ascends in and through material things to the immaterial God.

I end with a quotation from a holy Father of the Pre-Nicene Church, Hieromartyr Methodius, Bishop of Patara: “Even though the images of the emperor are not all made from gold or silver or precious metals, they are always honoured by everyone. Men are not honouring the materials from which they are made; they do not choose to honour one image more than another because it is made from a more valuable substance; they honour the image whether it is made of cement or bronze. If you should mock any of them, you will not be judged differently for mocking plaster or gold, but for showing contempt to your king and lord. We make golden images of God’s angels, principalities and powers, to give glory and honour to Him.”

St. Methodius of Patara.

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220 St. Methodius of Patara, Second Sermon on the Resurrection.
17. THE ICON OF THE HOLY TRINITY

In recent years, the icon of the Holy Trinity in which the Father is portrayed as an old man with white hair, the Son as a young man, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, has been characterized as "deception" and "cacodoxy" by some Orthodox writers, especially the Greek-American George Gabriel.

The arguments Gabriel brings forward are essentially three:

1. It is impossible to see or portray the Divine nature. Only the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, can be portrayed on icons, for He took on visible, tangible flesh in His Incarnation. Therefore the portrayal of the Father, Who has not become incarnate, is forbidden and speedily leads to the heresy of the circumscribability of the Divinity.

2. The icon of the Holy Trinity in question is supposed to portray the Prophet Daniel's vision of "The Ancient of Days", the old man with white hair being a depiction of the figure called "The Ancient of Days" (Daniel 7). However, the Ancient of Days, according to the Tradition and hymnology of the Church, is Christ, not the Father. Therefore the icon is based on a false interpretation of the prophetic text.

3. The icon of the Holy Trinity in question is a western invention, and has been forbidden by the Councils of Moscow in 1666 and Constantinople in 1780. These councils are authentic witnesses of Holy Tradition. Therefore their decisions should be respected and the icon condemned.

In this article I propose to show that these arguments are false and should be rejected. In doing so I shall rely largely on the excellent work, The Holy Trinity in Orthodox Iconography, produced (in Greek) by Holy Nativity skete, Katounakia, Mount Athos. The present article is essentially a synopsis of the main arguments of this work together with a few observations of my own.

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Let us take each of Gabriel's arguments in turn.

1. Both Gabriel and his Orthodox opponents are agreed, in accordance with the unanimous Tradition of the Orthodox Church, that the Divine Nature cannot be portrayed in icons. Gabriel then proceeds to assume, without any good reason, that the portrayal of "the Ancient of Days" in the icon of the Holy Trinity is an attempt to portray the Divine Nature. This is false.
The icon is a portrayal, not of the Divine Nature of the Father, but of His Divine Person. Moreover, it depicts Him, not realistically, but symbolically, not as He really is, in His Divine Nature, which is forever unattainable and undepictable, but only as He appeared to the prophet in a symbolic form or image for the sake of our understanding. The Son really became a man, so the depiction of the Son as a man in icons is a realistic depiction. The Father never became a man, so the depiction of Him as a man in icons is a symbolic, not a realistic depiction. In exactly the same way, the Holy Spirit never became a dove, so the depiction of Him as a dove in icons is not a realistic, but a symbolic depiction of Him, being a depiction of Him as He appeared in a symbolic form or image to St. John the Forerunner in the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan.

Two critical distinctions are implicit here: (a) between nature and person, and (b) between the Divine Nature (or Essence) and Energies.

(a) Icons, as St. Theodore the Studite teaches are representations, not of natures, but of persons existing in natures. Act 6 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council states: "An icon is not like the original with respect to essence, but with respect to hypostasis". St. Theodore put it as follows: The image is always dissimilar to the prototype with regard to essence (κατ’ ουσιαν), but it is similar to it with regard to essence (κατ’ υποστασιν) and name (κατ’ ονομα).221

Thus an icon of Christ is an image of a Divine Person in His human nature, which is visible to the bodily eye; and the icons of the angels are images of the persons of the angels in their angelic nature, which is invisible to the bodily eye. Nevertheless, God has condescended to allow the prophets and the saints to see the angels in bodily form, and it is these visions that we depict in the icons of the angels. For, as Vladimir Lossky writes, "it is not nature which sees nature, but person who sees person".222

(b) The distinction between the Divine Nature (or Essence) and Energies was clearly worked out by St. Gregory Palamas. Both the Nature and the Energies of God are common to all Three Persons. Only the Divine Nature is forever inaccessible to man (like the centre of the sun), while the Energies are God coming out of Himself, as it were, and making Himself communicable to men (like the rays of the sun).

The visions of God by the Old Testament Prophets are visions of the Divine Energies of God, not of His Essence. Thus St. Gregory Palamas, commenting on the Patriarch Jacob's words: "I have seen God face to face [or person to person], and my soul has been saved", writes: "Let [the cacodox] hear that

222 Lossky, op. cit., p. 111.
Jacob saw the face of God, and not only was his life not taken away, but as he himself says, it was saved, in spite of the fact that God says: 'None shall see My face and live'. Are there then two Gods, one having His face accessible to the vision of the saints, and the other having His face beyond all vision? Perish the impiety! The face of God which is seen is the Energy and Grace of God condescending to appear to those who are worthy; while the face of God that is never seen, which is beyond all appearance and vision let us call the Nature of God."

Abraham's vision at the oak of Mamre was likewise a vision of God, not in His Essence, but in His Energies. One or two Western Fathers (for example, St. Justin the Martyr) say that Abraham saw Christ and two angels. But the Greek Fathers and St. Augustine say that he saw the Holy Trinity in the form of three young men or angels. They all agree that Abraham saw God. Thus St. Gregory the Theologian says that "the great Patriarch saw God not as God but as a man". Again St. John Chrysostom writes that God appeared to Abraham, but not with "the nature of a man or an angel", but "in the form of a man". And St. John of Damascus, the great defender of the icons, writes: "Abraham did not see the Nature of God, for no one has seen God at any time, but an icon of God, and falling down he venerated it."

As the True Orthodox Fathers of Katounakia aptly put it: "There is no icon representing the Nature or Essence of God, but there is an icon of the 'icon' of God." (p. 30).

2. The term "Ancient of Days", like "God", is applicable to all Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Therefore there is no contradiction between allowing that Christ can be called "the Ancient of Days", as in the hymnology for the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, and believing that "the Ancient of Days" in the vision of Daniel is God the Father. Hieromartyr Hippolytus of Rome (P.G. 10, 37), St. Athanasius the Great (V.E.P. 35, 121), St. John Chrysostom (P.G. 57, 133; E.P.E. 8, 640-2), St. Gregory Palamas (Homilies 14, E.P.E. 9, 390), St. Cyril of Alexandria (P.G. 70, 1461), St. Symeon of Thessalonica (Interpretation of the Sacred Symbol, p. 412), and St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (The Rudder, Zakynthos, 1864, p. 320; Chicago, 1957, p. 420) all agree in identifying "the Ancient of Days" in the vision of Daniel with God the Father. They interpret the vision as portraying the Ascension of Christ ("the Son of Man") to God the Father ("the Ancient of Days"), from Whom He receives the Kingdom and the Glory, together with the power to judge the living and the dead. Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "Behold, again Emmanuel is manifestly and clearly seen ascending to God the Father in heaven... The Son of Man has appeared in the flesh and reached the Ancient of Days, that is, He has ascended to the throne of His eternal Father and has been given honor and worship..." (Letter 55, in The Fathers of the Church, vol. 77, Washington: CUA Press, 1987, pp. 28, 29). There are some Holy Fathers who speak in favour of the Ancient of Days being Christ in this vision (see The Lives of the Holy
Nevertheless, Gabriel's interpretation of this vision as a prophecy of the Incarnation, "the Son of Man" being the human nature of Christ and "the Ancient of Days" His Divine Nature, is difficult to support in that the two figures in the vision clearly represent Persons, not Natures, and the attempt to represent the two natures of Christ in separation, as if they each had an independent enhypostatic existence, smacks of Nestorianism. That is why we prefer the interpretation that the Ancient of Days in this vision is the Father.

The fact that in Revelation 1 Christ is portrayed with white hair does not undermine this interpretation. Christ as an old man symbolically signifies His antiquity, the fact that He has existed from the beginning. Christ as a young man is a realistic image of His Incarnation as a man and a symbolic image of His agelessness as God. These images together teach us that Christ God passes unchanging through all ages from the beginning to the end. Revelation also portrays Christ as a lamb, which signifies that He was slain for the sins of the world. The Father and the Spirit also have different symbolical representations. The Father is represented visually as a man (in Isaiah, Daniel, Stephen's vision in Acts and in Revelation) and aurally as a voice from heaven (at the Baptism of Christ and in John 12.28). Similarly the Spirit is represented as a bird (in Genesis 1 and at the Baptism of Christ) and as a wind and tongues of fire (at Pentecost).

3. Most of these scriptural icons of God passed into the artistic iconographical tradition of the Church from the beginning; only the iconographic representation of Christ as a lamb has been forbidden. Thus the appearance of the Trinity to Abraham is represented in the Via Latina catacombs in Rome (4th century), and the Father as an old man - in the Roman church of St. Maria Maggiore in Rome (c. 432). This constant tradition of the Church was confirmed by the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Synodicon of Orthodoxy.

Thus the Seventh Ecumenical Council declares: "Eternal be the memory of those who know and accept and believe the visions of the prophets as the Divinity Himself shaped and impressed them, whatever the chorus of the prophets saw and narrated, and who hold to the written and unwritten tradition of the Apostles which was passed on to the Fathers, and on account of this make icons of the Holy things and honour them." And again: "Anathema to those who do not accept the visions of the prophets and who reject the iconographies which have been seen by them (O wonder!) even before the Incarnation of the Word, but either speak empty words about having seen the unattainable and unseen Essence, or on the one hand pay heed to those who have seen these appearances of icons, types and forms of the truth, while on the other hand they cannot bear to have icons made of the Word become man and His sufferings on our behalf."
St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, in his prolegomena to the Seventh Ecumenical Council, sums up the Council's decrees on this subject as follows: "The present Council, in the letter which it sent to the Church of Alexandria, on the one hand blesses those who know and accept, and therefore make icons of and honour, the visions and theophanies of the Prophets, as God Himself shaped and impressed them on their minds. And on the other hand it anathematizes those who do not accept the iconographies of such visions before the incarnation of God the Word (p. 905 of the second volume of the Conciliar Records). It follows that the Beginningless Father must be represented in icons as He appeared to the Prophet Daniel, as the Ancient of Days. Even though it be admitted as a fact that Pope Gregory in his letter to Leo the Isaurian (p. 712 of the second volume of the Conciliar Records) says that we do not blazon the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet it must be noted that he said this not simply, but in the sense that we do not paint Him in accordance with the divine nature; since it is impossible, he says, to blazon or paint God's nature. That is what the present Council is doing, and the entire Catholic Church; and not that we do not paint Him as He appeared to the Prophet. For if we did not paint Him at all or portray Him in any manner at all to the eye, why should we be painting the Father as well as the Holy Spirit in the shape of Angels, or young men, just as they appeared to Abraham? Besides, even if it be supposed that Gregory does say this, yet the opinion of a single Ecumenical Council attended and represented by a large number of individual men is to be preferred to the opinion of a single individual man. Then again, if it be considered that even the Holy Spirit ought to be painted in the shape of a dove, just as it actually appeared, we say that, in view of the fact that a certain Persian by the name of Xanaeus used to assert, among other things, that it is a matter of infantile knowledge (i.e., that it is a piece of infantile mentality or an act of childishness) for the Holy Spirit to be painted in a picture just as It appeared in the semblance of a dove, whereas, on the other hand, the holy and Ecumenical Seventh Council (Act 5, p. 819 of the second volume of the Conciliar Records) anathematized him along with other iconoclasts, it may be concluded as a logical inference that according to the Seventh Ecumenical Council It ought to be painted or depicted in icons and other pictures in the shape of a dove, as it appeared.... As for the fact that the Holy Spirit is to be painted in the shape of a dove, that is proven even by this, to wit, the fact that the Fathers of this Council admitted the doves hung over baptismal founts and sacrificial altars to be all right to serve as a type of the Holy Spirit (Act 5, p. 830). As for the assertion made in the Sacred Trumpet (the Encomium of the Three Hierarchs) to the effect that the Father ought not to be depicted in paintings, according to Acts 4, 5, and 6 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, we have read these particular Actssearchingly, but have found nothing of the kind, except only the statement that the nature of the
Holy Trinity cannot be exhibited pictorially because it is shapeless and invisible.”223

As regards the councils of 1666 and 1780, even if they were without reproach in every other respect, they cannot be accepted as expressing the Tradition of the Church if they contradict the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council as well as the constant practice of the Church since Roman times.

However, there are other strong reasons for not accepting these councils. The Moscow council of 1666 was convened by the Tsar in order to defrock the righteous Patriarch Nikon; but only 16 years later, in 1682, this decision of the Moscow council was annulled by the Eastern Patriarchs. In any case, the prime force at the council, "Metropolitan" Paisios Ligarides, had already been defrocked by the Patriarch of Jerusalem for his crypto-papism. Thus far from expressing the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church against westernizing influences, the "Pan-Orthodox" council of Moscow actually represented a victory for westernism! Which is probably why Russia was flooded with the supposedly illegal icons of the Holy Trinity precisely after this council!

As for the Constantinopolitan council of 1780, it was convened by the same Patriarch, Sophronios II, who four years earlier had unjustly condemned Athanasios of Paros for following the laws of the Church in refusing to carry out memorials for the dead on Sunday instead of Saturday.

Another important historical point is the fact that the famous "Reigning" icon of the Mother of God, which went before the Russian armies fighting against Napoleon in 1812, and was miraculously discovered and renewed in Moscow at the precise moment that Tsar Nicolas II abdicated, on March 2, 1917, clearly portrays the Father as an old man at the top of the icon. Is it possible that God should have worked miracles through an icon that is heretical and blasphemous? Nor is this the only icon portraying the Father that has worked miracles. Another wonderworking icon of the Holy Trinity has been found in recent times in the possession of True Orthodox Christians in the region of Thessaloniki. This timing and location is significant, because perhaps the first opponent of the icon in the recent controversy, Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, was once in the True Orthodox Church in Thessaloniki, but left it and died while speaking against the holy icon.

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In conclusion, let us consider an icon which everyone accepts to be canonical and in accordance with Orthodox Tradition - the icon of the Transfiguration of Christ. Who or what is represented in this icon?

Clearly, the icon represents the Divine Person of Christ, Who exists inseparably in His Divine and human natures.

Now the particular significance of this icon of Christ is that we see in it not only the visible part of His human nature - His body, but also the Divine Energies that flow from His Divine Essence - the Divine Light.

And yet, as St. Gregory Palamas writes, "the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord has no beginning and no end; it remains uncircumscribed (in time and space) and imperceptible to the senses, although it was contemplated... But the disciples of the Lord passed here from the flesh into the spirit by a transmutation of their senses." And again he writes: "The Divine Light is not material, there was nothing perceptible about the Light which illuminated the apostles on Mount Tabor."

Now if we follow Gabriel's argument through to its logical conclusion, iconographers who depict the Divine Light of the Transfiguration are falling into the heresy of circumscribing the uncircumscribable. For unlike the body of Christ, the Divine Light that flowed from His body is uncircumscribable and imperceptible to the senses. But this conclusion is obviously absurd and against Tradition.

The correct conclusion which needs to be drawn is that iconographers are permitted to depict, not only realities that are accessible to our bodily senses, such as the bodies of Christ and the saints, but also those invisible realities, both created and uncreated, circumscribable and uncircumscribable, that God makes visible to holy men by a mystical transmutation of their senses. These invisible realities which God has made visible include angels and the souls of men, and the Divine Light of God Himself. This is the Tradition of the Holy Church of Christ.

Also depictable are those symbolic manifestations of spiritual realities which were revealed in visions to the Prophets and Apostles by a cataphatic outpouring of the Energies of God, such as Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days, or the Holy Scriptures taken as a whole. For, as St. Nicodemos writes: "There is a third kind of picture (or icon), which is called a figurative or symbolic picture. Thus, for example, the mysteries of the grace of the Gospel and of the truth of the Gospel were originals, while the pictures thereof are the symbols consisting of the old Law and the Prophets."

It remains forever true that the Divine Essence is absolutely unknowable and undepictable. But our zeal to guard this truth should not blind us to the
reality of what holy men have seen and which the Holy Church therefore allows to be depicted in icons. For as the Lord says through the Prophet Hosea: "I will speak to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and in the hands of the prophets I was likened" (12.11).

(June 6/19, 1993; revised March 5/18, 2002 and July 9/22, 2004)
18. ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Marriage as described in Holy Scripture represents a paradoxical, seemingly impossible union of opposites. On the one hand, it is seen as a great mystery, an image of, and participation in, the highest, purest, most self-sacrificial love - that of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5.32). On the other hand, it is little more than a safety-valve for unclean desire - "it is better to marry than to burn" (I Corinthians 7.9). On the one hand, it is the scene of the Lord's first and one of His most radiant miracles, whereby He "manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2.11). But on the other hand, it is that which those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes must avoid at all costs; "for these are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins" (Revelation 14.4).

The failure to reconcile these apparent opposites has produced some strange perversions of theory and practice, especially in the West. Thus whereas in the East sexual pleasure in marriage is generally regarded as "lawful"224, Blessed Augustine states that "intercourse... for the sake of satisfying lust... is a venial sin" even in marriage, though "it is pardoned" insofar if it leads to the sacred end of procreation.225 This uneasy compromise in a great Orthodox thinker was followed, after the falling away of the West, by some definitely heretical innovations: the false dogma of the "immaculate conception" of the Virgin, the adulterous "chastity" of the medieval troubadors, the sensual "mysticism" of Teresa of Avila, the ban on marriage by the Shakers, the sexual hypocrisy of the Victorians, and our own century's general debauchery.

Now as Orthodox Christians we know that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine..." (II Timothy 3.16). Therefore when difficulties in interpretation and apparent contradictions between texts are found, we are not at liberty to pick and choose those texts that we like and reject that those that we do not like. Rather we must humbly admit that the reason for our perplexity lies in ourselves, in the passionateness which prevents us from understanding the mysteries of God - and continue to "search the Scriptures". For "none of the mysteries," writes Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, "of the most secret wisdom of God ought to appear alien or altogether transcendent to us, but in all humility we must apply our spirit to the contemplation of divine things."226 We must turn to the Giver of wisdom for enlightenment, in accordance with the apostle's words: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1.5).

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224 See, for example, St. Photius the Great's Homily on the Nativity of the Virgin.
225 Blessed Augustine, On Marriage as a Good, 6.
Marriage in Paradise. Therefore, having invoked God's help, let us turn again to the Holy Scriptures. And let us pose the question: what was the original purpose of marriage as instituted by God in Paradise?

Two answers are suggested in Genesis: (a) the procreation of children, and (b) the inability of man alone, without woman, to fulfil the task appointed to him by God.

(a) "And God blessed them, saying, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it..." (1.28). Coming immediately after the first mention of the differentiation of the sexes (1.27), this clearly implies that the purpose of this differentiation is the procreation of children. But the question then arises: why, then, is there no mention of children or procreation in Paradise, the first reported birth, that of Cain, taking place only after the expulsion from Eden (4.1)?

Some of the Holy Fathers suggest that the reason is that God's command to increase and multiply was given in prevision of the Fall, and that if there had been no Fall there would have been no sexual relations, and the multiplication of the species would have taken place in a different way. Thus St. John of the Ladder writes that if Adam had not been overcome by gluttony, he would not have known what a wife was - that is, he would have lived with her as with a sister.227 And certainly, since all that we know of sexuality and procreation comes from life after the Fall, and has been corrupted by the Fall, there can be no doubt that marriage as we know it was not part of the life of the first couple in Paradise.

At the same time, the institution of "one-flesh" marriage is based on the nature of man and woman as they were originally created, on the fact that Eve was created from the flesh of Adam. Thus God placed Adam in a deep sleep (the Greek word in the Septuagint is: "ecstasy"), and created Eve (the literal translation from the Greek is: "built") out of his rib - an operation, incidentally, that makes very good surgical sense.228 Adam's first words on seeing the newly-created Eve clearly base marriage on this original "one-flesh" creation, defining it unambiguously as a physical union: "This is now bone of

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228 Thus Dr. J.E. Shelley writes: “The account in Genesis 2.18-25 is as factual as words can make it. It reads like the account which a surgeon writes for the records of the operating theatre! God performs a surgical operation under general anaesthesia, a rib re-section in this case. Note the detail: 'He closed up the flesh instead thereof'. In just such a manner would a surgeon describe his closing up of an incision. Remarkably enough, provided that the surgeon is careful to leave the periosteum (the membrane which envelops the bones) of the removed rib, the rib will reform in a non-septic case, and the operation performed upon Adam was truly aseptic. So far as I remember, the rib is the only bone in the body of man which will do this. God gave it this property, which is why He chose it. With the vast reservoir of living cells contained in the rib, 'He built up Eve'. (How God Created Man, a Bible Christian Unity Fellowship Study, p. 6).
my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was
taken out of her man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother
and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (2.23).

The Lord Himself quoted these words in the context of His discussion of
divorce (Matthew 19.4-5), so their authority is great. Divorce is wrong,
because marriage was constituted from the beginning, in Paradise, as an
unbreakable bond creating a single new unit. A unit, moreover, not only of
spirit, but also of flesh.

The holy new Russian confessor Bishop Gregory (Lebedev) has
commented on these words in an illuminating way: "And they two shall be
one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh', that is, the people
have ceased to exist separately even in the physical sense. They have become
one physical body, 'one flesh'. That is what the fulfilment of the will of God
has done... It has not only completed and broadened their souls in a mutual
intermingling, it has changed their physical nature and out of two physical
existences it has made one whole existence. That is the mystery of marriage.
Having explained it, the Lord concludes with a mild reproach to the Pharisees:
'Well, what do you want? What are you asking about? How after this can a
man leave his wife? That would be unnatural! In marriage we have a mutual
completion of life! But you want Me to approve the destruction of this
completion?! And in marriage we have a creative act, an act of God, Who
creates one life... How can you want Me to destroy life created by God? This is
unnatural... Don't think of encroaching on marriage! What God has joined
together, let man not put asunder'."229

It follows that it is not enough to define the purpose of marriage as
procreation alone. Marriage is not procreation, but creation, the creation of one
new life out of two; and this new life has value in itself, quite apart from the
fact that it is the means towards the procreation of further life. Otherwise the
union of childless couples would be without value.

That the marriage of childless couples can be blessed by God is clearly seen,
for example, in the lives of Saints Joachim and Anna. Although society
condemned them for their childlessness, they were righteous in the eyes of
God. And eventually they were rewarded by the birth of the Mother of God,
who appeared, not as the justification of their marriage, but as the natural
fruit of its manifest righteousness.

(b) "It is not good for man to be alone, let Us make for him a help suitable
to him" (2.18 - the Septuagint text literally translated is: "according to him",
just as man was made "according to the image of God"). In Tobit this passage

229 Hieromartyr Gregory (Lebedev) Tolkovnie Evangelia ot Marka (Interpretation of the Gospel of
is paraphrased as: "Thou madest Adam, and gavest him Eve his wife for an helper and support" (8.6). What kind of support is meant here?

St. Augustine, followed by most of the Western Fathers, replies: "for the sake of the procreation of sons, just as a support to the seed in the earth is that a thicket should grow on either side".230

However, St. Basil the Great takes a more spiritual view in his treatise, On Virginity; the support which is meant here, he says, is the general support that a woman gives to her husband in passing through life.

And Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus writes: "He bade her satisfy the man's desire, not a passion for pleasure, but by showing him the rational need of her society".231

Again, the holy new Martyr-Patriarch Tikhon writes: "Without a helpmate the very bliss of paradise was not perfect for Adam: endowed with the gift of thought, speech, and love, the first man seeks with his thought another thinking being; his speech sounds lonely and the dead echo alone answers him; his heart, full of love, seeks another heart that would be close and equal to him; all his being longs for another being analogous to him, but there is none; the creatures of the visible world around him are below him and are not fit to be his mates; and as to the beings of the invisible spiritual world they are above. Then the bountiful God, anxious for the happiness of man, satisfies his wants and creates a mate for him - a wife. But if a mate was necessary for man in paradise, in the region of bliss, the mate became much more necessary for him after the fall, in the vale of tears and sorrow. The wise man of antiquity spoke justly: 'two are better than one, for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up' (Sirach 4.9-10). But few people are capable of enduring the strain of moral loneliness, it can be accomplished only by effort, and truly 'all men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given' (Matthew 19.11), and as for the rest - 'it is not good for a man to be alone', without a mate."232

**Marriage in the Fall.** Like everything else that was created good by God in the beginning, marriage has been corrupted by the Fall. Unbelief ("ye shall not surely die" (3.15)), pride ("ye shall be as gods" (3.6)) and sensuality ("the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes to look upon, and beautiful to contemplate" (3.7)) invaded the nature, first of the woman, and then of the man. The Fall did not completely destroy the joyful, paradisiac image of marriage; but, as Vladimir Lossky points out, 'this paradisiac 'eros' would have been as different from our fallen and devouring sexuality as the

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230 Blessed Augustine, On Marriage as a Good, 6.
231 Blessed Theodoret, Commentary on Deuteronomy 21.13.
sacerdotal royalty of man over created being is from their actual devouring of each other. For... the Fall has changed the very meaning of the words. Sexuality, this 'multiplication' which God ordains and blesses, appears in our universe as irremediably bound to separation and death. The human condition has experienced a catastrophic mutation right down to its biological reality. But human love would not be pregnant with such a paradisiac nostalgia if there did not remain in it the sad memory of an original condition in which the other and the world was experienced from within, when death did not exist..."233

Both Adam and Eve failed to fulfil the law of marriage as God had ordained it. Thus Eve failed in her task of spiritually supporting Adam by offering him the forbidden fruit. But Adam, too, failed in his responsibility towards her. Instead of enlightening her about the devil's deception, and leading her back to obedience to God, he weakly followed her example. And instead of taking the blame for the whole affair upon himself, as befitted the head of the family, he bitterly put the blame on his wife - and indirectly on God Who had created her for him (3.13).

Thus they both felt guilty, and their shame took on a specifically physical form: "And the eyes of both were opened, and they perceived that they were naked" (3.8).

Blessed Augustine sees in this consciousness of nakedness the first stirrings of lust. For "the rational soul blushed at the bestial movements in the members of the flesh and inspired it with shame, not only because it felt this there where it had never sensed anything similar, but also because that shameful movement came from the transgression of the commandment".234 Thus the passionless delight in the other became the passionate desire for the other; "flesh of my flesh" was now "flesh for my flesh".

Against this new, devouring force in human nature, protection was needed; and a first protection was provided by God in the "coats of skin" - modesty is the first step towards chastity. There is another, more spiritual interpretation of the "coats of skin", according to which they signify the fallen passions in which man was now clothed.

However, modesty alone cannot control this passion in fallen man. A stronger restraint is required - and marriage provides that restraint. "For marriage," says St. John Chrysostom, "was not instituted for debauchery and fornication, but to prevent the one and the other: 'on account of fornications,' says St. Paul, 'let each man have his wife, and each woman her husband' (I

234 Blessed Augustine, On Genesis according to the Letter, XI, xxxxii.
Corinthians 7.2). There are two reasons for which marriage was instituted: to regulate our lust and to give us children: but the first is the principal one. The day on which lust was introduced was the day on which marriage was introduced to regulate it by leading the man to be content with one woman.

"As for the procreation of children, marriage does not absolutely enjoin it. That responds rather to this word of God in Genesis: 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth' (1.28). The proof of this is the large number of marriages which cannot have children.

"That is why the first reason for marriage is to regulate lust, and especially now that the human race has filled the whole earth".235

An important consequence of this view is that sexual pleasure in marriage, far from being an evil or inessential by-product of marriage, is to be welcomed - and this not for hedonistic, but for moral reasons. For if the man does not obtain sexual pleasure in marriage, he is likely to seek it elsewhere, thus destroying the one-flesh relationship and endangering both his and his wife's salvation. Hence the forthright exhortation of St. Ignatius the God-bearer: "Speak to my sisters that they love the Lord, and be satisfied with their husbands in flesh and in spirit".236

The doctrine of the majority of the Eastern Fathers on this point may be summed up in words from a poem by St. Gregory the Theologian:

For man and wife the union of wedlock is a bolted door securing chastity and restraining desire,
And it is a seal of natural affection,
They possess the loving colt which cheers the heart by gamboling,
And a single drink from their private fountain untasted by strangers,
Which neither flows outwards, nor gathers its waters from without.
Wholly united in the flesh, concordant in spirit, by love
They sharpen in one another a like spur to piety.237

But marriage in the Fall restrains more than lust alone. The pride and pleasure-seeking that led to the Fall are also corrected, and God achieves this through their opposites - pain and humiliation. Thus "to the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy pains and thy groanings; in pain thou shalt bring forth children, and thy turning shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3.17). Having turned to the devil in disobedience to God, the woman must learn obedience to God in turning to her husband. And having spoken to him to his ruin, she must now listen to him to her gain.

235 St. John Chrysostom, First Discourse on Marriage
236 St. Ignatius, To Polycarp, 5.
St. Paul develops the theme: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (I Timothy 2.11-15). Wives are to be "discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2.5). Nor is this obedience only for their own sake: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conduct of the wives; while they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear" (I Peter 3.1-2).

"And to Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and eaten of the tree concerning which I charged thee of it only not to eat - of that thou hast eaten, cursed is the ground in thy labours, in pain thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread until thou shalt return" (Genesis 3.18-20). Thus for his weakness of will and lack of true love for his wife, the man is condemned to work to support her and his family for the rest of his life, groaning not only under the physical burden but also in anxiety of spirit. For "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5.8). But in thus having to care for her, he will learn more truly to love her, subduing his anger and bitterness: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3.19). "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (I Peter 3.7).

Whereas obedience in marriage is one-way, exhortation must be mutual. Thus St. Tikhon of Zadonsk writes: "The husband and wife must lay virtue, and not passion, as the foundation of their love, that is, when the husband sees any fault in his wife, he must nudge her meekly, and the wife must submit to her husband in this. Likewise when a wife sees some fault in her husband, she must exhort him, and he is obliged to hear her."

Marriage in Christ. Marriage in the Fall restrains sin and lust, but it cannot extirpate them entirely. But Christ, writes Clement of Alexandria "condemns more than just imagining having sex with a woman. For to fantasize is already to commit an act of lust. Rather, Jesus goes further. He condemns any man who looks on the beauty of a woman with carnal and sinful admiration. It is a different matter, however, to look on beauty with chaste love. Chaste love does not admire the beauty of the flesh. It admires the beauty of the spirit.

With such love, a person sees the body only as an image. His admiration carries him through to the Artist himself - to true beauty.\textsuperscript{239}

However, a completely chaste love of beauty is unattainable to fallen man. The spirit is willing - for "I loved Her, and sought Her out from my youth; I desired to make Her my spouse, and I was a lover of Her beauty" (Wisdom 8.2; Proverbs 4.6). But the flesh is weak - for "the corruptible body presses down on the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weighs down the mind that muses upon many things" (Wisdom 9.15). That is why God became man and united His Spirit to our flesh, so as to purify our flesh and make it in all things conformed to His Spirit. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8.3-4).

Through the grace communicated to our flesh in the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, the disordered passions of our fallen nature are first crucified and then resurrected to new life. Sexuality is not destroyed completely; for it was there, as we have seen, in the beginning, before the Fall. Rather, it is resurrected in a new form.

Thus St. John of the Ladder writes: "Someone told me of an extraordinarily high degree of purity. He said: 'A certain man, on seeing a beautiful woman, thereupon glorified the Creator; and from that one look, he was moved to the love of God and a fountain of tears. And it was wonderful to see how what would have been a cause of destruction for one was for another the supernatural cause of a crown.' If such a person always feels and behaves in the same way on similar occasions, then he has risen immortal before the general resurrection."\textsuperscript{240}

For fallen man, marriage is a virtual necessity; and even in Christ it is the best path to chastity for most. However, Christ by His Coming and Example has opened up another path to the same end - that of virginity or monasticism. For He is the New Adam, just as His Mother is the New Eve - and both, of course, are Virgins.

Monasticism is the more direct, more arduous way to the summit; and to reach it by this path brings a special reward. True monastics attain in this life to the condition of the life to come, in which "they neither marry nor are given in marriage... for they are equal to the angels" (Luke 20.35, 36). Marriage is the less direct route, with many stops on the way and with the consequent danger of becoming distracted by the scenery along the way (I Corinthians 7.31-33).


\textsuperscript{240}St. John of the Ladder, \textit{The Ladder of Divine Ascent}, Step 15:60.
That is why St. Paul says: "I would that all men were even as myself [i.e. virgins]... But every man hath his proper charisma, one after this manner, and another after that" (I Corinthians 7.7).

Marriage in Christ recreates the image of Adam and Eve in Paradise, when there was no pride or lust or jealousy. Thus, as Alexis Khomiakov says, "for the husband, his companion is not just one of many women, but the woman; and her mate is not one of many men, but the man. For both of them the rest of the race has no sex." Monasticism, on the other hand, recreates the image of Adam not only before the Fall, but also before the creation of Eve, when he had eyes for God alone. In this sense, as St. Ambrose of Milan points out, monasticism, the state of being a "monad", alone with God, is even more primordially natural than marriage.  

However, there is no contradiction between the perfection of the monastic monad and the perfection of the marital dyad, just as there is no contradiction between the commandment to love God with all one's heart and the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself. Just as the first commandment is greater than the second, so is the virginal state greater than the marital. But they are both holy, both pure.

Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava sums up the question well: "It is necessary, first of all, to establish a correct understanding of marriage in principle, and then to examine the question from a practical point of view. There are two extreme viewpoints with regard to this question which are in principle incorrect: both that which considers marriage to be an evil and that which completely abolishes the difference in inner merit between marriage and virginity. The first extreme is seen in many mystical sects, the second is a generally accepted opinion in the Protestant West, from where it has succeeded in penetrating Orthodox literature also. According to the latter viewpoint, both the married and the virginal ways of life are simply defined as individual characteristics of a man, and nothing special or exalted is seen in the virginal way by comparison with the married state. In his time Blessed Jerome thoroughly refuted this viewpoint in his work: 'Two Books against Jovinian'. While the positive teaching of the Church was beautifully expressed by St. Seraphim in the words: 'Marriage is a good, but virginity is a better than good good!' True Christian marriage is the union of the souls of those being married that is sanctified by the grace of God. It gives them happiness and serves as the foundation of the Christian family, that 'house church'. That is what it is in principle; but unfortunately it is not like that in our time for the

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242 St. Ambrose, *On Paradise* 4.25. St. Ephraim the Syrian expresses the tradition that Adam was androgynous before the creation of Eve when he writes: "Adam was both one and two; one in that he was man [adam], two in that he was created male and female" (Commentary on Genesis 2.12; quoted in Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 302).
most part. The general decline in Christian life has wounded marriage, too. Generally speaking, people in recent times have forgotten that the grace of God is communicated in the sacrament of marriage. One must always remember this grace, stir it up and live in its spirit. Then the love of the man for the woman and of the woman for the man will be pure, deep and a source of happiness for them. For this love, too, is a blessed gift of God. Only people do not know how to make use of this gift in a fitting manner! And it is for this simple reason that they forget the grace of God! 'The first thing in the spiritual life,' says St. Macarius the Great, 'is love for God, and the second - love for one's neighbour. When we apply ourselves to the first and great task, then the second, being lesser, follows after the first with very little labour. But without the first the second cannot be pure. For can he who does not love God with all his soul and all his heart apply himself correctly and without flattery to love for his brothers?' That which has been said about love generally applies also to married love. Of all the kinds of earthly love it is the strongest and for that reason it is represented in Holy Scripture as an image of the ideal love of the human soul for God: 'The Song of Songs,' says Blessed Jerome, 'is a nuptial song of spiritual wedlock,' that is, of the union of the human soul with God. However, with the blessedness of the virgins nothing can be compared, neither in heaven nor on earth..."243

Virginity is not only higher than marriage, but the only viewpoint from which marriage can be correctly evaluated, and the apparently contradictory scriptural texts on marriage understood. For whereas a perfect marriage is the end of most men's dreams, "paradise on earth", the ideal of virginity points to a still higher end - not paradise on earth, but the Kingdom of heaven, an end which can be attained only by rejecting all thought of earthly delights, however lawful, an end in which marriage will exist neither as an arena in which to struggle with the fallen passions, nor as a passionless contemplation of each other's beauty, like Adam and Eve in Paradise. Rather, both the virgins and those who have been married will be "like the angels, who always behold the face of the Father in heaven" (Matthew 18.11). For when the Supreme Object of desire is present, lesser objects are necessarily eclipsed, not because they are lacking in true beauty, but simply because they are lesser. Which is why the holy Apostle Simon the Zealot, the bridegroom at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, abandoned not only the water of a fallen marriage, but even the wine of a marriage transformed and sanctified by Christ, for love of the Divine Bridegroom Himself...

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19. DEATH AND THE TOLL-HOUSES

It is decreed that men should die once, and after that the judgement. Hebrews 9.27.

The Orthodox tradition on the judgement of the soul after death, and the passage of the soul through the “toll-houses”, was summarized by St. Macarius the Great as follows: “When the soul of man departs out of the body, a great mystery is there accomplished. If it is under the guilt of sins, there come bands of demons, and angels of the left hand, and powers of darkness that take over that soul, and hold it fast on their side. No one ought to be surprised at this. If, while alive and in this world, the man was subject and compliant to them, and made himself their bondsman, how much more, when he departs out of this world, is he kept down and held fast by them. That this is the case, you ought to understand from what happens on the good side. God’s holy servants even now have angels continually beside them, and holy spirits encompassing and protecting them; and when they depart out of the body, the hands of angels take over their souls to their own side, into the pure world, and so they bring them to the Lord…

“Like tax-collectors sitting in the narrow ways, and laying hold upon the passers-by, so do the demons spy upon souls and lay hold of them; and when they pass out of the body, if they were not perfectly cleansed, they do not suffer them to mount up to the mansions of heaven and to meet their Lord, and they are driven down by the demons of the air. But if whilst they are yet in the flesh, they shall with much labour and effort obtain from the Lord the grace from on high, assuredly these, together with those who through virtuous living are at rest, shall go to the Lord…” 244

The first major exposition of this tradition in modern times was Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov’s Essay on Death in the third volume of his Collected Works. 245 St. Barsanuphius of Optina called this Essay “indispensable” in its genre”. 246 In recent years this teaching has been challenged by OCA Archbishop Lazarus (Puhalo). 247 Although refuted both by Hieromunk Seraphim Rose 248 and by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad 249, Puhalo’s thesis continues to be received doctrine in HOCNA and elsewhere, and elicits passionate support on Orthodox list-forums. It may be useful, therefore, to review some of the major arguments.

244 St. Macarius, Homilies, XLIII, 4, 9.
Is the Toll-House Teaching Gnostic?

The idea that the toll-house teaching is Gnostic is refuted by the support given it by many Holy Fathers. A very large body of evidence in favour of the toll-houses from scriptural, patristic, hagiographical and liturgical sources was amassed by Rose in the book alluded to above. According to Puhalo, however, many of these sources are either apocryphal (e.g. St. Cyril of Alexandria’s Homily on the Departure of the Soul from the Body) or influenced by Egyptian Gnostic ideas (e.g. the Homilies of St. Macarius the Great, quoted above) or the products of western heretical concepts concerning Divine justice, purgatory, etc. (e.g. the stories in St. Gregory the Great’s Dialogues or the Venerable Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English Church and People).

Since the present writer is not competent to discuss questions of textual authenticity, the rest of this article will be based on authorities and writings whose authenticity has never been questioned - in Orthodox circles, at any rate.

St. Athanasius the Great writes in his Life of Saint Anthony that one night the saint received “a call from on high, saying, ‘Anthony! Rise, go out and look!’ He went out therefore - he knew which calls to heed - and, looking up, saw a towering figure, unsightly and frightening, standing and reaching to the clouds; further, certain beings ascending as though on wings. The former was stretching out his hands; some of the latter were stopped by him, while others flew over him and, having come through, rose without further trouble. At such as these the monster gnashed with his teeth, but exulted over those who fell. Forthwith a voice addressed itself to Anthony, ‘Understand the vision!’ His understanding opened up, and he realized that it was the passing of souls and that the monster standing there was the enemy, the envier of the faithful. Those answerable to him he lays hold of and keeps them from passing through, but those whom he failed to win over he cannot master as they pass out of his range. Here again, having seen this and taking it as a reminder, he struggled the more to advance from day to day in the things that lay before him.”

Anthony’s disciple, Abba Ammonas, spoke of the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to pass all “the powers of the air” (Ephesians 2.2) after death: “For this is the power which He gives to me here; it is this, again, which guides men into that rest, until he shall have passed all the ‘powers of the air’. For there are forces at work in the air which hinder men, preventing them from coming to God.”

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The theologian Nikolaos P. Vasileiades writes: “After his death poor man Lazarus ‘was received up by the angels’ (Luke 16.22). Angels, however, accompany not only the souls of the just, but also those of evil men, as the divine Chrysostom comments, basing his words on what God said to the foolish rich man: ‘Fool, this night will they require thy soul from thee’ (Luke 12.20). So while good angels accompanied the soul of Lazarus, the soul of the foolish rich man ‘was required by certain terrible powers who had probably been sent for this reason. And the one (the rich man) they led away ‘as a prisoner’ from the present life, but Lazarus ‘they escorted as one who had been crowned’. St. Justin the philosopher and martyr, interpreting the word of the psalm, ‘Rescue my soul from the sword, and this only-begotten one of mine from the hand of the dog; save me from the mouth of the lion’ (Psalm 21.21-22), comments: By this we are taught how we also should seek the same from God when we approach our departure from this life. For God alone can turn away every ‘evil angel’ so that he may not seize our soul.

“Basil the Great relates that the holy martyr Gordius (whose memory is celebrated on January 3rd) went to martyrdom not as if he was about to meet the public, but as if he was about to hand himself over into the hands of angels who immediately, since they received him as ‘newly slaughtered’, would convey him to ‘the blessed life’ like the poor man Lazarus. In another place, the holy Father, with reasons (at that time men used to be baptized at a great age), said: Let no one deceive himself with lying and empty words (Ephesians 5.6); for the catastrophe will come suddenly upon him (I Thessalonians 5.3); it will come like a tempest. There will come ‘a sullen angel’ who will lead away your soul which will have been bound by its sins; and your soul will then turn within itself and groan silently, for the further reason, moreover, that the organ of lamentation (the body) will have been cut off from it. O how you will wail for yourself at that hour of death! How you will groan!

“The Lord’s words: ‘The ruler of the world cometh, and has nothing in Me’ (John 14.3) are interpreted by St. Basil as follows: Satan comes, who has power over men who live far from God. But in Me he will find nothing of his own that might give him power or any right over Me. And the luminary of Caesarea adds: The sinless Lord said that the devil would not find anything in Him which would give him power over Him; for man, however, it is sufficient if he can be so bold as to say at the hour of his death that the ruler of this world comes and will in me only a few and small sins. The same Father says in another place that the evil spirits watch the departure of the soul more vigilantly and attentively than ever enemies have watched a besieged city or thieves a treasury. St. Chrysostom calls ‘customs-officers’ those ‘threatening angels and abusive powers’ of terrible appearance, meeting whom the soul is seized with trembling; and in another place he says that these ‘persecutors are called customs-officials and tax-collectors by the Divine Scripture’.
“In that temporary state [between the death of the body and the Last Judgement] the just live under different conditions from the sinners. According to St. Gregory the Theologian, every ‘beautiful and God-loving’ soul has scarcely been parted from the body when it experiences a ‘wonderful’ inner happiness because of all the good things that await it in endless eternity. For this reason ‘it rejoices’ and goes forward redeemed, forgiven and purified ‘to its Master’ since it has left the present life which was like an unbearable prison. On the other hand, the souls of the sinners are drawn ‘to the left by avenging angels by force in a bound state until they are near gehenna’. From there, as they face ‘the terrible sight of the fire’ of punishment, they tremble in expectation ‘of the coming judgement’ and are already punished ‘in effect’ (St. Hippolytus). For the whole time that they are separated from their bodies they are not separated from the passions which had dominion over them on earth, but they bear with them their tendency to sin. For that reason their suffering is the more painful (St. Gregory of Nyssa).”

Visions of the passage through the toll-houses are common also in the Lives of the Celtic saints. Thus we read about St. Columba of Iona that “one day he suddenly looked up towards heaven and said: ‘Happy woman, happy and virtuous, whose soul the angels of God now take to paradise!’ One of the brothers was a devout man called Genereus, the Englishman, who was the baker. He was at work in the bakery where he heard St. Columba say this. A year later, on the same day, the saint again spoke to Genereus the Englishman, saying: ‘I see a marvelous thing. The woman of whom I spoke in your presence a year ago today – look! – she is not meeting in the air the soul of a devout layman, her husband, and is fighting for him together with the holy angels against the power of the enemy. With their help and because the man himself was always righteous, his soul is rescued from the devils’ assaults and is brought to the place of eternal refreshment.’”


253 Adomnan, Life of St. Columba, III, 10. When St. Brendan the Navigator was dying, his sister said to him: “Father, what dost thou fear?” “I fear,” said he, “my lonely passing: I fear the darkness of the way: I fear the untravelled road, the presence of the King, the sentence of the Judge” (Rev. Francis Browne, Saints and Shrine of Lough Corrib, pp. 4-5). And when St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise came to die, and said, “Dreadful is the way upwards” his disciples said: “But surely not for you?” “Och,” said St. Ciaran, “indeed my conscience is clear of offence, but yet, even David and Paul dreaded this road” (D.D.C. Pochin Mould, Ireland of the Saints, London: Batsford, 1953, p. 79).
Coming to our own age, we have mentioned the witness of the holy Bishops Ignatius Brianchaninov and Elder Barsanuphius of Optina. Still closer to our time is St. John Maximovich (+1966), who writes: “Many appearances of the dead have given us to know in part what happens with the soul when it leaves the body. When it no longer sees with its bodily eyes, its spiritual vision is opened. This frequently occurs even before actual death; while seeing and even conversing with those around them, the dying see that which others do not. Leaving the body, the soul finds itself among other spirits, good and evil. Usually it strives towards those which are more akin to it, but if while still in the body it was under the influence of certain spirits, it remains dependent upon them when it leaves the body, no matter how unpleasant they might prove to be at the encounter.

“For two days the soul enjoys relative freedom and can visit its favourite places on earth, but on the third day it makes its way towards other realms. At this time it passes through a horde of wicked spirits, who obstruct its path and accuse the soul of various sins by which they themselves had deceived it. According to revelations, there are twenty such barriers, so-called ‘toll-houses’. At each stop the soul is tested as to a particular sin. Passing through one, the soul comes upon the next, and only after successfully passing through them all can the soul continue its way, and not be thrown straightway into hell. These demons and their trials are so horrendous that the Mother of God herself, when informed by Archangel Gabriel of her imminent repose, entreated her Son to deliver her from those demons and, in fulfillment of her prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared from Heaven to take the soul of His Most Pure Mother and carry it up to Heaven. The third day is terrifying for the soul, and it is especially in need of prayer.

“One having safely passed through the toll-houses and having bowed down before God, the soul spends the next thirty-seven days visiting the heavenly habitations and the chasms of hades, not knowing where it will find itself, and only on the fortieth day is it assigned its place of waiting until the resurrection of the dead. Some souls find themselves with a foretaste of eternal joy and blessedness, while others – in fear of eternal torments, which will begin in earnest after the Dread Judgement. Until that time, changes in the state of the soul are still possible, especially through offering for their sake the Bloodless Sacrifice (commemoration at the Divine Liturgy), and likewise through other prayers.”

Descriptions of the passage of souls through the toll-houses are to be found in the Orthodox literature of many ages and nations. Such universality is in itself a witness against the idea that the toll-house tradition is Gnostic.

To Whom Belongs the Judgement?

Puhalo also argues that the toll-house tradition is heretical on the grounds that it implies that the judgement of souls after death is not God’s but the demons’. Moreover, it is very close, he claims, to the papist doctrine of purgatory. For “the difference between the purgatory myth and that of the aerial toll-houses is that the one gives God satisfaction by means of physical torment, while the other gives Him His needed satisfaction by means of mental torture.”

To discuss the role of justice and its satisfaction would take us too far from the toll-house. Therefore suffice it to say that while all judgement of souls is in the hands of God, He often uses created beings as the instruments of His justice, just as a judge might use lawyers for the prosecution and defence, or a king might use an executioner. Thus we think of the avenging Angel who slew all the first-born of Egypt, and of the Archangel Michael’s destruction of the 185,000 warriors of Sennacherib. And it is not only good angels who carry out His will in this way: the other plagues of Egypt were “a mission performed by evil angels” (Psalm 77.53). We are not tempted to think, in these cases, that God has lost control: He is simply executing His will through created instruments.

Similarly, we should not think that God is not carrying out His own judgement when he allows the soul to be tested at the toll-houses. Here God is revealing His judgement on a soul through the agency, on the one hand, of demons, who, like counsel for the prosecution, bring up all the evil things that the soul has thought or done, and, on the other hand, of the good angels, who, like counsel for the defence, bring up its good deeds. Moreover, insofar as it is the good angels who encourage men to good deeds, and the demons who incite them to evil, this procedure actually reveals to the soul the hidden springs of many of his actions on earth.

Thus there is no contradiction, contrary to Puhalo’s assertion, between the demons’ testing souls at the toll-houses and the final judgement of sinners being delivered by God Himself, Who “cuts them off from the Holy Spirit”. Of course, God has no need for a detailed examination of our thoughts and deeds; it is we who, in accordance with His justice, are required to come to a full consciousness of them. For the Lord Himself said: “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account of in the day of judgement” (Matthew 12.36). Sinners who fail the searching test of their conscience at the toll-houses are indeed cut off from the Holy Spirit, and their souls are “cast into prison” (Matthew 5.25), the prison of hades, of spiritual darkness and excommunication from God, until the final judgement of soul and body together on the last day. Thus while angels accuse and excuse, it is God alone who delivers the final verdict; He alone decides the soul’s destiny.

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255 Puhalo, Orthodoxy Canada, vol. 6, no. 12, 1979, p. 23.
Moreover, in His mercy God often “tips the balance” in favour of the sinner when the demons appear to have won the case. Thus in the *Life of St. Niphon*, Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, we read: “With his clairvoyant eyes the Saint saw also the souls of men after their departure from the body. Once, standing at prayer in the church of St. Anastasia, he raised his eyes to heaven and saw the heavens opened and many angels, of whom some were descending to earth, and others were ascending bearing to heaven many human souls. And he saw two angels ascending, carrying someone’s soul. And when they came near the toll-house of fornication, the demonic tax-collectors came out and said with anger: ‘This is our soul; how do you dare to carry him past us?’ The angels replied: ‘What kind of sign do you have on this soul, that you consider it yours?’ The demons said: ‘It defiled itself before death with sin, not only natural ones but even unnatural ones; besides that, it judged its neighbour and died without repentance. What do you say to that?’ ‘We will not believe,’ said the angels, ‘either you or your father the devil, until we ask the guardian angel of this soul.’ And when they asked him, he said: ‘It is true that this soul sinned much, but when it got sick it began to weep and confess its sin before God; and if God has forgiven it, He knows why: He has the authority. Glory be to His righteous judgement!’ Then the angels, having put the demons to shame, entered the heavenly gates with that soul. Then the blessed one saw the angels carrying yet another soul, and the demons ran out to them and cried out: ‘Why are you carrying souls without knowing them? For example, you are carrying this one, who is a lover of money, a bearer of malice, and an outlaw.’ The angels replied: ‘We well know that it did all these things, but it wept and lamented, confessed its sins, and gave alms; for this God has forgiven it.’ But the demons began to say: ‘If even this soul is worthy of God’s mercy, then take and carry away the sinners from the whole world. Why should we be labouring?’ To this the angels replied: ‘All sinners who confess their sins with humility and tears receive forgiveness by God’s mercy; but he who dies without repentance is judged by God.’”

This shows, on the one hand, that the demons are essentially powerless, and on the other, that such authority as they possess over souls is ceded to them by the souls themselves when they willingly follow their enticements. For the Lord said: “He who sins is the servant of sin” (*John* 8.34), and therefore of him who is the origin and instigator of sin, the devil. If the demons have power even in this life over those who willingly follow their suggestions, what reason have we for believing that these souls do not continue in bondage after their departure from the body? However, if we resist sin and the devil in this life, they will have no power over us in the next. For, as St. Anthony says: “If the demons had no power even over the swine, much less have they any over men formed in the image of God. So then we ought to fear God only, and despise the demons, and be in no fear of them.”

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256 *The Orthodox Word*, May-June, 1980, pp. 139-140.
257 St. Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Anthony*. 
The Toll-Houses and Purgatory

But if the judgement of souls after death is not in any real sense a judgement by the devil, as opposed to God, much less is it a purging of souls in the papist sense. At most, the fear experienced on passing through the toll-houses can to some extent purify the soul. That this is admitted by the Orthodox Church is shown by the following reply of St. Mark of Ephesus to the Roman cardinals on purgatory: “At the beginning of your report you speak thus: ‘If those who truly repent have departed this life in love (towards God) before they were able to give satisfaction by means of worthy fruits for their transgressions or offences, their souls are cleansed after death by means of purgatorial sufferings; but for the easing (or ‘deliverance’) of them from these sufferings they are aided by the help which is shown them on the part of the faithful who are alive, as for example: prayers, Liturgies, almsgiving, and other works of piety.’

“To this we answer the following: of the fact that those reposed in faith are without doubt helped by the Liturgies and prayers and almsgiving performed for them, and that this custom has been in force since antiquity, there is the testimony of many and various utterances of the Teachers, both Latin and Greek, spoken and written at various times and in various places. But that souls are delivered thanks to a certain purgatorial suffering and temporal fire which possesses such (a purgatorial) power and has the character of a help – this we do not find either in the Scriptures or in the prayers and hymns for the dead, for in the words of the Teachers. But we have received that even the souls which are held in hell and are already given over to eternal torments, whether in actual fact and experience or in hopeless expectation of such, can be aided and given a certain small help, although not in the sense of completely loosing them from torment or giving hope for a final deliverance. And this is shown from the words of the great Macarius the Egyptian ascetic who, finding a skull in the desert, was instructed by it concerning this by the action of Divine power. And Basil the Great, in the prayers read at Pentecost writes literally the following: ‘Who also, on this all-perfect and saving feast, art graciously pleased to accept propitiatory prayers for those who are imprisoned in hell, granting us a great hope of improvement for those who are imprisoned from the defilements which have imprisoned them, and that Thou wilt send down Thy consolation’ (Third Kneeling Prayer at Vespers).

“But if souls have departed this life in faith and love, while nevertheless carrying away with themselves certain faults, whether small ones over which they have not repented at all, or great ones for which – even though they have repented over them – they did not undertake to show fruits of repentance: such souls, we believe, must be cleansed from this kind of sins, but not by means of some purgatorial fire or a definite punishment in some place (for this, as we have said, has not at all been handed down to us). But some must
be cleansed in the very departure from the body, thanks only to fear, as St. Gregory the Dialogist literally shows; while others must be cleansed after the departure from the body, either while remaining in the same earthly place, before they come to worship God and are honoured with the lot of the blessed, or – if their sins were more serious and bind them for a longer duration - they are kept in hell, but not in order to remain forever in fire and torment, but as it were in prison and confinement under guard.

“All such ones, we affirm, are helped by the prayers and Liturgies performed for them, with the cooperation of the Divine goodness and love for mankind. This Divine cooperation immediately disdains and remits some sins, those committed out of human weakness, as Dionysius the Great (the Areopagite) says in Reflections on the Mystery of those Reposed in the Faith (in The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, VII, 7); while other sins, after a certain time, by righteous judgements it either likewise releases and forgives – and that completely – or lightens the responsibility for them until that final Judgement. And therefore we see not necessity whatever for any other punishment or for a cleansing fire; for some are cleansed by fear, while others are devoured by the gnawings of conscience with more torment than any fire, and still others are cleansed by the very terror before the Divine glory and the uncertainty as to what the future will be. And that this is much more tormenting and punishing than anything else, experience itself shows…”

Thus while St. Mark rejected the idea of a purging by fire as the cardinals understood it, he definitely accepted the notion of a purging by fear and the gnawings of conscience. Now the experience of the soul after death which Orthodox writers describe by means of the toll-house metaphor is certainly an experience which includes fear and the gnawings of conscience. We may therefore conclude that there is nothing heretical in the notion of the toll-houses – provided we remember that it is a metaphor and not a literal description of events.

*Soul-Sleep?*

A third set of objections raised by Puhalo is based on the teaching that the soul when separated from the body cannot, by its nature, have such experiences as are attributed to it by the Orthodox teaching. For “the notion that the soul can exit the body, move about, have experiences, receive visions, revelations, wander from place to place, make progress or be examined and judged without the body, is essentially Origenistic, and is derived from the philosophies of the pagan religions of Greece and elsewhere... Old Testament anthropology, like that of the New Testament, never conceived of an immortal soul inhabiting a moral body from which it might be liberated, but always conceived a simple, non-dualistic anthropology of a single,

psychophysical organism. And active, intellectual life or functioning of the soul alone could never be conceived in either Old or New Testament thought. For the soul to function, its restoration with the body as the ‘whole person’ would be absolutely necessary.” 259 At the same time, Puhalo accepts that the soul has “some consciousness of future destiny, some hope”, and is “neither dead nor devoid of spiritual sensations”.260

The question arises: why should not the experiences that the Orthodox teaching attributes to the soul after death be accounted as “spiritual sensations”? We have seen, for example, that according to St. Basil the indolent soul after death “groans silently” because “the organ of lamentation (the body) will have been cut off from it”. So while it cannot lament in the way it did before, the soul still laments – in a disincarnate, bodiless way. Similarly, it sees without eyes and hears without ears. These “spiritual” experiences are certainly different from their analogues in the sensual world, but they are none the less real and vivid for all that.

The difference between the spiritual and sensual senses is well illustrated by the following: “they used to tell a story of a certain great old man, and say that when he was traveling along a road two angels cleaved to him and journeyed with him, one on his right hand and the other on his left. And as they were going along they found lying on the road a dead body which stank, and the old man closed his nostrils because of the evil smell, and the angels did the same. Now after they had gone on a little farther, the old man said unto them, ‘Do ye also smell as we do?’ And they said unto him, ‘No, but because of thee we closed our nostrils. For it is not for us to smell the rottenness of this world, but we do smell the souls which stink of sin, because the breath of such is night for us.” 261

It is not only angels who have these spiritual senses: to the degree that a man is purified he may also see, hear and smell spiritually even while in the body: “It came to pass that when the old man [St. Pachomius the Great] had said these thing to the brethren, the door-keeper came to him and said: ‘Certain travelers, who are men of importance, have come hither, and they wish to meet thee.’ And he said: ‘Call them hither.’ And when they had seen all the brotherhood, and had gone round all the cells of the brethren they wanted to hold converse with him by themselves. Now when they had taken their seats in a secluded chamber, there came unto the old man a strong smell of uncleanness though he thought that it must arise from them because he was speaking with them face to face; and he was not able to learn the cause of the same by the supplication which [he made] to God, for he perceived that that their speech was fruitful [of thought] and that their minds were familiar with the Scriptures, but he was not acquainted with their intellectual

259 Puhalo, op. cit., pp. 31, 33.
260 Puhalo, op. cit., p. 33.
uncleanness. Then, after he had spoken unto them many things out of the Divine Books, and the season of the ninth hour had drawn nigh meanwhile, they rose up that they might come to their own place, and Rabba entreated them to partake of some food there but they did not accept [his petition, saying] that they were in duty bound to arrive home before sunset; so they prayed, and they saluted us, and then they departed.

“And Abba, in order to learn the cause of the uncleanness of these men, went into his cell, and prayed to God; and he knew straightway that it was the doctrine of wickedness which arose from their souls and pursued these men, and having overtaken them, he said unto them, ‘Do ye call that which is written in the works of Origen heresy?’ And when they had heard the question they denied and said that they did not. Then the holy man said unto them, ‘Behold, I take you to witness before God, that every man who readeth and accepteth the work of Origen, shall certainly arrive in the fire of Sheol, and his inheritance shall be everlasting darkness. That which I know from God I have made you to be witnesses of, and I am therefore not condemned by God on this account, and ye yourselves know about it. Behold, I have made you hear the truth. And if ye believe me, and if ye wish to gratify God, take all the writings of Origen and cast them into the fire; and never seek to read them again.’ And when Abba Pachomius had said these things he left them.”

Spiritual beings not only smell the spiritual condition of souls: they also see them – and their appearance depends on their spiritual state. Thus St. John the Baptist once appeared to St. Diadochus of Photike, and said that “neither the angels nor the soul can be seen” by the bodily senses insofar as they are “beings which do not have a shape”. However, he went on, “one must know that they have a visible aspect, a beauty and a spiritual limitation, so that the splendour of their thoughts is their form and their beauty. That is why, when the soul has beautiful thoughts, it is all illumined and visible in all its parts, but if bad ones, then it has no luster and nothing to be admired...”

When the soul is separated from the body, it loses the use of its bodily senses, but by no means the use of its spiritual senses. On the contrary, they revive. For, as St. John Maximovich says, “When it [the soul] no longer sees with its bodily eyes, its spiritual vision is opened.” Again, St. John Chrysostom writes: “Do not say to me, ‘He who has died does not hear, does not speak, does not see, does not feel, since neither does a man who sleeps.’ If it is necessary to say something wondrous, the soul of a sleeping man somehow sleeps, but not so with him who has died, for [his soul] has

awakened.”264 Again, St. John Cassian writes: “The souls of the dead not only do not lose consciousness, they do not even lose their dispositions – that is, hope and fear, joy and grief, and something of that which they expect for themselves at the Universal Judgement they begin already to foretaste… They become yet more alive and more zealously cling to the glorification of God. And truly, if we were to reason on the basis of the testimony of the Sacred Scripture concerning the nature of the soul, in the measure of our understanding, would it not be, I will not say extreme stupidity, but at least folly, to suspect even in the least that the most precious part of man (that is, the soul), in which, according to the blessed Apostle, the image and likeness of God is contained, after putting off this fleshly coarseness in which it finds itself in this present life, should become unconscious – that part which, containing in itself the power of reason, makes sensitive by its presence even the dumb and unconscious matter of the flesh?”265

Not only is the soul the opposite of unconscious and unfeeling when it departs from the body: its sinful passions reveal themselves in all their hidden strength. “For the soul,” writes St. Dorotheus of Gaza, “wars against this body with the passions and is comforted, eats, drinks, sleeps, talks to and meets up with friends. But when it leaves the body it is left alone with the passions. It is tormented by them, at odds with them, incensed at being troubled by them and savaged by them… Do you want an example of what I am saying to you? Let one of you come and let me lock him up in a dark cell, and for no more than three days let him not eat nor drink, nor sleep, not meet anyone, not singing hymns or praying, not even desiring God, and you will see what the passions make of him. And that while he is still in this life. How much more so when the soul has left the body and is delivered to the passions and will remain all along with them…”266

It follows that the ancient heresy of “soul-sleep”, which is here revived in a modern form by Puhalo in his polemic against the toll-houses, is false: the soul in its disincarnate form can indeed spiritually perceive angels and demons and feel “hope and fear, joy and grief” in their presence.

**Conclusion**

The doctrine of the toll-houses, of the particular judgement of souls after death, is indeed a fearful doctrine. But it is a true and salutary and Orthodox one. Let us therefore gather this saving fear into our souls, in accordance with the word: “Remember thine end, and thou shalt never sin” (Sirach 7.36).

(February 8/21, 1981; revised July 9/22, 2004 and November 14/27, 2007)

265 St. John Cassian, First Conference of Abba Moses.
20. DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN ORTHODOX AND A MANICHAEAN ON MARRIAGE

1. Love and Lust

**Orthodox.** Father, I want you to be the first to know! I’m getting married!

**Manichaean.** Really? May God save and protect you!

**Orthodox.** Thank you… But aren’t you going to congratulate me?

**Manichaean.** Why?

**Orthodox.** Well… because it’s usual to congratulate people when they get married, to wish them joy.

**Manichaean.** What is “usual” is not always what is right.

**Orthodox.** But the Church also rejoices and prays for the joy of the couple that is to be married. “Let that joy come upon them,” says the priest in the marriage service, “such as the blessed Helena received when she found the precious Cross”. As a priest, do you not wish me that joy?

**Manichaean.** As a priest I wish you the joy of the cross, just as the prayer says. The joy of the cross is the joy of the Holy Spirit that comes through abstinence, through self-denial, through crucifying the passions and lusts of the flesh.

**Orthodox.** And do you not see the possibility of that joy and that self-denial in marriage? After all, “Holy Martyrs” is chanted during the service.

**Manichaean.** Not if marriage is simply a condition in which to indulge the lusts of the flesh.

**Orthodox.** Is that all you see in it? Do you see nothing good in marriage?

**Manichaean.** I see good in the begetting of children, “if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (I Timothy 2.15), as the apostle says. And I see good in the prevention of fornication (I Corinthians 7.2). However, these are essentially Old Testament criteria. The earth is already overflowing with people; the Messiah is already born, so the Jewish hope of being His ancestor has now been superseded; our attention should be directed towards converting the present population to the faith rather than begetting more people. And in the New Testament Church we have a new ideal, that of virginity: “It is good for a man not to touch a woman” (I Corinthians 7.1). And a new grace to live by that ideal.

**Orthodox.** Are you saying that married Christians do not live in the grace of the New Testament?

**Manichaean.** Yes.

**Orthodox.** You do surprise me, Father! Tell me: do you believe that the Apostle Peter was a Christian?

**Manichaean.** I know what you’re going to say: that he was married. But after becoming an apostle he lived with his wife as brother and sister.

**Orthodox.** Yes, but he did not have to. The Apostle Paul wrote with some irony: “We do not have authority to lead about a wife who is a sister in the Lord, as also the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas, do we?” (I Corinthians 9.5). The irony in his words indicated that he, though an apostle carrying out the highest ministry in the Church of Christ, was of
not forbidden to have a wife; it was not incompatible with his grace-filled ministry of the New Testament. True, he did not in fact take a wife; for “all things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient” (I Corinthians 6.12; cf. 10.23). But he could have – and there is no indication whatsoever that for St. Paul, who polemicised more than any apostle with those who would confuse the grace of the New Testament with the law of the Old, the married state was incompatible with the life of grace.

**Manichaean.** There are many things which were good in Old Testament times, but which have been superseded in the New: circumcision, sabbaths…

**Orthodox.** And marriage?

**Manichaean.** Marriage has not been superseded, of course, but it is an Old Testament sacrament, as it were, and appropriate only for those living under the law. For those living in the grace of the New Testament it is sinful.

**Orthodox.** But this is the heresy of Manichaeism. And Manichaeism is specifically declared by St. John Chrysostom to have been the target of St. Paul’s prophecy: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (I Timothy 4.1-4).

Manichaeism and its related teachings are demonic, explains St. John, because they condemn as evil those things, such as marriage and certain foods, which are not evil in themselves, but only if taken in excess. For “good things are created to be received... But if it is good, why is it ‘sanctified by the word of God and prayers’? For it must be unclean, if it is to be sanctified? Not so, here he is speaking to those who thought that some of these things were common; therefore he lays down two positions: first, that no creature of God is unclean; and secondly, that if it has become so, you have a remedy: seal it [with the sign of the cross], give thanks, and glorify God, and all the uncleanness passes away.”

**Manichaean.** I hope you are not accusing me of heresy!

**Orthodox.** Not if you accept the Orthodox teaching on marriage …But let me ask: what, according to you, is the purpose of marriage?

**Manichaean.** The aim of Christian marriage is to cure us of the desire to live the married life.

**Orthodox.** A most paradoxical aim! Please explain.

**Manichaean.** With pleasure, and you mark my words carefully… I have said, following the apostle, that the ideal is virginity, abstinence. But if (for the time being) a Christian cannot (or will not) abstain, then he must necessarily, as a kind of penance, bear the burden of bearing and bringing up many children. But if he does not want to have children, he must abstain from marital relations. There is simply no other way. If a man does not want children, but does want to have marital relations, then this is simply fornication, albeit in marriage –

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“fornication under a crown”, as my much-esteemed friend, the patrologist Fr. G., has put it. Such a position has simply no relation whatsoever to Christian marriage. Then various devices arise with the aim of preventing the birth of children, “a planned family”, and similar things which God hates.

**Orthodox.** Well, I can assure you that I do want children, and will do nothing to prevent them appearing.

**Manichaean.** I am very glad to hear it.

**Orthodox.** So do I qualify as a New Testament Christian?

**Manichaean.** If you live with your wife as brother and sister.

**Orthodox.** But how can I do that and still have children?!

**Manichaean.** [laughs] Yes, that is a problem…

**Orthodox.** You may laugh, but I can assure you it is no joking matter for me! You make it sound as if normal married life is incompatible with the grace of the New Testament and therefore with salvation itself!

**Manichaean.** The problem, my dear friend, is that while your desire to have children is quite unobjectionable, there is no way in which you can fulfil that desire without indulging the lusts of the flesh. And that is sinful.

**Orthodox.** Tell me, Father: do you think that God would ever command us to do something sinful?

**Manichaean.** No.

**Orthodox.** Well, then, please explain to me the following story. In the Life of the English Orthodox saint, Wulfhilda of Barking (+c. 1000), we read that for eighteen years before the conception of Wulfhilda, her pious parents, who had already had several children, had been living as brother and sister so as to give themselves up more completely to prayer and fasting. “One night, however, an angel appeared to each of them separately three times, and told them that they should come together so as to beget a daughter who would become a bride of Christ. The next morning they told each other the vision, and discovered that it had been identical for the two of them. So they accepted it as having come from God. Thus was the saint conceived and born…”

Here, according to your schema, it turns out that two people living the New Testament life of grace return to the Old Testament life of the law. Although the aim of the spouses was the begetting of a child, they returned to “marital satisfaction”, that is, according to you, to the sinful satisfaction of the passion of lust, albeit to a limited degree. But would God ever call anyone to satisfy a sinful lust? Or to return from the life of grace to the life of the law? Of course not! The only conclusion must be, therefore, that sexual relations in a Christian marriage in no way impede the life of grace.

**Manichaean.** I believe that in this case God practised “economy” for the sake of the birth of a holy soul.

**Orthodox.** What do you mean by “economy” here?…

**Manichaean.** [pause] Permission to sin for the sake of the greater good.

**Orthodox.** So something like the Jesuit precept so beloved of the Marxists that “the end justifies the means”?

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Manichaean, [pause] Er...
Orthodox. Well, while you’re thinking about the answer to that question, let us consider an episode from the *Life* of perhaps the greatest woman saint of the West, the fifth-century St. Brigit of Ireland: “A certain man of Kells... whom his wife hated, came to Brigit for help. Brigit blessed some water. He took it with him and, his wife having been sprinkled [therewith], she straightway loved him passionately.”

Again, from the *Life* of St. Columba, Apostle of Scotland (+597): “Another time, when the saint was living on the Rechrena island, a certain man of humble birth came to him and complained of his wife, who, as he said, so hated him, that she would on no account allow him to come near her for marriage rights. The saint on hearing this, sent for the wife, and, so far as he could, began to reprove her on that account, saying: ‘Why, O woman, dost thou endeavour to withdraw thy flesh from thyself, while the Lord says, ‘They shall be two in one flesh’? Wherefore the flesh of thy husband is they flesh.’ She answered and said, ‘Whatever thou shalt require of me I am ready to do, however hard it may be, with this single exception, that thou dost not urge me in any way to sleep in one bed with Lugne. I do not refuse to perform every duty at home, or, if thou dost command me, even to pass over the seas, or to live in some monastery for women.’ The saint then said, ‘What thou dost propose cannot lawfully be done, for thou art bound by the law of the husband as long as thy husband liveth, for it would be impious to separate those whom God has lawfully joined together.’ Immediately after these words he added: ‘This day let us three, namely, the husband and his wife and myself, join in prayer to the Lord and in fasting.’ But the woman replied: ‘I know it is not impossible for thee to obtain from God, when thou askest them, those things that seem to us either difficult, or even impossible.’ It is unnecessary to say more. The husband and wife agreed to fast with the saint that day, and the following night the saint spent sleepless in prayer for them. Next day he thus addressed the wife in presence of her husband, and said to her: ‘O woman, art thou still ready today, as thou saidst yesterday, to go away to a convent of women?’ ‘I know now,’ she answered, ‘that thy prayer to God for me hath been heard; for that man whom I hated yesterday, I love today; for my heart hath been changed last night in some unknown way – from hatred to love.’ Why need we linger over it? From that day to the hour of death, the soul of the wife was firmly cemented in affection to her husband, so that she no longer refused those mutual matrimonial rights which she was formerly unwilling to allow.”

Manichaean. You make the saints sound like sex-therapists!
Orthodox. Love-therapists, perhaps, not sex-therapists.
Manichaean. I am very suspicious of your examples from the lives of little-known British and Irish saints. I insist on a return to the Holy Scriptures and the Eastern Fathers of the Holy Orthodox Church!

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269 Bethu Brigte, edited by Donncha O hAodha, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978, 45, p. 32.
Orthodox. Well, I do not object, so long as you accept that the lives of the
Western Fathers of the Orthodox Church, who died many centuries before the
West fell into heresy, are also part of Holy Tradition... So let us return to the
Holy Scriptures. For example: “If you marry you do not sin” (I Corinthians
7.28), and “marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled” (Hebrews
13.4).

Manichaean. I think that the apostle meant only that the marriage bed is not
adultery or fornication.

Orthodox. The Fathers are more positive than you. In his commentary on this
passage, St. John Chrysostom writes: “Marriage is pure”.\(^{271}\) Again, Blessed
Theophylact comments on the same verse: “By ‘in all’ he means ‘in every
way’ and ‘in every season’”.\(^{272}\)

Manichaean. The apostle knew that the majority of people would not be able
to accept the ideal of virginity. And since marriage is better than fornication,
he wanted to encourage marriage in the weaker brethren.

Orthodox. I see... So marriage is the legal permission to sin in a small way in
order to avoid sinning in a big way!

Manichaean. Yes, though I wouldn’t have put it so crudely...

Orthodox. Crude or not, that is what you believe. And if you are right, then
the Orthodox Church is wrong to treat marriage as a holy sacrament, and
hypocritical in its prayers for the married couple, since there is no trace in
them of the idea that they are in any way sinning.

Manichaean. Fr. G. says that marriage is a sacrament in the way that the
sacrament of confession is a sacrament. The Church in the sacrament of
confession does not bless further sin, but by means of this sacrament helps the
restoration of the unity of the person with the Body of Christ that has been
violated by sin. The meaning of crowning is analogous: it forgives the sin of
sensual pleasure that is inevitably incurred in marriage.

Orthodox. Fr. G. is a very original theologian! Too original, I’m afraid. The
sacrament of confession absolves sin after it has been committed, not before,
and only on condition that a firm resolve is made not to repeat the sin. The
sacrament of marriage, on the other hand, neither speaks of any sin in
marriage, nor, a fortiori, absolves one from it. If Fr. Gregory were right, then it
would be necessary for the married couple to seek forgiveness from God
every time they made love, and every such act would have to be considered,
not as an expression of the bond created in marriage, but as a violation of it!

Manichaean. You know, several of the Fathers – for example, Blessed
Augustine in *The Good of Marriage*, - indicated that the pleasure of intimate
relations in marriage is sinful, but is “covered”, as it were, by the good
intention of bearing children.

Orthodox. [smiles] I thought you didn’t want to return to the Western
Fathers...

Manichaean. Blessed Augustine is a Father well-known in the East.

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\(^{272}\) Blessed Theophylact, P.G. 125:756B (col. 389).
Orthodox. And one who, as St. Photius the Great testified, did not in all respects reflect the Tradition of the Eastern Church. Much as I respect Blessed Augustine, I do not believe that he was expressing the consensus of the Fathers on this point. He was, after all, a Manichaean in his youth, and traces of that doctrine may have persisted in him, tempting him not to accept the words of the apostle on the purity of the marriage bed in their full simplicity. St. John Chrysostom, as we have seen, had a different point of view.

Manichaean. Alright then, leaving aside the question of the sinfulness or otherwise of the sexual act, can you deny that it has no value except in the producing of children?

Orthodox. I do deny that, and consider it to be a typically Latin idea. The Latins, - not the Celtic saints whose lives I quoted earlier, but those who fell into the heresy of Papism - followed Augustine’s thought to its logical conclusion and ceased to treat marriage as a sacrament. According to Roman Catholic theology, marriage is a contract performed, not by God through the priest, but by the couple themselves. The fruits of this sombre, non-sacramental view of marriage have been unequivocally bad. Thus the idea that a married couple can achieve sexual stability while believing that the very means to this end, marital relations, is inherently sinful, has led, directly or indirectly, to a large proportion of the heresies and perversions that have bedevilled the history of Western Christianity: the enforced celibacy of Catholic priests, the "immaculate conception" of the Virgin by her parents Joachim and Anna, the profoundly adulterous "chastity" of the troubadors, the definitely sensual "mysticism" of Teresa of Avila and other Latin "saints", the ban on all marriage by the Shakers and other Protestant sects, the sexual hypocrisy of the Victorians, and, as a long-delayed and therefore enormously exaggerated reaction to all this blasphemy against the goodness of God’s original creation, the general permissiveness towards almost all kinds of truly sinful acts in the twentieth century.

Manichaean. So what, according to you, is the positive value of sexual relations in marriage apart from the procreation of children?

Orthodox. Its value, apart from the procreation of children and the gradual quenching of the passion of lust, lies in the fact that it is the natural expression of the love between the husband and wife. A certain Orthodox Christian put it rather well: “Physical relations may be elicited by lust, but they may [also] be elicited by love. The spouses enter into physical relations not with the aim of removing over-excitement and quenching the ragings of the flesh, but because they love each other, because they are striving for unity. The unity which marital relations gives to the spouses is not comparable with unity in the Body of Christ, but it is an image of it and is accepted into the Church. The aim of marriage is to lessen the element of lust in physical relations and increase the element of love.”273 And again: “The unity of spouses, on being accepted into the Church is liberated in the Church from its limitedness. Love for one’s spouse becomes a school of love for all.”

Manichaean. Are you saying that it is possible for there to be no lust in the sexual act?
Orthodox. In practice, because of our fallen state, it is almost impossible to clearly separate the elements of love and lust in the sexual act, just as it is almost impossible to separate greed from restoration of the organism in the act of eating, or sinful anger from righteous anger in the disciplining of children and subordinates. Absolute purity is unattainable in our fallen state in any significant action, and not only in marital relations. The important thing is that the dominant motive in any particular act should be pure.

Manichaean. If love were the dominant motive in marriage, then the spouses would not enter into sexual relations.

Orthodox. So if I understand you rightly, you believe that love cannot be the motive for entering into sexual relations, but only lust?

Manichaean. That’s right.

Orthodox. That’s what I was afraid of... I, however, believe, with the Orthodox Christian quoted above, that “the motive for entering into sexual relations may be both lust, that is, the egocentric desire to satisfy the whim of one’s flesh with the help of a partner, and love for one’s spouse, the desire for both spiritual and bodily union with him or her”.

In fact, I believe that love must be the main motive for entering into sexual relations. I do not exclude the desire for children or the desire to avoid fornication as secondary motives. But neither of these secondary motives can or should be pursued without love or outside the context of the sexual act as an expression of love. Without love, the other person in sexual relations is not an end in him or herself, but purely an instrument for attaining some other goal. And that, in my view, is immoral.

Manichaean. Alright, as regards high-sounding abstract principles and general contexts I agree. However, when we come down to concrete actions, and in particular to the sexual act itself, then you must admit: here we are simply talking about animality. It is not love, but naked, fallen passion, pure lust.

Orthodox. Just that? Are you sure? All lust and no love?

Manichaean. If there is any love, then it is overwhelmed by lust at the climax of the act.

Orthodox. I think you are wrong about that. I think that the quality of sexual relations between couples is as varied as the quality of the couples themselves. In the one couple, lust can indeed dominate to such an extent that each is simply using the other as a vehicle for sensual indulgence – or some other passion (most rapes, as is well-known, are in fact expressions of hatred, not love or lust). But in others, sexual feeling is transmuted into tenderness, in which the lover strives above all to give, and not to take, to show love, not to receive pleasure. Thus Tobias on his wedding-night specifically denied that his feeling for his wife was lust: "Thou madest Adam, and gavest him Eve as his wife for an helper and stay of them came mankind: Thou hast said, It is..."
not good that man should be alone; let us make unto him an aid like unto
himself. And now, O Lord, I take not this my sister for lust, but uprightly:
therefore mercifully ordain that we may become aged together..." (Tobit 8.6-7).

Sex can be animality – when human beings choose to live like animals. But
sex can also – in very closely defined circumstances (lawful, Christian
marriage between spouses who truly love each other) – be the expression of
love. Sexuality within the one-flesh relationship of marriage is not simply a
means to another end, procreation (although it is that), and not simply a
concession to weakness (although it is that, too), but the completely natural
and lawful expression of that relationship of unity as such.

**Manichaean.** You speak about love and unity. And yet is not love and unity
attainable without physical relations? Is not the love and unity of the Church
a non-physical unity? And is not this, as you have just admitted, higher than
the love and unity of a married couple?

**Orthodox.** Of course. But there is a physical element in the love and unity of
the Church – the participation of all members of the Church in the Body and
Blood of Christ.

**Manichaean.** But there is no physical pleasure in the relations between
members of the Church (outside marriage), nor, of course, in the reception of
the sacraments.

**Orthodox.** I think that the presence of absence of pleasure is irrelevant to our
discussion. Love is good, and lust is evil. But pleasure is neither good nor evil
as such. Everything depends on the context in which it is experienced, on the
motives and aims of the individual. There is spiritual pleasure, intellectual
pleasure, aesthetic pleasure, physical pleasure....

**Manichaean.** I could accept that there was no sin in sexual relations if there
was no pleasure in them either.

**Orthodox.** So pleasure is sin, and even the essence of sin, according to you!
And the only truly happy – i.e. sinless – marriage is that in which there is no
pleasure at all!

**Manichaean.** Well, you must remember that, according to St. Maximus the
Confessor, pleasure and pain were introduced into the world as a result of the
fall.

**Orthodox.** But that is not the same as to say that pleasure - or pain, of course -
is necessarily sinful. Thus St. Photius the Great explicitly states that sexual
pleasure in marriage is “lawful”, while at the same time explaining why there
could be no pleasure (or pain) at the conception and nativity of Christ: "It was
needful that a mother should be prepared down below for the Creator, for the
recreation of shattered humanity, and she a virgin, in order that, just as the
first man had been formed of virgin earth, so the re-creation, too, should be
carried out through a virgin womb, and that no transitory pleasure, even
lawful, should be so much as imagined in the Creator's birth: since a captive
of pleasure was he, for whose deliverance the Lord suffered to be born."\(^{275}\)

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Again, St. John of Damascus divides pleasures into three categories: (1) natural and necessary, (2) natural and unnecessary, and (3) unnatural and unnecessary. “Some pleasures are true, others false. And the exclusively intellectual pleasures consist in knowledge and contemplation, while the pleasures of the body depend upon sensation. Further, of bodily pleasures, some are both natural and necessary, in the absence of which life is impossible, for example the pleasures of food which replenishes waste, and the pleasures of necessary clothing. Others are natural but not necessary, as the pleasures of natural and lawful intercourse (Greek: αἱ κατὰ φυσιν καὶ κατὰ νόμον μιξίς). For though the function that these perform is to secure the permanence of the race as a whole, it is still possible to live a virgin life apart from them. Others, however, are neither natural nor necessary, such as drunkenness, lust (λαγνεία) and surfeiting to excess. For these contribute neither to the maintenance of our own lives nor to the succession of the race, but on the contrary, are rather even a hindrance. He therefore that would live a life acceptable to God must follow after those pleasures which are both natural and necessary: and must give a secondary place to those which are natural but not necessary, and enjoy them only in fitting season, and manner, and measure; while the others must be altogether renounced. Those then are to be considered good (καλὲς) pleasures which are not bound up with pain, and bring no cause for repentance, and result in no other harm and keep within the bounds of moderation, and do not draw us far away from serious occupations, nor make slaves of us.”²⁷⁶ Important here is the last phrase: “making slaves of us”. Almost all the Holy Fathers agree that pleasure in itself is not sinful, although the vicious cycle of human enslavement to pleasure, leading to pain and death, is undoubtedly sinful. Sin consists rather in the enslavement to pleasure than in pleasure itself. As the apostle says: “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything” (I Corinthians 6.12).  

**Manichaean.** Alright, I agree. But you have to agree: the less you indulge in pleasure the less you are enslaved to it.  

**Orthodox.** In general, yes; for our faith is an ascetic faith in which self-denial is the norm. Nevertheless, we must never confuse ends with means: the end is spiritual freedom, and one of the means to that end is self-denial. But absence of pleasure is neither good nor evil in itself, and cannot be considered to be a criterion of spirituality. For, as Bishop Theophan the Recluse writes: “No matter how spiritual someone is, he cannot help but give the intellectual and carnal their rightful sphere; he maintains just a little of them, in subordination to the spirit. Let intellectualis be not too broad (in scientific knowledge, arts and other subjects), and let carnality be firmly restrained – then he is a real, whole person.”²⁷⁷  

For, as New Hieromartyr John (Steblin-Kamensky) writes, “the Christian is not a stranger to earthly joys. On the contrary, he appreciates them to a much higher degree than the unbeliever, because he believes that they have been given to him not by chance, and the joy of this or that experience of event in

life is united in him with the spiritual experience of boundless gratitude to the One Who knows all our needs. The Christian is not a stranger to earthly joys, but does not make them the aim of his life; he does not fight against his neighbour for their sake, and does not seek them. Therefore he receives them ‘pure’, and they do not darken his spirit.”

Also, much depends on the individual here: a measure of indulgence that is harmful for one person may cause no harm to another. It is right sometimes to indulge in some innocent pleasure, for example, on church feast-days, when fasting is forbidden and a measure of pleasure for the body contributes to the joy in the soul, in accordance with the word: “wine maketh glad the heart of man” (Psalm 103.16).

Manichaean. But this is just a concession to weakness. Some of the hermits fasted all year round.

Orthodox. St. Antony the Great said that even ascetics have to relax at times.

Manichaean. But relaxation for the hermits did not go as far as marrying.

Orthodox. Of course not! But neither do the Orthodox hermits abhor marriage in the way you do. Indeed, the canons of the Council of Gangra anathematise those who abhor marriage.

Manichaean. I have my private opinion about the Council of Gangra. The conciliar canons are a juridical document, and so it is always dangerous to allow too much leeway for their interpretation. From the literal meaning of the canons one could form the impression that marriage and virginity were equal in honour.

Orthodox. Private opinions which contradict the mind of the Church should not be expressed in public. The Church accepts the Canons of the Council of Gangra; evidently you do not. In any case, we do not need the witness of hermits and councils when we have the unambiguous witness of the highest authority of all. The Lord Jesus Christ, Who is perfect man and perfect God, came to the marriage in Cana of Galilee and turned the water in to wine. He actually increased the pleasure and the joy of the wedding-feast. Was He wrong?

Manichaean. No, of course not, but….

Orthodox. Not only was He not wrong, but He demonstrated thereby a most important truth about marriage: that He came, not to deny the pleasures and joys of marriage, but to infuse them with the “sober intoxication” of the Holy Spirit, as St. Gaudentius of Brescia points out. For the gift of the Holy Spirit that is given in the sacrament of Christian marriage both purifies the pleasure and elevates the joy of the married couple. Thus the priest in the marriage service prays that they should have “concord of soul and of body. Exalt them like the cedars of Lebanon, exalt them like a luxurious vine. Give them seed in number like unto the full ears of grain; that having sufficiency in all things,
they may abound in every good work which is well-pleasing unto thee. And let them behold their children’s children, like a newly-planted olive-orchard round about their table…”

So I repeat: Love is good, and lust is evil. But pleasure is neither good nor evil as such. Do you agree?

**Manichaean.** Yes, I agree.

**Orthodox.** So with your permission I would like to return to what I consider to be the more important theme, the theme of love and unity, and to the analogy between the love and unity that reigns in the Church and the love and unity that reigns in the “little church”, as St. John Chrysostom calls it, of the Christian marriage.²⁸⁰

A married couple form one unit through their spiritual and physical relationship sanctified by the grace of God. This unit then enters into the wider and deeper unity of the Church, which wider unity is both the foundation and the seal of their married unity. It is the foundation, because true unity in marriage is impossible without unity in Christ, which is why the canon law of the Church allows only Orthodox spouses to be married in the Orthodox Church. And it is the seal, because without the grace of constant participation in Christ their own union would fall apart, which is why marriage in the early Church formed part of the Divine Liturgy, at which both spouses communicated of the Body and Blood of Christ.

**Manichaean.** I need to see patristic authority for this view of yours.

**Orthodox.** And you shall have it. St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "Christ, having taken as an example and image of that indivisible love, accord and unity which is conceivable only in unanimity, the unity of essence which the Father has with Him and which He, in turn, has with the Father, desires that we too should unite with each other; evidently in the same way as the Consubstantial, Holy Trinity is united so that the whole body of the Church is conceived as one, ascending in Christ through the fusion and union of two peoples into the composition of the new perfect whole. The image of Divine unity and the consubstantial nature of the Holy Trinity as a most perfect interpenetration must be reflected in the unity of the believers who are of one heart and mind" - and body, he adds, for this "natural unity" is "perhaps not without bodily unity".²⁸¹

**Manichaean.** Still, it seems to me that you exaggerate the element of physical union in marriage, as if it was that, and not spiritual union, that constituted marriage.

**Orthodox.** But it is precisely the physical union that constitutes marriage. Did not the Lord Himself define marriage in this way, saying that “they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Matthew 19.6)? And that is why the only reason He allows for divorce is adultery (Matthew 5.32); for it is precisely adultery which destroys the “one-flesh” relationship through the joining of the flesh of one of the spouses to a third person. Very apt in this connection are the words

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²⁸⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*.
of holy New Hieromartyr Gregory (Lebedev), Bishop of Schlusselburg: “‘And they two shall be one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh’ (Matthew 19.6), that is, the people have ceased to exist separately even in the physical sense. They have become one physical body, ‘one flesh’. That is what the fulfilment of the will of God has done... It has not only completed and broadened their souls in a mutual intermingling, it has changed their physical nature and out of two physical existences it has made one whole existence. That is the mystery of marriage”\(^{282}\) Thus marriage is not primarily procreation, but creation; it creates an ontological change in the persons being married: they are no longer two, but one flesh. And this change has “completed and broadened their souls”.

**Manichaean.** I don’t find anything about “completing and broadening their souls” in the Holy Scriptures. This is sentimental rubbish. The Fathers talk only about the procreation of children and the prevention of fornication.

**Orthodox.** That is not true. Read Ephesians 5, the reading from the apostle appointed by the Church for the marriage service, in which the main emphasis is precisely on love - which love is the essential condition for the fulfilling and broadening of our souls. And please be careful about dismissing the words of a bishop-martyr as “sentimental rubbish”...

**Manichaean.** Alright. The only thing I insist on is that an element of lust is inescapable in sexual relations.

**Orthodox.** And the only thing I insist on is that when we speak about the love between a husband and wife this is not a euphemism for lust, but is indeed love, and not something else. As the love-stories of every nation testify, for the sake of his beloved a genuine lover is prepared to suffer any privation. This love is genuinely self-sacrificial and therefore it is genuinely love, not lust, even if it contains a physical element. In the Holy Scriptures God very often compares himself to a bridegroom (Hosea 2.19-20; Song of Songs; Isaiah 54.5, 61.10, 62.5; Ezekiel 16.8; Matthew 22.1-14, 25.1-13; John 3.29; Eph. 5.32; II Corinthians 11.2; Revelation 19.7, 21.2). For, far from sexual love sanctified by the grace of Christian marriage being the opposite of true love, it is in fact the closest image on earth of God’s love for man and of man’s love for God.

### 2. Adam and Eve

**Manichaean.** Alright. But I think we can approach this question from a different point of view, the point of view of the original creation. Now if I can prove to you that Adam and Eve had no sexual relations in Paradise, will you agree that sexual relations belong exclusively to the fall?

**Orthodox.** Let me see your proof first.

**Manichaean.** The Holy Fathers make it clear that sexual relations came only after the fall, and were a product of the fall. Thus St. Gregory of Nyssa writes that the differences between man and woman were created by God in prevision of the fall. And St. John of the Ladder writes: “If he [Adam] had not

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been overcome by his stomach, he would not have known what a wife was”.

**Orthodox.** There are two questions here. First, the nature and purpose of the differentiation of the sexes. And secondly, the nature of our first parents’ sexual relationship, if any such existed, before the fall.

I would agree that there were no sexual relations as we know them in Paradise. But I do not accept that there was no sexuality of any kind there. Men and women were created from the beginning, before the fall, with a natural, unfallen need for each other.

**Manichaean.** What is your evidence for that statement?

**Orthodox.** The Holy Scriptures. God said: “it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper like unto him” (Genesis 2.18). In other words, Adam, though sinless and unfallen, was nevertheless incomplete on his own. Nor was this incompleteness due simply to a lack of rational (non-animal) company, otherwise God could simply have sent him an angel, or another man, to supply his lack. No: Adam needed a companion who would help him, and who would be like him without being too similar to him.

**Manichaean.** It is obvious that Eve was created in order to help Adam in the procreation of children.

**Orthodox.** I don’t think that was the only reason. And there is no hint of that at this stage in the Biblical discourse. In any case, procreation could have been through a process of sexless cloning, or, as St. Gregory of Nyssa suggests, in the same manner as the angels multiplied, rather than sexual reproduction. No: Adam needed a deeper kind of help, a help linked, not to his incapacity to reproduce on his own, but to some incompleteness in his inner nature. He needed not a physical mate, but a soulmate.

This is confirmed by St. John Chrysostom, who writes: “How great the power of God, the master craftsman, making a likeness of those limbs from that tiny part [the rib of Adam], creating such wonderful senses and preparing a creature complete, entire and perfect, capable both of speaking and of providing much comfort to man by a sharing of her being. For it was for the consolation of this man that this woman was created. Hence Paul also said, ‘Man was not created for the woman, but woman for the man’ (I Corinthians 11.9).”

Again, the holy new Martyr-Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow writes: "Without a helpmate the very bliss of paradise was not perfect for Adam: endowed with the gift of thought, speech, and love, the first man seeks with his thought another thinking being; his speech sounds lonely and the dead echo alone answers him; his heart, full of love, seeks another heart that would be close and equal to him; all his being longs for another being analogous to him, but there is none; the creatures of the visible world around him are below him and are not fit to be his mates; and as to the beings of the invisible spiritual world they are above. Then the bountiful God, anxious for the happiness of

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man, satisfies his wants and creates a mate for him - a wife. But if a mate was necessary for man in paradise, in the region of bliss, the mate became much more necessary for him after the fall, in the vale of tears and sorrow. The wise man of antiquity spoke justly: 'two are better than one, for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up' (Ecclesiastes 4.9-10). But few people are capable of enduring the strain of moral loneliness, it can be accomplished only by effort, and truly 'all men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given' (Matthew 19.11), and as for the rest - 'it is not good for a man to be alone', without a mate.  

**Manichaean.** But monks and nuns live as monads even while contending with a fallen nature that Adam did not have.  

**Orthodox.** This is indeed a paradox: that Adam, though unfallen, needed a mate, whereas fallen monks and nuns can do without one. But this indicates, not the illusoriness of Adam’s need (for the Word of God is quite specific about it), but rather the supernatural, charismatic quality of virginity. For virginity is a gift of God that carries human nature, not only above the fallen state, but even higher than the original, unfallen state of Adam in Paradise. So great is this gift that it is revealed only in very few of the righteous of the Old Testament (the Prophets Elijah and Jeremiah, St. John the Baptist), and is revealed in its full glory only in the New Testament.  

**Manichaean.** Alright. But I want you to specify more clearly what you mean by this “need” that Adam had for Eve. Surely you don’t mean a sexual need?! The need for sex is fallen.  

**Orthodox.** There is a difference between fallen need and unfallen need. Fallen need tyrannises; unfallen need does not tyrannise, and should therefore properly not be called “need” (for that implies a certain compulsion), but “attraction” or “appetite”. Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria writes of Adam’s body before the fall: "It had indeed innate appetites, appetites for food and procreation, but his mind was not tyrannised by these tendencies."  

**Manichaean.** This is a new idea to me! And I need more than one patristic testimony to believe it! You make it sound as if Adam was fallen before the fall!  

**Orthodox.** Perhaps you have a wrong idea about what is fallen… Here’s another patristic testimony. St. Gregory Palamas writes that “the natural motions related to the begetting of children can be detected in infants that are still at the breast… The passions to which it [carnal desire] give birth belong to us by nature; and natural things are not indictable; for they were created by God Who is good, so that through them we can act in ways that are also good. Hence in themselves they do not indicate sickness of soul, but they become evidence of such sickness when we misuse them.”  

Are you satisfied?  

**Manichaean.** Conditionally. Go on.

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287 St. Cyril, Against Julian, 3, P.G. 76, 637.  
288 St. Gregory Palamas, To Xenia, 41; The Philokalia, vol. IV, p. 309.
Orthodox. There can be no doubt that the closeness of Adam and Eve in Paradise had certain forms of expression more perfect than what we now recognise as the sexual act. It was expressed primarily on the psychological level, but there is no reason to suppose that there was not also a physical element in it.

Manichaean. I hope you are not talking about sexual union!

Orthodox. No. I have already agreed that there were no sexual relations as we know them between Adam and Eve in Paradise. However, they were of one flesh. Thus "the Lord God brought a deep sleep (Greek: ἐκκατασία, literally “ecstasy”) on Adam; and while he was asleep, he took one of his ribs, and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man" (Genesis 2.21-22). The great Serbian Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes about this event: “This is the foundation of, and the reason for, the mysterious and attraction and union between man and woman” — a foundation laid, it should be noted once more, already in Paradise.

Manichaean. I don’t see how Velimirovich can draw this conclusion.

Orthodox. The conclusion is justified because the account of the creation of Eve from the flesh of Adam is linked directly, by the word “therefore”, with the following passage, which is the “foundation charter”, as it were, for the sacrament of marriage: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one” (2.24). These words, whose authority was confirmed by Christ Himself (Matthew 19.6), as well as by the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 5.31), make clear that the physical union of man and woman was in the original plan of God for mankind; for there can be no other interpretation of the word “cleave” (or “cling”). And yet this law of physical attraction and union is described by St. Paul as “a great mystery” (Ephesians 5.31).

Manichaean. I think it is a mistake to consider that the law of the physical and attraction of man and woman is “a great mystery”. St. Paul was talking about the union between Christ and the Church, which is a virginal union.

Orthodox. The union between Christ and the Church, like the union between Adam and Eve in Paradise, is both virginal and one-flesh, the flesh being that of Christ Himself, which He took from the Virgin and then gives to all believers in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Moreover, it is clear that St. Paul was identifying the two mysteries – that of human marriage, and that of the union between Christ and the Church.

Or perhaps we can put it another way: the mystery of human marriage is an icon of the mystery of the marriage between Christ and the Church. And the lower mystery derives its holiness from the higher mystery, just as an icon derives its holiness from its archetype. Thus the marriage of male and female is a great mystery because it was created to symbolise a still greater mystery, the mystery of the union of Christ and the Church. And this is the explanation


290 St. John Chrysostom, Homily 20 on Ephesians.
for the phenomenon of sexual differentiation, attraction and union (which, by the way, is a major problem for evolutionary biology). God planted sexuality in the midst of His creation so that men, by pondering on this lower mystery, should by analogy come to a deeper understanding of the higher mystery of God’s love for mankind and His union with man in the Incarnation.

But even in its own terms sexual love leading to marriage is a great mystery. For, as St. John Chrysostom writes, “the girl who has always been kept at home and has never seen the bridegroom, from the first day loves and cherishes him as her own body. Again, the husband, who has never seen her, never shared even the fellowship of speech with her, from the first day prefers her to everyone, to his friends, his relatives, even his parents. The parents in turn, if they are deprived of their money for another reason, will complain, grieve, and take the perpetrators to court. Yet they entrust to a man, whom often they have never even seen before..., both their own daughter and a large sum as dowry. They rejoice as they do this and they do not consider it a loss. As they see their daughter led away, they do not bring to mind their closeness, they do not grieve or complain, but instead they give thanks. They consider it an answer to their prayers when they see their daughter led away from their home taking a large sum of money with her. Paul had all this in mind: how the couple leave their parents and bind themselves to each other, and how the new relationship becomes more powerful than the long-established familiarity. He saw that this was not a human accomplishment. It is God Who sows these loves in men and women. He caused both those who give in marriage and those who are married to do this with joy. Therefore Paul said, ‘This is a great mystery’."

Manichaean. I think you should be more careful about comparing heavenly things with earthly things. It is only by the greatest economy that God allows sinful human relationships to be images of heavenly mysteries.

Orthodox. Call it “economy” if you like. But the fact remains, and the Holy Fathers confirm the fact. Thus another aspect of this mystery is that from the union of the two a third is brought into being. One divides into two, then the two reunite to form, not one only, and not three only, but three-in-one! As St. John Chrysostom writes: “A man leaves his parents, who gave him life, and is joined to his wife, and one flesh – father, mother, and child – results from the commingling of the two. The child is born from the union of their seed, so the three become one flesh.” And again, still more clearly: “They come to be made into one body. See the mystery of love! If the two do not become one, they cannot increase; they can increase only by decreasing! How great is the strength of unity! God’s ingenuity in the beginning divided one flesh into two; but he wanted to show that it remained one even after its division, so He made it impossible for either half to procreate without the other. Now do you see how great a mystery marriage is! From one man, Adam, He made Eve,
then He reunited these two into one, so that their children would be produced from a single source. Likewise, husband and wife are not two, but one; if he is the head and she is the body, how can they be two? She was made from his side; so they are two halves of one organism. God calls her a ‘helper’ to demonstrate their unity, and He honors the unity of husband and wife above that of child and parents. A father rejoices to see his son or daughter marry; it is as if his child’s body is becoming complete. Even though he spends so much money for his daughter’s wedding, he would rather do that than see her remain unmarried, since then she would seem to be deprived of her own flesh. We are not sufficient unto ourselves in this life. How do they become one flesh? As if she were gold receiving the purest of gold, the woman receives the man’s seed with rich pleasure, and within her it is nourished, cherished, and refined. It is mingled with her own substance and she then returns it as a child! The child is a bridge connecting mother to father, so the three become one flesh… That is why the Scripture does not say, ‘They shall be one flesh’, but that they shall be joined together ‘into one flesh’, namely the child. But supposing there is no child, do they then remain two and not one? No, their intercourse effects the joining of their bodies and they are made one, just as when perfume is mixed with ointment.”

Thus the mystery of the union of man and woman in marriage, which reflects the union of God and man in the God-man, gives birth to the mystery of the union of father, mother and child in the family, which in turn reflects the Holy Trinity-in-Unity of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Both mysteries may be said to be aspects of the image of God in man. For the image is imprinted not only on man and woman as individuals, but also on their union with each other, and on the whole family of men they were called to create through this union. Thus St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: “Adam, not having a created cause and being unbegotten, is an example and image of the uncaused God the Father, the Almighty and Cause of all things; while Eve, who proceeded from Adam (but is not born from him) signifies the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit proceeding.”

And St. Anastasius of Sinai writes: “Adam is the type and image of the Unoriginate Almighty God, the Cause of all; the son born of him manifests the image of the Begotten Son and Word of God; and Eve, who proceeded from Adam, signifies the proceeding Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit. This is why God did not breathe in her the breath of life: she was already the type of the breathing and life of the Holy Spirit.”

**Manichaean.** There you go again! Exalting earthly “love” far beyond its true worth!

**Orthodox.** The theology of the icon entails both a great distance between the icon and the archetype, and a great closeness. On the one hand, just as a
wooden icon and its archetype are of different natures, so the love between a husband and his wife and its archetype in the love between Christ and the Church are different in nature – as different as heaven is from the earth. On the other hand, just as the grace of the archetype is communicated to the icon because of the likeness between the two, according to the Seventh Council, so the grace of the love between Christ and the Church is communicated to those who are truly married in Christ, and who have been made partakers of His Divine nature (II Peter 1.4) in Baptism and Chrismation, and in His deified human nature in the Eucharist.

Thus the holiness of marriage between two believers in Christ follows, in a sense, from the holiness of the marriage between each believer with Christ. Of course, the “vertical” marriage of each believer with Christ is higher and infinitely more important. However, the “horizontal” marriage fits into the structure with no fissure or schism.

In this vision, while due preference is given to the supreme glory of virginity, no dishonour is given to the lesser glory of marriage, but both virgins and married people, both monads and dyads, are harmoniously integrated as shining and perfectly sculpted stones into the building of the Church, so that as one body they may be presented “as a bride prepared for her husband” (Revelation 21.2).

Manichaean. Nevertheless, I think we should have less mysticism and more realism. Instead of speculating about the relationship between Adam and Eve, and building vast, insubstantial clouds of “sexual metaphysics” on that basis, we should concentrate on the realities of our fallen condition.

Orthodox. In my opinion, it is impossible accurately to define the nature of our fall unless we first understand what we have fallen from. However, I am quite happy to turn to our fallen condition if you want. Where shall we start?

3. Fall and Resurrection

Manichaean. From the Holy Scriptures, and in particular from the verse: “In sins did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 50.7). This shows that even in lawful sexual relations there is an element of sin.

Orthodox. The Scriptures should always be interpreted in the light of the whole body of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Holy Fathers. Thus the best interpretation on this verse is provided by Job: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” (Job 14.4). And by St. John Chrysostom, who interprets this verse to refer to original sin, adding: “therefore he [David] does not condemn marriage, as some have thoughtlessly supposed”. Thus it is not a question of the sexual act being sinful in itself, but of it being the vehicle for the transmission of sinful human nature from generation to generation.

Manichaean. As a result of original sin, all our faculties are diseased and have become passionate. To submit to passion is sin. Therefore to submit to fallen sexual passion inside marriage, while less sinful than outside marriage, is still sin.

Orthodox. First, we have to be clear about the passions. There are two kinds of passion, according to the Holy Fathers: innocent and sinful. The Eastern Fathers make a distinction between “lawful” or “natural” and “unlawful” or “unnatural” pleasures and desires or passions. A natural passion is an impulse that is in accordance with nature as God originally created it; while a culpable passion is, in St. Maximus' words, "an impulse of the soul that is contrary to nature." Culpable passions feed on natural ones like parasites: the culpable passion of gluttony - on the natural passion to satisfy hunger, the culpable passion of indolence - on the natural desire to rest weary limbs, the culpable passion of lust - on the natural passion of sexual desire. Some culpable passions have no natural counterpart, like avarice, which St. John Chrysostom contrasts with sexual passion in this respect.

Manichaean. That is all very well, but the fact remains that since the fall all our faculties are fallen and passionate.

Orthodox. So we must never use any of our faculties?

Manichaean. I didn’t say that.

Orthodox. No, but it follows logically from what you are saying. I accept that our faculties are fallen, but I do not accept that every expression of our faculties is necessarily sinful. If that were so, then in order to avoid sin, we would have to stop thinking altogether, since the thinking faculty of our soul is fallen, and we would have to stop being angry in all circumstances, even against sin and heresy, since the incensive faculty of our soul is fallen, and we would have to abstain from all sexual activity, even in marriage, since our desiring faculty is fallen. But that would mean that we would have to become like logs, neither thinking nor feeling in any way. That is not Christianity, but Buddhism. Our faculties are not bad in themselves; they were created “very good”. It is the use we make of them which is bad. Thus St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: “The depraved sinner, though bereft of the Good by his brutish desire, is in this respect unreal and desires unrealities; but still he has a share in the Good insofar as there is in him a distorted reflection of true love and communion. And anger has a share in the Good insofar as it is a movement which seeks to remedy apparent evils, converting them to that which appears to be fair. And even he that desires the basest life, yet insofar as he feels desire at all and feels desire for life, and intends what he think the best kind of life, to that extent he participates in the Good. And if you wholly destroy the good, there will be neither being, life, desire, nor motion, or any other thing”.

Manichaean. But how can a fallen faculty bring forth unfallen fruits?

Orthodox. By being brought out from under the dominion of the devil, and being placed under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, Who can transform the fallen impulses of the soul, resurrecting them to their former, unfallen state. And this is done through prayer, fasting and good works, and especially by

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298 St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on Titus, V, 2.
the reception of the sacraments, whereby we receive a transfusion of grace, as it were. We must always remember, as Archbishop Theophan reminds us, that marriage is a sacrament which communicates grace.

Manichaean. But the Christian 

Orthodox. Fallen impulses must be crucified in order to rise again in a new and incorrupt form. By “crucifixion” here I do not mean complete “destruction”; for the source in our human nature from which these fallen impulses come cannot be destroyed, precisely because it is part of human nature. In any case, to destroy human nature is a kind of mutilation or castration, which is forbidden by the Church. Our human nature must not be destroyed, but transformed, redirected, resurrected. And then it can be used for the good, since then we are talking, not about fallen impulses, but about natural ones.

Manichaean. Nevertheless, the Fathers speak about a complete extirpation of the passions. This is what, for example, St. Maximus the Confessor says with regard to the eight principal passions. Only through extirpating the passions is passionlessness possible.

Orthodox. However, the same Holy Father uses the word “passion” in a different sense in other passages. Thus he speaks about the eight evil or unnatural passions as being a sickness of the two natural passions – desire and anger. Like the unnatural passions, the natural passions are “alogical”. But they are not “paralogical”, and can be “logicised” when they are led by the spirit towards the Logos, Christ, giving ardour and strength to man’s striving for God. Thus he writes: “Let our intelligence, then, be moved to seek God, let our desire be roused in longing for Him, and let our incensive power struggle to keep guard over our attachment to Him. Or, more precisely, let our whole intellect be directed towards God, tensed by our incensive power as if by some nerve, and fired with longing by our desire at its most ardent”.

Manichaean. Can you adduce any further patristic testimonies in your support?

Orthodox. I can. For example, St. Gregory the Theologian writes: “I am united to God in an indivisible identity of will, and that through making reasonable in a fitting manner the irrational powers of the soul by leading them through reason to a familiar commerce with the mind: I mean anger and desire. I have changed the one into charity, and the other into joy.” And St. Theodore the Great Ascetic, commenting on the same Father, writes: “Every deiform soul is tripartite, according to Gregory the Theologian. Virtue, when established in the intelligence, he calls discretion, understanding and wisdom; and when in the incensive power, he calls it courage and patience; and when in the faculty of desire, he calls it love, self-restraint and self-control. Justice or right judgement penetrates all three aspects of the soul, enabling them to function

301 St. Gregory the Theologian, quoted by St. Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua, P.G. 91, 1665D.
in harmony.”\footnote{St. Theodore the Great Ascetic, \textit{A Century of Spiritual Texts}, no. 24.} Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes that “if we use our reason aright and master our emotions, everything can be transformed into virtue; for anger produces courage, hatred - aversion from vice, the power of love - the desire for what is truly beautiful…”\footnote{St. Gregory of Nyssa, \textit{On the Making of Man}, XVIII, 5.}

**Manichaean.** I don’t see how anger is transformed into courage.

**Orthodox.** St. Isaiah the Solitary explains: "There is among the passions an anger of the intellect, and this anger is in accordance with nature. Without anger a man cannot attain purity; he has to feel angry with all that is sown in him by the enemy."\footnote{St. Isaiah, \textit{On Guarding the Intellect: Twenty-Seven Texts}, 1.} So anger is necessary in order to hate evil - “Be angry, and sin not”, says David (\textit{Psalm} 4.5).

**Manichaean.** And how is desire transformed into the love of the beautiful – I mean the \textit{spiritually} beautiful?

**Orthodox.** Solomon says of Wisdom: “I loved her from my youth, and I desired to take her for my bride, and I became a lover (Gk: ἑρωτηθέν) of her beauty” (Wisdom 8.2). Thus, purified of all unnatural, sinful elements, sexual passion can aid the love of the good, the good being perceived as \textit{beauty}.

Again, St. John of the Ladder writes: “I have seen impure souls raving madly about physical love; but making their experience of such love a reason for repentance, they transferred the same love to the Lord; and overcoming all fear, they spurred themselves insatiably on to the love of God. That is why the Lord does not say of that chaste harlot: ‘Because she feared,’ but: ‘Because she loved much,’ and could easily expel love by love.”\footnote{St. John, \textit{The Ladder}, 5:26.} And again: “Someone told me of an extraordinarily high degree of purity. He said: ‘A certain man, on seeing a beautiful body, thereupon glorified the Creator, and from that one look he was moved to the love of God and to a fountain of tears. And it was wonderful to see how what would have been a cause of destruction for one was for another the supernatural cause of a crown. If such a person always feels and behaves in the same way on similar occasions, then he has rise immortal before the general resurrection.”\footnote{St. John, \textit{The Ladder}, 15:60.}

Do you see how the fallen faculty is not destroyed in its essence (for it is impossible to destroy human nature), but is \textit{resurrected} by a \textit{redirection} of its innate energy in a different, God-pleasing direction, and that these faculties are the very means “by which we may be raised towards union with the heavenly”, in St. Gregory of Nyssa’s words?\footnote{St. Gregory of Nyssa, \textit{On the Soul and the Resurrection}, P.G. 46:61.}

**Manichaean.** This sounds dangerously like the Freudian idea of sublimation to me. Or rather, it’s worse than that: you seem to regard sexual relations as a path to the knowledge of God! As if sex has anything to do with the Holy Trinity! This is Gnosticism! This is Tantrism!

**Orthodox.** But Father, I’ve been quoting from the Holy Fathers!
**Manichaean.** This is not patristics, but sexopatrology! It’s disgusting! It reminds me of the Parisian school of “lyrical Orthodoxy”!

**Orthodox.** You have misunderstood me. It is not sexual relations, but chastity, which is the essential prerequisite for the knowledge of God, for it is the pure in heart who will see God. However, the point I have been making is that chastity is not a negative virtue, simply the absence of sex, but rather the redirection and resurrection of sexual desire. This redirection is first away from all forbidden objects and towards one’s wife, and then, in its highest form, away from all material things and towards God alone.

**Manichaean.** I still need more patristic evidence for this most surprising doctrine.

**Orthodox.** And you shall have it. Consider, for example, this passage from St. Gregory Palamas: "Not only hast Thou made the passionate part of my soul entirely Thine, but if there is a spark of desire in my body, it has returned to its source, and has thereby become elevated and united to Thee." And again the same Holy Father writes: "Impassibility does not consist in mortifying the passionate part of the soul, but in removing it from evil to good, and directing its energies towards divine things... Through the passionate part of the soul which has been orientated towards the end for which God created it, one will practise the corresponding virtues: with the concupiscent appetite, one will embrace charity, and with the irascible, one will practise patience. It is thus not the man who has killed the passionate part of the soul who has the pre-eminence, for such a one would have no momentum or activity to acquire a divine state and right disposition and relationship with God; but rather, the prize goes to him who has put that part of his soul under subjection, so that by its obedience to the mind, which is by nature appointed to rule, it may ever tend towards God, as is right, by the uninterrupted remembrance of Him... Thus one must offer to God the passionate part of the soul, alive and active, that it may be a living sacrifice. As the Apostle said of our bodies, ’I exhort you, by the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God’ (Romans 12.1)." And again: "Therefore those who love the Good (οἱ ἐρασται τῶν καλῶν) carry out a transposition (μεταθεσίαν) of this faculty and do not make it die; they do not suck it into themselves without letting it move, but they show it to be active in love towards God and neighbour”.

4. Marriage and Monasticism

**Manichaean.** Alright, you have a point. Nevertheless, marriage remains an earthly institution. Monasticism calls us to a higher mystery which is above and beyond all the good things of this life.

**Orthodox.** Undoubtedly. But we are talking about the good of marriage here, not the still higher good of monasticism. Remember: monasticism is not made

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higher through the denigration of marriage. Rather it is the opposite: monasticism is exalted because it is an even better good than the good of marriage. For, as St. Seraphim of Sarov said: “Marriage is good, and virginity is very, very good”.

**Manichaeans.** Marriage is less good because it has an admixture of sin.

**Orthodox.** No! Otherwise, the marriage service would be an occasion for sorrow rather than joy! For how can a sacrament be celebrated over that which is inherently sinful? “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory” (I Corinthians 15.41). And yet they all shine with the same light, which is pure and undefiled in each. It is the same with marriage and monasticism. Undoubtedly monasticism is the greater light. But marriage is also a light, in which there is no darkness at all.

**Manichaeans.** Still, I can’t help feeling sad that you have renounced the virginal state in which you lived before, and so you have fallen – or have decided to fall in the future. If virginity is higher than marriage, the transition from virginity to marriage must be a transition from the higher to the lower, which is sad.

**Orthodox.** So, according to you, the marriage service should really be an occasion for mourning in that the couple to be married are renouncing the virginal state! But lifelong virginity is a gift of God which is not given to all. If a man feels that he does not have this gift, it is as well that he enters into marriage earlier rather than later. And it is a cause for joy that he has found the right person with whom he can carry out the calling given to him by God.

**Manichaeans.** But the gift of virginity can be given to anyone who asks for it with sufficient determination.

**Orthodox.** No. The Lord Himself said: “Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given” (Matthew 19.11). And St. Paul says: “I wish that all men were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another” (I Corinthians 7.7). “The distribution of the charismata,” says St. John Chrysostom, “does not lie in the will of the receiver, but in the judgement of the provider.”

God gives one gift (virginity) to one, and another (marriage) to another, knowing which gift is suited to the character and circumstances of each, which gift will bring forth the greater fruit in each. God calls some to monasticism and others to marriage, knowing that some in each category will prove worthy of their calling and gift, and others unworthy. He knows that there are some wise virgins, and some foolish – and that some non-virgins will be higher in the Kingdom than either. If all Christians were called to be virgins, and it simply depended on the determination of each individual, then St. Seraphim would not have told one woman who wanted to marry that she must become a nun, and to another who wanted to become a nun that she must marry.

**Manichaeans.** God gives the gift of virginity to those who, in the Lord’s words, “can receive it”, that is, whom He foresees will not fall into fornication;

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whereas the weaker vessels He leads towards marriage, since the purpose of marriage is to prevent fornication (I Corinthians 7.2).

**Orthodox.** I have already agreed that one of the purposes of marriage is to avoid fornication. But it is only one purpose. And I think that God’s gifts are distributed for much deeper and more mysterious reasons than simply the greater or lesser sexual temperance of this or that person. What of those monks who fell into fornication, but repented and later became saints? Are we to conclude that they should really have married first?

**Manichaean.** Not necessarily. Perhaps all the temptations of married life – the everyday cares, the looking after children – would have quenched their zeal for God. St. Paul gives this as one of the main reasons for the superiority of monasticism over marriage (I Corinthians 7.34).

**Orthodox.** Yes indeed, that is just my point! In fact, I believe it is the main reason. The main reason why monasticism is superior to marriage is that it creates better conditions for the struggle against the passions, less distractions of every kind. It is not a question of sexuality in the first place, still less of avoiding the supposed “sinfulness” of sexual relations in marriage.

**Manichaean.** And yet even the married are called to abstain from sexual relations if possible. For the apostle writes: “The time is short; so let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those involved in worldly affairs as though they were not involved” (I Corinthians 7.29,31).

**Orthodox.** The apostle is talking about non-attachment to material things here, not total sexual abstinence. For St. Gregory Palamas, immediately after citing this verse, writes: “This, I think, is harder to accomplish than the keeping of one’s virginity. For experience shows that total abstinence is easier than self-control in food and drink”.

**Manichaean.** My friend Fr. G. says that a man can separate from his wife for the sake of abstinence, even without his wife’s permission. One of Justinian’s novellas permits it.

**Orthodox.** There is another of Justinian’s novellas which says that any legislation of the Church which contradicts the Canons of the Church is ipso facto illegal. The canons specifically forbid clergy to put away their wives “under pretext of religion” (Apostolic Canon 5), “lest we should affect injuriously marriage constituted by God and blessed by His presence, as the Gospel saith: ‘What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder’; and the Apostle saith, ‘Marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled’; and again, ‘Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed’” (Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 13).

**Manichaean.** But I know of cases from the lives of the saints in which the saint has left his wife without her permission.

**Orthodox.** There are exceptions to every rule. But the rule must still be maintained as the norm, and nobody is permitted to deny the norm set by God. This point is well illustrated by the *Life* of the British saint, Monk-Martyr Nectan of Hartland (+c. 500). St. Nectan’s father, Brychan, was a local prince who left his wife to practise the ascetic life in Ireland. After several years of

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asceticism, he returned to his native land, and there, finding his wife still alive, “although he had not proposed any such thing himself”, he had relations with her and begat several sons and daughters – one for each year of his unlawful abstinence. Brychan recognised his fault, saying: “Now has God punished me for vainly intending to act contrary to His will.”  

Brychan and his children, all of whom became monastic missionaries in south-west England, are counted among the saints of the British Church – a happy ending which would not have come to pass if he had continued his unlawful asceticism to the end of his life...

Manichaean. You promised not to quote from any more lives of the Celtic saints!

Orthodox. Yes, forgive me...

Manichaean. So let us return to the real Tradition... The Lord Himself says: “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14.26).

Orthodox. However, Blessed Theophylact interprets this verse as follows: “The Lover of man does not teach hatred for man, nor does He counsel us to take our own lives. But He desires His true disciples to hate his own kin when they prevent him from giving reverence to God and when he is hindered from doing good by his relationship to them. If they do not hinder us in these things, then He teaches us to honor them until our last breath.”

Manichaean. Still, you have to admit: the highest level of sanctity is unattainable for married people.

Orthodox. I would agree that a married person cannot hope to achieve all the crowns, because there is a special crown for virginity. The Church teaches that a special reward is reserved for the great feat of monasticism. And Archbishop Theophan of Poltava writes: “With the blessedness of virginity there is no comparison, neither in heaven, nor on earth.”

Manichaean. So you agree with me...

Orthodox. Not completely. St. John Chrysostom writes: “Use marriage temperately, and you will be the first in the Kingdom of heaven and be counted worthy of all its blessings”. And again: “If any marry thus, with these views, he will be but little inferior to monks; the married are only a little below the unmarried.”

Manichaean. The question here is: what is the meaning of “temperately”? My friend Fr. G. argues that “temperately” means “virginally”, insofar as the meaning and aim of Christian marriage does not differ in any way from the celibate life.

Orthodox. I think you should pay more attention to the actual words of the Holy Fathers, and less to Fr. G.’s interpretation of them! What does the saint

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315 Archbishop Theophan, Letters, op. cit, p. 37.
316 St. John Chrysostom, Homily 7 on Hebrews, 4.
317 St. John Chrysostom, Homily 20 on Ephesians.
actually say? “It is possible, very possible, also for those who have wives to be virtuous, if they wish. How? If they, while having wives, shall be as though they had them not, if they will not rejoice in acquisitions, if they will use the world as if not using it (I Corinthians 7.29-31). But if some have found marriage an obstacle, let them know that it is not marriage that serves as an obstacle, but self-indulgence ill-using marriage, just as wine does not produce drunkenness, but evil self-indulgence and its intemperate use. Use marriage in a temperate way, and you will be the first in the Heavenly Kingdom and will taste all its blessings, which may we all be worthy of through the grace and love for man of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The critical comparison here is between wine and sexual relations. Just as it is possible to drink wine sparingly without getting drunk, so it is possible to have sexual relations in marriage “in a temperate manner”, without it serving as an impediment to the spiritual life. Complete abstinence from sexual relations is definitely not indicated. If it were, then the saint would have said that one must not drink wine even in small quantities because even the smallest consumption leads to drunkenness. But the whole point of the comparison is that in wine-drinking, as in marital relations, small, “measured” use is not harmful. For, as St. John Chrysostom writes, commenting on St. Paul’s phrase "sold under sin": "Desire is not sin; but when it becomes extravagant, and breaks the bonds of lawful marriage, and springs even upon other men’s wives, it becomes thereafter adultery - not, however, because of the desire, but because of the lack of moderation." So there is no evidence that St. Chrysostom meant by “temperance” “complete abstinence”.

Manichaean. Alright. But the majority of the saints were monastics.

Orthodox. If you count all the martyrs, then I am not at all sure that the majority are monastics. However, I would agree that the majority of the most famous saints, including the very greatest such as the Mother of God and St. John the Baptist, were virgins or monastics. And this is a clear witness to the general superiority of monasticism over marriage as a Christian path in life. But that is a point I have never disputed. What I dispute is your contention that marriage necessarily involves sin because of the element of sexual relations. And that marriage in itself prevents men from reaching the highest levels of sanctity.

Manichaean. I think you will find that the married saints were saints, not because of their marriage, but in spite of it. They either ceased from marital relations, and were therefore purified of sexual stain, or they suffered martyrdom, which removes all stains.

Orthodox. The Martyr Thomais of Alexandria was martyred for her faithfulness to her husband, with whom, as far as we know, she led a normal married life. St. Daniel of Skete recommended that monks suffering from sexual temptations should pray to her for relief, which would appear to indicate that her virtue lay precisely in her refusal to succumb to sexual sin. Her martyrdom did not “remove sexual sin”, but was the culmination of her successful struggle against sexual sin.

318 St. John Chrysostom, Homily 13 on Romans, 1.
Again, take a still more illuminating example: Tsar-Martyr Nicholas and Tsaritsa-Martyr Alexandra. Anyone who has read the diaries of these saints will know that their love was far from platonic. And yet nobody has suggested that this love of theirs, being supposedly “fallen”, was an impediment to their holiness. On the contrary, as Fr. Sergius Furmanov has said, “The family of the Tsar was an icon of the family... The holy royal couple, who constructed their family happiness on a love that was in no way darkened in the course of 24 years of marriage, shows the path to young people, that they may with prayer to God for help seek for partners in life.”

**Manichaean.** I think what is meant here is that the Tsar-Martyr’s marriage was not darkened by any shadow of infidelity. I accept that married fidelity is a virtue, albeit of a negative kind.

**Orthodox.** Not that negative. Alexis Khomyakov said: “For the husband his wife is not one of many women, but the woman; and her spouse is for her not one of many men, but the man. For both all other people have no sex.” In my view, that is a high ideal.

**Manichaean.** Nevertheless, fidelity is not the same as chastity, for chastity necessarily implies complete abstinence. Married chastity is possible only for married couples who live as brother and sister, like Adam and Eve in the garden. For they were “married”, and yet had no sexual relations.

**Orthodox.** It seems to me that you concentrate too much on the sexual act itself. I have already indicated that Adam and Eve’s relationship in Paradise was sexual even if it did not involve the sexual act.

**Manichaean.** Chastity in the strict sense is not possible where certain sexual reactions are deliberately stimulated. And when a couple decide to make love they are deliberately stimulating certain sexual reactions. That is why I believe Fr. G. is justified in his use of the term “fornication under a crown” (блуд под венцом).

**Orthodox.** Within the one-flesh of the marriage relationship there can be no such thing as fornication; and the very idea of “fornication under a crown” must be categorically rejected as a contradiction in terms. For the Russian word for fornication, блуд, suggests the idea of wandering, “the wandering of concupiscence” (Wisdom 4.12), whereas it is impossible to “wander” in relation to one’s own flesh.

**Manichaean.** Alright, let us not use the word “fornication”. Let us talk instead about lust. Can you deny that lust is stimulated in marriage?

**Orthodox.** As I have said earlier, lust is present in all fallen men, whether married or monastics. From one point of view, there is more lust in monasticism than in marriage because the monastic does not have the sexual release provided in marriage, and while abstaining from sexual acts may be still more tormented by sexual thoughts and desires. The Lord Himself said: “Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5.28) – a command which applies, of course, to both monastics and married people. In that sense lust is more stimulated in

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319 Furmanov, Russkij Pastyr’ (Russian Pastor), 36, № 1, 2000, p. 34. Italics mine (V.M.).

320 Khomyakov, quoted in Orthodox Life (Jordanville), November-December, 1983, p. 22.
monasticism than in marriage. Hence the words of the apostle: “It is better to marry than to burn” (I Corinthians 7.9). In fact, as we have seen, St. Paul recommends monasticism over marriage, not because it stimulates lust less, but because it contains fewer worldly cares (I Corinthians 7.32-33). Thus monasticism does not eliminate lust immediately, any more than marriage does. But both states, properly used, serve to moderate lust and increase chastity and true love. The aim of both is chastity, and chastity can be attained by both. I would compare chastity to the summit of a mountain. Monasticism is the shorter, but more difficult way to the summit, with a real danger of falling over a precipice. It offers a greater struggle with sexual temptation, but a quicker victory over it – and a greater reward in proportion to the greater struggle. Marriage is a longer, and intrinsically easier way to the top. However, the danger of getting distracted along the way, of becoming absorbed in the cares of life and therefore abandoning the journey altogether, is also greater.

Manichaean. Still, abstinence is always better than indulgence.

Orthodox. Not necessarily. Marriage is a one-flesh relationship, and therefore total abstinence is contrary to its nature and purpose. That is why the Apostle Paul says: “Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (I Corinthians 7.5)

Manichaean. But Fr. G. says that, according to St. John Chrysostom, St. Paul’s “Deprive not” is only a form of “Deprive” for tender ears

Orthodox. Your Fr. G. again! Is not the meaning of the apostle’s words clear enough? Why should the apostle say “deprive not” if he meant “deprive”?! We must remember that the grace of marriage works within the one-flesh relationship to purify and transfigure the passions. For marriage is not simply a permit to sin in a small way so as to avoid sinning in a large way. No: marriage is a sacrament which communicates grace; and as such it changes that which it touches - so long as it is received in the proper manner, as part of the Christian life as a whole. It changes two bodies into one, and lust into chastity – not immediately, of course, but gradually. In this connection, the words of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava are especially relevant: “People in recent times have forgotten that the grace of God is communicated in the sacrament of marriage. One must always remember this grace, stir it up and live in its spirit. Then the love of the man for the woman and of the woman for the man will be pure, deep and a source of happiness for them.”

Manichaean. You know, this sounds all very well. But Christianity is not romanticism. And there still seems to me to be a streak of romanticism in you, a tendency to glorify sexual passion in the romantic manner, which is so prevalent in our civilisation.

Orthodox. I am as much against romanticism as you are. Except for that “romanticism” which is to be found in the Holy Scriptures themselves.

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321 Archbishop Theophanes, Pis’ma, op. cit, pp. 35-37.
Manichaean. What do you mean? I don’t find it in the Scriptures. Which is why I suspect your quotations from the Holy Fathers. I hope you are not going to make the very crude mistake of interpreting The Song of Songs in a literal manner! You know, the Holy Fathers interpreted it as an allegory of the soul’s purely spiritual love for God.

Orthodox. I know. I was thinking of another passage from Solomon: “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely hind, a graceful doe. Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love…” (Proverbs 5.18-19)

Manichaean. I think the Holy Fathers would also interpret this passage in an allegorical manner.

Orthodox. I don’t think so. This is what St. Gregory the Theologian wrote, obviously referring to this passage: “For man and wife the union of wedlock is a bolted door securing chastity and restraining desire. And it is a seal of natural affection. They possess the loving colt which cheers the heart by gamboling, and a single drink from their private fountain untasted by strangers, which neither flows outwards, nor gathers its waters from without. Wholly united in the flesh, concordant in spirit, by love, they sharpen in one another a like spur to piety…”

Manichaean. According to your logic, marriage should be as sensual as possible!

Orthodox. I never said that. But I do believe that the married couple should not be prevented from having joy in each other. St. Ignatius the Godbearer writes: "Speak to my sisters that they love the Lord, and be satisfied with their husbands in flesh and in spirit. In the same way enjoin on my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ 'to love their wives as the Lord loved the Church'... It is right for men and women who marry to be united with the consent of the bishop, that the marriage may be according to the Lord and not according to lust." Here there is a frank admission that marriage is designed to satisfy certain natural needs, both fleshly and spiritual. But the satisfaction of these needs is “not according to lust [Gk. ἐπιθυμεῖν]”, but “according to the Lord” if it is done with the blessing of the bishop – that is, with the grace of God imparted through the sacrament of marriage. Thus there is no prudery, no attempt to deny the satisfactions of marriage; for the result of that, among fallen men and women, would be that they would seek satisfaction outside marriage, and the first purpose of marriage, to avoid fornication, would be frustrated. This is not hedonism, but realism.

Manichaean. Alright, I am beginning to come round to your point of view. But I still have one difficulty: how do you interpret the Scripture: “These are they who have not defiled themselves with women; for they are virgins” (Revelation 14.4)? Does this not mean that those who are not virgins are defiled?

323 St. Ignatius, To Polycarp, 5.
Orthodox. No, it does not. The Scriptures cannot contradict each other. We have already seen that Hebrews 13.4, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers, clearly indicates that marriage and sexual relations in marriage are pure. So the passage from Revelation that you quote cannot have a meaning contradictory to that. I think the resolution of the problem is simple. For those who have made a vow of virginity relations with women are a defilement, which also explains why so many monastic texts speak about marriage as if it were a defilement. In the context of the monastic struggle, this is perfectly understandable and right. For, as Origen says, “to think that marital life leads to destruction is useful, since it elicits a striving for perfection”.324 But in the broader context of Christian theology as a whole, and for those who have not made a vow of virginity, there is no defilement in entering into lawful marriage. Thus St. Gregory the Theologian says to those preparing to be baptised: “Are you not yet married to the flesh? Fear not this consecration; you are pure even after marriage. I will take the risk of that. I will join you in marriage. I will dress the bride. We do not dishonour marriage because we give a higher honour to virginity. I will imitate Christ, the pure Bridegroom and Leader of the Bride, as He both worked a miracle at a wedding, and honours marriage with His Presence.”325

Former Manichaean. Alright. I am convinced…

Orthodox. Glory to God!… So, Father, will you marry us?

Former Manichaean. With the greatest pleasure!

Orthodox. [smiles] You’re not against pleasure any more, then?

Former Manichaean. Not this kind of pleasure! And I must thank you for enabling me now for the first time to utter the prayer of the marriage service with conviction: “O Holy God, Who didst create man out of dust, and didst fashion his wife out of his rib, and didst unite her unto him as a helpmeet; for it seemed good to Thy majesty that man should not be alone upon the earth: Do thou even now, O Master, stretch out Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling-place and unite this Thy servant, and this Thy handmaid; for by Thee is the husband united unto the wife. Join them in one mind; crown them into one flesh, granting unto them the fruit of the womb, and the enjoyment of fair children…”

Dedicated to the servants of God Alexei and Olga, on their marriage.
March 1/14, 2002.


325 St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration on Holy Baptism, 18.
The phenomenon of false eldership is well-known in monastic circles. However, in our times it has become rampant even in parishes in the world – especially in the Moscow Patriarchate, but also in True Orthodox Church. Fr. Alexey Young has justly criticised the practice whereby lay parishioners are given monastic-style obediences by parish priests who arrogate to themselves authority over them that is appropriate only to a true, Spirit bearing elder. And he is surely right to say that you should be wary "if you are a layman in a parish situation [and] are expected to get permission ('a blessing') from the priest before you change jobs, buy a new car, etc. Under normal circumstances these are not the proper purview of a parish priest, however wise and pious he may otherwise be. One may -- and should -- ask for prayers and advice about these and other non-controversial aspects of practical life, but asking for permission is quite a different thing." Since such demands for monastic-style obedience are often encountered by laymen, Fr. Alexey, as a pastor of laymen, has every right to express an opinion on the subject, basing himself, of course, on the Tradition of the Orthodox Church as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers.

One of the Fathers who spoke most urgently about the dangers of false elders was Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, who wrote: "What has been said of solitude and seclusion must also be said of obedience to elders in the form in which it was practiced in ancient monasticism -- such obedience is not given in our time."326 Fr. Alexey does not mention Bishop Ignatius, but he follows in the same tradition when he asserts: "... in this country, at least, there are NO true elders today whose voice can be the voice of heaven for a disciple or spiritual child" (emphasis his).

The Response disputes this opinion, pointing out that the Optina elders flourished during the time of Bishop Ignatius, and that "in this century, many Holy Elders in Russia, Romania Bulgaria, Greece, Mt Athos, Mt. Sinai and elsewhere have led countless souls to salvation."

However, disputes about the number of elders in Russia or America in the 19th or 20th century are beside the point. The point is that the grace of true eldership has grown exceedingly scarce (how could it be otherwise in the era of the Antichrist?), and that great care must therefore be exercised before entering into a relationship of strict obedience to a supposed elder, insofar as obedience to a false elder, according to the Holy Fathers, can lead to the loss of one's soul.

Let us consider some examples. In the sixth century, when monasticism was at its height and truly Spirit-bearing elders could be found in many places, Saint John of the Ladder still found it necessary to warn: "When motives of humility and real longing for salvation decide us to bend our neck and entrust ourselves to another in the Lord, before entering upon this life, if there is any vice and pride in us, we ought first to question and examine, and even, so to speak, test our helmsman, so as not to mistake the sailor for the pilot, a sick man for a doctor, a passionate for a dispassionate man, the sea for a harbor, and so bring about the speedy shipwreck of our soul."  

Again, in the eleventh century Saint Symeon the New Theologian wrote: "If you wish to renounce the world and learn the life of the Gospel, do not surrender (entrust) yourself to an inexperienced or passionate master, lest instead of the life of the Gospel you learn a diabolic life. For the teaching of good teachers is good, while the teaching of bad teachers is bad. Bad seeds invariably produce bad fruits..."

"Every blind man who undertakes to guide others is a deceiver or quack, and those who follow him are cast into the pit of destruction, according to the word of the Lord, If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a hole (Matthew 15:14)."

In the eighteenth century, the situation had become so serious that, in spite of having an ardent desire to find a true elder to whom he could bow his neck in complete obedience, Saint Paisius Velichkovsky was unable to find such a man, although he scoured all the lands between Russia and Mount Athos. Eventually he and a like-minded brother from the Holy Mountain entered into mutual obedience to each other, "having instead of a father and instructor the teaching of our Holy Fathers."

The author of the Response writes: "We must also understand what true Eldership is. True Elders do not, of course, ask us to do what is immoral or wrong. Nor do they claim to speak with the authority of Heaven or to possess infallibility. We Orthodox are not Papists."

So far so good. But then he continues: "To the extent that we entrust our souls to our Elders, make them images of Christ, and let God work through them, their human errors become inconsequential. In short, our obedience within monasticism, covered as we are by the Grace of the sacred tonsure, produces eldership. Eldership is not personal. Wherever there is sincere monastic obedience, there is Eldership."

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328 St. Symeon, Practical and Theological Texts, 32, 34, in The Philokalia, vol. 3.
The obedience of disciples produces elders, makes them images of Christ?! Perhaps this is just careless language, but the prima facie sense of the words implies that the grace of eldership comes, not from above, but from below, not from God but from the subjective and quite possibly misplaced faith of the disciple. Perhaps what is meant is that God bestows the grace of eldership on a man in response to the eager faith of his disciple. But this is still unacceptable from an Orthodox point of view. A disciple can no more make an elder than a layman can ordain a priest.

Bishop Ignatius puts the point in typically trenchant fashion: “Perhaps you retort: A novice's faith can take the place of an incompetent elder. It is untrue. Faith in the truth saves. Faith in a lie and in a diabolic delusion is ruinous, according to the teaching of the Apostle. They refused to love the truth that would save them, he says of those who are voluntarily perishing. Therefore, God will send them (will permit them to suffer) a strong delusion, so that they will believe a lie, that all may be condemned who do not believe the truth but delight in falsehood (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).”

How, then, are we to distinguish between true and false elders? I. M. Kontzevich provides the answer in his book on the Optina elders: “Those who have given themselves over to the direction of a true elder experience a special feeling of joy and freedom in the Lord. He who writes these lines has personally experienced this in himself. The elder is the immediate channel of the will of God. Communion with God is always accompanied by a 'feeling of spiritual freedom, joy, and indescribable peace in the soul. Contrary to this, the false elder pushes God into the background, putting his own will in the place of God, which is accompanied by a feeling of enslavement, depression and, almost always, despondency. Besides, the complete submission of the disciples before the false elder exterminates his personality, buries his will, perverts the feeling of righteousness and truth, and, in this way, weans his conscience from responsibility for his actions.

“Concerning false eldership his Reverence Ignatius Brianchaninov says this: ‘It is a terrible business, out of self-opinion and on one's own authority, to take upon oneself duties which can be carried out only by the order of the Holy Spirit and by the action of the Spirit. It is a terrible thing to pretend to be a vessel of the Holy Spirit when all the while relations with satan have not been broken and the vessel is still being defiled by the action of satan! It is disastrous both from oneself and one's neighbor; it is criminal, blasphemous.’

“False eldership produces hypnosis of thought. And since at the root of it there lies a false idea, this idea produces spiritual blindness. When the false idea covers up reality, then no arguments will be accepted any longer, since

they stumble upon an idée fixe, which is considered to be an unshakeable axiom.\textsuperscript{331}

True eldership, according to Kontzevich, is nothing other than the gift of prophecy, the second of the gifts of the Spirit listed by the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 12:28). This is confirmed by Hieroconfessor Barnabas (Belyaev), Bishop of Pechersk, himself a clairvoyant elder, who wrote: "Elders in Russian ecclesiastical consciousness are ascetics who have passed through a long probation and have come to know the spiritual warfare from experience, who by many exploits have acquired the gift of discernment, and who, finally, are capable by prayer of attaining to the will of God for man. That is, to a greater or lesser extent they have received the gift of clairvoyance and are therefore capable of giving spiritual direction to those who turn to them.\textsuperscript{332}

Bishop Ignatius' warnings against false eldership should not be taken as a renunciation of all forms of monastic obedience. If they were, his works would hardly have been given as required reading for monastics by the Optina elders and Bishop Theophan the Recluse. Hieromonk Nicon of Optina, in his commentary on Bishop Ignatius' writings\textsuperscript{333} explains that Bishop Ignatius' warnings apply only to the strictest kind of elder-disciple relationship: less strict forms of obedience still retain all their spiritual usefulness, even necessity; for no Christian can be saved without obedience and the cutting off of his will in some way. But in our apocalyptic age, when the love of many has grown cold and there is a general spiritual impoverishment, it is as dangerous to demand the strictest forms of obedience as it would be to demand the strictest forms of fasting or prayer or other kinds of ascetic endeavour. We must discern the signs of the times, and adapt our strategies for survival accordingly.

When we see, on the one hand, how difficult it is to be a Christian in the maze of modern life, and, on the other, with what swiftness and apparent ease the monks and pious laymen of past ages attained salvation through strict obedience to a God-bearing elder, it is tempting to find such an elder even when he does not exist. But when we surrender our will to a false elder, we become slaves of a man, a man who is suffering a very grave spiritual sickness; whereas Apostle Paul says, You were bought with a price; do not become the slaves of men (I Corinthians 7:23). And having become slaves of men, we lose that most quintessential attribute of man made in the image of God - independent judgment, and the ability to turn to God directly for enlightenment and help.

\textsuperscript{332} Bishop Barnabas Belyaev, Pravoslavie (Orthodoxy), Kolomna: New Golutvin Convent, 1995, p. 149, emphasis mine (in Russian)
\textsuperscript{333} Hieromonk Nicon, Pis’ma k Dukhovnym Chadam (Letters to Spiritual Children), Kuibyshev, 1990 (in Russian).
Many converts are tempted to submit to a false elder for another reason - that he led them to Orthodoxy and may well be the only Orthodox leader in the vicinity. Then a mixture of gratitude and the fear of becoming completely isolated may lead the convert to conclude that Divine Providence must have led him to submit his whole life to this man for the salvation of his soul. The false elder, who is often a cunning psychologist, can exploit this situation to gain complete control over his disciples, adding, in the case of disobedience, the threat of fearsome sanctions, including very strict penances, curses and even anathematization and expulsion (supposedly) from the Orthodox Church! - a tragic situation which may lead to the convert's abandoning the Orthodox Church altogether, and which the present writer has personally observed in True Orthodox communities in England, Russia, Bulgaria and Greece.

Many who have fallen into the trap of false eldership and begin to see their real situation, are deterred from breaking free by false feelings of guilt, as if there were no circumstances in which a disciple can disobey an elder. But, even apart from heresy, there are certain conditions in which it is right to disobey and leave one's elder, as we read in the Sayings of the Desert Fathers:

A brother questioned Abba Poemen, saying, "I am losing my soul through living near my abba; should I go on living with him?" The old man knew that he was finding this harmful and he was surprised that he even asked if he should stay there. So he said to him, "Stay if you want to." The brother left him and stayed there. He came back again and said, "I am losing my soul." The old man did not tell him to leave. He came a third time and said, "I really cannot stay there any longer." Then Abba Poemen said, "Now you are saving yourself; go away and do not stay with him any longer. And he added, "When someone sees that he is in danger of losing his soul, he does not need to ask advice."\(^{334}\)

Perhaps the most characteristic mark of the last times is the spiritual isolation of the individual believer. As David says: “I am alone until I pass by... Flight hath failed me, and there is none that watcheth out for my soul” (Psalm 140.12, 141.6).\(^{335}\) Of course, no true Christian is ever really alone: he always has with him God and the Mother of God and all the saints and angels of the Heavenly Church. But in the last times the support of the Heavenly Church may be the only real support that the conscientious believer has, as the Earthly Church grows weak and small, and even such leaders as are left become ensnared in uncanonical situations or suspect in some other way.

This has been the experience of many thousands of believers of the Russian Catacomb Church, and it is therefore from the Catacomb Church that we hear


\(^{335}\) In the Septuagint, the phrase “watcheth out” could also be translated “superviseth” or “acts as a bishop” (ἐπισκοπεῖ).
the most urgent admonitions to preserve our spiritual freedom, "lest imperceptibly and little by little we lose the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has 'given us as a free gift by His Own Blood".336

Thus Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene, Bishop of Glukhov, said, "Perhaps the time has come when the Lord does not wish that the Church should stand as an intermediary between Himself and the believers, but that everyone is called to stand directly before the Lord and himself answer as it was with the forefathers!" 337 Again, Hieromartyr Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd, emphasized the possibility that the true Christians of the last times will have to leave all the recognized spiritual guides; for "perhaps the last 'rebels' against the betrayers of the Church and the accomplices of Her ruin will be not only bishops and not protopriests, but the simplest mortals, just as at the Cross of Christ His last gasp of suffering was heard by a few simple souls who were close to Him..."338

Thus we may be moving into the last period of the Church's history, when the wheel has come round full circle and the Church has returned to the molecular structure of Abraham's Family Church, when true bishops are few and far between, when charismatic spiritual guides have more or less disappeared, and when the individual believer has to seek the answers to his spiritual problems from God and God's word alone, remembering David's words: It is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to hope in the Lord than to hope in princes (Psalm 118:8-9).

If even the Apostle Peter was rebuked for making damaging concessions to the Jews (Galatians 2:11-12), how can we expect never to be in conflict with our spiritual leaders? And if even the Apostle Paul feared lest after preaching to others he himself should be disqualified (I Corinthians 9:27), how can we deny the possibility that our spiritual guides may also lose grace, necessitating our departure from them? Those who point out these facts are not inciting to rebellion -far from it! They are calling men to a sober understanding of the nature of the times we live in, They are warning that those who, unlike the true apostles and holy fathers and God-bearing elders of all ages, attempt to lord it over our faith (II Corinthians 1:24) must be rejected for the sake of that same faith, out of obedience to the one and only infallible authority, God Himself.

(Orthodox America, vol. XVI, № 1 (141), July, 1996; revised June 22 / July 5, 2004)

336 8th Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council.
22. THE SEAL OF THE ANTICHRIST IN SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

The judgement of God is being carried out on the Church and the people of Russia…
A selection is being made of those true warriors of Christ who alone will be able…

to resist the Beast himself.

Hieromartyr Damascene, Bishop of Glukhov.

He causes all… to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,
And that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name…

Revelation 13.16-17.

Introduction

The year 1917 marked the beginning of the time of the end, the time of the Antichrist, according to the prophecies of such luminaries of the Church as St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Ambrose of Optina, Bishop Theophanes the Recluse, St. John of Kronstadt and the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia. On November 9, 1917, Divine Providence drew the attention of all those with eyes to see the signs of the times to an extraordinary “coincidence”: in one column of newsprint in the London Times, there appeared two articles, the one announcing the outbreak of revolution in Petrograd, and the other – the promise of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine (the Balfour declaration). Thus at precisely the same time the two horns of the beast of the last times, the power of apostate Jewry, appeared above the vast sea of the formerly Christian world: the anti-theist, materialist horn of Soviet power, and the theist, Judaistic horn of Zionist Israel.

The fall of Russia, the last Orthodox Christian empire, was followed by further blows to the monarchical, God-established principle of political government. In 1918 the Catholic empire of Austro-Hungary and the Protestant empire of Germany collapsed. In 1924 the Orthodox kingdom of Greece fell; and in 1941 and 1944 the last Orthodox monarchies of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria also fell. By the end of the Second World War there were no real monarchies left in Europe or America, and the world was dominated by two powers based on the anti-monarchical, democratic principle: the United States of America, representing the more individualist, tolerant variety of democratism, and the Soviet Union, representing the more collectivist, intolerant variety.

50 years later, the situation had changed again. The Soviet Union was no more, and its rival for leadership of the communist world, China, was well on the way to transforming itself into a capitalist democracy. With the fall of the anti-theist, materialist horn of the beast, the attention of many Orthodox was turned to the other, theist horn – Israel, founded in 1948 under the
sponsorship of Britain and the Soviet Union, and to Israel’s allies (or “colonies”, as some asserted) in the West, especially America, the only remaining superpower. In particular, alarm was aroused by the spread throughout the West, and thence into the East, of new forms of identification and money exchange – credit cards, bar-codes, 18-figure identity cards, etc. – which appeared to contain the number of the beast, 666. The question raised in many minds, and addressed in the present article, is: could this be the seal of the Antichrist?

1. Authorities and anti-authorities

Let us begin by studying the reign of the Antichrist since 1917. In what does it consist? What are its essential characteristics?

According to the holy apostles and fathers of the Church, the reign of the Antichrist will be characterised by an extreme form of anarchy – that is, the absence of law and order. Now the origin of all law and order is God, so all law and order, all true authority, is established by God. That is the meaning of the apostle’s famous saying: “There is no power that is not of God; the powers that be are established by God” (Romans 13.1). Christians honour the king and pray for the powers that be precisely in order to avoid the great evil of anarchy, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (I Timothy 2.2). Since anarchy is opposed to God-established authority, it is opposed to God, and must therefore itself be opposed by all those who fear God and obey His holy will.

A ruler may be unjust and cruel, but as long as he prevents anarchy Christians must obey him. Thus St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: “Some rulers are given by God with a view to the improvement and benefit of their subjects and the preservation of justice; others are given with a view to producing fear, punishment and reproof; yet others are given with a view to displaying mockery, insult and pride – in each case in accordance with the deserts of the subjects. Thus... God’s judgement falls equally on all men.”339 Again, St. Isidore of Pelusium writes that the evil ruler “has been allowed to spew out this evil, like Pharaoh, and, in such an instance, to carry out extreme punishment or to chastise those for whom great cruelty is required, as when the king of Babylon chastised the Jews.”340

But there is line beyond which an evil ruler ceases to be a ruler and becomes an anti-ruler, an unlawful tyrant, who is not to be obeyed. Thus the Jews were commanded by God through the Prophet Jeremiah to submit to the king of Babylon, evil though he was; whereas they were commanded through

another prophet, Moses, to resist and flee from the Egyptian Pharaoh, and rebelled again, with God’s blessing, under Antiochus Epiphanes. For in the one case the authority, though evil, was still an authority, which it was beneficial to obey; whereas in the other cases the authority was in fact an anti-authority, obedience to which would have taken the people further away from God.

Anarchy, the absence of true authority, can be of two kinds: organised and disorganised. When a true authority collapses, there usually follows a period of disorganised anarchy, which is characterised by individual crimes of all kinds - murder, robbery, rape, sacrilege - that go unchecked and unpunished because of the absence of a true power. Such was the period of Russian history that followed the collapse of the Orthodox empire in February, 1917. The Provisional government, having itself contributed to the collapse of the empire, and having received its authority neither (through holy anointing) from God nor (by means of a popular vote) from men, was unable to check the rising tide of anarchy and collapsed ignominiously. The disorganised anarchy of the Provisional government was followed by the organised anarchy of the Bolshevik “government”...

This was foreseen by many prophets. And it was revealed that the coming period would be the beginning of the last times when it would be necessary to suffer in order not to receive the seal of the Antichrist. Thus on February 21, 1917, a 14-year-old Kievan novice, Olga Zosimovna Boiko, fell into a deep trance which lasted for exactly forty days and during which many mysteries were revealed to her. One of these was the coming abdication of the Tsar. And she saw the following: “In blinding light on an indescribably wonderful throne sat the Saviour, and next to Him on His right hand – our sovereign, surrounded by angels. His Majesty was in full royal regalia: a radiant white robe, a crown, with a sceptre in his hand. And I heard the martyrs talking amongst themselves, rejoicing that the last times had come and that their number would be increased.

“They said that they would be tormented for the name of Christ and for refusing to accept the seal [of the Antichrist], and that the churches and monasteries would soon be destroyed, and those living in the monasteries would be driven out, and that not only the clergy and monastics would be tortured, but also all those who did not want to receive ‘the seal’ and would stand for the name of Christ, for the Faith and the Church.”

Now Christians are obliged to recognise every power that is in fact a power in the apostolic meaning of the word – that is, which at least tries to prevent anarchy by rewarding the good and punishing the bad (Romans 13.3; 341 Letter of Sergius Nilus to Hierodeacon Zosimas, 6 August, 1917; in Vladimir Gubanov, Tsar’ Nikolai II-i i Noveie Mucheniki (Tsar Nicholas II and the New Martyrs), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 121 ©

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I Peter 2.14). Such a power does not have to be Christian: although only the Orthodox anointed kings, working together with the Orthodox hierarchs, are able to establish God’s order in anything approaching fullness, even pagan, heretical and Muslim states punish those crimes that are recognised as such by the vast majority of mankind, and are therefore recognised as legitimate by the Church. However, such recognition can only be relative – relative, that is, to the degree to which the government does in fact establish order, and in extreme cases can be refused altogether.

Thus in the fourth century, the Persian King Sapor proposed to Hieromartyr Simeon, Bishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, that he worship the sun, in exchange for which he would receive every possible honour and gift. But if he refused, this would bring about the complete destruction of Christianity in Persia. Now already before he had made this proposal to Simeon, King Sapor had started to kill the clergy, confiscate church property and raze the churches to the ground. So when he was brought before the king for his reply, St. Simeon not only refused to worship the sun but also, upon entering, refused to recognise the king by bowing. This omission of his previous respect for the king’s authority was noticed and questioned by the King. St. Simeon replied: "Before I bowed down to you, giving you honour as a king, but now I come being brought to deny my God and Faith. It is not good for me to bow before an enemy of my God!"342

Again, when Julian the Apostate (361-363) came to the throne, the Church refused to recognize him. Thus St. Basil the Great prayed for the defeat of Julian in his wars against the Persians; and it was through his prayers that the apostate was in fact killed, as was revealed by God to the holy hermit Julian of Mesopotamia.343 At this, St. Basil’s friend, St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: “I call to spiritual rejoicing all those who constantly remained in fasting, in mourning and prayer, and by day and by night besought deliverance from the sorrows that surrounded us and found a reliable healing from the evils in unshakeable hope... What hoards of weapons, what myriads of men could have produced what our prayers and the will of God produced?” Gregory called Julian not only an “apostate”, but also “universal enemy” and “general murderer”, a traitor to Romanity (ρωματοκράτιος– that is, the religio-political ethos of the Christian Roman empire - as well as to Christianity.344

Again, when the Norman Duke William invaded England in 1066 with the blessing of the Pope, and was crowned as the first Catholic king of England in

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342 St. Demetrius of Rostov, Lives of the Saints, April 17.
343 Theodoret, Ecclesiastical History, III, 19; V.A. Konovalov, Otnoshenie Khristianstva k sovietskoj vlasti (The Relationship of Christianity to Soviet Power), Montreal, 1936, p. 35 ®.
344 St. Gregory, First Word against Julian, 35; Second Word against Julian, 26. In the Life of St. Artemius the Great Martyr (St. Demetrius of Rostov, Lives of the Saints, October 20), we read that Julian refused to recognise the legitimacy even of the reign of St. Constantine the Great. In this sense he, like the Bolsheviks after him, renounced Christian Romanity and thereby became anti-Roman as well as anti-Christian.
the following year, the brother-bishops and hieromartyrs Ethelric and Ethelwine solemnly anathematized both him and the Pope, and called on the people to rise up against the false authority (they did, and 20% of the English population was killed by the papists). Again, in 1611 St. Hermogen, patriarch of Moscow, called on the Russian people to rise up against the crypto-Catholic false Demetrius, although the latter had been anointed by a supposedly Orthodox patriarch.

The state that is refused recognition by the Church is the state of organized anarchy – that is, the state in which crime is not only not punished, as in disorganized anarchy, but is confirmed and recognized as lawful. Thus the essence of antichristian power is not simply the doing of evil – all states, even the most Orthodox, at times do evil – but the systematic recognition of evil as good, of lawlessness as the law, of the abnormal as the norm and even the aim of society. Such a state is “the mystery of lawlessness” (II Thessalonians 2.7).

Such a state was the Bolshevik regime, which, taking advantage of the disorganized anarchy prevailing under the Provisional government, not only did not restore order, but consolidated, intensified and organized the chaos, made it the norm, made it “lawful”. Church tradition calls unlawful councils, councils that preach heresy instead of truth, “robber councils”. In the same way, unlawful states such as the Bolshevik regime can be called “robber states”, insofar as murder, robbery and sacrilege become the norm under them – indeed, are committed primarily by the state itself. Robber states cannot command the obedience of God-fearing Christians, for they are not authorities in the apostolic sense of the word, but “anti-authorities”. Rather, such states must be rebuked and rejected by them.

That is why, on November 11, 1917, the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed a letter to the faithful calling the revolution “descended from the Antichrist” and declaring: “Open combat is fought against the Christian Faith, in opposition to all that is sacred, arrogantly abasing all that bears the name of God (II Thessalonians 2.4)… But no earthly kingdom founded on ungodliness can ever survive: it will perish from internal strife and party dissension. Thus, because of its frenzy of atheism, the State of Russia will fall… For those who use the sole foundation of their power in the coercion of the whole people by one class, no motherland or holy place exists. They have become traitors to the motherland and instigated an appalling betrayal of Russia and her true allies. But, to our grief, as yet no government has arisen which is sufficiently one with the people to deserve the blessing of the Orthodox Church. And such will not appear on Russian soil until we turn with agonizing prayer and tears of repentance to Him, without Whom we labour in vain to lay foundations…”

In January, 1918, Patriarch Tikhon and the Local Council meeting in Moscow anathematized the Bolsheviks. The significance of this anathema lies
not so much in its casting out of the Bolsheviks themselves (all those who deny God are subject to anathema, for that very denial), as in the command to the faithful: “I adjure all of you who are faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ not to commune with such outcasts of the human race in any matter whatsoever; ‘cast out the wicked from among you’ (I Corinthians 5.13).” In other words, the Bolsheviks were to be regarded, not only as apostates from Christ (that was obvious), but also as having no moral authority, no claim to obedience whatsoever.  

It has been argued that the Patriarch’s decree did not anathematise Soviet power as such, but only those who were committing acts of violence and sacrilege against the Church in various parts of the country. However, this argument fails to take into account several facts. First, the patriarch himself, in his declarations of June 16 and July 1, 1923, repented precisely of his “anathematisation of Soviet power”. Secondly, even if the decree did not formally anathematise Soviet power as such, since Soviet power sanctioned and initiated the acts of violence, the faithful were in effect being exhorted to having nothing to do with it. And thirdly, in his Epistle to the Council of People’s Commissars on the first anniversary of the revolution, November 7, 1918, the Patriarch obliquely but clearly confirmed his non-recognition of Soviet power, saying: “It is not our business to make judgments about earthly authorities. Every power allowed by God would attract to itself Our blessing if it were truly ‘the servant of God’, for the good of those subject to it, and were ‘terrible not for good works, but for evil’ (Romans 13.3,4). But now to you, who have used authority for the persecution of the innocent, We extend this Our word of exhortation…”

Most important of all, when the Patriarch’s decree came to be read out to the Council on January 22 / February 4, it was enthusiastically endorsed by it in terms which make it clear that the Council understood the Patriarch to have anathematised precisely Soviet power: “The Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia in his epistle to the beloved in the Lord archpastors, pastors and all faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ has drawn the spiritual sword against the outcasts of the human race – the Bolsheviks, and anathematised them. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church adjures all her faithful children not to enter into any communion with these outcasts. For their satanic deeds they are cursed in this life and in the life to come. Orthodox! His Holiness the Patriarch has been given the right to bind and to loose according to the word of the Saviour... Do not destroy your souls, cease communion with the servants of Satan – the Bolsheviks. Parents, if your children are Bolsheviks, demand authoritatively that they renounce their errors, that they bring forth repentance for their eternal sin, and if they do not

345 M.E. Gubonin, Akty Sviatejshago Patriarkha Tikhona (The Acts of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon), Moscow: St. Tikhon’s Theological Institute, 1994, pp. 82-85 §.  
346 Gubonin, op. cit, pp. 280, 296.  
347 Gubonin, op. cit, p. 151.
obey you, renounce them. Wives, if your husbands are Bolsheviks and stubbornly continue to serve Satan, leave your husbands, save yourselves and your children from the soul-destroying infection. An Orthodox Christian cannot have communion with the servants of the devil... Repent, and with burning prayer call for help from the Lord of Hosts and thrust away from yourselves ‘the hand of strangers’ – the age-old enemies of the Christian faith, who have declared themselves in self-appointed fashion ‘the people’s power’... If you do not obey the Church, you will not be her sons, but participants in the cruel and satanic deeds wrought by the open and secret enemies of Christian truth... Dare! Do not delay! Do not destroy your soul and hand it over to the devil and his stooges.”

This first instinct of the Russian Church in the face of Soviet power has never been extinguished among Russian Christians. It continued to manifest itself both at home and abroad - for example, in the First All-Emigration Council of the Russian Church Abroad in 1921, and both in the early and the later decades of Soviet power - for example, among the "passportless" Christians of the Catacomb Church in the 1960s and 70s. However, it was very soon tempered by the realisation that such outright rejection of Soviet power on a large scale could be sustained only by war - and after the defeat of the White Armies in the Civil War there were no armies left to carry on the fight against the Bolsheviks. Therefore from the early 1920s a new attitude towards Soviet power began to evolve among the Tikhonite Christians: loyalty towards it as a political institution (“for all power is from God”), and acceptance of such of its laws as could be interpreted in favour of the Church (for example, the law on the separation of Church and State), combined with rejection of its atheistic world-view (large parts of which the renovationists, by contrast, accepted). In essence, this new attitude involved accepting that the Soviet State was not the Antichrist, as the Local Council of 1917-18 and the Russian Church Abroad had in effect declared, but Caesar, no worse in principle than the Caesars of Ancient Rome, to whom the things belonging to Caesar were due.

This attitude presupposed that it was possible, in the Soviet Union as in Ancient Rome, to draw a clear line between politics and religion. But in practice, even more than in theory, this line proved very hard to draw. For the early Bolsheviks, at any rate, there was no such dividing line; for them, everything was ideological, everything had to be in accordance with their ideology, there could be no room for disagreement, no private spheres into which the state and its ideology did not pry. Unlike most of the Roman emperors, who allowed the Christians to order their own lives in their own way so long as they showed loyalty to the state (which, as we have seen, the Christians were very eager to do), the Bolsheviks insisted in imposing their

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348 "Is sobran’ya Tsentral’nogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Oktyabr’skoj revolyutsii: listovka pod № 1011 (From the collection of the Central State Archive of the October revolution: leaflet without indications, № 1011", Nauka i Religia (Science and Religion), 1989, no. 4 ®.
own ways upon the Christians in every sphere: in family life (civil marriage only, divorce on demand, children spying on parents), in education (compulsory Marxism), in economics (dekulakization, collectivization), in military service (the oath of allegiance to Lenin), in science (Darwinism, Lysenkoism), in art (socialist realism), and in religion (the requisitioning of valuables, registration, commemoration of the authorities at the Liturgy, reporting of confessions by the priests). Resistance to any one of these demands was counted as "anti-Soviet behaviour", i.e. political disloyalty. Therefore it was no use protesting one's political loyalty to the regime if one refused to accept just one of these demands. According to the Soviet interpretation of the word: "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one has become guilty of all of it" (James 2.10), such a person was an enemy of the people.

In view of this, it is not surprising that many Christians came to the conclusion that it was less morally debilitating to reject the whole regime that made such impossible demands, since the penalty would be the same whether one asserted one's loyalty to it or not. And if this meant living as an outlaw, so be it. Such a rejection of, or flight from the state had precedents in Russian history; and we find some priests, such as Hieromartyr Timothy Strelkov of Mikhailovka (+1930) and even some bishops, such as Hieroconfessor Amphilochius of Yeniseisk (+1946), adopting this course.349

Nevertheless, the path of total rejection of the Soviet state required enormous courage, strength and self-sacrifice, not only for oneself but also (which was more difficult) for one's family or flock. It is therefore not surprising that, already during the Civil War, the Church began to soften her anti-Soviet rhetoric and try once more to draw the line between politics and religion. This is what Patriarch Tikhon tried to do in the later years of his patriarchate - with the best of motives (to save Christian lives), but, it must be said, only mixed results. Thus his decision to allow some, but not all of the Church's valuables to be requisitioned by the Bolsheviks in 1922 not only did not bring help to the starving of the Volga, as was the intention, but led to many clashes between believers and the authorities and many deaths of believers. For, as the holy Elder Nectarius of Optina said: "You see now, the patriarch gave the order to give up all valuables from the churches, but they belonged to the Church!"350

The decision to negotiate and compromise with the Bolsheviks - in transgression of the decrees of the 1917-18 Council - only brought confusion and division to the Church. Thus on the right wing of the Church there were those who thought that the patriarch had already gone too far; while on the left wing there were those who wanted to go further. However, neither

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Patriarch Tikhon nor his successor, Metropolitan Peter, crossed the line which would have involved surrendering the spiritual freedom of the Church into the hands of the authorities.

That line was crossed only with the coming to power, in 1927, of Metropolitan Peter’s deputy, Metropolitan Sergius. He sought and obtained legalization for his church organization, the present-day Moscow Patriarchate. And then introduced the commemoration of the God-hating anti-authorities at the Divine Liturgy.

This was a fateful step, because to seek legalization from a state inescapably implies recognition of that state to a greater or lesser degree; at a minimum, it implies recognition of that state as God-established and the majority of its laws as binding on Christians. But how can a state that openly and systematically wars against God be God-established? And how can a state that legalizes all manner of crimes be considered to be legal in itself and the fount of legality?! Rather, such a state is not an authority at all, but the beast of the Apocalypse, of whom it is written that it receives its authority, not from God, but from the devil (Revelation 13.2).

Moreover, by declaring, in his famous “Declaration”, that the Soviet regime's joys were the Church's joys, and its sorrows the Church's sorrows, Sergius in effect declared an identity of aims between the Church and the State. And this was not just a lie, but a lie against the faith, a concession to the communist ideology. For it implied that communism as such was good, and its victory to be welcomed.

Thus Sergius Nilus quoted Izvestia, which said that Metropolitan Sergius’ “Declaration” was an attempt “to construct a cross in such a way that it would look like a hammer to a worker, and like a sickle to a peasant”. “In other words,” said Nilus, “to exchange the cross for the Soviet seal, the seal of the beast (Rev. 13.16).”

In order to protect the flock of Christ from Sergius' apostasy, the leaders of the True Church had to draw once more the line between politics and religion. One approach was to distinguish between physical opposition to the regime and spiritual opposition to it. Thus Hieromartyr Archbishop Barlaam of Perm wrote that physical opposition was not permitted, but spiritual opposition was obligatory. Again, Hieromartyr Bishop Mark (Novoselov) wrote: “I am an enemy of Soviet power – and what is more, by dint of my religious convictions, insofar as Soviet power is an atheist power and even anti-theist. I believe that as a true Christian I cannot strengthen this power by any means...
[There is] a petition which the Church has commanded to be used everyday in certain well-known conditions... The purpose of this formula is to request the overthrow of the infidel power by God... But this formula does not amount to a summons to believers to take active measures, but only calls them to pray for the overthrow of the power that has fallen away from God.”

This criterion allowed Christians quite sincerely to reject the charge of "counter-revolution" - if "counter-revolution" were understood to mean physical rebellion. The problem was, as we have seen, that the Bolsheviks understood "counter-revolution" in a much wider sense...

Another, still more basic problem was that it still left the question whether Soviet power was from God or not unresolved. If Soviet power was from God, it should be counted as Caesar and should be given what was Caesar's. But bitter experience had shown that this "Caesar" wanted to seat himself in the temple as if he were God (II Thessalonians 2.4). So was he not in fact Antichrist, whose power is not from God, but from Satan (Revelation 13.2), being allowed by God for the punishment of sinners, but by no means established by Him? If so, then there was no alternative but to flee into the catacombs, rejecting totally the government of Satan on earth.

In the early years after Metropolitan Sergius' declaration, many Catacomb Christians, while in practice not surrendering what was God's to the Soviets, in theory could not make up their minds whether the Soviet regime was Caesar or Antichrist. Thus Hieromartyr Joseph (Gavrilov), superior of Raithu Desert (+1930), confessed at his interrogation: "I have never, and do not now, belong to any political parties. I consider Soviet power to be given from God, but a power that is from God must fulfill the will of God, and Soviet power does not fulfill the will of God. Therefore it is not from God, but from Satan. It closes churches, mocks the holy icons, teaches children atheism, etc. That is, it fulfills the will of Satan... It is better to die with faith than without faith. I am a real believer, faith has saved me in battles, and I hope that in the future faith will save me from death. I firmly believe in the Resurrection of Christ and His Second Coming. I have not gone against the taxes, since it says in Scripture: 'To Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'"

From this confession, impressive though it is, it is not clear whether Hieromartyr Joseph recognised the Soviet regime as Caesar, and therefore from God, or as Antichrist, and therefore from Satan. In the end the Bolsheviks resolved his dilemma for him. They shot him, and therefore showed that they were - Antichrist.

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353 Novoselov, quoted in I.I. Osipova, “Istoria Istinnogo Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi po Materialam Sledstvennago Dela (The History of the True Orthodox Church from Investigative Case Material)”, Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Rus’), № 14 (1587), July 15/28, 1997, p. 3®.

354 Novie Prepodobnomucheniki Raifskie (The New Monk-Martyrs of Raithu), publication of the Kazan diocese, Moscow, 1997, p. 17®.
In the Russian Church in Exile, meanwhile, a consensus had emerged that the Soviet regime was not Caesar, but Antichrist. This was the position of, for example, Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava, Metropolitan Innocent of Peking and Archbishop Averky of Jordanville.\footnote{Cf. \textit{The Letters of Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava and Pereyaslavl}, Jordanville, 1976; Archbishop Averky, "Nevidimij Mir - sily besplotnie (The invisible world - the bodiless angels)", \textit{Slova i Rechi (Sermons and Speeches)}, Jordanville, 1975, vol. 2, pp. 593-95; Metropolitan Innocent, "On Soviet Power", in Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), \textit{Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago (Life of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich)}, Montreal, 1960, volume 6, pp. 168-172 \®.}

As Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), the foremost canonist of the Russian Church Abroad, wrote: “With regard to the question of the commemoration of authorities, we must bear in mind that now we are having dealings not simply with a pagan government like Nero’s, but with the apostasy of the last times. Not with a so far unenlightened authority, but with apostasy. The Holy Fathers did not relate to Julian the Apostate in the same way as they did to the other pagan Emperors. And we cannot relate to the antichristian authorities in the same way as to any other, for its nature is purely satanic…”\footnote{Grabbe, \textit{Letters}, Moscow, 1998, p. 85 \®.}

\section*{2. The Seal of the Soviet Antichrist}

If the Soviet state was the collective Antichrist, the beast of the Apocalypse, what was its seal? In the case of the Church, this question has already been answered: the seal was “legalisation” by “the mystery of lawlessness”, on the one hand, and the commemoration of the Antichrist \textit{by name} at the liturgy, on the other. This was the “abomination of desolation” set up in the Holy of holies.

In the case of individual Christians, the answer is analogous: the seal of the Antichrist was any activity that presupposed participation in, and recognition of, the Soviet state. For the main lesson of the 1920s and 30s was that it is vain to see a modus vivendi with the Antichrist: he takes everything and gives nothing in return, as Metropolitan Peter once bitterly complained to the Soviet “over-procurator” Tuchkov. So the Christians began to avoid everything that tied them in any way to the state: Soviet passports (which, at least in some periods, involved definite obligations to the state); service in the Red Army (how can a Christian fight for “the conquests of October”?); Soviet educational institutions (which involved compulsory study of, and examinations in, Marxism-Leninism); and any and every kind of electoral or political activity (which was monopolised by the communist party).

There was no consensus among Catacomb Christians about what activities were to be considered as “Soviet”; some groups and branches of the Church were stricter, others less strict. Thus some “non-commemoorators” took jobs in
Soviet institutions and restricted their abstinence from Soviet life to non-membership of the communist party and the Soviet church. Others, however, not only refused to work for the Antichrist in any way, but even refused to have electricity in their homes, since this, too, came to them from the Antichrist. As Soviet power weakened, some Catacomb Christians felt able to practise “economy” and temper the strictness of their rule. Thus the Catacomb hieromonk Gury (Pavlov) was a “passportless”, but took a Soviet passport in 1990 in order to receive consecration to the episcopate in the U.S.A.

The question of Soviet passports needs to be examined in a little more detail. Passportisation had been introduced into the Soviet Union only in 1932, and only for the most urbanized areas. Already then it was used as a means of winking out Catacomb Christians. Thus M.V. Shkvarovsky writes: “Completing their liquidation of the Josephites, there was a meeting of regional inspectors for cultic matters on March 16, 1933, at a time when passportisation was being introduced. The meeting decided, on the orders of the OGPU, ‘not to give passports to servants of the cult of the Josephite confession of faith’, which meant automatic expulsion from Leningrad. Similar things happened in other major cities of the USSR.”

Catacomb hierarchs did not bless their spiritual children to take passports because in filling in the forms the social origins and record of Christians was revealed, making them liable to persecution. Also Catacomb Christians did not want to receive what they considered to be the seal of the Antichrist, or to declare themselves citizens of the antichristian kingdom.

In the 1930s the peasants had not been given passports but were chained to the land which they worked. They were herded into the collective farms and forced to do various things against their conscience, such as vote for the communist officials who had destroyed their way of life and their churches. Those who refused to do this – refusals were particularly common in the Lipetsk, Tambov and Voronezh areas – were rigorously persecuted, and often left to die of hunger.

On May 4, 1961, however, the Soviet government issued its decree on “parasitism” and introduced its campaign for general passportisation. In local papers throughout the country it was announced that, in order to receive a Soviet passport, a citizen of the USSR would have to recognize all the laws of Soviet power, past and present, beginning from Lenin’s decrees. Since this involved, in effect, a recognition of all the crimes of Soviet power, a movement arose to reject Soviet passports, a movement which was centred mainly in the country areas among those peasants and their families who had rejected collectivization in the 1930s.

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357 Shkvarovsky, Iosifianstvo (Josephitism), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 171 ©.
E.A. Petrova writes: “Protests against general passportisation arose among Christians throughout the vast country. A huge number of secret Christians who had passports began to reject them, destroy them, burn them and loudly, for all to hear, renounce Soviet citizenship. Many Christians from the patriarchal church also gave in their passports. There were cases in which as many as 200 people at one time went up to the local soviet and gave in their passports. In one day the whole of a Christian community near Tashkent gave in 100 passports at once. Communities in Kemerovo and Novosibirsk provinces gave in their passports, and Christians in the Altai area burned their passports... Protests against general passportisation broke out in Belorussia, in the Ukraine, and in the Voronezh, Tambov and Ryazan provinces... Christians who renounced their Soviet passports began to be seized and, imprisoned and exiled. But in spite of these repressions the movement of the passportless Christians grew and became stronger. It was precisely in these years that the Catacomb Church received a major influx from Christians of the patriarchal church who renounced Soviet passports and returned into the bosom of the True Orthodox Church.”

In the 1970s the detailed questionnaires required in order to receive passports were abandoned, but in 1974 it was made obligatory for all Soviet citizens to have a passport, and a new, red passport differing quite significantly from the old, green one. However, it contained a cover with the words: “Passport of a citizen of the Soviet Socialist Republics” together with a hammer and sickle, which was still unacceptable to the Passportless, who therefore continued to be subject to prison, exile and hunger. Those who joined the Catacomb Church at this time often erased the word “citizen”, replacing it with the word “Christian”, so that they had a “Passport of a Christian of the Soviet Socialist Republics”.

In recent years the great podvig of the Passportless Catacomb Christians has been criticised by some, and not only, as we would expect, by members of the Soviet and other heterodox churches. Thus Metropolitan Vitaly, first-hierarch of the ROCA, in a dialogue with representatives of the Passportless, compared the Soviet Union to the Roman empire. St Paul had been proud of his Roman citizenship, he wrote, so what was wrong with having a Soviet passport and being called a Soviet citizen? Passportless Christians were appalled by the comparison – as if Rome, the state in which Christ Himself was born and was registered in a census, and which later grew into the great Orthodox Christian empires of Byzantium, the New Rome, and Russia, the Third Rome, could be compared to the anti-state, the collective Antichrist,

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that destroyed the Russian empire! Rome, even in its pagan phase, had protected the Christians from the fury of the Jews: the Soviet Union was, in its early phase, the instrument of the Jews against the Christians. Rome, even in its pagan phase, guaranteed a framework of law and order within which the apostles could rapidly spread the faith from one end of the world to the other: the Soviet Union forced a population that was already Orthodox in its great majority to renounce their faith or hide it “in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11.38).

Still more recently, an anonymous publication has accused the Catacomb Christians of “premature flight” from the world, analogous to the flight of the Old Believers from Russian society. On this path of premature flight from the world, writes the anonymous author, “set out the schismatic Old Ritualists under Peter. In our century, the Catacomb Christians decisively refused to accept any state documents, seeing in them the seal of the Antichrist. Of course, in Peter’s reign, and still more in Stalin’s regime, elements of an antichristian kingdom were evident. But such terrible rebellions against the God-established order were not yet the end, ‘this is only the beginning of sorrows’, as the Gospel says (Luke 21.9).”

So what is the anonymous author asserting? That the Catacomb Christians are schismatics on a par with the Old Ritualists?! This not only constitutes a serious slander against the Catacomb Church, but also betrays a blindness with regard to the eschatological significance of the Russian-Jewish revolution, which, if only the “beginning” of sorrows, was nevertheless also the beginning of the reign of the Antichrist, when the relationship between the Church and the State changed from one of cooperation and mutual recognition to one of mutual non-recognition and the most fundamental incompatibility.

There can be no doubt that Peter the Great inflicted great damage on the Church (and thereby indirectly also on the State, for which it paid in 1917) through his westernizing reforms. However, the conscience of the Church, while rejecting his errors, has always recognized that he died as a Christian and God-anointed tsar (see the Life of St. Metrophanes of Voronezh, who appeared to one of his venerators after his death and told him: “If you want to be pleasing to me, pray for the repose of the soul of Emperor Peter the Great”). No saint of the Church ever counselled rebellion against Peter or his successors, as opposed to resistance to certain of their decrees.

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360 Petrova, op. cit.
361 Kreditnie kartochki ili pechat’ antikhrista? (Credit cards or the seal of the antichrist?), St. Petersburg: Tsentr Pravoslavnogo prosveshcheniya, 2000, pp. 8-9 ©.
363 As Hieromonk Dionysius points out, “the service of ‘him that restraineth’, although undermined, was preserved by Russian monarchical power even after Peter – and it is necessary to emphasize this. It was preserved because neither the people nor the Church
As for the Old Ritualists, their rebellion was not in the first place against Peter and his reforms, but against Patriarch Nicon and his reforms, which was quickly followed by rebellion against Peter’s father, Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich also. Later, they seized on Peter’s reforms as an excuse for widening and deepening their rebellion against the God-established order, making them the forerunners, not of the True Orthodox Christians of the Soviet catacombs, who always recognized that which the Old Ritualists rejected, but of the revolutionaries of 1905 and 1917.

As Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) wrote in 1912, in his encyclical to the Old Ritualists: “The spirit of this world... winks at real revolutionaries and sent the money of your rich men to create the Moscow rebellion of 1905.”

Another, more moderate objection is sometimes raised: that the exploit (podvig) of the Catacomb Christians, while admirable and justified in view of the ferocity of the Soviet regime, was nevertheless not necessary, for one could be saved without resorting to such extreme measures.

The present writer is not aware of any decision by any competent Church authority that would clarify the question whether the rejection of Soviet passports was necessary for the salvation of Christians in the Soviet period. It may be that such a question cannot be answered in a clear and categorical manner in view of the great complexity and diversity of the relations between individual believers and the Soviet state. Only God knows whether any particular degree of involvement in Soviet life constituted apostasy or an acceptable level of accommodation to circumstances.

However, the question whether the podvig of the Catacomb Christians was “necessary” is much easier to answer. It is as easy to answer as the question: Is it necessary to keep as far away from sin as possible, or: Is it necessary to take every possible precaution against sin? The answer, of course, is: yes, it is absolutely necessary!

The English have a parable: when you have supper with the devil, take a very long spoon. The Catacomb Christians took not even very long spoons to the marriage feast of the devil and the citizens of the Soviet state. In their completely laudable zeal to keep their bridal garments spotless for the marriage feast of Christ and His Church, they chose not even to step over the

renounced the very ideal of the Orthodox kingdom, and, as even V. Klyuchevsky noted, continued to consider as law which corresponded to this ideal, and not Peter’s decrees.”

(Priest Timothy and Hieromonk Dionysius Alferov, O Tserkvi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Times), Moscow: “Russkaia Idea”, 1998, p. 66 ®).

364 Quoted in “Otnoshenia s Staroobriadchestvom (Relations with Old Believerism), Vozdvizhenie, (Exaltation), Winter, 2000, p. 76 ®.
threshold of the Soviet madhouse. They chose rather to go hungry than eat of 
the devil’s food, the communion of heretics and apostates.

And not only did they save their own souls thereby: they also provided an 
absolutely necessary warning to those Christians who, thinking that they 
could take coals into their breast and not be burned, were being tempted into 
closer relations with the Antichrist. For as the beast’s ferocity gradually 
lessened from the 1956 amnesty onwards, and the Soviet state began to 
acquire some (but never all) of the external characteristics of the “normal” 
state, it was indeed tempting to think that the leopard was changing its spots, 
that the lion was becoming a vegetarian, that Pharaoh was becoming Caesar – 
so that it was now time to give to Caesar what was Caesar’s…

Against this terribly dangerous temptation, the movement of the 
Passportless, which exploded at precisely this time, came as a powerful 
warning. “No,” they said, “the beast has not changed its nature. If its 
persecution is less widespread now than before, this is because the opposition 
to him has been largely destroyed. The persecution now is no less fierce than 
before, only it is more subtle, for it now mixes rewards – the comforts of the 
Soviet “paradise” – with punishments. But ‘here we have no continuing city’; 
and if this was true even under the God-loving tsars, how can it not be even 
more so now, under the God-hating Antichrist? If Christ suffered outside 
the walls of the city in order to sanctify us by His Blood, then we, too, must go 
out to Him outside the walls of the antichristian state (Hebrews 13.12-14).”

Now, having said all this, it must be admitted that the seal of the Antichrist 
in Soviet Russia could not have been the same seal that is mentioned in 
Revelation 13, if only because it was not a mark placed on the right hand and 
forehead. However, we are fully justified in calling it a seal (of the collective 
Antichrist), if not the seal (of the personal Antichrist); for its acceptance, at 
least in certain contexts (for example, the context of the 1961 law), entailed 
acceptance of the whole lawless legislation and ideology of the Soviet state. 
To that extent it was not just a neutral act of registration; it was an act of 
registration in Satan’s kingdom, the kingdom of the Antichrist, and as such 
was not only the forerunner of the seal, but in a sense the beginning of that 
seal, in that it had the same apocalyptic significance for the life of Christians.

3. The Enigmatic 1990s

If we do not understand the period of Church history immediately 
predicting our own, then we shall not be able to understand or perceive the 
signs of our own times. Thus a correct understanding of the seal of the

365 Only in this sense could the Soviet seal be said to be on the forehead and right hand: in 
that it prevented people, “from fear of the Jews”, from making the sign of the cross with their 
right hand on their forehead.
Antichrist in the Soviet period is a necessary prerequisite to understanding the seal in the post-Soviet period.

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 posed a difficult problem of interpretation. Was the Antichrist really dead? If so, then had the end times, paradoxically, come to an end? Or was this only a temporary “breathing space” in which the Antichrist was preparing a new, more subtle, more universal and more deadly onslaught?

The signs were mixed. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that perestroika and the fall of communism came not a moment too soon for the beleaguered Catacomb Church, which was scattered and divided, and desperately short of bishops and priests of unquestioned Orthodoxy and apostolic succession. The fall of the iron curtain enabled the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to enter Russia and regenerate the hierarchy of the True Church, while the introduction of freedom of speech and the press enabled millions of Soviet citizens to learn the truth about their state and church for the first time. On the basis of this knowledge, they could now seek entrance into the True Church without the fear of being sent to prison or the camps. In the wave of disillusion with post-Soviet democracy that followed in the mid-1990s, it was pointed out – rightly – that freedom is a two-edged weapon, which can destroy as well as give life, and that “freedom” had brought Russia poverty and crime as well as interesting newspapers. However, for the soul thirsting for truth there is no more precious gift than the freedom to seek and find; and that opportunity was now, at last, presented to the masses.

On the other hand, only a minority of Russians used this freedom to seek the truth that makes one truly, spiritually free. And so if the fall of communism in 1989-91 was a liberation, it was a liberation strangely lacking in joy. Orthodoxy was restored neither to the state nor to the official church, and the masses of the people remained unconverted. Ten years later, a priest of the Moscow Patriarchate could claim that “the regeneration of ecclesiastical life has become a clear manifestation of the miraculous transfiguration of Russia”. But behind the newly gilded cupolas reigned heresy and corruption on a frightening scale. It was as Bishop Theophan the Recluse had prophesied over a century before: “Although the Christian name will be heard everywhere, and everywhere will be visible churches and ecclesiastical ceremonies, all this will be just appearances, and within there will be true apostasy. On this soil the Antichrist will be born...”

None of the communist persecutors of the previous seventy years, throughout the whole vast territory of Eastern Europe and Russia, was brought to trial for his crimes. The consequences have been all too evident.

Thus one group of “repentant” communists, sensing the signs of the political times, seized power in 1991 in a “democratic” coup and immediately formed such close and dependent ties on its western allies that the formerly advanced (if inefficient) economy of Russia was transformed into a scrap-heap of obsolescent factories, on the one hand, and a source of cheap raw materials for the West, on the other.\(^{367}\) Another group, playing on the sense of betrayal felt by many, formed a nationalist opposition – but an opposition characterized by hatred, envy and negativism rather than a constructive understanding of the nation’s real spiritual needs and identity. Still others, using the contacts and dollars acquired in their communist days, went into “business” – that is, a mixture of crime, extortion and the worst practices of capitalism. It is little wonder that in many churches the prayer to be delivered “from the bitter torment of atheist rule” continues to be chanted…

In the midst of this disorganized anarchy, many have begun to long nostalgically for the organized anarchy of the Soviet period, considering that the cheapness of Soviet sausages somehow outweighed the destruction of tens of millions of souls through Soviet violence and propaganda. Like the children of Israel who became disillusioned with the rigorous freedom of the desert, they have begun to long once more for the fleshpots of Egypt. But unlike the Israelites, the wanderers in the desert of post-Soviet Russia have had no Moses to urge them ever onwards to the Promised Land. True, they feel the need for such a leader; and if many still long for the return of a Stalin, there are many who prefer the image of Tsar Nicholas II, whose ever-increasing veneration must be considered one of the most encouraging phenomena of the 1990s. But veneration for the pre-revolutionary tsars will not bring forward the appearance of a post-revolutionary tsar unless that veneration is combined with repentance. Few understand that the people must become worthy of such a tsar by a return to the True Church and a life based on the commandments of God. Otherwise, if they continue to worship the golden calf, the new Moses, if such a one appears, will break the tablets of the new law before their eyes. And if they continue to follow the new Dathans and Abirams of the heretical Moscow Patriarchate, then under their feet, too, the earth will open – or they will be condemned to wander another forty years in the desert, dying before they reach the promised land of a cleansed and Holy Russia.

It is in the context of this general mood of confusion, disillusion and apocalyptic expectation that the new forms of identification and money exchange, containing, if the experts are to be believed, the number 666, have aroused such alarm in the Orthodox countries of Eastern Europe and Russia – and indeed, throughout the world. That these forms of identification came from the West rather than the East only increased the sense of apocalyptic foreboding; for in the view of many the capitalist West was no less

\(^{367}\) See Mikhail Nazarov, Tajna Rossii (The Mystery of Russia), Moscow: “Russkaia Idea”, 1999 ©.
antichrarian than the post-communist East, having many of the same characteristics of lawlessness. Thus the American hieromonk Fr. Seraphim Rose wrote: “If we look around at our 20th-century civilization, lawlessness or anarchy is perhaps the chief characteristic which identifies it... In the realm of moral teaching, it is quite noticeable, especially in the last twenty years or so, how lawlessness has become the norm, how even people in high positions and the clergy in liberal denominations are quite willing to justify all kinds of things which before were considered immoral... All this is a sign of what St. Paul calls ‘the mystery of lawlessness’.”

Some have mocked the idea that these new forms of identification could be the seal of the Antichrist. Thus the anonymous author cited above writes, quoting Luke 2.1-4: “The Most Pure Virgin Mary, and even the Saviour Himself borne in her cradle, took part in a census. And this took place during the reign of the pagan Emperor Augustus. This act – census-taking – is the essence of all contemporary registration cards, individual numbers, etc. In antiquity officials registered the names of people and gave them a number. The registration was undertaken with the aid of the technical means of that time: with a quill on parchment. Even the Mother of God, who was beyond all corruption and filled with the Holy Spirit, received some kind of number in these lists. Now officials make similar registers with the aid of other means. The essence remains the same: the state receives information on its citizens which is necessary for the execution of government.”

But is the essence really the same then and now? We have already seen that the pagan Roman empire cannot be considered to be the same kind of State as the kingdom of the Antichrist. There is no evidence that the census information obtained by the Roman emperors was used for any evil purpose. But already in the Soviet period, registration (passportisation) was most definitely used for evil, antichristian purposes, and was therefore avoided by the Catacomb Christians. The question to be asked about the modern forms of identification is: are they now being used, or could they be used in the future, for antichristian purposes?

The anonymous author considers that the modern forms of identification could not be the seal of the Antichrist, in the first place because “they do not symbolize love for any particular person” – and the seal, according to St. Nilus the Myrrhgusher, contains an inscription expressing voluntary acceptance of, and love for, the Antichrist. According to this author, external imprinting, “pieces of paper and plastic and electronic gadgets”, divert the

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368 Rose, in Monk Damascene, Not of this World, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1995, pp. 996-997.
369 The Old Believer Priest Gennady Chunin has written intelligently against identifying the bar-code in Russian tax declaration forms with the apocalyptic number. “The tax number and the seal of the Antichrist”, Dukhovnie Otveti (Spiritual Replies), № 14, 2000, pp. 67-80 ®.
370 Kreditnie kartochki..., op. cit., p. 35.
371 Kreditnie kartochki..., op. cit., p. 11.
attention of believers from the real, internal imprinting with the seal – apostasy from Christ through participation in the heresy of ecumenism. Moreover, this internal imprinting with heresy has an external aspect in the form of external rituals and sacraments. "'Orthodox' bishops together with representatives of every possible religion raised a pagan idol in Vancouver, passed through 'purifying smoke' in Canberra, etc. There are many examples... The essence of these abominations is renunciation of Christ the God-man. All these actions receive the approbation of the [Moscow Patriarchal] Synod. And not one of the bishops has declared his protest. This means that the whole fullness of the episcopate is 'sealed' - by direct participation or silent non-resistance – with the seal of apostasy from Christ. And this is the essence of the number of the beast..." 372

And yet where is the number here? As far as the present writer knows, the number 666 is not imprinted on any of the participants in ecumenical worship. Of course, we can completely agree with the anonymous author that participation in the ecumenical movement is indeed a sin unto death, and that receiving the "sacraments" of the ecumenists is analogous to imprinting with the seal of the Antichrist. But this is an analogy, a type – no more. It is obvious that the seal of the Antichrist, as described in the Apocalypse, is something different. It is a mark placed on the forehead and right hand without which people will not be able to buy or sell; and this it is difficult in this connection not to be struck by the fact that a very similar, electronic or bio-electronic implant under the skin of the forehead and right hand has been proposed as the basis for a worldwide food distribution system!

Thus P. Budzilovich writes: "In the U.S.A., which is the leader of the builders of the 'New World Order', all technical preparations have now been made for the attainment of global control. The National Security Agency already has a super-powerful computer created specially for this aim (Texe Marr 'Project LUCID - the Beast Universal Human Control System', Austin, TX, 1996). Work on the creation of this computer and the required mathematical software has been conducted as part of a project with the code-name 'Project LUCID' (the abbreviation LUCID means bright, radiant; whence 'Lucifer', Satan - light-bearing). They have also worked out means of 'placing the seal' of the beast - biological microcircuits, which are planned to be incorporated into the right hand or the head (at the moment, as reported in 'Phoenix Letter' for March, 1997, the governments of Denmark, the Philippines and Trinidad are taking steps to introduce such microcircuits to check the identities of their citizens, referring to the success of this programme in the U.S.A. Although this work is being carried out in secret in the U.S.A.). The microcircuits will contain all-encompassing information about their bearers, including photographs, fingerprints, feet, snaps of the irises, information about their financial situation, health, etc. It goes without saying that every individual in the whole world will be given a unique

registration number. At the moment it is suggested that such a number should consist of 18 digits, in three groups, which means... six digits in each group, forming the image of the number 666.\(^{373}\)

Now a number or equivalent mark imprinted in some such way into the body (and scanned, perhaps, by satellites in space) could indeed be interpreted as a mark given by the beast.

Again, Tim Willard, editor of the “Futurist” magazine, writes of the biochip: ‘The technology behind such a biochip implant is fairly uncomplicated and with a little refinement could be used in a variety of human applications. Conceivably a number could be assigned at birth and follow that person throughout life. Most likely it would be implanted on the back of the right or the left hand so that it would be easy to scan at stores. Then you would simply scan your hand to automatically debit your bank account’\(^{374}\)

In this context, the following observation by George Sprukstis is important: “Usually, when you want to contact someone on the internet, you type the three letters ‘www’ [for ‘worldwide web’]... It is fascinating that in the international alphabet, ‘w’... is used to translate the Hebrew letter vav into the standard Roman alphabet. Vav, the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, represents the number 6. So, in a sense, when you type the three letters ‘www’, you are entering the Hebrew equivalent of ‘666’. We have all known for a long time that the Antichrist will need a global communications system to carry out his evil schemes. Now, we have one with his initials on it.”\(^{375}\)

It should be remembered that in technologically advanced countries the internet is already widely used for buying and selling various things... At the same time, no means of communication is in itself evil. It is the message, rather than the medium, which may be evil.

Also important in this context is the observation by the confessor Sergius Nilus that the Star of David, the symbol of Jewish state power, has a structure which can be described in terms of six sixes.

"The symbol or seal of the mystery of iniquity - of the God-fighting devil, as well as its significance and power (albeit illusory), must be known to every Jew - to the whole of the Jewish people and through it to Masonry, as the ally of Jewry. Their seal will also be the seal of their king and antichrist-god, who is not yet, but who will be in the nearest future.

\(^{373}\) “Novij Mirovoj Poriadok v 2000-em godu? (The New World Order in the year 2000?)” Pравославная Русь (Orthodox Rus’), № 9 (1582), May 1/14, 1997, p. 5 ®.

\(^{374}\) Light for the Last Days, January-March, 1997, pp. 4-5.

\(^{375}\) Sprukstis, “666 & the World Wide Web”, Orthodox@listserv.indiana.edu, 15 September, 1997.
"But does such a symbol, such a seal, really exist among the Jews and Masons?...

"The six-pointed star, composed of two interlocking, equal-sided similar triangles... Each of the triangles has three sides, three corners and three apexes. Consequently, in the two triangles there will be 6 sides, 6 corners and 6 apexes...

"In the seal of the Antichrist, therefore, the number 6 is repeated three times, that is: 666, which for fear of the Jews (John 19.38), for the reader who understands (Matthew 24.15) the symbolism of the mystery, could also be represented by the seer of mysteries in writing, as six hundred and sixty-six...

"... This star is truly just as sacred a symbol for the Jew (and therefore for the Mason) as the sign of the life-giving Cross is for the Christian...

"This seal which is sacred for Jewry bears the name in the ritual of the Jewish services of 'Mochin-Dovid', which means 'Shield of David'. They put it into the grave of every right-believing Jews, as an earnest of his communion with his 'god' beyond the grave...

"The Masons and the offshoots of the Masonic tree - the theosophists, the occultists, the spiritualists, the gnostic, etc. - attach just as sacred a significance to this seal, but it has another name. It is called: "The Seal of Solomon" or the Cabbalistic "Tetragramma".

"And so the symbol or seal of Judaeo-Masonry, the "synagogue of Satan" of the apostates from Christ and Jewish kahal is the "tetragramma" of the Cabbala.

"If the seal of those who... are preparing a kingdom for the antichrist is the "tetragramma of Solomon" or "Mochin Dovid", then is it not clear that it will also be the seal of the Antichrist himself?

"Will any of those who believe in Christ renounce the Cross of the Lord? Will he agree to replace it with another symbol?

"No way.

"Nor will the Jews and the Masons renounce their seal, until Israel is converted and they shall look on Him Whom they have pierced..."376

So the combination of “666” on biochips inserted into our foreheads and right hands, with “666” (“www”) on the internet, with “666” as the symbol of

376 Nilus, It is Near, at the Very Door, Sergiev Posad, 1917, pp. 262-263, 248-250 ©.
Jewish political power (the Star of David), constitutes undoubtedly the closest apparent analogy - if it is only an analogy - to the seal of the Antichrist that has yet appeared in human history. Whether it is in fact the seal itself remains to be proved. But only a great insensitivity to “the signs of the times” would fail to be impressed – and alarmed – by this sign.

Now the anonymous author expresses the fear that a premature flight from the world containing these “playthings of civilization” will create schism in the Church, with those who reject them condemning those who do not reject them as schismatics and apostates. While this remains a possibility, we may note that in Greece, where alarm at the new identity cards has provoked mass demonstrations and protests in front of government offices, and some Synods have made an official decisions to reject the cards while others have not, no ecclesiastical schism on this soil has yet arisen. The experience of the Catacomb Church is relevant here again. Although some catacombniks accepted Soviet passports and others did not, no formal schism arose on this soil. The Passportless were (and are) to be found in several catacomb jurisdictions, and some Christians without passports did not refuse to be under the omophorion of bishops with passports. In any case, even if schisms do arise on this soil, that is no reason to sweep the question under the carpet. In this, as in all ecclesiastical controversies, the only rational option is to study the question carefully on the basis of Holy Tradition and come to a corresponding conclusion, whether that leaves one in the majority or in the minority, with the so-called “extremists” or with the “moderates”, with the “zealots” or with the “compromisers”.

Of course, it cannot be denied that it is possible to “jump the gun” and abandon the world too soon. St. Paul wrote to warn the Thessalonian Christians who had already abandoned their jobs in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ that this would not happen before the removal of “him who restrains” (lawful monarchical power, according to the holy Fathers) and the great apostasy (II Thessalonians 2.1-7). Again, the 19th century Romanian saint, Callinicus of Cernica, stopped building a church because he thought that the end of the world was near – until an angel appeared to him and told him that there was still time to build churches. Again, in 1962 St. John Maximovich is reported as having declared that the Antichrist had just been born...

These were mistakes, but they were mistakes engendered by highly sensitive consciences acutely aware of the increase of corruption in the world. Such a mistake is less dangerous than the opposite one of underestimating the growth of apocalyptic evil. Indeed, there are far more scriptural passages warning against false optimism in this respect than against excessive pessimism (cf. I Thessalonians 5.3-4). And it goes without saying that as time passes and we come closer to the end, the signs of the times come to match the signs given in the Scriptures more and more closely, making the
possibility that such-and-such a phenomenon is in fact the seal of the Antichrist that much greater. As Fr. Seraphim Rose used to say: it is later than we think…

The Jordanville Monk Vsevolod, in an article quoted at length by our anonymous author, considers that while the new identity cards are probably not the seal of the Antichrist, they may well be a preparation for it. This conclusion is less comforting than it sounds; in fact, it implies that we have every reason to approach these identity cards and similar objects with great caution. For who knows at what time the preparation for the seal will turn into the seal itself, especially since the “trial” seal will be very close to the final, “real” seal in form?

The question is: how will we know when a certain technology has ceased to be a mere preparation for the seal, and is the seal itself? At this point it must be emphasized, as St. Gregory Palamas reminds us, that no number of itself is evil, for the whole creation, and therefore all numbers, were created good by God. An external mark or number only becomes evil – in this we can fully agree with our anonymous author - when its reception is bound up with inner apostasy from Christ. In other words, it is not the number 666 as such which destroys the soul, but the apostasy from Christ which is the condition of receiving the seal of that number and the material benefits that go with it.

Thus, as Monk Sergius writes, “as long as we do not deny Christ with knowledge, we should not be afraid of various technologies, not even if they should inject ‘666’ into our blood system!”

At some point, therefore, the use of this technology will be bound up with certain conditions, conditions which it will be impossible for an Orthodox Christian to accept. As far as the present writer knows, no such conditions are attached – yet – to the use of any of the technologies in question; and it is idle to speculate precisely what these conditions will be. Of one thing, however, we can be certain in advance: that the revelation that the conditions attached to the use of this technology are unacceptable will be more likely to be given to those who have always treated it with the greatest suspicion and have kept away from it even when it was not strictly necessary (because no conditions were attached to its use) than to those who have looked down on their more cautious brothers with scarcely concealed disdain, and who may therefore have ceased to notice that, little by little and in the most clever and insidious way, an originally neutral, even beneficial technology has become the instrument of their damnation.

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Conclusion

In 1917 the world entered the era of the Antichrist. “He who restrains”, Orthodox monarchical power, was removed, the great apostasy began and Jewish antichristian power emerged from the underground into the foreground of world history. Since then, the possibility has been ever present that, together with the Antichrist, his seal, too, would appear – not tomorrow, not in generations to come, but today. This fact does not exclude the further possibility that the onslaught of the Antichrist may be temporarily weakened, even turned back, for a period before the end, and that, as some prophecies indicate, there will be a resurrection of the Orthodox empire “for a short time”. But in general the spiritual condition of mankind in the era of the Antichrist will sharply deteriorate, according to the holy fathers, which must make us especially vigilant with regard to the fulfillment of the prophecies contained in the Apocalypse.

The Soviet era was the first era in history in which the majority of Orthodox Christians have had to live for an extended period in a state not established by God and not recognized, but rather anathematized, by the Church – that is, in a state of anarchy which the Apocalypse calls the beast. As such, it is called the era of the collective Antichrist, in contrast to the era of the personal Antichrist, which is yet to come and which will spread over the whole earth. Being the Antichrist, Soviet power had its seal – those forms of legalization and commemoration which entailed the individual Christian’s or church organization’s recognition of the state as God-established and lawful.

The decade since the fall of Soviet power has been an enigmatic period full of conflicting signs whose overall interpretation is not yet clear. On the one hand, an opportunity has been presented to the broad masses of the Russian people to learn the truth and join the True Church. On the other hand, this opportunity has been seized so far by only a small minority, there has been no return to Orthodox forms of official ecclesiastical and political life, and the indications are that the advent of the personal Antichrist, the false king of the Jews, is being prepared. These indications include: the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948; the spread of American-Western-Jewish civilization throughout the world; and the rise in influence of Talmudic Judaism and the bowing before it of most of the world’s religions. Now again, as in the generation before the First Coming of Christ, the land of Israel is at the centre of world history, and the world as a whole is filled with the tense expectation of a coming saviour – only that saviour will be the Antichrist rather than Christ.

In view of this, it is only natural that the appearance of the apocalyptic number 666 in a series of technologies spread and controlled by the dominant American-Western-Jewish civilization should have led many God-fearing
Christians to conclude that “the end is near, even at the doors” (Matthew 24.23), and that “those who are in Judaea” – that is, within the sphere of influence of the New World Order and its “seals” – should “flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24.16) – that is, have nothing to do with these technologies or with the mysterious international powers that issue them.

Nevertheless, in the very tentative and humble opinion of the present writer, these technologies are not the seal of the Antichrist itself, but a preparation for it.

This conclusion is based on the following considerations: (1) so far no conditions unacceptable to the Christian conscience have been attached to the use of these technologies; (2) the American-Western-Jewish civilization that uses them is in fact much weaker than may appear and is on the point of collapse (cf. the prophecy of Elder Aristocles of Moscow and Mount Athos: “America will feed the world, but will finally collapse”); (3) in consequence, the possibility of a recovery of a truly Orthodox empire and civilization, as indicated by many prophecies, is in fact much stronger than may appear; which (4) accords with the possibility, indicated by certain other prophecies, that the Antichrist, though a Jew, will in fact come, not from a pagan, heretical or Jewish background, but from an Orthodox Christian environment (Russia) and will try to imitate Orthodoxy in both his religion and his statehood.

However, in view of the uncertainty of the above conclusion, and of the abundant exhortations to watchfulness contained in the writings of the holy apostles and fathers, it is safer to draw the following, somewhat different conclusion: that whether or not we believe that the modern forms of identification are the seal of the Antichrist, the opinion of those zealots of Orthodoxy who believe that they are should be respected and in no way rejected or ignored. After all, it was these same zealots who refused to take Soviet passports as being the seal of the collective Antichrist, who kept the flame of the true understanding of the Soviet beast alive in the last years of Soviet power, who were that “salt” which kept the last remnants of True Orthodoxy in Russia from being corrupted. And if their watchfulness was so vital in the past, it may well be so again in the future. For blessed is he “who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near…” (Revelation 1.3).

Suzdal.

(This is a revised and slightly expanded version of the original article published in Russian in Suzdal’skie Eparkhial’nie Vedomosti (Suzdal Diocesan News), № 10, April-November, 2000, pp. 22-30)
23. THE DIANA MYTH AND THE ANTICHRIST

“Are we united in grief or collectively nuts?” asked a British columnist the day after Princess Diana’s funeral. He posed a false dichotomy. The majority of the British nation (and many millions abroad) is both united in grief and collectively “nuts” – and it is important to understand how and why.

A priest of the Russian Church Abroad who happened to be visiting England at the time of Diana’s death expressed a seemingly cruel, but in fact sober and saving truth. Although we cannot know God’s final judgement on her, he said, and whatever personal qualities she may have had, the natural reaction of the Orthodox Christian to her death must be that this was the judgement of God upon her and a warning sent from God for all of us. For what else can we say about a person who was not a Christian (she believed in reincarnation and visited fortune-tellers), who lived an openly sinful and extravagant life-style in spite of her royal status, and who was cut down suddenly and without repentance in the middle of her sins?

So why this sudden outpouring of grief on an unparalleled scale, by millions of people who did not even know her? Why was this obviously deeply flawed woman, whose flaws were well known and had been severely criticized, suddenly promoted to the status of an “icon”, the “goddess of good”, “the Cinderella of the twentieth century”?

The journalist Ann Leslie, a fierce critic of Diana in the past, says she has now been humbled in the face of the “awesome power” of the Diana myth. “Myths may not be based on truth – in fact, few are. But we need myths to tell us that we can rise above our pettiness, our banality, our ordinariness, that through some person, or some object, we can connect with the nobler part of ourselves.”

“Myth is not about the head,” she continues, “it is – like Diana – about the heart. It is about longing to feel we belong to something greater, more beautiful than ourselves. Diana, whether she liked it or not, deserved it or not, has become the vehicle for that collective longing.

“This Diana worship, the insistence that this dead, highly privileged if often unhappy millionaires was a saint is, of course, totally irrational. But as the 17th-century French theologian Pascal put it: ‘The heart has its reasons, which reason knows nothing of.’”

Leslie goes on: “Those who felt marginalized by illness, by disease, by disablement, by poverty, found that by believing in the Diana myth – rather than her reality which none of us can truly know – they felt less isolated.
“Because of the way she publicised the stigmata of her eating disorder, her self-laceration, her semi-suicide attempts, she had somehow ‘cured’ them of their sense of estrangement.

“Like apparently miraculous statues, marble Pietas, holy pictures, her image seemed to tell them: ‘I have suffered and I will redeem you.’

“In a country with the highest divorce rate in Europe, Diana’s broken marriage made those whose relationships had collapsed in bitterness and pain feel that perhaps they were not such failures after all.

“If even Diana, with her beauty and wealth, couldn’t make her husband love her, then countless of others couldn’t be blamed for failing in exactly the same way.

“And those whose ethnicity and religion made them feel excluded felt – through the power of the Diana myth – included at last.

“As one Moslem said: ‘She fell in love with a Moslem, a man from the Middle East. If someone like Diana could love a Moslem, perhaps ordinary people in Britain won’t look at us as if we were enemies any more.’

“That is the role of myth. A powerful myth tells us more about our needs than the reality upon which it is founded; it not only rises above reality, but transforms it.”

There is much perceptive psychology in these words; but from an Orthodox Christian perspective they are morally and spiritually misleading.

First, the people may have needs which express themselves in the creation of myths, but if the needs are fallen, their expression needs to be suppressed – or rather, confessed. This may not accord with the tenets of modern psychology (although Freud, for one, was by no means in favour of the completely free expression of passion), but it agrees completely with Orthodox Christian psychology, which favours self-knowledge but not uncontrolled self-expression. In any case, if a myth is false, there is no way it can heal us; for “we can rise above our pettiness, our banality, our ordinariness” only through the truth, which alone, as the Lord said, can make us free (John 8.32).

Secondly, it is misleading to oppose the head and the heart in such a stark and categorical manner, still more to infer (as Leslie appears to do) that where they are in conflict one must follow one’s heart, even if this seems “totally irrational” to the head. The wise Solomon says: “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Proverbs 28.26), and the Prophet Jeremiah says: “The heart is

deceitful above all things” (17.9). Both the head and the heart are fallen. They can be healed only by a fervent pursuit of truth in all spheres – dogmatic truth, moral truth, psychological truth, scientific truth, artistic truth. And truth can be attained only by the head and the heart working together under the guidance of the Spirit of truth.

Diana said that she wanted to be a “Queen of hearts”; she laid claim to the virtues of love and sincerity combined with royal charisma – and the world has taken her at her word. But love of the poor sits badly with great wealth and luxurious living, and “sincerity” – with public humiliation of one’s husband and family and betrayal of his marriage bed. For just as “love” can so often be a cover for sentimentality at best, and self-indulgence at worst, so “sincerity” can be a mask for unconscious hypocrisy and cruelty.

Diana may well be an “icon”, in the sense of a likeness and exemplar, of many elements of popular culture, from her love of pop music and psychotherapy to her eating disorders and religious ecumenism. People identify with her in the faults they share with her, while vicariously enjoying the things they do not share with her – her beauty, her glamour, her popularity. But the saints depicted in Orthodox icons are “God-like” rather than “man-like”; they depict the unfallen image of God in man rather than the image of the beast to which we have fallen. We venerate them precisely because they are not like us in our fallenness, but like God in His holiness.

If Diana is made into an icon in the sense of an object of veneration, then there is a real danger of idolatry. Such an “icon” will not heal our infirmities, because it will in fact confirm us in them, justify them, make them look good. It will tell us that we do not have to change, to repent. Like the gods and goddesses of the pagans, against whom the apostles fought, the veneration of the new goddess Diana – the hunted goddess rather than the hunter goddess, as her brother said at her funeral service (although in fact she was both hunter and hunted) – will become a form of national self-worship and self-justification, the deification of the nation’s fallen passions.

One “constitutional expert” has said of the Diana myth: “Man invented God, and man invented Diana”. It would be truer to say: “Man, having lost faith in the true God, has invented a false goddess.” Diana acquired this ascendancy over the hearts of many millions of people without having any formal political or ecclesiastical power, and without having provided any great service to mankind. By a combination of Hollywood glamour, media hype and an “iconic” likeness to everyman’s image of himself, she invented the world’s longest-running and most popular soap-opera – a show that is destined to continue running long after her death, and whose popularity democratic politicians will have to take into account for many years to come.
And yet the myth of Diana could never have come into being without her being a real princess. For, for all Diana’s personal gifts, and, as one American commentator has written, “for all the opprobrium heaped last week by Diana’s admirers on the chilly Windsors, she would have been invisible without them.”380 It is not simply that her royal marriage made her well-known. Without the charisma attaching to her marriage “in the purple”, she would have been just another high-born socialite.

This raises interesting questions concerning the enduring appeal of the monarchy in our ultra-democratic society. Even such a convinced democrat as C.S. Lewis could write of the monarchy as “the channel through which all the vital elements of citizenship - loyalty, the consecration of secular life, the hierarchical principle, splendour, ceremony, continuity - still trickle down to irrigate the dustbowl of modern economic Statecraft”.381 Even in republican America, whose whole national myth is built on its cult of individual freedom and anti-monarchism, Diana-mania has reached extraordinary proportions, as if she represented the queen the Americans never had and would so like to have had…

Thus to take just one example from many, a 51-year-old professor from Chicago made a 8000-mile round trip just to lay lowers at Diana’s grave, saying: “I absolutely had to come. You don’t have to ask yourself why. If I didn’t, I just wouldn’t have been able to forgive myself for the rest of my life.”382

And yet, how can this be so, when the whole of western education teaches people to believe that monarchy is an outdated institution, when the monarchies that survive have been deprived of all real power, when the royals themselves often behave in an exceedingly unroyal manner, and when Diana herself never ruled in reality, and by her death was an ex-royal, having been divorced from her prince and deprived of her royal title?

Being made in the image of the Heavenly King, men instinctively venerate the image of the Heavenly King in the earthly monarchies, even if some of those images bear very little likeness to the Archetype. Just as those who do not know the true God will nevertheless construct images of false gods, so those who have never known a true king, and have been taught to despise the true kings of the past, are still not protected from falling in love with pseudo-kings and queens. For even in democratic society the urge to love and sacrifice oneself for someone higher that oneself can never be discounted. In Orthodox monarchies such an urge can be directed to sustain Orthodoxy, the

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381 Lewis, “Myth became Fact”, God in the Dock: Essays on Theology, Fount Paperbacks, 1979, p. 64.
true worship of God in Christ. In heterodox democracies it could be directed
to enthrone – the Antichrist...

For, on the one hand, as Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow writes: “The
Tsar lives for his subjects and the subjects for the Tsar... Obviously here the
law of love and self-sacrifice for others rules and not the struggle for
survival.” On the other hand, in the time of the Antichrist, both the struggle
for survival – for a world ruler will be need to deliver the world from anarchy
– and the law of love and self-sacrifice – manipulated, as the prophecies say,
by a magician-false prophet – will propel to the fore a king whose “myth” the
whole non-Orthodox world will fall for, and who will then use the power he
has attained (perhaps through a quasi-Orthodox ceremony of sacred
anointing beamed throughout the world by television) to charm the whole
world into worshipping him as king and as god.

Of course, the twentieth century has already been distinguished by several
evil cults of personality, such as those of Hitler and Stalin. But these, we
thought, were exceptional phenomena occasioned by war, revolution,
personal powerlessness and national humiliation. But the Diana phenomenon
has taken place in a peaceful and prosperous nation, in which no despot rules
or necessity compels. It represents the collective madness of a nation famed
for its eccentric individualism and sober sanity. As such, it is an important
“sign of the times”, showing how easily the Antichrist could take control even
in an anti-monarchical society.

St. Paul said of people in the last times: “Because they received not the love
of the truth, that they might be saved, for this cause God will send them a
strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned
who believed not in the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thess.
2.10-12). In the wake of the Diana phenomenon, it becomes less difficult to
believe how these words could come true on a world-wide scale. We know
now that the world is materially, psychologically and spiritually one major
step closer to that most evil apotheosis, from which may the Lord deliver us
in His great mercy...

(August 28/ September 10, 1997; revised June 26 / July 9, 2004)

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383 Metropolitan Macarius, “Love: the Foundation of Existence in our World”, Orthodox Life,
vol. 47, № 3, May-June, 1997, p. 3.
24. ON DEATH, THE TOLL-HOUSES AND THE JUDGEMENT OF SOULS

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever and ever.
Psalm 18.9.

Introduction

“It is decreed,” says the Apostle, “that men should die once, and after that a judgement” (Hebrews 9.27). The remembrance of death, and the judgement that comes after death, was always before the eyes of the Saints and Fathers of the Church. Thus St. Gregory the Theologian writes: “For the future, instead of the present, make your life here a meditation on death.”384 And of the great Arsenius of the Egyptian desert it is written: “When the blessed Arsenius was about to deliver up his spirit, the brethren saw him weeping, and they said unto him, ‘Art thou also afraid, O father?’ And he said unto them, ‘The dread of this hour has been with me in very truth from the time when I became a monk, and was afraid.’ And so he died.”385

This attitude of continual watchfulness, of spiritual sobriety in the fear of God and His just judgements, is completely contrary to the spirit of the age. It is not simply that men do not believe in the judgement or life after death. Even when they believe, they often do not consider such an attitude worthy of a Christian. They are fond of quoting the words of St. John the Theologian: “Perfect love casts our fear” (John 4.18). But who among us has perfect love? And therefore who among us can afford to be without that saving fear which propels us to love by keeping us away from all evil?

It is this latter fear that is meant when reference is made to the fear of God in this essay, that fear of which we read in the Life of St. Pachomius the Great, who “maintained himself constantly in the fear of God with the remembrance of the eternal torments and pains which have no end – that is, with the remembrance of the unquenchable fire and the undying worm. By this means Pachomius kept himself from evil and roused to the better.”386

If even the greatest saints exercised themselves in this fear, how much more we who are sinners and beginners on the path to salvation? “For as merchants on a voyage, though they find a wind to suit them and the sea calm, but have not yet reached the haven, are always subject to fear, lest suddenly a contrary wind should stir and the sea rise into billows, and the ship be in peril, so Christians, even if they have in themselves a favourable wind of the Holy Spirit blowing, are nevertheless yet subject to fear, lest the wind of the adverse power should rise and blow on them, and stir up disturbance and

384 St. Gregory the Theologian, Letter to Philagrius, P.G. 37: 68C.
billows for their souls. There is need therefore of great diligence, that we may arrive at the have of rest, at the perfect world, at the eternal life and pleasure, at the city of the saints, at the heavenly Jerusalem, at ‘the church of the firstborn’ (Hebrews 12.23).”  

The Orthodox tradition on the judgement of the soul after death, which is known in the West as “the particular judgement” and is often now called “the toll-house teaching”, was summarised by St. Macarius the Great as follows: “When the soul of man departs out of the body, a great mystery is there accomplished. If it is under the guilt of sins, there come bands of demons, and angels of the left hand, and powers of darkness take over that soul, and hold it fast on their side. No one ought to be surprised at this. If, while alive and in this world, the man was subject and compliant to them, and made himself their bondsman, how much more, when he departs out of this world, is he kept down and held fast by them. That this is the case, you ought to understand from what happens on the good side. God’s holy servants even now have angels continually beside them, and holy spirits encompassing and protecting them; and when they depart out of the body, the bands of angels take over their souls to their own side, into the pure world, and so they bring them to the Lord…  

“Like tax collectors sitting in the narrow ways, and laying hold upon the passers-by, so do the demons spy upon souls and lay hold of them; and when they pass out of the body, if they are not perfectly cleansed, they do not suffer them to mount up to the mansions of heaven and to meet their Lord, and they are driven down by the demons of the air. But if whilst they are yet in the flesh, they shall with much labour and effort obtain from the Lord the grace from on high, assuredly these, together with those who through virtuous living are at rest, shall go to the Lord…”

The first major exposition of this tradition in modern times was Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov’s Essay on Death in the third volume of his Collected Works. Later, he added a “Reply” to the objections of a certain priest called Matveevsky. St. Barsanuphius of Optina called Bishop Ignatius’ Essay “indispensable in its genre”.

In recent years this teaching was again challenged by the Orthodox deacon Lev Puhalo (now OCA Bishop Lazar). Although Puhalo’s thesis was successfully challenged by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, who was in turn

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388 St. Macarius the Great, Homilies, XXII, XLIII, 9.
391 Puhalo, “The Soul, the Body and Death”, Orthodoxy Canada, vols. 6-7 (1979-80).
supported by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, it continues to be influential in certain Orthodox jurisdictions (for example, HOCA, the “Holy Orthodox Church in North America”) and elicit passionate support on Orthodox list-forums. It may be useful, therefore, to review some of the major arguments.

**The Witness of the Ecumenical Teachers**

According to Puhalo, the scriptural and patristic evidence for the “toll-house” teaching is meagre. Many of the texts produced in its favour are either apocryphal (e.g. St. Cyril of Alexandria’s *Homily* on the departure of the soul from the body) or influenced by Egyptians Gnostic ideas (e.g. the *Homilies* of St. Macarius the Great, quoted above) or the products of western heretical concepts concerning Divine vengeance, purgatory, etc. (e.g. the stories in the Venerable Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English Church and People*). Since the present writer is not competent to discuss questions of textual authenticity, the authorities quoted in the following discussion will be, as far as possible, the most unimpeachable (e.g. the three universal teachers SS. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom) in writings whose authenticity has never been questioned.

A very large mass of evidence in favour of the toll-houses from scriptural, patristic, hagiographical and liturgical sources has been amassed by Rose in the book alluded to above. We may supplement these with writings gathered together by the Greek theologian Nikolaos P. Vasileiades, who writes: “After his death poor man Lazarus ‘was received up by the angels’ (*Luke* 16.22). Angels, however, accompany not only the souls of the just, but also those of evil men, as the divine Chrysostom comments, basing his words on what God said to the foolish rich man: ‘Fool, this night will they require thy soul from thee’ (*Luke* 12.20). So while good angels accompanied the soul of Lazarus, the soul of the foolish rich man ‘was required by certain terrible powers who had probably been sent for this reason. And the one (the rich man) they led away ‘as a prisoner’ from the present life, but Lazarus ‘they escorted as one who had been crowned’. St. Justin the philosopher and martyr, interpreting the word of the psalm, ‘Rescue my soul from the sword, and this only-begotten one of mine from the hand of the dog; save me from the mouth of the lion’ (*Ps.* 21.21-22), comments: By this we are taught how we also should seek the same from God when we approach our departure from this life. For God alone can turn away every ‘evil angel’ so that he may not seize our soul.

“Basil the Great relates that the holy martyr Gordius (whose memory is celebrated on January 3rd) went to martyrdom not as if he was about to meet the public, but as if he was about to hand himself over into the hands of angels who immediately, since they received him as ‘newly slaughtered’,

393 “Extract from the Minutes of the Session of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 31, №1, January-February, 1981, pp. 23-27.
would convey him to ‘the blessed life’ like the poor man Lazarus. In another
place, the holy Father, with the aim of turning to holy Baptism as many as
procrastinated for the wrong reasons (at that time men used to be baptized at
a great age), said: Let no one deceive himself with lying and empty words
(Ephesians 5.6); for the catastrophe will come suddenly upon him (I
Thessalonians 5.3); it will come like a tempest. There will come ‘a sullen
angel’ who will lead away your soul which will have been bound by its sins;
and your soul will then turn within itself and groan silently, for the further
reason, moreover, that the organ of lamentation (the body) will have been cut
off from it. O how you will wail for yourself at that hour of death! How you
will groan!…

“The Lord’s words: ‘The ruler of the world cometh, and has nothing in Me’
(John 14.30) are interpreted by St. Basil as follows: Satan comes, who has
power over men who live far from God. But in Me he will find nothing of his
own that might give him power or any right over Me. And the luminary of
Caesarea adds: The sinless Lord said that the devil would not find anything in
Him which would give him power over Him; for man, however, it is
sufficient if he can be so bold as to say at the hour of his death that the ruler
of this world comes and will find in me only a few and small sins. The same
Father says in another place that the evil spirits watch the departure of the
soul more vigilantly and attentively than ever enemies have watched a
besieged city or thieves a treasury. St. Chrysostom calls ‘customs-officers’
those ‘threatening angels and abusive powers’ of terrible appearance, meeting
whom the soul is seized with trembling; and in another place he says that
these ‘persecutors are called customs-officials and tax-collectors by the Divine
Scripture’.

“In that temporary state [between the death of the body and the Last
Judgement] the just live under different conditions from the sinners.
According to St. Gregory the Theologian, every ‘beautiful and God-loving’
soul has scarcely been parted from the body when it experiences a
‘wonderful’ inner happiness because of all the good things that await it in
endless eternity. For this reason ‘it rejoices’ and goes forward redeemed,
forgiven and purified ‘to its Master’ since it has left the present life which was
like an unbearable prison. On the other hand, the souls of the sinners are
drawn ‘to the left by avenging angels by force in a bound state until they are
near gehenna’. From there, as they face ‘the terrible sight of the fire’ of
punishment, they tremble in expectation ‘of the coming judgement’ and are
already being punished ‘in effect’ (St. Hippolytus). For the whole time that
they are separated from their bodies they are not separated from the passions
which had dominion over them on earth, but they bear with them their
tendency to sin. For that reason their suffering is the more painful (St.
Gregory of Nyssa).”394

Is the Toll-House Teaching Gnostic?

As regards the argument that the toll-houses teaching is “Gnostic”, this would appear to be extremely foolish in view of the fact that not only the Ecumenical Teachers quoted above, but also such a distinguished Father as St. Athanasius the Great espouses it. For in his *Life of St. Anthony the Great* he writes of the saint, evidently with no disapproval: “He had this favour from God. When he sat alone on the mountain, if ever in his reflections he failed to find a solution, it was revealed to him by Providence in answer to his prayer: the happy man was, in the words of Scripture, ‘taught of God’. Thus favoured, he once had a discussion with some visitors about the life of the soul and the kind of place it will have after this life. The following night there came a call from on high, saying, ‘Anthony! Rise, go out and look!’ He went out therefore – he knew which calls to heed – and, looking up, saw a towering figure, unsightly and frightening, standing and reaching to the clouds; further, certain beings ascending as though on wings. The former was stretching out his hands: some of the latter were stopped by him, while others flew over him and, having come through, rose without further trouble. At such as these the monster gnashed with his teeth, but exulted over those who fell. Fortwith a voice addressed itself to Anthony, ‘Understand the vision!’ His understanding opened up, and he realized that it was the passing of souls and that the monster standing there was the enemy, the envier of the faithful. Those answerable to him he lays hold of and keeps them from passing through, but those whom he failed to win over he cannot master as they pass out of his range. Here again, having seen this and taking it as a reminder, he struggled the more to advance from day to day in the things that lay before him.”

St. Anthony’s disciple, Abba Ammonas, speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to pass all “the powers of the air” (*Ephesians* 2:2) after death: “For this is the power which He gives to men here; it is this, again, which guides men into that rest, until he shall have passed all the ‘powers of the air’. For there are forces at work in the air which hinder men, preventing them from coming to God.”

Such visions are common also in the *Lives* of the Celtic saints. Thus we read about St. Columba of Iona that “one day he suddenly looked up towards heaven and said: ‘Happy woman, happy and virtuous, whose soul the angels..."
of God now take to paradise!' One of the brothers was a devout man called
Genereus the Englishman, who was the baker. He was at work in the bakery
where he heard St. Columba say this. A year later, on the same day, the saint
again spoke to Genereus the Englishman, saying: ‘I see a marvellous thing.
The woman of whom I spoke in your presence a year ago today – look! – she
is now meeting in the air the soul of a devout layman, her husband, and is
fighting for him together with holy angels against the powers of the enemy.
With their help and because the man himself was always righteous, his soul is
rescued from the devils’ assaults and is brought to the place of eternal
refreshment.’”\footnote{397}

In fact, descriptions of the passage of souls through the toll-houses are to
be found in Orthodox literature of all ages and cultures. Such universality is
in itself a witness against the idea that the toll-house tradition is Gnostic or
heretical.

\textit{To Whom Belongs the Judgement?}

Puhalo also argues that the toll-house tradition is in fact heterodox because
it implies that the judgement of souls is not God’s but the demons’. Moreover,
it is very close, he claims, to the papist doctrine of purgatory. For “the
difference between the purgatory myth and that of the aerial toll-houses is
that the one gives God satisfaction by means of physical torment, while the
other gives Him His needed satisfaction by means of mental torture.”\footnote{398}

In answer to this objection, it is necessary to point out that while all
judgement of souls is in the hands of God, He often uses created beings as the
instruments of His justice, just as a judge might use lawyers for the
prosecution and defence, or a king might use an executioner. Thus we think
of the avenging Angel who slew all the first-born of Egypt but passed over
the house of the Israelites; and of the Archangel Michael’s destruction of the
185,000 warriors of Sennacherib. And it is not only good angels who carry out
His will in this way: the other plagues of Egypt were “a mission performed by
evil angels” (Psalm 77.53). We are not tempted to think, in these cases, that
God has lost control: He is simply executing His will through created
instruments.

\footnote{397 Adomnan, \textit{Life of St. Columba}, III, 10. When St. Brendan the Navigator was dying, his sister
said to him: “Father, what dost thou fear?” “I fear,” said he, “my lonely passing: I fear the
darkness of the way: I fear the untravelled road, the presence of the King, the sentence of the
Judge” (Rev. Francis Browne, \textit{Saints and Shrines of Lough Corrib}, pp. 4-5). And when St. Ciaran
of Clonmacnoise came to die, and said, “Dreadful is the way upwards”, his disciples said:
“But surely not for you?” “Och,” said St. Ciaran, “indeed my conscience is clear of offence,
but yet, even David and Paul dreaded this road” (D.D.C. Pochin Mould, \textit{Ireland of the Saints},

\footnote{398 Puhalo, \textit{Orthodoxy Canada}, vol. 6, No 12, 1979, p. 23.}
Similarly, we should not think that God is not carrying out His own judgement when a soul passes through the toll-houses. Here God is revealing His judgement of a soul through the agency, on the one hand, of demons, who, like counsel for the prosecution, bring up all the evil things that the soul has thought or done, and, on the other hand, of the good angels, who, like counsel for the defence, bring up its good deeds. Moreover, insofar as it is the good angels who encourage men to good deeds, and the demons who incite them to the evil, this procedure actually reveals to the soul the hidden springs of his actions on earth.

Thus there is no contradiction, as Puhalo asserts, between the idea of the toll-houses and the teaching that the real judgement of sinners is that “at death they are cut off from the Holy Spirit”. Of course, God has no need for a detailed examination of our thoughts and deeds: it is we who are required to come to a full consciousness of them, in accordance with the Lord’s word: “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account of in the day of judgement” (Matthew 12.36). Sinners who fail the searching test of their conscience are indeed cut off from the Holy Spirit, and their souls are “cast into prison” (Matthew 5.25), the prison of Hades, of spiritual darkness and excommunication from God, until the final judgement of soul and body together on the last day.

Thus if angels accuse and excuse, it is God alone Who judges in the sense of delivers the final verdict; He alone decides the soul’s destiny, and often, in His great mercy, decisively “tips the balance” in its favour. Thus in the Life of St. Niphon Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus we read: “With his clairvoyant eyes the Saint saw also the souls of men after their departure from the body. Once, standing at prayer in the church of St. Anastasia, he raised his eyes to heaven and saw the heavens opened and many angels, of whom some were descending to earth, and others were ascending, bearing heaven human souls. And he saw two angels ascending, carrying someone’s soul. And when they came near the toll-house of fornication, the demonic tax-collectors came out and said with anger: ‘This is our soul; how do you dare to carry him past us?’ The angels replied: ‘What kind of sign do you have on this soul, that you consider it yours?’ The demons said: ‘It defiled itself before death with sins, not only natural ones but even unnatural ones; besides that, it judged its neighbour and died without repentance. What do you say to that?’

“‘We will not believe,’ said the angels, ‘either you or your father the devil, until we ask the guardian angel of this soul.’ And when they asked him, he said: ‘It is true that this soul sinned much, but when it got sick it began to weep and confess its sin before God; and if God has forgiven it, He knows why: He has the authority. Glory be to His righteous judgement!’ Then the angels, having put the demons to shame, entered the heavenly gates with that soul.
“Then the blessed on saw the angels carrying yet another soul, and the
demons ran out to them and cried out: ‘Why are you carrying souls without
knowing them? For example, you are carrying this one, who is a lover of
money, a bearer of malice, and an outlaw.’ The angels replied: ‘We well know
that it did all these things, but it wept and lamented, confessed its sins, and
gave alms; for this God has forgiven it.’ But the demons began to say: ‘If even
this soul is worthy of God’s mercy, then take and carry away the sinners from
the whole world. Why should we be labouring?’ To this the angels replied:
‘All sinners who confess their sins with humility and tears receive forgiveness
by God’s mercy; but he who dies without repentance is judged by God.”\textsuperscript{399}

This shows, on the one hand, that the demons are essentially powerless,
and on the other, that such authority as they possess over souls is ceded to
them by the souls themselves when they willingly follow their enticements.
For the Lord said: “He who sins is the servant of sin” (\textit{John} 8.34), and
therefore of him who is the origin and instigator of sin, the devil. If the
demons have power even in this life over those who willingly follow their
suggestions, and the Lord allows even the baptized to be possessed by
demons, what reason have we for believing that these souls do not continue
in bondage after their departure from the body? However, if we resist sin and
the devil in this life, they will have no power over us in the next. For, as St.
Anthony says in his \textit{Life}, “if the demons had no power even over the swine,
much less have they any over men formed in the image of God. So then we
ought to fear God only, and despise the demons, and be in no fear of them.”\textsuperscript{400}

\textbf{The Toll-houses and Purgatory}

But if the judgement of souls after death is not in any real sense a
judgement by the devil on souls, much less is it a purging of souls in the
papist sense. At most, the experience of fear can to some extent purify the soul
as it passes through the toll-houses and before it comes to worship at the
Throne of God. That this is admitted by the Orthodox Church is shown by the
following reply of St. Mark of Ephesus to the Roman cardinals on purgatory:
“At the beginning of your report you speak thus: ‘If those who truly repent
have departed this life in love (towards God) before they were able to give
satisfaction by means of worthy fruits for their transgressions or offences,
their souls are cleansed after death by means of purgatorial sufferings; but for
the easing (or ‘deliverance’) of them from these sufferings they are aided by
the help which is shown them on the part of the faithful who are alive, as for
example: prayers, Liturgies, almsgiving, and other works of piety.’

“To this we answer the following: of the fact that those reposed in faith are
without doubt helped by the Liturgies and prayers and almsgiving performed
for them, and that this custom has been in force since antiquity, there is the

\textsuperscript{399} \textit{The Orthodox Word}, May-June, 1980, pp. 139-140.
\textsuperscript{400} St. Athanasius, \textit{The Life of Saint Anthony}.
testimony of many and various utterances of the Teachers, both Latin and Greek, spoken and written at various times and in various places. But that souls are delivered thanks to a certain purgatorial suffering and temporal fire which possesses such (a purgatorial) power and has the character of a help – this we do not find either in the Scriptures or in the prayers and hymns for the dead, or in the words of the Teachers. But we have received that even the souls which are held in hell and are already given over to eternal torments, whether in actual fact and experience or in hopeless expectation of such, can be aided and given a certain small help, although not in the sense of completely loosing them from torment or giving hope for a final deliverance. And this is shown from the words of the great Macarius the Egyptian ascetic who, finding a skull in the desert, was instructed by it concerning this by the action of Divine power. And Basil the Great, in the prayers read at Pentecost writes literally the following: ‘Who also, on this all-perfect and saving feast, art graciously pleased to accept propitiatory prayers for those who are imprisoned in hell, granting us a great hope of improvement for those who are imprisoned from the defilements which have imprisoned them, and that Thou wilt send down Thy consolation’ (Third Kneeling Prayer at Vespers).

“But if souls have departed this life in faith and love, while nevertheless carrying away with themselves certain faults, whether small ones over which they have not repented at all, or great ones for which – even though they have repented over them – they did not undertake to show fruits of repentance: such souls, we believe, must be cleansed from this kind of sins, but not by means of some purgatorial fire or a definite punishment in some place (for this, as we have said, has not at all been handed down to us). But some must be cleansed in the very departure from the body, thanks only to fear, as St. Gregory the Dialogist literally shows; while others must be cleansed after the departure from the body, either while remaining in the same earthly place, before they come to worship God and are honoured with the lot of the blessed, or – if their sins were more serious and bind them for a longer duration – they are kept in hell, but not in order to remain forever in fire and torment, but as it were in prison and confinement under guard.

“All such ones, we affirm, are helped by the prayers and Liturgies performed for them, with the cooperation of the Divine goodness and love for mankind. This Divine cooperation immediately disdains and remits some sins, those committed out of human weakness, as Dionysius the Great (the Areopagite) says in Reflections on the Mystery of those Reposed in the Faith (in The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, VII, 7); while other sins, after a certain time, by righteous judgements it either likewise releases and forgives – and that completely – or lightens the responsibility for them until that final Judgement. And therefore we see no necessity whatever for any other punishment or for a cleansing fire; for some are cleansed by fear, while others are devoutly by the gnawings of conscience with more torment than any fire, and still others are cleansed only by the very terror before the Divine glory and the uncertainty
as to what the future will be. And that this is much more tormenting and punishing than anything else, experience itself shows...

Thus while St. Mark reject the idea of a purging by fire as the papists understand it, he definitely accepts the notion of a purging (of at any rate certain sins) by fear and the gnawings of conscience. Now the experience of the soul after death which Orthodox writers describe by means of the toll-house metaphor is certain an experience which includes fear and the pangs of conscience; and there is nothing in St. Mark’s words to suggest that he is speaking about some different experience. We may therefore conclude that there is nothing inherently heterodox in the notion of the toll-houses – provided we remember that this is a metaphor and not a literal description of events.

Soul-Sleep?

A third set of objections raised by Puhalo is based on the teaching that the soul when separated from the body cannot, by its nature, have such experiences as are attributed to it by the Orthodox doctrine. For “the notion that the soul can exit the body, move about, have experiences, receive visions, revelations, wander from place to place, make progress or be examined and judged without the body, or, indeed, function in any sensual manner without the body, is essentially Origenistic, and is derived from the philosophies of the pagan religions of Greece and elsewhere... Old Testament anthropology, like that of the New Testament, never conceived of an immortal soul inhabiting a mortal body from which it might be liberated, but always conceived a simple, non-dualistic anthropology of a single, psychophysical organism. And active, intellectual life or functioning of the soul alone could never be conceived in either Old or New Testament thought. For the soul to function, its restoration with the body as the ‘whole person’ would be absolutely necessary.” At the same time, Puhalo accepts that the soul has “some consciousness of future destiny, some hope”, and is “neither dead nor devoid of spiritual sensations.”

The question arises: why should not the experiences that the Orthodox doctrine attributes to the soul after death be accounted as “spiritual sensations”? We have seen, for example, that according to St. Basil the indolent soul after death “groans silently” because “the organ of lamentation (the body) will have been cut off from it”. It would be consistent with this manner of speaking to say that the soul “sees unseeingly” and “hears unhearingly”. In such cases we are trying to describe in the only language that available or comprehensible to us – the language of incarnate, bodily

402 Puhalo, op. cit., pp. 31, 33.
403 Puhalo, op. cit., p. 33.
experience, - experiences that are disincarnate and spiritual – but none the less real and vivid for all that.

The difference between the sensual and the spiritual senses is well illustrated by the following: “They used to tell a story of a certain great old man, and say that when he was travelling along a road two angels cleaved to him and journeyed with him, one on his right hand and the other on his left. And as they were going along they found lying on the road a dead body which stank, and the old man closed his nostrils because of the evil smell, and the angels did the same. Now after they had gone on a little farther, the old man said unto them, ‘Do ye also smell as we do?’ And they said unto him, ‘No, but because of thee we closed our nostrils. For it is not for us to smell the rottenness of this world, but we do smell the souls which stink of sin, because the breath of such is night unto us.’”

Spiritual beings not only smell souls: they also see them – and their appearance depends on their spiritual state. Thus St. John the Baptist appeared to St. Diadochus of Photike, and said that “neither the angels nor the soul can be seen” insofar as they are “beings which do not have a shape”.

Palladius, The Paradise of the Fathers, vol. 2, p. 200. It is not only angels who have these senses; to the degree that a man is purified he may also see, hear and smell spiritually even while in the body: “It came to pass that when the old man [St. Pachomius the Great] had said these things to the brethren, the door-keeper came to him and said: ‘Certain travellers, who are men of importance, have come hither, and they wish to meet thee’. And he said: ‘Call them hither’. And when they had entered into the monastery, he saluted them with the brethren. And after they had seen all the brotherhood, and had gone round all the cells of the brethren they wanted to hold converse with him by themselves. Now when they had taken their seats in a secluded chamber, there came unto the old man a strong smell of uncleanness, though he thought that it must arise from them because he was speaking with them face to face; and he was not able to learn the cause of the same by the supplication which [he made] to God, for he perceived that their speech was fruitful [of thought], and that their minds were familiar with the Scriptures, but he was not acquainted with their intellectual uncleanness. Then, after he had spoken unto them many things out of the Divine Books, and the season of the ninth hour had drawn nigh meanwhile, they rose up that they might come to their own place, and Rabba entreated them to partake of some food there, but they did not accept [his petition, saying] that they were in duty bound to arrive home before sunset; so they prayed, and they saluted us, and then they departed.

“And Abba, in order to learn the cause of the uncleanness of these men, went into his cell, and prayed to God, and he knew straightway that it was the doctrine of wickedness which arose from their souls that sent forth such an unclean smell. Thereupon he went forth from his cell immediately and pursued those men, and having overtaken them, he said unto them, ‘Do ye call that which is written in the works of Origen heresy?’ And when they had heard the question they denied and said that they did not. Then the holy man said unto them, ‘Behold, I take you to witness before God, that every man who readeth and accepteth the work of Origen, shall certainly arrive in the fire of Sheol, and his inheritance shall be everlasting darkness. That which I know from God I have made you to be witnesses of, and I am therefore not to be condemned by God on this account, and ye yourselves know about it. Behold, I have made you hear the truth. And if ye believe me, and if ye wish truly to gratify God, take all the writings of Origen and cast them into the fire; and never seek to read them again.’ And when Abba Pachomius had said these things he left them.” (The Paradise of the Fathers, vol. 1, pp. 292-293).
However, he went on, “one must know that they have a visible aspect, a beauty and a spiritual limitation, so that the splendour of their thoughts is their form and their beauty. That is why, when the soul has beautiful thoughts, it is all illuminated and visible in all its parts, but if bad ones, then it has no lustre and nothing to be admired…”

When the soul is separated from the body, it loses the use of its sensual senses, but by no means loses the use of his spiritual senses. On the contrary, they revive, as it were. Thus St. John Chrysostom says: “Do not say to me, ‘He who has died does not hear, does not speak, does not see, does not feel, since neither does a man who sleeps.’ If it is necessary to say something wondrous, the soul of a sleeping man somehow sleeps, but not so with him who has died, for [his soul] has awakened.” And, as St. Chrysostom’s disciple, St. John Cassian, writes, “the souls of the dead not only do not lose consciousness, they do not even lose their dispositions – that is, hope and fear, joy and grief, and something of that which they expect for themselves at the Universal Judgement they begin already to foretaste… They become yet more alive and more zealously cling to the glorification of God. And truly, if we were to reason on the basis of the testimony of the Sacred Scripture concerning the nature of the soul, in the measure of our understanding, would it not be, I will not say extreme stupidity, but at least folly, to suspect even in the least that the most precious part of man (that is, the soul), in which, according to the blessed Apostle, the image and likeness of God is contained, after putting off this fleshly coarseness in which it finds itself in this present life, should become unconscious – that part which, containing in itself the power of reason, makes sensitive by its presence even the dumb and unconscious matter of the flesh?”

Not only is the soul the opposite of unconscious and unfeeling when it departs from the body: its sinful passions reveal themselves in all their hidden strength. “For the soul, writes St. Dorotheus of Gaza, “wars against this body with the passions and is comforted, eats, drinks, sleeps, talks to and meets up with friends. But when it leaves the body it is left alone with the passions. It is tormented by them, at odds with them, incensed at being troubled by them and savaged by them… Do you want an example of what I am saying to you? Let one of you come and let me lock him up in a dark cell, and for no more than three days let him not eat nor drink, nor sleep, not meeting anyone, not singing hymns nor praying, not even desiring God, and you will see what the passions make of him. And that while he is still in this life. How much more

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so when the soul has left the body and is delivered to the passions and will remain all alone with them..."\(^{408}\)

It follows that the ancient heresy of “soul sleep”, which is here revived by Puhalo in his polemic against the doctrine of the toll-houses, is false: the soul in its disincarnate form can indeed spiritual perceive angels and demons and feel “hope and fear, joy and grief” in their presence.

**The Faculties of Demons**

Puhalo also asserts that the demons can see neither the grace of God (St. Diadochus of Photike) nor angels (St. Isaac the Syrian) nor human souls (St. Isaac the Syrian, St. John the Solitary) nor thoughts coming from deep within the soul (St. John Cassian).\(^{409}\) However, we may admit this without rejecting the toll-houses. For a careful study of the accounts of passages through the toll-houses in the *Lives of the Saints* reveals that the demons’ accusations relate to what they have *deduced* from a careful study of the external behaviour of men; so their apparent ability to know the inner thoughts and feelings of men is actually the result simply of good psychological analysis acquired over centuries of observation.

In any case, it cannot be true that the demons cannot perceive the grace of God in any sense whatsoever. For when the Lord approached the demon-possessed, and when His pure soul entered Hades, did not the demons tremble, sensing the approach of Divine grace as a blind man senses the nearness of fire? And does not the grace residing in the relics of the saints even now cause demons to flee?

But it is best not to peer too closely into these difficult and subtle matters. Suffice it to say that there is no contradiction between what the Fathers say on the nature of souls and angels and the doctrine of the toll-houses. Above all, it is necessary to heed the words of Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow: “One must note that, just as in general in the depictions of the objects of the spiritual world for us who are clothed in flesh, certain features that are more or less sensuous and anthropomorphic are unavoidable – so in particular these features are unavoidably present also in the detailed teaching of the toll-houses which the human soul passes through after the separation from the body. And therefore one must firmly remember the instruction which the angel made to St. Macarius of Alexandria when he had just begun telling him of the toll-houses: ‘Accept earthly things here as the weakest kind of depiction of heavenly things.’ One must picture the toll-houses not in a sense that is crude and sensuous, but – as far as possible for us – in a spiritual sense, and not be tied down to details which, in the various writers and various accounts


\(^{409}\) Puhalo, *Orthodoxy Canada*, vol. 7, № 4, 1980, p. 29.
of the Church herself, are presented in various ways, even though the basic idea of the toll-houses is one and the same.\textsuperscript{410}

The doctrine of the toll-houses, of the particular judgement of souls after death, is indeed a fearful doctrine. But it is a true and salutary and Orthodox one. Let us therefore gather this saving fear into our souls, in accordance with the word: “Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember thine end, and thou shalt never sin” (Sirach 7.36).

\textit{(February 8/21, 1981; revised July 9/22, 2004)}

\textsuperscript{410} Metropolitan Macarius, quoted in \textit{The Orthodox Word}, November-December, 1978, pp. 247-248.
24. IS HELL JUST?

Of all the Christian dogmas, none has elicited more perplexity over the centuries than the doctrine of eternal punishment. Thinkers from Origen to the contemporary ecumenists have tried somehow to get round the unequivocal statements of the Gospel that those who will stand condemned at the Last Judgement will be cast into the eternal fire, from which there will be no deliverance unto the ages of ages. In attempting in this way to deny the eternity of the torments of hell, these thinkers have employed a number of arguments, of which the most commonly encountered are the following: -

1. The Argument from God's Compassion. According to this argument, it is contrary to God’s nature to consign anyone to hell for ever. After all, what human father would ever divide his children into sheep and goats? What human bridegroom, even the most insanely jealous, would wish eternal torments on his bride? And even if some such could be found, what has this to do with God? Is He not perfect love, infinite mercy, unbounded compassion?

The commonest answer to this very common perplexity is to say: God is not only perfect love, He is also perfect justice; and while in His love for mankind He wishes that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2.4), the fact remains that very many "resist the truth" (II Timothy 3.8), and so cannot be saved, becoming subject to the full severity of His justice. The satisfaction of justice is an absolute demand of the Divine Nature, not because God is a bloodthirsty tyrant seeking revenge in a human, fallen manner, - God is not subject to any human passion, - but because evil and injustice are utterly alien to His Nature. As St. John of Damascus puts it: "A judge justly punishes one who is guilty of wrongdoing; and if he does not punish him he is himself a wrongdoing. In punishing him the judge is not the cause either of the wrongdoing or of the vengeance taken against the wrongdoing, the cause being the wrongdoing's freely chosen actions. Thus too God, Who saw what was going to happen as if it had already happened, judged it as if it had taken place; and if it was evil, that was the cause of its being punished. It was God Who created man, so of course he created him in goodness; but man did evil of his own free choice, and is himself the cause of the vengeance that overtakes him."411

Now such an answer was quite sufficient for generations of Christians brought up in the fear of God, and believing in the goodness of His judgements without presuming to understand them. For them the fact of impenitence, and its link with Divine judgement, was as self-evident as the link between penitence and Divine mercy. And if there were still many things they did not understand, this was only to be expected. After all, how can the

411 St. John of Damascus, Dialogue against the Manichaeans, 37.
pot be expected to understand the potter (Roman 9.20-21)? The judgements of God are a great abyss, and it is not for sinful mortals to plumb their depth.

If we question God’s judgements, then we are implicitly placing ourselves in judgement over Him, as if we could be more just than He. What folly could be greater than this? “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, He put no trust in His servants; and His angels He charged with folly. How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust? (Job 4.17-19). "For who shall say, What hast Thou done? Or who shall withstand His judgement? Or who shall accuse Thee for the nations that perish, whom Thou hast made? Or who shall come to stand against Thee, to be revenged for the unrighteous men? (Wisdom of Solomon 12.12).

It was by meditating on such passages of Holy Scripture that our forefathers guarded themselves from highmindedness. We are not so humble today. In proportion as our pride in ourselves and our capacities has increased, so has our trust in, and reverence for, the judgements of God decreased. Our attitude is: if I cannot understand this, or if it offends my moral sense, then even if God has declared it to be so, it cannot be so; there must be a mistake.

Hell offends not only our sense of justice, but also our self-esteem (the two are closely connected). Whereas the holy Apostles, though innocent of betraying their Master, still had the humility and awareness of their profound weakness to ask: "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26.22), we both absolve ourselves of any really serious sin, and, like the Popes of old, give indulgences to the whole of the rest of humanity. Although the holy Apostle Peter says that even the righteous will scarcely be saved (I Peter 4.18), we consider that even unbelievers will be saved. Perhaps a few of the worst sinners, we concede, might be worthy of hell - the Hitlers and Stalins of this world. But is it possible to believe that the nice, caring, enlightened men of late twentieth-century civilisation are worthy of hell? Away with the thought!

Speaking of hell and its eternity, St. John Chrysostom writes: - "Do not say to me, 'How is the balance of justice preserved if the punishment has no end?' When God does something, obey His demand and do not submit what has been said to human reasoning. In any case, is it not in fact just that one who has received countless good things from the beginning, has then done things worthy of punishment, and has not reformed in response either to threats or to kindness, should be punished? If it is justice you are after, we ought all on the score of justice to have perished at the very outset. Indeed even that would have fallen short of the measure of mere justice. For if a man insults someone who never did him any wrong, it is a matter of justice that he be punished. But what if he insults his Benefactor, Who without having received any favour from him in the first place, has done countless things for him - in
this case the One Who was the sole source of his existence, Who is God, Who endowed him with a soul, Who gave him countless other gifts and purposed to bring him to heaven? If after so many favours, he not only insults Him but insults Him daily by his conduct, can there be any question of deserving pardon?

"Do you not see how He punished Adam for a single sin? 'Yes', you will say, 'but He had given him paradise and made him the recipient of very great kindness.' And I reply that it is not at all the same thing for a man in the tranquil possession of security to commit a sin and for a man in the midst of affliction to do so. The really terrible thing is that you sin when you are not in paradise but set amidst the countless evils of this present life, and that all this misery has not made you any more sensible. It is like a man who continues his criminal behaviour in prison. Moreover you have the promise of something even greater than paradise. He has not given it to you yet, so as not to make you soft at a time when there is a struggle to be fought, but neither has He been silent about it, lest you be cast down by all your labours.

"Adam committed one sin, and brought on total death. We commit a thousand sins every day. If by committing a single sin he brought such terrible evil on himself and introduced death into the world, what should we, who live continually in sin, expect to suffer - we who in place of paradise have the expectation of heaven? This is a burdensome message; it does upset the man who hears it. I know, because I feel it myself. I am disturbed by it; it makes me quake. The clearer the proofs I find of this message of hell, the more I tremble and melt with fear. But I have to proclaim it so that we may not fall into hell. What you received was not paradise or trees and plants, but heaven and the good things in the heavens. He who had received the lesser gift was punished and no consideration exempted him; we have been given a greater calling and we sin more. Are we not bound to suffer things beyond all remedy?

"Consider how long our race has been subject to death on account of a single sin. More than five thousand years have passed and the death due to a single sin has not yet been ended. In Adam's case we cannot say that he had heard prophets or that he had seen others being punished for their sins so that he might reasonably have been afraid and learnt prudence if only from the example of others. He was the first and at that time the only one; yet he was still punished. But you cannot claim any of these things. You have had numerous examples, but you only grow worse; you have been granted the great gift of the Spirit, but you go on producing not one or two or three but countless sins. Do not think that because the sins are committed in one brief moment the punishment therefore will also be a matter of a moment. You can see how it is often the case that men who have committed a single theft or a single act of adultery which has been done in a brief moment of time have had to spend all their lives in prison or in the mines, continually battling with
hunger and every kind of death. No one lets them off, or says that since the 
crime was committed in a brief moment the punishment should match the 
crime in the length of time it takes.

"People do act like that,' you may say, 'but they are men, whereas God is 
loving towards mankind.' Yes, but even the men who act in this way do not 
do so out of cruelty but out of love for mankind. So since God is loving to 
mankind He too will deal with sin in this way. 'As great as is His mercy, so 
great also is His reproof' (Sirach 16.12). So when you speak of God as loving 
towards mankind, you are actually supplying me with a further reason for 
punishment, in the fact that the One against Whom we sin is such as this. That 
is the point of Paul's words: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the 
living God' (Hebrews 10.31). I ask you to bear with these words of fire. 
Perhaps, yes, perhaps they may bring you some consolation. What man can 
punish as God has been known to punish? He caused a flood and the total 
destruction of the human race; a little later He rained down fire from on high 
and utterly destroyed them all. What human retribution can compare with 
that? Do you not recognise that even this case of punishment is virtually 
endless? Four thousand years have passed and the punishment of the 
Sodomites is still in full force. As His loving kindness is great, so also is His 
punishment..."

St. Barsanuphius of Optina said: “We think too abstractly about the 
torments of hell, as a result of which we forget about them. In the world they 
have totally forgotten about them. The devil convinces everyone there that 
neither he himself nor the torments of hell exist. But the Holy Fathers teach 
that one’s betrothal to Gehenna, just as to blessedness, begins while one is still 
on earth – that is, sinners while still on earth begin to experience the torments 
of hell, while the righteous experience blessedness, only with this difference – 
that in the future age both the one and the other will be incomparably more 
powerful...

“At the present time, not only among lay people, but even among the 
young clergy the following conviction is beginning to spread: eternal torment 
is incompatible with the boundless mercy of God; consequently, the torments 
are not eternal. Such a misconception proceeds from a lack of understanding 
of the matter. Eternal torments, and eternal blessedness, are not things which 
proceed from without, but exist first and foremost within a man himself. ‘The 
Kingdom of God is within you’ (Luke 17.21). With whatever feelings a man 
instills within himself during his life, he departs into eternal life. A diseased 
body torments one on earth, and the more severe the disease is, the greater 
the torment is. So also a soul infected with various diseases begins to be 
cruelly tormented at its passage into eternal life. An incurable physical 
ailment ends with death, but how can a sickness of the soul end, when there is

no death for the soul? Malice, anger, irritability, lust, and other infirmities of
the soul are vermin which will creep after a man even into eternal life. Hence,
it follows that the aim of life consists in crushing these vermin here on earth,
so as to purify one’s soul entirely, and before death to say with our Savior,
‘The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me’ (John 14.30). A
sinful soul, not purified by repentance, cannot be in the company of the saints.
Even if it were placed in Paradise, it would itself find it unbearable to remain
there, and would try to get out.”

“Even the bodies of sinners will experience torment. The fire will be
material; there will not only be pangs of conscience, and so forth. No, this will
really be perceptible fire. Both the one and the other will be real. Only, just
like the body, the fire will be far more subtle, and everything will bear only a
certain resemblance to earthly things.”

2. The Argument from the Saints’ Compassion. According to this argument,
heaven would not be heaven for the righteous as long as they knew that the
sinners were being tortured in hell. Being filled with compassion, their bliss
would be spoiled as long as there was even one sinner still suffering torment.
So God in His compassion, and so as to give His chosen ones a perfect and
unspoiled reward, will forgive all men eventually.

However, the Fathers teach that that feeling of compassion which is so
necessary while there is still life and hope will be taken away by God when
there is no more use for it. For if, as St. John of Damascus says, “in hades [i.e.
after death but before the Last Judgement] there is no confession or
repentance”415, then much less will there be confession and repentance after
the Last Judgement in gehenna. And if there is no repentance how can there
be forgiveness?

Thus St. Gregory the Great writes, in his commentary on the parable of
Lazarus and the Rich Man: "We must ponder these words: 'They who would
pass from hence to you cannot' (Luke 16.26). For there is no doubt that those
who are in hell long to enjoy the lot of the blessed. But since the latter have
been received into eternal happiness, how can it be said that they desire to
pass over to those in hell? It must be that, as the damned desire to go to the
dwelling of the elect, to escape from that place of suffering, so the just wish to
cross over in mercy to that place of torments, to bring them the freedom they
desire. But those who wish to cross from heaven to hell can never do so; for
although the souls of the just are aflame with mercy, nevertheless they are so
united to the divine justice and guided always by rectitude, that they are not
moved by any compassion towards the reprobate. They are in complete

413 Victor Afanasiev, Elder Barsanuphius of Optina, Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood,
2000, pp. 283, 309.
414 Afanasiev, op. cit., pp. 735-736.
conformity with that judge to whom they are united, and so they cannot have compassion for those whom they cannot free from hell. They consider them as strangers, remote from themselves, since they have seen them repelled by their Maker who is the object of their love. So neither the wicked can cross over to the felicity of the blessed: because they are shackled by an irrevocable condemnation, nor the just go to the unjust: because they cannot feel compassion for those whom the divine justice has rejected..."416

3. The Argument from Ignorance. This argument can be summarised as follows: "Neither are the works of faith necessary for salvation, nor even faith. For most men have never had the Gospel preached to them, and so belong to other faiths simply out of ignorance, because they were born into non-Christian societies or families. The All-loving and All-just God will certainly not judge them for that. Indeed (continues the argument in some of its forms), all that is necessary for salvation is good faith, by which we do not mean the one true faith (for there is no such thing), but sincerity, even if that sincerity is manifested in non-Christian beliefs and actions: blessed are the sincere, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven."

However, Divine Revelation attaches little value to sincerity per se: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Proverbs 12.15), says Solomon, and: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death" (Proverbs 14.12). In any case, if true faith in Christ were not absolutely necessary for salvation, and one could be saved without knowing Him, then it would not have been necessary for the Martyrs to confess Him, for the Apostles to preach Him, or for Christ Himself to become incarnate for our sakes.

"Are you saying, then" retort the ecumenists, "that all the Hindus and Buddhists will be damned?!"

We neither assert this nor deny it, preferring to "judge nothing before the time" (I Corinthians 4.5), and to follow St. Paul's rule: "what have I to do to judge them that are without?... Them that are without God judgeth" (I Corinthians 5.12-13). We know with complete certainly about the perdition of only a few men (Judas, Arius, etc.), just as we have complete certainty about the salvation of only a few men (those whom the Church has glorified as saints). As Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava wrote, when asked about the salvation of the Jews: "When St. Anthony the Great was thinking about questions of this kind, nothing concerning the essence of these questions was revealed to him, but it was only told him from on high: 'Anthony, pay attention to yourself!', that is, worry about your own salvation, but leave the salvation of others to the Providence of God, for it is not useful for you to

know this at the present time. We must restrict ourselves to this revelation in the limits of our earthly life.\footnote{Archbishop Theophanes, \textit{Pis'ma Arkhiepiskopa Feofana Poltavskogo (The Letters of Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava and Pereyaslavl)}, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1976, p. 31 (in Russian).}

Nevertheless, when compassion for unbelievers is taken as a cloak from under which to overthrow the foundations of the Christian Faith, it is necessary to say something more, not as if we could say anything about the salvation or otherwise of specific people (for that, as Archbishop Theophanes says, has been hidden from us), but in order to re-establish those basic principles of the Faith, ignorance of which will undoubtedly place us in danger of damnation.

Ignorance - real, involuntary ignorance - is certainly grounds for clemency according to God's justice, as it is according to man's. The Lord cried out on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (\textit{Luke} 23.24); and one of those who were forgiven declared: "I obtained mercy because I acted in ignorance" (\textit{I Timothy} 1.13; cf. \textit{Acts} 3.17, 17.30). For our Great High Priest is truly One "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" (\textit{Hebrew} 5.2).

However, there is also such a thing as wilful, voluntary ignorance. Thus St. Paul says of those who do not believe in the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, that "they are without excuse" (\textit{Romans} 1.20), for they deny the evidence from creation which is accessible to everyone. Again, St. Peter says: "This they are \textit{willingly} ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men" (\textit{II Peter} 3.5-7). Again, claiming knowledge when one has none counts as wilful ignorance. For, as Christ said to the Pharisees: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (\textit{John} 9.41).

Wilful ignorance is very close to conscious resistance to the truth, which receives the greatest condemnation according to the Word of God. Thus those who accept the Antichrist will do so "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (\textit{II Thessalonians} 2.10-12). And if it seems improbable that God should send anyone a strong delusion, let us remember the lying spirits who, with God's permission, deceived the prophets of King Ahab because they only prophesied what he wanted to hear (\textit{I Kings} 22.19-24).
Conscious, willing resistance to the truth is the same as that "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" which, in the words of the Lord, "shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matthew 12.31). As Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) explains: "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or 'sin unto death', according to the explanation of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (VIII, 75), is a conscious, hardened opposition to the truth, 'because the Spirit is truth' (John 5.6)." It is not that God does not want to forgive all sins, even the most heinous: it is simply that he who bars the way to the Spirit of truth is thereby blocking the way to the truth about himself and God, and therefore to the forgiveness of his sins. As St. Augustine says: "The first gift is that which is concerned with the remission of sins... Against this gratuitous gift, against this grace of God, does the impenitent heart speak. This impenitence, then, is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit."

Wilful ignorance can be of various degrees. There is the wilful ignorance that refuses to believe even when the truth is staring you in the face – this is the most serious kind, the kind practised by the Pharisees and the heresiarchs. But a man can also be said to be wilfully ignorant if he does not take the steps that are necessary in order to discover the truth – this is less serious, but still blameworthy, and is characteristic of many of those who followed the Pharisees and the heresiarchs. Thus we read: "That servant who knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and he to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12.47-48). To which the words of St. Theophylactus of Bulgaria are a fitting commentary: "Here some will object, saying: 'He who knows the will of his Lord, but does not do it, is deservedly punished. But why is the ignorant punished?' Because when he might have known he did not wish to do so, but was the cause of his own ignorance through sloth."

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "How can he who did not know it be guilty? The reason is, because he did not want to know it, although it was in his power to learn." To whom does this distinction apply? St. Cyril applies it to false teachers and parents, on the one hand, and those who follow them, on the other. In other words, the blind leaders will receive a greater

419 St. Augustine, Homily 21 on the New Testament, 19, 20. See also St. Symeon the New Theologian, Discourse XXIII, 1. There are other interpretations of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which complement and follow from this one. Thus St. Ambrose (On Repentance, II, 24), followed by St. Augustine (Homily 21 on the New Testament, 28), regards heretics and schismatics as blasphemers against the Holy Spirit insofar as they deny the Spirit and Truth that is in the True Church.
condemnation than the blind followers - which is not to say, however, that they will not both fall into the pit (Matthew 15.14). For, as Bishop Nicholas Velimirovich writes: "Are the people at fault if godless elders and false prophets lead them onto foreign paths? The people are not at fault to as great an extent as their elders and the false prophets, but they are at fault to some extent. For God gave to the people also to know the right path, both through their conscience and through the preaching of the word of God, so that people should not blindly have followed their blind guides, who led them by false paths that alienated them from God and His Laws."422

Are Hindus and Buddhists who have lived their whole lives in non-Christian communities wilfully ignorant of the truth? Of course, only God knows the degree of ignorance in any particular case. However, even if the heathen have more excuse than the Christians who deny Christ, they cannot be said to be completely innocent; for no one is completely deprived of the knowledge of the One God. Thus St. Jerome writes: "Ours and every other race of men knows God naturally. There are no peoples who do not recognise their Creator naturally." 423 And St. John Chrysostom writes: "From the beginning God placed the knowledge of Himself in men, but the pagans awarded this knowledge to sticks and stones, doing wrong to the truth to the extent that they were able."424 And the same Father writes: "One way of coming to the knowledge of God is that which is provided by the whole of creation; and another, no less significant, is that which is offered by conscience, the whole of which we have expounded upon at greater length, showing how you have a self-taught knowledge of what is good and what is not so good, and how conscience urges all this upon you from within. Two teachers, then, are given you from the beginning: creation and conscience. Neither of them has a voice to speak out; yet they teach men in silence."425

Many have abandoned the darkness of idolatry by following the voices of creation and conscience alone. Such, for example, was St. Barbara, who even before she had heard of Christ rejected her father's idols and believed in the One Creator of heaven and earth. For she heeded the voice of creation: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands" (Psalm 18.1). And the voice of her conscience, which recoiled from those "most odious works of witchcrafts, and wicked sacrifices; and also those merciless murderers of children and devourers of man's flesh, and the feasts of blood, with their priests out of the midst of their idolatrous crew, and the parents, that killed with their own hands souls destitute of help" (Wisdom of Solomon 12.4-6). But her father, who had the same witnesses to the truth as she, rejected it - to the extent of killing his own daughter.426

423 St. Jerome, Treatise on Psalm 95.
424 St. Chrysostom, Homily 3 on Romans, 2.
425 St. Chrysostom, First Homily on Hannah, 3.
Thus there is a light that "enlightens every man who comes into the world" (John 1.9). And if there are some who reject that light, abusing that freewill which God will never deprive them of, this is not His fault, but theirs. As St. John Chrysostom says, "If there are some who choose to close the eyes of their mind and do not want to receive the rays of that light, their darkness comes not from the nature of the light, but from their own darkness in voluntarily depriving themselves of that gift."427

This mystery of the voluntary rejection of the light was revealed in a vision to a nun, the sister of the famous novelist Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, who rejected the teaching of the Orthodox Church and died under anathema: "When I returned from the burial of my brother Sergius to my home in the monastery, I had some kind of dream or vision which shook me to the depths of my soul. After I had completed my usual cell rule, I began to doze off, or fell into some kind of special condition between sleep and waking, which we monastics call a light sleep. I dropped off, and beheld... It was night. There was the study of Lev Nikolayevich. On the writing desk stood a lamp with a dark lampshade. Behind the desk, and leaning with his elbows on it, sat Lev Nikolayevich, and on his face there was the mark of such serious thought, and such despair, as I had never seen in him before... The room was filled with a thick, impenetrable darkness; the only illumination was of that place on the table and on the face of Lev Nikolayevich on which the light of the lamp was falling. The darkness in the room was so thick, so impenetrable, that it even seemed as if it were filled, saturated with some materialisation... And suddenly I saw the ceiling of the study open, and from somewhere in the heights there began to pour such a blindingly wonderful light, the like of which cannot be seen on earth; and in this light there appeared the Lord Jesus Christ, in that form in which He is portrayed in Rome, in the picture of the holy Martyr and Archdeacon Laurence: the all-pure hands of the Saviour were spread out in the air above Lev Nikolayevich, as if removing from invisible executioners the instruments of torture. It looks just like that in the picture. And this ineffable light poured and poured onto Lev Nikolayevich. But it was as if he didn't see it... And I wanted to shout to my brother: Levushka, look, look up!... And suddenly, behind Lev Nikolayevich, - I saw it with terror, - from the very thickness of the darkness I began to make out another figure, a terrifying, cruel figure that made me tremble: and this figure, placing both its hands from behind over the eyes of Lev Nikolayevich, shut out that wonderful light from him. And I saw that my Levushka was making despairing efforts to push away those cruel, merciless hands... At this point I came to, and, as I came to, I heard a voice speaking as it were inside me: 'The Light of Christ enlightens everyone!'428

427 St. Chrysostom, Homily 8 on John.
If the Light of Christ enlightens everyone, then there is no one who cannot come to the True Faith, however unpromising his situation. If a man follows the teachers that are given to everyone, creation and conscience, then the Providence of God, with Whom "all things are possible" (Matthew 19.26), will lead him to the teacher that is given at the beginning only to a few - "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth" (I Timothy 3.15). For "it is not possible," writes St. John Chrysostom, "that one who is living rightly and freed from the passions should ever be overlooked. But even if he happens to be in error, God will quickly draw him over to the truth." Again, as Chrysostom's disciple, St. John Cassian, says: "When God sees in us some beginnings of good will, He at once enlightens it, urging it on towards salvation."

This point was developed in an illuminating manner by Cassian's French contemporary, Prosper of Aquitaine: "The very armies that exhaust the world help on the work of Christian grace. How many indeed who in the quiet of peacetime delayed to receive the sacrament of baptism, were compelled by fear of close danger to hasten to the water of regeneration, and were suddenly forced by threatening terror to fulfil a duty which a peaceful exhortation failed to bring home to their slow and tepid souls? Some sons of the Church, made prisoners by the enemy, changed their masters into servants of the Gospel, and by teaching them the faith they became the superiors of their own wartime lords. Again, some foreign pagans, whilst serving in the Roman armies, were able to learn the faith in our country, when in their own lands they could not have known it; they returned to their homes instructed in the Christian religion. Thus nothing can prevent God's grace from accomplishing His will... For all who at any time will be called and will enter into the Kingdom of God, have been marked out in the adoption which preceded all times. And just as none of the infidels is counted among the elect, so none of the God-fearing is excluded from the blessed. For in fact God's prescience, which is infallible, cannot lose any of the members that make up the fullness of the Body of Christ."

However, there are few today who have a living faith in God's ability to bring anyone to the faith, whatever his situation. It may therefore be useful to cite the famous example of God's favour to the Aleuts of Alaska, to whom He sent angels to teach them the Orthodox Faith in the absence of any human instructor. Fr. John Veniaminov (later St. Innocent, metropolitan of Moscow (+1879)) relates how, on his first missionary journey to Akun island, he found all the islanders lined up on the shore waiting for him. It turned out that they had been warned by their former shaman, John Smirennikov, who in turn had been warned by two "white men", who looked like the angels on icons. Smirennikov told his story to Fr. John, who wrote: "Soon after he was

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429 St. Chrysostom, Homily 24 on Matthew, 1.
430 St. Cassian, Conferences, XIII, 8.
431 Prosper, The Call of the Nations, II, 33.
baptised by Hieromonk Macarius, first one and later two spirits appeared to him but were visible to no one else... They told him that they were sent by God to edify, teach and guard him. For the next thirty years they appeared to him almost every day, either during daylight hours or early in the evening - but never at night. On these occasions: (1) They taught him in its totality Christian theology and the mysteries of the faith... (2) In time of sickness and famine they brought help to him and - though more rarely - to others at his request. (When agreeing to his requests that they help others, they always responded by saying that they would first have to ask God, and if it was His will, then they would do it.) (3) Occasionally they told him of thing occurring in another place or (very rarely) at some time in the future - but then only if God willed such a revelation; in such cases they would persuade him that they did so not by their own power, but by the power of Almighty God.

"Their doctrine is that of the Orthodox Church. I, however, knowing that even demons believe - and tremble with fear [James 3.19], wondered whether or not this might be the crafty and subtle snare of him who from time immemorial has been Evil. 'How do they teach you to pray, to themselves or to God? And how do they teach you to live with others?' He answered that they taught him to pray not to them but to the Creator of all, and to pray in spirit, with the heart; occasionally they would even pray along with him for long periods of time.

"They taught him to exercise all pure Christian virtues (which he related to me in detail), and recommended, furthermore, that he remain faithful and pure, both within and outside of marriage (this perhaps because the locals are quite given to such impurity). Furthermore, they taught him all the outward virtues..."432

Very apt was the comment of one of the first who read this story: "It is comforting to read about such miraculous Divine Providence towards savages, sons of Adam who, though forgotten by the world, were not forgotten by Providence."433

These cases lead us to draw the following conclusions: (1) The Providence of God is able to save anyone in any situation, providing he loves the truth. Therefore (2), although we cannot declare with categorical certainty that those who die in unbelief or heresy will be damned, neither can we declare that they will be saved because of their ignorance; for they may be alienated from God "through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4.18), and not simply through the ignorance that is caused by external circumstances. And (3) if we, who know the truth, say that such people do not need to become Christians in order to be saved, then we shall

432 Paul Garrett, St. Innocent, Apostle to America, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979, pp. 80-81.
433 Garrett, op. cit., p. 85, footnote.
be guilty of indifference to the truth; for which we shall certainly merit damnation. For while we cannot presume to know the eternal destinies of individual men, we do know this, that the Word of God is true that declares: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16.16). And again: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3.5). And again: "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father Who is in heaven" (Matthew 10.33).

Moreover, to the unlying Word of God we may add the witness of Holy Tradition, in the form of the experience of Theodora, the spiritual daughter of St. Basil the New, who, after passing through the toll-houses and being returned to her body, was told by the angels: "Those who believe in the Holy Trinity and take as frequently as possible the Holy Communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, our Saviour's body and Blood - such people can rise to heaven directly, with no hindrances, and the holy angels defend them, and the holy saints of God pray for their salvation, since they have lived righteously. No one, however, takes care of wicked and depraved heretics, who do nothing useful during their lives, and live in disbelief and heresy. The angels can say nothing in their defence... [Only those] enlightened by the faith and holy baptism can rise and be tested in the stations of torment [that is, the toll-houses]. The unbelievers do not come here. Their souls belong to hell even before they part from their bodies. When they die, the devils take their souls with no need to test them. Such souls are their proper prey, and they take them down to the abyss."

Some believe that even those condemned to hell after their death, may yet get a “second chance” at the Last Judgement, through the prayers of the saints and the Mother of God. The present writer knows no patristic witness that would clearly confirm or refute such an idea. However, we know from St. Simeon the Theologian that if a man is making progress towards the truth in this life he will not be deprived of further progress in the life to come: "It is a great good thing to believe in Christ, because without faith in Christ it is impossible to be saved; but one must also be instructed in the word of truth and understand it. It is a good thing to be instructed in the word of truth, and to understand it is essential; but one must also receive Baptism in the name of the Holy and Life-giving Trinity, for the bringing to life of the soul. It is a good thing to receive Baptism and through it a new spiritual life; but it is necessary that this mystical life, or this mental enlightenment in the spirit, also should be consciously felt. It is a good thing to receive with feeling the mental enlightenment in the spirit; but one must manifest also the works of light. It is a good thing to do the works of light; but one must also be clothed in the humility and meekness of Christ for a perfect likeness to Christ. He who attains this and becomes meek and humble of heart, as if these were his..."

natural dispositions, will unfailingly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and into the joy of the Lord. Moreover, regarding all those who are running on the path of God according to the order I have indicated, if it happens that natural death should cut off their course in the midst of this, they will not be banished from the doors of the Kingdom of God, and these doors will not be closed before them, according to the limitless mercy of God. But regarding those who do not run in such a way, their faith also in Christ the Lord is vain, if they have such..."\(^{435}\)

4. The Argument from the Supremacy of Love over Justice. Another argument goes as follows. "Let us suppose that most men are not worthy to enter the Kingdom of heaven, if only because they will find nothing akin to their own corrupted nature there. Nevertheless, God is love, and he would never cast the creatures He has created and still continues to love into the unimaginably terrible torments of hell, whose purpose, since they are unending, cannot be the rehabilitation of the sinner, nor deterrence of future evil. We do not deny that the Scriptures speak in many places of the existence of just such a hell, and of a great multitude entering into it. But we cannot but hope and believe (for 'love believeth all things, hopeth all things' (I Corinthians 13.7) that these images are placed before us simply as a deterrent, and that in the end hell will be an empty place, not only spiritually but also physically. God has shown, by His Death on the Cross, that His love for us is greater than His love for the abstract principle of justice. Is it possible that he would finally deny that, admit that His Sacrifice had been in vain (for the great majority of people, at any rate), and allow cold justice to triumph over love?"

In attempting to answer this objection, we must first arm ourselves with the most basic weapon of the Christian life: the fear of God. The fear of God is not an abject trembling before a despotic tyrant. It is a rational, heartfelt awareness that we all, and every part of our lives, are in the hands of a Being Who infinitely transcends everything that we can say about Him, and even the very categories of our discourse. This applies not only to clearly inexplicable and unimaginable acts of His such as the creation of the world out of nothing. It also applies to those definitions of His nature which seem to correspond to something in our experience, such as: "God is love".

If human love can sometimes seem to be incompatible with justice, this is not so with Divine love. For what is the whole economy of God’s incarnation, life on earth and death on the Cross if not perfect love in pursuit of perfect justice - an extraordinary, humanly speaking paradoxical justice, it is true, but for that very reason characteristically Divine justice? For He, the Just One, Who committed no sin and had done everything to deter us from it, out of love for man died to blot out all the sins and injustices of the whole world. When we

could not pay the price, He paid it for us; when we were dead in sin, He died to give us life; "for Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (I Peter 3.18).

The Church has expressed the paradoxicality of God’s justice with great eloquence: "Come, all ye peoples, and let us venerate the blessed Wood, through which the eternal justice has been brought to pass. For he who by a tree deceived our forefather Adam, is by the Cross himself deceived; and he who by tyranny gained possession of the creature endowed by God with royal dignity, is overthrown in headlong fall. By the Blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away; and the curse of a just condemnation is loosed by the just punishment inflicted on the Just. For it was fitting that wood should be healed by wood, and that through the Passion of One Who knew not passion should be remitted all the sufferings of him who was condemned because of wood. But glory to Thee, O Christ our King, for Thy dread dispensation towards us, whereby Thou hast saved us all, for Thou art good and lovest mankind."

436 Here there is no contradiction between love and justice. And if there is no contradiction between them in the Redeeming Passion of Christ on the Cross, then there is likewise no contradiction between them in His Coming again to judge men in accordance with their response to His Passion. But in order to understand this it is necessary, first, to rid ourselves of the idea that God’s just wrath against impenitent sinners is comparable to the sinful human passion of vengefulness. Such vengefulness is condemned by the Word of God (Romans 12.17-21), and cannot possibly be attributed to the Divine Nature, which is alien to all fallen human passion. We must at all times hate the sin and not the sinner; we must wish for the destruction of sin and not of sinners. If we wish to identify our will with the Will of God, then our first desire must be for the salvation of all sinners, including our enemies, paying special attention (lest we become hypocrites) to those sinners we know best and for whom we are primarily responsible - ourselves.

"The wrath of God," writes Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava, "is one of the manifestations of the love of God, but of the love of God in its relationship to the moral evil in the heart of rational creatures in general, and of man in particular."437 That is why the martyrs under the heavenly altar, filled as they are with the love of God to the highest degree, are at the same time filled with a holy wrath: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6.10). And yet,

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436 Menaion, September 14, Great Vespers of the Exaltation of the Cross, "Lord, I have cried", "Glory... Both now..."

as the Venerable Bede writes, "the souls of the righteous cry out these words, not out of hatred for enemies, but out of love for justice".\footnote{St. Bede, On Genesis 4.10.}

This love of justice is natural to man, for it is made in the image of God’s own love of justice. The love of justice proceeds naturally from the Nature of God, like heat from the sun. Thus to say that God should be loving but not just is like saying that the sun should give light but not heat. It is simply not in the nature of things. What is in accordance with the nature of God is that He should divide the light of His grace from its fiery heat at the Last Judgement, giving the light only to the blessed and the heat only to the damned.

As St. Basil the Great writes, commenting on the verse: “The voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire” (Psalm 28.6), writes: “The fire prepared in punishment for the devil and his angels is divided by the voice of the Lord. Thus, since there are two capacities in fire, one of burning and the other of illuminating, the fierce and punitive property of the fire may await those who deserve to burn, while its illuminating and radiant part may be reserved for the enjoyment of those who are rejoicing.”\footnote{St. Basil, On Psalm 28.6; translated in Jurgens, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. II, p. 21.}

The Lord placed justice on a par with mercy and faith (Matthew 23.23), and it was the Ephesian Church’s hatred of injustice that redeemed it in His eyes; for “this thou hast, that thou hastest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (Revelation 2.6). This lesson is particularly important for our century, when the Orthodox Church has been persecuted by the ecumenists with their indifference to the truth, on the one hand, and the sergianists with their indifference to justice, on the other. We have to kindle in ourselves a holy and dispassionate zeal for the truth and hatred of injustice.

Thus, as Archbishop Theophanes writes in reply to the question “Can one have a negative feeling in relation to the enemies of the Russian people and the Orthodox Church or must one suppress in oneself this feeling, repeating the words: ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay’?”: “To have a negative feeling towards the enemies of God and of the Russian people is natural. And on the contrary not to have a negative feeling is unnatural. Only this feeling must be correct. And it will be correct when it has a principled, not personal character, that is, when we ‘hate’ the enemies of God and of the Russian people not for their personal offences against us, but for their hostile attitude towards God and the Church and for their inhuman attitude towards Russian people. Therefore it is also necessary to fight with these enemies. Whereas if we do not fight, we will be punished by God for our lukewarmness. He will then take His vengeance not only on them, but also on us...”\footnote{Archbishop Theophanes, \textit{Piśma}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 40.}
The whole burden of the Old Testament Prophets was an impassioned, yet holy lament against the injustice of man against God and against his fellow man. And if anything to the Prophets was proof of the corruption of Israel, it was that, instead of repenting of their own injustice, they accused the Just One of injustice. Thus the holy Prophet Ezekiel laments: “The house of Israel saith, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not My ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 18.29-30). And the holy Prophet Malachi laments: “Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgement?” (Malachi 2.17).

The God of judgement is within us, manifest in that extraordinarily powerful love of justice that is created in the image of God’s love of justice. Faith teaches, and human nature cries out for, a last and most glorious Judgement in which all tears will wiped away from every innocent face (Revelation 21.4), and every apparently meaningless suffering will find its meaning and reward. Again, faith teaches, and human nature cries out for, a last and most terrible Judgement in which those who laughed over the sufferings of others will weep (Luke 6.25), and those who feasted on human flesh will gnash their teeth in eternal frustration. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Galatians 6.7,8)

Thus the Last, Most Terrible Judgement is a mystery proclaimed by the Word of God and grounded in the deepest reality of things. It both proceeds from the nature of God Himself, and is an innate demand of our human nature created in the image of God. It is the essential foundation for the practice of virtue and the abhorrence of vice, and the ultimate goal to which the whole of created nature strives, willingly or unwillingly, as to its natural fulfilment. Without it all particular judgements would have a partial and unsatisfactory character, and the reproaches of Job against God, and of all unbelievers against faith, would be justified. And if the Last Judgement is different from all preceding ones in that in it love seems to be separated from justice, love being distributed exclusively to the righteous and justice to the sinners, then this is because human nature itself will have divided itself in two, one part having responded to love with love, to justice with justice, while the other, having rejected both the love and the justice of God, will merit to experience His justice alone...

And if, like Ivan in Dostoyevsky’s novel, The Brothers Karamazov, we still cannot come to terms with the tears of an innocent child, this is not because our love is too great, but because our faith in God's justice is too small. God’s ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His justice, we
must humbly accept, is not our justice. At some times we cannot understand why the innocent suffer; at others – why the guilty get away with it. At some times we cannot understand why great sinners are forgiven in a moment; at others – why those who seem to us to be less guilty appear destined for the eternal fire. The only right way to respond to this is to recognise humbly that the creature cannot and must not argue with his Creator, and to say with the Psalmist: “Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgements” (Psalm 118.137)…

(January 20 / February 2, 1999; revised July 8/21, 2004)
25. GOD AND TSUNAMIS

Introduction

“There were some present at that very time who told Him of the Galilaeans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answered then, ‘Do you think that these Galilaeans were worse sinners than all the other Galilaeans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish’ (Luke 13.1-5).

This Gospel tells us three things. First, those who suffer in disasters such as the recent South Asian tsunami are not necessarily worse people than those who escape them. Secondly, however, such disasters do come upon those who do not repent of their sins; they are the instruments of God’s wrath against sinners. And so, thirdly, we who remain among the living must fear lest we perish like they did because of our sins.

The western press, both atheist and Christian, will have none of this. God does not cause disasters like this, says the atheist: rather, the very presence of such disasters is proof that God does not exist. For if He did exist, and was able to stop them but did not, this proves that He is immoral. And if He was not able to stop them, this proves that He is impotent, or at any rate not omnipotent. But since religion says that God is both moral and omnipotent, this proves that God does not exist.

The arguments of Christian leaders to defend their faith against such attacks have been feeble in the extreme. Or rather, they have joined the atheists in attacking it. Thus the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, shocked British listeners by declaring: “Every single random, accidental death is something that should upset a faith bound up with comfort and ready answers. Faced with the paralysing magnitude of a disaster like this, we naturally feel more deeply outraged.”

But there are no “random, accidental” deaths, and Orthodox Christian piety most definitely does not feel “outrage” before the judgements of God, but only reverence: “The judgements of God are a great abyss…”

The archbishop’s statement is on a par with the remark made by the Bishop of Durham, Dr. David Jenkins, some years ago that if God allowed Auschwitz, He is the devil! Presuming that the Bishop of Durham is not joking, and that he does believe in the devil, we must conclude either that he believes that the devil rules the universe and allowed Auschwitz or that he does not believe in the omnipotence of God. The latter opinion appears to be much more likely…
A similar, if less crudely expressed, argument has been made by Professor Keith Ward of Oxford University in his recently published debate with the atheist A.C. Grayling. 441 God, he says, is not as omnipotent as some traditional concepts of the deity presume: although God is the Creator of the universe, the laws of nature produce some unpleasant consequences, such as tsunamis, over which He has no control. And so He is not responsible for them.

Grayling replies: “If he is the creator, he is not like the builder of an aeroplane, which everyone hopes will never crash; he is rather like the builder of an aeroplane which is actually designed to crash – this being the necessity of a world with moving tectonic plates, viruses, and all the other vectors of disaster; and for this, therefore, he is responsible”.

Not so, responds Ward. “There is a big difference between the statements ‘The universe is designed to inflict pain’ and ‘The universe is designed to produce intelligent life, but a foreseen, regretted yet inevitable consequence is the existence of pain’; also between ‘suffering for some good purpose’ and ‘suffering as an unwelcome consequence of the pursuit of a good purpose’. A personal cause might have to accept the latter pair, but never the former.”

To which Grayling retorts: “When believers recite their version of the creed – every version of which bar the Chalcedonian places ‘almighty God’ at the head – they literally mean a God capable of anything, and therefore capable of preventing innocent suffering if he chose; which, if he exists and is omnipotent in the literal sense, he does not do, and that impugns his morals. Your vaguely drawn alternative deity is not to blame for humanity’s sufferings because he is powerless to prevent them, but since this is far from what the body of the faithful believe of him, and furthermore, since diminished potency entails diminished wisdom, benevolence, and the rest of the traditional attributes, it is hard to see why anyone should be impressed by the residue you offer.”

It is hard to disagree with Grayling’s objection to the professor of theology – but without, of course, accepting his atheist conclusions. Diminishing the omnipotence of God in order to free Him from responsibility for human suffering is a false solution, which only plays into the atheists’ hands. God is almighty, but at the same time perfectly good and just: that is the belief of the Orthodox Church.

How, then, do we answer the atheists, and those “Christians” who concede far more to the atheists than is compatible with the Christian Faith?

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Let us begin by pointing out that God is not only capable of creating a world without suffering – He did so, right at the beginning, in Paradise. Suffering and death came into the world, not by the will of God, but through the envy of the devil, who caused Adam and Eve to fall away from God, and therefore from Life itself. If man had not sinned, there is no reason why this blissful life in Paradise, free of all suffering and death, should not have continued forever, both for Adam and Eve and for their descendants.

But why, somebody may object, should sin result in death? Could not God have devised a better way of correcting the sinner? Could He not simply have explained to Adam and Eve the error of their ways, and then, upon their repentance, allowed them to continue their former blissful life?

But God did call Adam and Eve to repentance – and they did not repent. Moreover, it must be remembered that sin, being the opposite of holiness, drove away that holiness that was integral to man at the beginning, who was made “after the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4.24). And having lost holiness, or the Holy Spirit, man began to disintegrate, like an organism out of which the central, controlling organ has been removed. When the Spirit departed from the soul, it began to fall apart into warring passions. And then the body, too, began to break up, resulting in death.

There could therefore be no question of restoring man to his former beauty and holiness just like that – he was dying, and destined for the grave, the moment he stubbornly refused to repent. Only a thorough recreation of man could restore him. And that recreation was effected in Christ, the New Adam.

In any case, for sinners like ourselves, as St. Ambrose of Milan points out, death is a good. Suffering helps to correct sin by humbling the soul, preparing it to receive the forgiveness and new life that is in Christ. And death cuts off sin together with the sinner. Moreover, death is the necessary precondition of resurrection; for just as a statue that is flawed can be corrected only by melting it down and starting again, so is it with man. Through death he is “melted down”, as it were, making it possible for him to be rebuilt, without the flaws introduced by sin, at the general resurrection from the dead...

“Faith”, writes St. Macarius of Optina, “does not consist of merely believing in the existence of God, but also in His all-wise Providence which guides His creatures and arranges everything for the good; the times and the seasons are put in His power (Acts 1.7), and for each of us the limits of our life were determined before our existence, and without His will a bird does not fall nor does a hair of our head perish! (Matthew 10.29; Luke 21.28)... The works of God are wondrous and unfathomable for our darkened minds, but
as much as possible, we see from Scripture and our personal experiences that
the Lord sends sicknesses, sorrows, deprivation, droughts, wars, and
revolutions, either as punishment for our sins, or in anticipation, so that we
do not fall into sins, or sometimes to test our faith. And so, we must bow in
reverence before His all-wise Providence and give thanks for His ineffable
mercy towards us.”

**Does God Play with Dice?**

“But this is all nonsense”, say the atheists and our modern theologians.
Being Darwinists to a man, they do not believe in Paradise or in Adam and
Eve; they believe that death was there from the beginning, as the engine of
evolution. God just couldn’t help it, they say: the world He created came into
being through death and destruction – mutation and natural selection. It is a
paradox, of course, that life should come into being through death – but
science has proved it! God wasn’t capable of getting it right first time: He had
gradually to perfect the species through an incredibly costly process of trial
and error involving the suffering and deaths of millions and millions of
creatures over millions and millions of years. And even now He hasn’t got it
right: “foreseen, regretted yet inevitable” disasters keep interfering with the
world He supposedly created. God is really in the dock before our
contemporary theistic evolutionists. However, they are generously prepared
to acquit Him - on the grounds of “diminished responsibility”…

According to this “enlightened” thinking, man is in the privileged position
of being able, through science and reason, to correct the mistakes God made
in creation. God gets things wrong, sending thousands of innocent creatures
to their deaths, but man puts things right - through earth science (how clever
we are!) and tsunami appeals (how generous we are!), through the American
Fleet and the United Nations and the Kyoto Protocols, etc., etc., etc.
Eventually, perhaps, man will even be able to help God out in recreating man
himself – through stem cell research and gene therapy, through social
engineering, free trade and democracy. No need, then, for a New Adam: the
old Adam can put himself right, thank you! In truth, then, the real god of
creation is not God – but man!

All this rests on the premise that God is as limited by the laws of nature as
we are. At best, the picture that the modern theologians present us with is the
Deist-Masonic one of the eighteenth-century philosophers. The Deists’ “god”
may have created the universe in the beginning, but he certainly has no
control over it now; he is like the child who winds up a toy and then cannot
keep up with it as it jumps all over the room. He is allowed to perform a
miracle occasionally, but only as a special exception – for those who believe in
such things. But there can be no question of God having any real control over

442 St. Macarius of Optina, in “Spiritual Teachings of the Optina Elders, Part IX”, *Orthodox Life*,
nature as a whole or in detail – after all, that would leave no room for the creativity of man, whose “calling” is to alter the workings of the bouncing toy and return it, like a benevolent father, to the distraught child!

The Orthodox Christian philosophy argues quite differently. He who believes in chance, says St. Basil the Great, is an atheist – he does not really believe in God at all. There is no such thing as chance, says St. Ignatius Brianchaninov. Nothing is impossible for God, because He controls the workings of the universe down to the last detail, down to the tiniest wave-function. When we say that A causes B, what we mean is that God causes A and then causes B. As David Hume pointed out already in the eighteenth century, nobody has actually seen a cause: the only thing we ever see is events of class A being followed by events of class B, a regular sequence; we never see a third entity, C, causing A to be followed by B. The only true Cause of every single event in the history of the universe – except, as we shall see, the free decisions of men and angels – is God.

The only limitations God allows to be placed on his sovereign will are the workings of the wills of men and angels – and that only for a time, and only within severe limits. Everything that is not willed by men or angels is willed by God. And so the South Asian tsunami, if it was not caused by men, was caused by God or the devil. Actually, it could have been caused by God and the devil, in that God sometimes uses the evil will of demons as an instrument to the fulfilling of His own good and perfect will. And so all things are either actively willed by God, or, if it not actively willed, are allowed by Him.

Who is Innocent?

The arrogance of the “Christian theologians” is most clearly revealed in their attitude to the victims of the tsunami: all of them, they agree, are “innocent”. This “truth” is reeled out by almost every commentator as if it were a dogma. As if they could see and weigh up the thoughts of all of the 150,000 victims, and declare them all: “not guilty!”

But on what basis can they acquit the pagans and Muslims who died? And on what basis can they acquit the Christian victims, most of whom were sunning themselves on the day after Western Christmas far from a Christian church? It was left to some Muslims who know the region better than the Christian theologians, and who also appear to believe more in the justice of God than they, to point out that immoral practices such as child kidnapping and paedophilia are rife in the region...

“Are you then saying that all the victims were killed as God’s punishment for their sins?” No, we are not. We do not know the victims, and would not have the right to judge them, even if we knew them. Only God can judge, because only He knows the hearts and reins of every man. We know neither
the heart of each man, nor the reason why God sends this or that man this or that form of suffering.

For there are many possible reasons why a man should die or be injured in a disaster such as the South Asian tsunami. It may be the final punishment of a sinner who will not repent. Or the timely chastisement of a sinner who will repent. It may be the deliverance of a good but vulnerable soul from mortal sin in the future (“while living among sinners he was taken up, lest evil should change his understanding or guile deceive his soul” (Wisdom 4.10-11)). Or the crown of a just life (St. Athanasius of Mount Athos was killed by a falling bell).

Herod and Ahab and Judas died as a punishment of their sins, of which they did not repent; and their punishment continued after their deaths. But David and Peter and Paul suffered as a chastisement for their sins, repented and were forgiven. The children who mocked the Prophet Elisha died because of their mockery. But Job did not suffer because of his sins, but in order to serve as an example of long-suffering, and even as a type of Christ. And the 14,000 innocents of Bethlehem suffered in order to receive a crown of glory in the heavens...

It is important to realize that when speaking of fallen human beings, - that is, all human beings except Christ the Lord, - we use the term “innocent” only relatively speaking. The sentence of death falls on all the sons of Adam. “For all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3.23).

Nor are children and even new-born babies exempt from this rule; for “even from the womb, sinners are estranged” (Psalm 57.3). As Job says: “Who shall be pure from uncleanness? Not even one, even if his life should be but one day upon the earth” (Job 14.4 (LXX)). That is why we baptise children “unto the remission of sins”.

Modern theologians try to “absolve” God of responsibility for the suffering and deaths of millions whom they – the theologians – in their infinite wisdom declare to be “innocent”. And yet God does not deny that He sends death upon these millions – and says that we are to blame! Consider His verdict on the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar: “The Lord, the God of their fathers, constantly sent to them by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words, and scoffing at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against His people, until there was no remedy. Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged: He gave them all into his hand” (II Chronicles 36.15-16).
There is no question about it: the disaster was willed by God, as a just punishment for sin. And even if the instruments of His wrath, the Chaldeans, were themselves evil, God used the evil as an instrument for His good ends. In the same way, the ten plagues of Egypt – which killed many “innocent” babes – were willed by the good God, but carried out by evil demons: “And He sent forth against them the wrath of His anger, anger and wrath and affliction, a mission performed by evil angels” (Psalm 77.53). Not that the evil executioners of God’s wrath are justified for that; “for shall the axe vaunt itself over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it?” (Isaiah 10).

Of course, God’s primary or active will is that we should do good, and should be rewarded for it. But if we frustrate his primary will, then He allows evil to be punished: this is His secondary will, as it were. For He is just as well as merciful; He is the God of justice as well as the God of love.

Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) of New York writes: “The Lord sometimes waits for evil to reveal itself utterly, so that, having exposed its real nature, it might by itself be rejected by the hearts of men; and He subjects the righteous man to a sevenfold trial, so as to reveal his spiritual beauty before the whole world and increase his reward. Thus, for a time, He allows things to remain as they are: ‘He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still’ (Revelation 22.11).

“If, with a righteous man, the least sinful obstacles characteristic of fallen human nature are burned up in the fire of trials, so also does God allow the ungodly one to enjoy prosperity for a time, so that he might receive his ‘reward’ for those crumbs of good which he might at any time do during his life. The just Judge does not wish to remain in debt either to the righteous or to the sinful. The latter, of course, do not realize that He is dealing with them in this instance as a physician does with the hopelessly ill, deciding at the last moment to let them have anything they want, only because they have no hope for a future. With great eloquence and persuasiveness the blessed Augustine reveals this latter idea in his famous work On the City of God, which is, as is well known, the first attempt at a philosophy of history, when he speaks of the fall of Rome. The very prosperity of those condemned to destruction is no more than a phantom, like smoke, and therefore it should elicit no sense of envy in anyone, but only a sad pity for their lot, for the divine Word is immutable: ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay’ (Romans 9.13; Deuteronomy 32.35). ‘When I am given the appointed time, I will judge uprightly’ (Psalm 74.3); ‘I will begin, and I will make an end’ (I Kings 3.12).

‘Fret not thyself because of evil-doers,’ King David the prophet urges us, ‘nor envy them that work iniquity. For like grass quickly shall they be withered, and like green herbs quickly shall they fall away’ (Psalm 36.1-2).
“‘Weep for the sinner who succeeds at everything’, one of the Fathers of the Church teaches us, ‘for the sword of divine justice is hanging over him’.

“When the Lord deems it necessary, He reveals His judgement over ungodliness even here on earth, answering, as it were, the entreaty of mankind: ‘Let me see Thy vengeance taken upon them, for to Thee I have declared my cause’ (Jeremiah 11.2).”

**Conclusion**

The Apostle Paul writes: “All things happen for the best for those who love God, and who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8.28). So even the most terrible disasters are for the best – for those who love God, and for those who, though they do not love God now, are called to love Him in the future and enjoy His eternal good things. For those who do not love God, however, they express the righteous wrath of God in punishing evil.

The love and justice of Divine Providence is based on the omnipotence of God: if God were not the pantocrator, the almighty, the words of the apostle would make no sense. It is therefore the height of impiety, exhibiting clear disbelief in the truth of the Holy Scriptures, to attempt to limit His omnipotence. For as the Lord said to Abraham: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18.14). For “I form light and create darkness, I make prosperity and create woe. I am the Lord, Who does all these things” (Isaiah 45.7).

And if it is the height of impiety – equivalent, as St. Basil says, to atheism – to attempt to limit the omnipotence of God, and make Him helpless before chance or the supposed iron laws of nature, what are we to say of those who impugn His justice, and who take it upon themselves to declare all the victims of His judgements innocent?

God is justified in His words and prevails when He is judged by those evil men who accuse Him of injustice. As He says through the Prophet Ezekiel: “Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not My ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways” (Ezekiel 18.29-30). Again, the Prophet Malachi says: “Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgement?” (Malachi 2.17). But God is not unequal in His ways, and He is always the God of judgement.

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“For who will say, ‘What hast Thou done? Or who will resist Thy judgement? Who will accuse Thee for the destruction of the nations which Thou didst make? Or who will come before Thee to plead as an advocate for unrighteous men? For neither is there any god besides Thee, Whose care is for all men, to whom Thou shouldest prove that Thou hast not judged unjustly; nor can any king or monarch confront Thee about those whom Thou hast punished.” (Wisdom 12.12-14).

January 21 / February 3, 2005.
St. Maximus the Confessor.
26. THE POWER OF ANATHEMAS

The Orthodox world was shocked when, in 1965, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras “lifted the anathemas” on their churches. Metropolitan Philaret led the True Orthodox in protesting that this simply could not be done. The anathemas on the Filioque and other Papist heresies were eternally valid, for falsehood remains falsehood for ever; and as long as the Papists confessed these heresies, they fell under the anathemas.

The essential point is this: if an anathema expresses truth, and the bishops who pronounce it are true, then it has power “to the ages of ages”, and nobody can lift it, because it is pronounced not only by the earthly Church, but also by the Heavenly Church, in accordance with the word of the Lord: “Whatever ye [the apostles and their successors] shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Matthew 18.18).

However, following in the footsteps of Athenagoras, we now have a man who thinks he can lift anathemas: Fr. John Shaw. Or rather, Fr. John does not pretend to lift them (that would be a truly Herculean task for a mere priest!). He either (in the case of Patriarch Tikhon and the anathema on the Bolsheviks of 1918) says that a patriarch has lifted it, or (in the case of the ROCOR’s anathema against ecumenism of 1983) does something even less plausible: he says it never really happened!

The Anathema of 1918

Let us take the first case. On January 19, 1918 Patriarch Tikhon anathematised the Bolsheviks in the following words: “By the power given to Us by God, we forbid you to approach the Mysteries of Christ, we anathematise you, if only you bear Christian names and although by birth you belong to the Orthodox Church. We also adjure all of you, faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ, not to enter into any communion with such outcasts of the human race: ‘Remove the evil one from among you’ (I Corinthians 5.13).”

The significance of this anathema lies not so much in its casting out of the Bolsheviks themselves (all those who deny God are subject to anathema, that is, separation from God, for that very denial), as in the command to the faithful to have no communion with the Bolsheviks. In other words, the authorities were to be regarded, not only as apostates from Christ (that was obvious), but also as having no moral authority, no claim to obedience whatsoever – an attitude taken by the Church to no other government in the whole of Her history. The decree ended with an appeal to defend the Church, if necessary, to the death. For “the gates of hell shall not prevail against Her” (Matthew 16.18).
Now Fr. John says that this anathema, which was confirmed by the Local Council of the Russian Church, has no validity because the patriarch repented of it!!! The historical fact to which he is referring is the following. On June 16 and again on July 1, 1923, Patriarch Tikhon issued from prison a “confession”, in which he repented of all his anti-Soviet acts, including his “anathematisation of Soviet power”, and “finally and decisively” set himself apart “from both the foreign and the internal monarchist White-guard counter-revolutionaries”.

Even supposing that this “confession” was meant to “lift the anathema” on Soviet power, the anathema was confirmed by the All-Russian Council, and the patriarch had no right unilaterally to annul an act of the Council. But in any case the “confession” was by no means meant to be such an annulment. Let us consider the witness of Archbishop Nicon (Rklitsky), with whom Fr. John was closely associated and whom he evidently greatly respects. However we evaluate Patriarch Tikhon’s declaration, writes Archbishop Nicon, we must recognise: “1) it did not annul the anathema in the name of the Russian Orthodox Church on Soviet power, 2) he did not declare himself a friend of Soviet power and its co-worker, 3) it did not invoke God’s blessing on it, 4) it did not call on the Russian people to obey this power as God-established, 5) it did not condemn the movement for the re-establishment of the monarchy in Russia, and 6) it did not condemn the Whites’ struggle to overthrow Soviet power. By his declaration Patriarch Tikhon only pointed to the way of acting which he had chosen for the further defence and preservation of the Russian Orthodox Church. How expedient this way of acting was is another question,... but in any case Patriarch Tikhon did not cross that boundary which had to separate him, as head of the Russian Orthodox Church, from the godless power.”444

Moreover, as reported in Izvestia on June 12, 1924, the Patriarch wrote to Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky): “I wrote this for the authorities, but you sit and work”...445

So we, the Orthodox Christians, are not meant to pay attention to the patriarch’s confession, which was intended only for the Bolsheviks. Unfortunately, however, Fr. John prefers to take the patriarch’s confession seriously, as if he were a Bolshevik... This is not only a slander on the patriarch, making him out to be a sergianist before Sergius, but raises the questions: Does not Fr. John believe that Soviet power was (is) under anathema? If he does not, then does he not believe that the communist State was (is) a legitimate State?

Let us now pass to the anathema against ecumenism. Fr. John has for several now years been peddling the story that this anathema is of no significance because “it was not the product of any deliberation by the ROCOR bishops”, but was “slipped in” by Bishop (then Protopresbyter) Gregory Grabbe. “Metropolitan Philaret,” he writes, “basically did whatever Fr. George Grabbe (later Bishop Gregory) told him to. Most of the other bishops believed it was impossible to circumvent Fr. George / Bishop Gregory, and so they remained silent.” That is why it was first published in the Greek newspaper *Orthodoxos Typos* and not in *Pravoslavnaia Rus’*.

Two sets of questions are immediately raised by this story. First: if the anathema was published without the bishops’ knowledge or their authority, why did they not immediately issue a statement to that effect? And why did Metropolitan Philaret write to Fr. Anthony Gavalas quoting the anathema and saying that it was the decision of the Church? Is Fr. John asking us to believe that the bishops were really so spineless as to allow themselves to be bullied, as it were, into accepting a doctrinal definition of cardinal importance by a mere priest? Why were they afraid? What power did he have over them? And secondly: if Bishop Gregory Grabbe had really forced them to accept an anathema they did not want or believe in, why did they confirm it in 1998, two years after his death? Does this not in fact show that the bishops were not bullied or deceived or browbeaten into accepting an anathema they did not want or believe in, but in fact believed in it? (Or, if some did not in fact believe, like Archbishop Mark, they at any rate thought for one tactical reason or another that it would good that the anathema should go out under their signatures.) For if they had been tricked by Grabbe, they were now free to reveal the plot (and the shame of their own cowardice) – but did not, instead confirming Grabbe’s work (if it was indeed his).

Fr. John seems to think that the fact, if it is a fact, that Grabbe (or the Boston monastery) composed the anathema somehow casts doubt on its validity. But the author of a doctrinal definition is not important. We know, for example, that Professor Ivan Popov composed Patriarch Tikhon’s epistle to Patriarch Gregory of Constantinople in 1924, and the Epistle of the Solovki Bishops in 1926. But that fact is insignificant beside the fact that the Patriarch, in the one case, and the Solovki bishops, in the other, signed the documents in question.

The important questions about an anathema are: Is it true? And: Did the bishops of the Church confirm its truth? All other questions are strictly speaking irrelevant for us, the believers, who are required to act in obedience to the Church.

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446 Shaw, “Re: [orthodox-synod’ Re: 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA”, orthodox-synod@yahoogroups.com, 31 August, 2005.
Fr. John says many blatant lies in defence of his thesis. For example: “There were no pagan services, or pagan groups represented at the WCC.” Or again: “The ROCOR withdrew [from the WCC] because the Moscow Patriarchate became involved” (the ROCOR was never in the WCC). And worst of all: “In reality, none of the Orthodox participants in the ecumenical movement have said that Orthodoxy was not the true faith, or any of the other things referred to in the anathema” (they have all signed up to the branch theory of the Church, which is the main object of the anathema).

However, rather than spending time on these obvious lies, I should like to draw attention to a more subtle one. Fr. John writes: “In his message, the future Metropolitan Vitaly expressed the hope that such an ‘anathema’ might be enacted by the other Orthodox Churches. He thus shows that he did not see it as changing our relationship with them, or as anathematizing other jurisdictions.”

What Metropolitan Vitaly actually meant he himself is in the best position to explain. But the idea that inviting other jurisdictions to enact the anathema somehow invalidates its power, or shows that it has no real power, is a very strange argument. Why invite someone to do something that is ineffectual and/or invalid?

There is perfectly reasonable way of justifying such an appeal to other Churches. The meaning of the appeal could be as follows: “We have anathematised the branch theory of the Church. We invite you also to anathematise the branch theory of the Church. In this way you will proclaim your Orthodoxy and be freed from the power of this anathema. If, on the other hand, you do not join with us in anathematising this heresy, this shows that you in fact confess the heresy, and fall under the anathema’s power.”

The “Heresy of Universal Jurisdiction”

The attack on the validity of the 1983 anathema has been waged by others, notably Fr. John Shaw’s comrade-in-betrayal, Fr. Alexander Lebedev, who some years ago called the idea that the anathema strikes down all ecumenists “the heresy of universal jurisdiction”. Who the anathema actually strikes down was never made clear. The only inference must be: ecumenists in the ROCOR’s own fold (Frs. John Shaw and Alexander Lebedev perhaps?)

Readers will forgive me if I quote my own reply to Fr. Alexander in 2000: “Thinking about your ‘heresy of universal jurisdiction’, it seems to me that you confuse two things: the Church as an external organisation, and the Church as a mystical organism, to use the terminology of Hieromartyr Catacomb Bishop Mark (Novoselov) (+1938). It seems to me that you are right as regards the Church as an external organisation, but wrong as regards the Church as a mystical organism. Let me explain.
“An anathema excludes the person anathematised from the holy mysteries, from membership of the Holy Church. In the first place, of course, that applies to the local Church of which that person is a member. It applies to other Churches only to the extent that the leaders of those other Churches agree with the original anathema and ‘sign up to it’, as it were. Thus the heretic Arius was originally anathematized by the Bishop of Alexandria, which meant that he was excluded from receiving the sacraments throughout the Church of Alexandria. However, not all the bishops of neighbouring Churches agreed with this anathema, so Arius was able to receive communion in other Local Churches. To this extent the anathema was only of local significance. It required the convening of the First Ecumenical Council before Arius was anathematized ‘universally’ - and even then, the anathema was not universally received, as the history of the Church in the next fifty years demonstrates.

“It is a different matter when we consider an anathema sub specie aeternitatis, in its mystical, super-terrestrial significance. From that point of view, the anathematization of a heretic begins in the heavens. Thus even before Arius had been ‘locally’ anathematized by St. Alexander of Alexandria, the Lord appeared to his predecessor, St. Peter, with a torn cloak, and in answer to St. Peter’s question: ‘O Creator, who has torn Thy tunic?’, replied: ‘The mindless Arius; he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood’ (St. Demetrius of Rostov, Lives of the Saints, November 25). So not only Arius, but all those who followed him, had been separated from the Church by the anathema of Her First Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ, years (or rather, aeons) before even the first ‘local’ anathema had been uttered. All heresies and heretics are anathematized ‘from all eternity’ by the eternal Lord, for just as every truth is approved by the Truth Himself from all eternity, so is every lie condemned by Him from all eternity, being condemned with "the father of lies" to the gehenna of fire (Revelation 22.15).

“The task of hierarchs on earth is to discern the decisions of the heavenly Church, and then apply these heavenly decisions on earth, in space and time. As St. Bede the Venerable (+735) writes: ‘The keys of the Kingdom designate the actual knowledge and power of discerning who are worthy to be received into the Kingdom, and who should be excluded from it as being unworthy’ (Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, P.L. 94, col. 219). From this point of view, it matters not a jot whether a heretic is anathematized locally or universally, since he has already been anathematized by the heavenly Church. Or rather, it matters in this sense: that if the heretic has been anathematized locally, but this anathema is not accepted by the rest of the Church, then the rest of the Church is under the grave danger of falling under this same anathema. For the local anathema, if it is just, is the reflection of a heavenly anathema; and the anathema of the heavenly Church is universal....
“This explains why, when local Churches anathematized a heresy, they never qualified the anathema (as you, Fr. Alexander, would like to qualify the ROCA’s anathema against ecumenism) by saying: ‘but of course, this applies only to the heretics in our local Church’. On the contrary: history shows that local Churches freely anathematized heretics, not only in their own Churches, but also in others. Thus Nestorius, a heretic of the Church of Constantinople, was first condemned by a local Synod of the Church of Rome under St. Celestine; the Monothelite heretics were first condemned by a local Synod, again, of the Church of Rome; and the Papist heretics were first condemned by a local Synod of the Church of Constantinople.

“Consider what St. Maximus said of the Monothelites: ‘In addition to having excommunicated themselves from the Church, they have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?’ Note that the saint says that the heretics have excommunicated themselves; for as the Apostle Paul writes, ‘he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself’ (Titus 3.11). But the heretics’ self-condemnation and self-exclusion from the Church as a mystical organism must be followed by their exclusion from the Church as an external organization, lest others be infected with their heresy. Hence the need for councils of bishops to anathematize them, following the rule: ‘A heretic after the first and second admonition reject’ (Titus 3.10), and: ‘If he refuses to listen to the Church, let him be unto you as a heathen and a publican’ (Matthew 18.17). And clearly St. Maximus considered that the anathema of the local Church of Rome had validity throughout the Ecumenical Church.

“Administrative matters and moral falls are the business of local Churches and councils. However, heresies of their very nature are of universal significance, having the potential to infect the whole Church. That is why the appearance of a heresy in one local Church is not the business only of that local Church, but of all the local Churches - and every local Church can and must anathematize it.

“Even the anathema of a single bishop has universal power and validity if it is uttered in the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the eternal Truth. Thus in 1069 the bishops of the metropolitanate of York, in the north of England, solemnly anathematized both the Pope of Rome and his stooge, William the conqueror, the first papist king of England. All the evidence is that they did not know that the Church of Constantinople had already anathematized Rome in 1054. So they were not simply confirming the word of a higher authority. They did not need a higher authority. They were successors of the apostles, with the power to bind and to loose. And they used that power, not for personal gain (on the contrary: they paid for their boldness with their lives), even against the most senior bishop in Christendom...
“In the same way, in 1983 the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad, using the power to bind and to loose given them by the Bishop of bishops, the Lord Jesus Christ, translated onto earth, into space and time, the completely binding and universally applicable decision already arrived at from all eternity by the Council of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Ecumenism is, was and always will be a heresy, indeed ‘the heresy of heresies’, and the ecumenist heretics are, were and always will be outside the Church, the mystical Body of Christ. The decision of the ROCOR Sobor in 1983, confirmed with no change to its universal wording in 1998, expelled these already self-condemned and Divinely condemned heretics also from the external organization of the Church - and woe to any man, of whatever Church, who despises that decision, for he will then surely fall under the same anathema…”

Conclusion

Just as there is no deadlier weapon in the armoury of the Church than the weapon of anathema, which casts heretics out of the Church and places them, unprotected by the Church’s blessing, before the throne of God’s fearsome justice, so there is no more serious sin than to deny, mock, misinterpret or in some other way diminish the seriousness and significance of the Church’s anathemas, thereby diminishing the fear of God among the faithful and aiding and abetting the spread of heresy. The anathemas of 1918 against Bolshevism and of 1983 against ecumenism constitute the two most important doctrinal declarations of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in the twentieth century. Between them they cast the proponents of “ecucommunism” out of the Church, and guaranteed the survival of True Orthodoxy into the twenty-first century.

In July, 1937 a secret Council of the Russian Catacomb Church took place in Ust-Kut, Siberia. Although the existence of this Council is not well-known, its existence is vouched for by three independent sources. Fr. John would do well to take note of the first three canons of this Council:-

“1. The Sacred Council forbids the faithful to receive communion from the clergy legalized by the anti-Christian State.

“2. It has been revealed to the Sacred Council by the Spirit that the anathema-curse hurled by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon is valid, and all priests and Church-servers who have dared to consider it as an ecclesiastical mistake or political tactic are placed under its power and bound by it.

“3. To all those who discredit and separate themselves from the Sacred Council of 1917-18 – Anathema”

What was said here in relation to the anathema of 1918 will undoubtedly one day be said by another True Orthodox Council about the anathema of 1983. Those who discredit and separate themselves from it will be under anathema. For “whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder…” (Matthew 21.44).

August 19 / September 1, 2005; revised September 6/19.
27. USA BEWARE: PUNK-TRUE-ORTHODOXY IS HERE!

They have set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue roveth in the earth.

Psalm 72.9.

Let not the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which maketh mischief in the name of the law.

Psalm 93.20.

Introduction

An Orthodox bishop once said: the lives of the saints reveal an infinite variety, in the image of God’s infinity, but sin is always boring, always the same. Yes indeed: “there’s nothing new under the sun”, said the wise Solomon, having tasted of almost everything this fallen world has to offer. However, we need to qualify this judgement somewhat. Since sin is always boring, the sinner is always bored with himself above all, and so is always seeking new expressions for his everlastingly boring content. Moreover, Satan is always seeking to catch us out by presenting sin in new forms, new and unexpected combinations.

Modern western culture revels in such shocking new combinations. Take the rock singer Marilyn Manson. A conventional Satanist, one might think. After all, one of his records is called “Antichrist Superstar”, and he has large placards on stage while performing that read: “KILL GOD!” However, he wears a large cross in a prominent position over his demonic face, and has published an article entitled: “The Cross I bear”. Does he respect the Cross even while trampling on it? No, of course not… And yet the modern phase in popular culture, which may be said to have started in the 1970s with the rise of the punk movement in the West, and about ten years later in the East with Gorbachev’s perestroika, is definitely religious by comparison with the preceding phase. Some time ago Satan came to the conclusion that the frontal assault on religion – through the persecutions against the faith in the communist countries, and through the preaching of unbridled licence and the relativisation of religion in the capitalist countries – should now be brought to an end. It was time, while not completely abandoning the old methods, to combine communism with capitalism, Christianity with Antichristianity, licentiousness with asceticism. No longer, since then, do Satan’s agents strive to sweep the very name of God from off the face of the earth. Instead the names of God and Christ and the Mother of God appear everywhere – but rarely in a holy context, always in combination with filth and blasphemy. Thus a singer in Los Angeles and London calls herself “Madonna” and propagates the Kabbala, while a cult leader in Kiev with links to the KGB calls herself “Deva Christi”, “Virgin of Christ”…
One of the first True Orthodox thinkers to study these phenomena and write about them was Hieromonk Seraphim Rose. Having drunk deeply of the “delights” of hippy-nihilist culture before converting to Orthodoxy, he was in a good position to analyse it and anticipate the ways in which it might invade the culture of True Orthodoxy. His book, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, touched a chord in the hearts of many, not only in America but also in Russia.

One of Rose’s Russian admirers is Igumen Gregory Lourie. Scion of a famous Jewish family (the *Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia* calls them “aristocrats among the Jews”[^449]), and a direct descendant of the foremost Kabbalist in Europe in the sixteenth century, Issak Lourie Levi (a link of which he is reported to be very proud), he is a product of the Leningrad rock underground as Rose was of San Francisco hippydom. Like Rose, he has set himself the task of interpreting the nihilist culture of his youth for a True Orthodox readership, and, vice-versa, of bringing True Orthodoxy to the down and outs of the Russian cities. Unlike Rose, however, he has not fully broken with that culture... The result is a horrific hybrid, a mixture of True Orthodoxy and nihilist “art” and philosophy – “Punk-True-Orthodoxy” – which has already created havoc in the ranks of the True Orthodox in Russia, and which he is threatening to bring to America through a union with HOCNA (see my “Open Letter to Fr. Gregory Lourie”[^450]).

**Lourie's Punk Orthodoxy**

In order that we may better understand the essence of this horrific hybrid, here is an extensive quotation from an article on it by N.D. Nedashkovskaya, former Director of the Centre of Orthodox Enlightenment in St. Petersburg entitled "Taking Inspiration from Emptiness, or: The Theology of the Gutter":

"First: blasphemy against God as the Creator of a perfect and beautiful world that has not finally lost these qualities even after the fall of Satan and man. As it is written in [Lourie's] "Swiss Time": "You want to be a good person? I do not, whatever this 'goodness' may consist in. But if after all I have to be a man, then I would do better to try and become the kind of man I myself want to be, and not the kind that someone here (even God) would consider to be 'good'. But if I were to set about thinking even harder, then I would not find in the idea of 'man' (any man, 'man generally speaking') anything for the sake of which it would be worth living, even on the condition of immortality: the senseless does not acquire sense if it becomes infinitely long... Such a picture of Paradise - in the form of an infinitely long and infinitely happy human existence - begins very much to smack of


Mohammedan dreams of blessedness beyond the grave. But the Mohammedans have in mind the usual physiological 'pleasures' raised to an infinite degree, while with the Christians it turns out to be something closer to psychodelics: some special kind of 'kick' which you don't find in everyday life (the same 'psychodelic paradise' that Yanka Dyagilev [a Russian pop star] rejected!). One can't help thinking at this point that the Mohammedans nevertheless have something healthy. "

"I should like immediately to point out either the illiteracy or the deliberate distortion of concepts in Fr. Gregory Lourie, who is advertised as a 'theologian' or 'patrologist'. He substitutes for the positive infinity of being, well-being, of the creature in the Kingdom of Heaven the "bad" infinity. The latter will be realised in hell. By the way, in this extract we have a vivid example of the characteristic style of our author: mocking and overstrained, the exact opposite of the style of the Holy Fathers, which is full of seriousness and weeping.

"The failure to distinguish between the "heights" and the "depths", the substitution of the one for the other, and demagogic play on the antimonies: the world as the sum total of God's creation, created as a mirror in which His all-perfection is reflected for the Noetic Powers and for man; and the world in the ascetic sense, as the name of the sum total of the demonic and human passions. In this consist the spirit of the world-view of "Luciferyanism" (we retain Fr. Nektary [Yashunsky]'s term). However, for the author we have his own name for himself: "punk-orthodoxy": "I am conscious of, and recognise in myself, something of the rocker and even... of 'punk-orthodoxy', writes Fr. Gregory Lourie.

"Second blasphemy: a blasphemous distortion of the lofty patristic teaching on the final end of the existence of the world and man - deification. As Fr. Nektary writes in the above-mentioned work: "... Once the daystar 'said in his heart, 'I will ascend to heaven: above the stars of God I shall set my throne... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself equal to the Most High' (Isaiah 14.13-14). But Hieromonk [Gregory] truly aspires to become equal to the Most High. He writes: 'Being with God is not the infinity of unlimited human existence, but real eternity, which has not only no end, but also no beginning'. He apparently hopes to excel in deification even the Son of God Himself, or at least he ascribes this to the Holy Fathers, who, insofar as 'in them the real aim of the Incarnation of Christ has been completely accomplished', 'themselves became primary sources of the teaching of the Church' ('Swiss dogmatics')...

Nedashkovskaya continues her article: "Thus we see a direct merging between the theology of Luciferyanian "deification" and the "simple" Luciferyanism of the punk-nihilists... That is Fr. Gregory Lourie's Orthodoxy!..."
"But of course the apotheosis of his theology is his insinuation of a "discovery" of the unfortunate Nietzsche, who died of syphilis. In the course of eighteen and a half centuries there was nothing that was not thrown at the Church: both heresies and schism. But neither they, nor the most savage enemy of Christianity, Talmudic Judaism, ever thought up such a blasphemy against the Life-Giver Christ as was born in the rotting brain of the made Nietzsche and which is now being taken up as a revelation of Fr. Gregory Lourie's "purified" (from Christianity "direct path". It is terrible even to repeat this blasphemy, but the Internet is teeming with it: *Christ committed... suicide*: "The image of the death of Christ, to which our death must be conformed, has long ago been named in the unbelieving world: suicide (F. Nietzsche)" ("Let's try this").

"Here is some correspondence between Fr. Gregory Lourie [and someone else] in the "suicides' club":

**Someone**: They say that if a person believes in God, it's kind of more difficult for him to decide on the step [of suicide]. Tell me, please: do you believe that this is true?

**Fr. Gregory**: It depends how you look at it. You can also believe that deciding on this step would even be easier. On this subject there is a special song by Yanka Dyagileva, "The flocks are flying". But if you believe in an Orthodox way, then all problems are removed, while new ones (even worse?) appear (4 January, 2002).

**Someone**: I'm almost, I don't want to live... It's true, it's a great thing.

**Fr. Gregory**: One "wants" to live, but one mustn't." (5 January, 2002).

Nedashkovskaya concludes: "How have we got to such a life?

"Such a horrific phenomenon as Fr. Gregory Lourie's punk-Orthodoxy is not a chance phenomenon, just as the appearance of another horror, ecumenism, was not a chance phenomenon. **Horrific** not in an abusive sense: we call horrors the fantastic union of that which cannot be united by nature. And if ecumenism is justly called a pan-heresy, then we can call the newly-born chimera, "punk orthodoxy", a hyper-heresy. The essence of ecumenismis the bringing to earth of the commandment on love, bringing it down to the level of an earthly, non-spiritual phenomenon. The pseudo-struggle of "punk orthodoxy" with ecumenism leads to a denial of, and blasphemy against, all manifestations of love - except love for one's own pseudo-divine ego. The stages on the inglorious path of apostasy from God were indicated by Fr. Seraphim Rose in his work, *Subhumanism..."*
Lourie and True Orthodoxy

So much for Lourie's Punk Orthodoxy, which, as should be clear now, is not only not Christian or Orthodox, but the purest Antichristianity. However, if that were all there is to the man, he would not represent such a threat to the True Orthodox. Surely he cannot enter among us, one may object! But he entered already eight years ago... How could such a bizarre, deluded man make serious inroads into our enclosed, traditionalist, anti-modernist world? By presenting himself as traditionalist and anti-modernist to some, while practising the destruction of tradition in the most cynically modernist spirit in front of others...

We must not underestimate what Lourie can achieve and has already achieved: his horrific hybrid "Punk-True-Orthodoxy" is spreading fast in Russia - and he plans to bring it to America through a secretly planned union with HOCNA... Fr. Panteleimon of Boston was already courting Lourie in the year 2000. In September, 2005 he went for three weeks to Russia...

One of the reasons for Lourie's success is his ability to think strategically about Orthodoxy in the contemporary world in clear, coherent lines that seem to make sense of the present "time of troubles" while giving concrete indications as to how the Church is to survive in the 21st century. Such strategic thinking is very rare in True Orthodoxy today, obsessed as we are by tactical questions - that is, inter- and intra-jurisdictional issues. These cannot, unfortunately, be avoided; but for the soul, especially the young soul, they are meagre food. As the wise Solomon says, "without a vision the people perish..."

So let us examine some aspects of Lourie’s strategic plan for the Orthodox Church in the twenty-first century:-

1. Lourie’s Eschatology

It is best to begin at the end, with Lourie’s idea of how things are likely to develop, because this to a large extent determines his outlook on other subjects.

Lourie is resolutely opposed to the idea that there will be a restoration of the Orthodox monarchy (which he in any case considers to be an "Old Testament" institution!). Thus in July, 2003 the ROAC Synod, at Lourie’s prompting, declared: "The old 'Christian world' has gone, never to return, and that which is frenziedly desired by some, the regeneration of the 'Orthodox monarchy' in some country, in which the true faith will reign, must be considered a senseless utopia." Assuming that the signatures under this decree are genuine (which one can by no means assume in the ROAC), then we must conclude that the ROAC has officially rejected the hope of all truly
Orthodox Christians in the resurrection of Orthodoxy under an Orthodox Emperor, and in particular the resurrection of Orthodoxy under a Russian Tsar.

How this renunciation of the hopes of the Catacomb Church and the old-style ROCOR can be reconciled with the many prophecies that speak of a restoration of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox monarchy before the end, has never, to my knowledge, been explained by Lourie. The authenticity of some prophecies may be doubted; the sanctity and true inspiration of some of the prophets may perhaps be challenged; but a rejection of all the prophecies, and the characterisation even of the hope of the resurrection of Orthodoxy as a "frenzied desire" for a "senseless utopia", indicates more than a cautious scepticism. It is as if Lourie does not want the resurrection of Orthodoxy, as if he is determined, for motives that are unclear, to root out this "superstition" from the minds of believers (who happened to include very many of the saints and martyrs of the twentieth century).

In his most recent article Lourie also attacks the idea that Russia must undergo some kind of collective repentance in order to receive again an Orthodox monarchy. "The worst thing about this 'penitentialism',' he writes, "is that it blocks all thought about the regeneration of Russia as a State without her regeneration as an Orthodox State" (my italics -V.M.)… Lourie here forgets that St. John Kronstadt said Russia without an Orthodox tsar is "a stinking corpse"…

"Perhaps," he continues, "such a destiny [having an Orthodox State] still awaits Russia. But for us now, who again find ourselves in about the first century of Christianity, such historical conjectures are of practically no topical interest. Whether we like it or not, we are living in the midst of an unbelieving people. If we do not consider that its unbelief is a reason for wishing it the speediest annihilation, then it would be reasonable on our side not to imitate the eschatological escapism of Old Ritualism…"451

One might think that Lourie simply believes, as do so many Orthodox Christians today, that the Antichrist is just round the corner, so there is no hope of a "Triumph of Orthodoxy" before the Second Coming of Christ; we must simply bunker down in our catacomb-like cells and wait for the end, renouncing missionary work and all long-term plans for the establishment of large-scale Orthodox structures – Churches or States.

Not a bit of it! Lourie talks little about the Antichrist – he is much too anchored in the here and now. And he is the very opposite of a Catacomb Christian in his mentality and aspirations (which is why the Catacomb hierarchs of the ROAC have been trying, and now finally succeeded in

451 Lourie, "Russkoe okaianstvo i pravoslavnoe pokaianstvo" (Russian pestilentialism and Orthodox penitentialism), portal-credo.ru, 3 October, 2005 (in Russian).
obtaining his defrocking - whether canonically or not, as Lourie contends, is another matter). He is a media man, a performer, a "star", just made for the age of the internet. He and his very active disciples in St. Petersburg and elsewhere write articles, publish journals, speak on the radio, create web-sites and web-forums and even organise press conferences to propagandise their views. Lourie seeks publicity because, as he writes, "for the successful mission of the Church in the contemporary world the Church organism must be not only Spirit-bearing, but also dynamic and effective" - as if acquiring the Holy Spirit is not the ultimate and completely sufficient aim of the Orthodox Christian, but has to be supplemented by worldly "dynamism" and "effectiveness"!

2. Lourie and Politics

This brings us to Lourie’s highly controversial relations with politics and politicians.

Lourie believes that, even in this "post-religious" world, as he calls it, the Church should get involved in politics. This is made clear in his writings. "The True Orthodox Church should exert a strong influence on the religious politics of its State." "Her strategic interests coincide with the interests of any patriotic government of its country." (Interesting...) "The process of degeneration is unstoppable, and the Old Calendarist movement is no longer able to save itself..." (HOCNA, take note!) "Its only chance is to get hitched up to a tug-boat." (That "tug-boat" is the State – and Lourie is not too finicky about what kind of State: the Soviet State under Stalin and the neo-Soviet State under Putin are equally acceptable.) "For me it is evident that in Russia there is required a restoration of those relationships between the MP and the State that were bequeathed to us by the great Stalin."

So Sergianism is just fine, and Stalin is “great” (in other places he speaks of his “respect” for Stalin, and the “genius” of his socialist realist art)! And yet in other works of his Lourie blasts both ecclesiastical Stalinism and the Sergianism of the MP! More than that: he blasts the pre-revolutionary Synod for being "Sergianist" before Sergius!

In this amazingly hypocritical tactic Lourie displays a close kinship with the "Living Church" renovationists of the 1920s. Before the revolution, these heretics were among the foremost critics of the Church’s too-close dependence on the Orthodox Tsarist State, and were usually anti-monarchists. After the revolution, they immediately entered into an extremely dependent relationship on the antichristian Soviet State, and justified all the horrors of Lenin and Stalin in the name of Christ.

There can be no doubt that when the time for the next State-sponsored persecution of the Church comes, Lourie will be on the side of the
persecutors. After all, if, as he says, Bulgakov and Pasternak "should not have been left alive" by the "great" Stalin, what mercy can we, the True Orthodox Christians expect from him in time of trouble? Already, he has powerful protectors in high places, such as the Kremlin "politechnologist" and betrayer of the dissidents, Gleb Pavlovsky, who provides him with money and lawyers and makes visits with him to the bedside of Metropolitan Valentine...

Some have speculated that Lourie is a KGB agent. I have no proof of this, and just as we had to wait until 1992 for final proof that the leading hierarchs of the MP were KGB agents, so we shall probably have to wait until the arrival of a True Orthodox tsar before Lourie’s true status is elucidated beyond doubt. But his activities would seem to indicate that here is a new type of agent – not the crude Soviet mouth-pieces of the Brezhnev years, but a much more "flexible" force (the word was used of Metropolitan Sergius), more like an "agent of influence", that is probably given much more freedom to choose his own strategy, more rope with which to hang others – and himself. Lourie is no atheist planted in an already Sovietised institution, but a sincere "believer" – an eccentric and heretical one, but a "believer" nonetheless, whose ambition can be guaranteed to bring about the required results for the government without any (or only very little) instructions or encouragement. Lourie probably feels he is using the government rather than being used by it (again the parallel is with Sergius): the important fact from our point of view is that Satan is manipulating both of them.

3. Lourie and the MP

So what is Lourie’s relationship to the MP? Just as Metropolitan Sergius, as Hieromartyr Damascene pointed out, took a suspiciously long time to leave the renovationists in 1924, so Lourie was remarkably late in leaving the MP in 1997. In the case of many, perhaps most, converts, this could be put down to ignorance of the true state of affairs. Not Lourie. A patrologist and Byzantinist, a former secretary of Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev) of St. Petersburg, he must have been well aware long before he left the MP that it was a thoroughly corrupt and heretical organisation. Certainly, the MP’s betrayal of the faith at Chambésy and Balamand in the early 1990s would have made him think of leaving (he appears to be a sincere anti-ecumenist), and he was prominent in the criticism of these unias within the MP. But precisely because he could still have influence within the anti-ecumenist movement in the MP, he was not going to leave it simply on anti-ecumenist principle immediately heresy appeared. Lourie never acts on principle alone...

This lack of principle is evident in his ambiguous attitude towards the question of when the MP lost grace. There is an interesting parallel here (and not the only one) with Fr. Panteleimon of Boston. The Bostonites are usually considered very zealous anti-ecumenists, and I would not deny them that title. But why does Fr. Panteleimon consider that the new calendarists lost
grace only in 1965, when the official position of the Greek Old Calendarists (and of Archbishop Auxentius, from whom Panteleimon’s bishops obtained their orders) is 1935, a full thirty years later, and a full fifteen years after Patriarch Athenagoras made his super-ecumenist declaration: “We are in error and sin if we think that the Orthodox Faith came down from heaven and that the other dogmas [i.e. religions] are unworthy. Three hundred million men have chosen Mohammedanism as the way to God and further hundreds of millions are Protestants, Catholics and Buddhists. The aim of every religion is to make man better”? The probable answer is that since Fr. Panteleimon left the new calendarists in 1965, to assert that the new calendarists lost grace before that would imply that Panteleimon – heaven forbid! – was once a heretic. Far better to say that the new calendarists lost grace precisely when Panteleimon left them! Then he can claim he had never been in heresy or a false church! Similarly, when the Bostonites left the ROCOR in 1986 (so as to save Panteleimon from a court trial and defrocking for immorality), they conveniently stated that the ROCOR had lost grace at that time. They could not say that the ROCOR lost grace earlier, for then the Bostonites would have been graceless at least for a time. But they could not say it remained Orthodox after they left, because it had always been a cardinal doctrine of Boston that one can leave a Church for no other reason than heresy, and leaving for any other reason constitutes schism…

Lourie’s attitude to the question of grace is not so clearly defined, but no less opportunistic. He has carefully not subscribed to the view that the MP lost grace in the 30s or 40s, as the great majority of the New Hieromartyrs of Russia declared, nor even when the MP entered the World Council of Churches in the 1960s. In fact, it is not at all clear when, if at any time, he considers the MP to have lost grace.

This makes sense in terms of his overall strategic plan, which is not to replace or convert the MP – he considers such an idea wildly unrealistic, even undesirable – but to keep it in place as the church for the uncultured masses. What, then, should the relationship of ROAC be to the MP, in his opinion? A form of “alternative Orthodoxy”. For, as he said in a press conference in 2001, he regards the MP, the Old Ritualists and the ROAC as the three forms of Orthodoxy in Russia. The ROAC is not a rival, but an alternative to the MP. For whom? For those who are really serious about their Orthodoxy, for the elite believers…

4. Lourie and the Church of the Elite

Elitism runs like a silver thread through all of Lourie’s writings. Now an elite does not live in complete isolation from the “common” crowd: rather it is like the leaven in the lump, working to transform the lump while not being corrupted by it. It is useful to compare Lourie’s “Church of the Elite” with
two other forms of quasi-élitist religious organisation: the Masonic lodge and the monastery.

Lourie writes: “The True Orthodox Church is distinguished from a Masonic lodge by the fact that it is not an esoteric organisation: on no ‘level of initiation’ do they communicate something that contradicts what is communicated on lower levels.” This reveals that for Lourie the TOC is in fact rather like a lodge, only more “open”. And in fact the similarity, not of the TOC as a whole, but of his own sect within the TOC, to Masonry is remarkable. Like the lodges, the sect exists in order to subvert existing ecclesiastical authority, to effect a revolution in the Church. The élite who are privileged to be given access to this lodge are initiated into a series of “secret” doctrines, which it would be as well not to proclaim too quickly or too openly. For example, the doctrine that the Name of God is God, a heresy condemned by the Greek and Russian Churches in 1913. (It was for preaching this heresy that Lourie was defrocked by the Synod of the ROAC in September, 2005.) Again, the doctrine of “samobozhie”, that all True Christians are gods, having no beginning or end (see the “second blasphemy” in Nedashkovskaya, above). Of course, pseudo-patristic arguments are cited in favour of these doctrines. For without such arguments the doctrines would not be accepted – and it is the purpose of the sect to spread their doctrines in the wider world, just as it was the purpose of the Masonic lodges to spread the revolution.

Lourie combines quasi-masonic élitism with a strong emphasis on monasticism. But not Orthodox monasticism. The first book of his that elicited controversy within the True Orthodox Church, *The Calling of Abraham*, is a call to monasticism of a special, Manichaean kind, in which the monastic or virgin life is seen as the *only* possible way of life for the New Testament Christian, while marriage is for “Old Testament Christians”, who live according to the law, not grace. Lourie himself abandoned his wife against her will in order to become a monk in the world – a way of life that he recommends for his closest followers (rock music is the preferred preparation for this kind of monasticism!).

5. Lourie and Globalism

So far, Lourie’s cult is comparatively small – a few hundred people at most, (but with thousands of sympathisers) - confined mainly to Russia. However, cults, like malignant cancers, have an inexorable tendency to grow – and Lourie’s influence is growing rapidly. In the present writer’s opinion, his defrocking is likely to be only a temporary setback on his road to religious superstardom, and may even be exploited by him to his advantage. For if he succeeds in having that decision reversed under a new first-hierarch, he may even gain complete control over ROAC – after the diehard catacombniks have fled in horror…
Lourie’s appeal lies in his exotic mixing of many elements hitherto considered to be incompatible, and in his ability to appeal to strictly traditionalist “theologians”, on the one hand, and punks, drug addicts and suicides, on the other. He is, or tries to be, “all things to all men” – except that, unfortunately, the purity of the Apostolic message is lost along the way. Moreover, he realises the full import of a fact too often lost sight of by the leaders of True Orthodoxy today: that almost all new members of the Orthodox Church today are converts, even if they happen to be Greek or Russian by origin, and have to be taught the fundamentals of Orthodoxy from the beginning. In this increasingly small and interconnected world, to retreat into an ethnic reservation, preaching Russian Orthodoxy to Russians only, or Greek Orthodoxy to Greeks only, is no longer an option, for the simple reason that young Russians and Greeks, for better or worse, already belong to a cosmopolitan culture in which internationalist science, internationalist art and international politics are the staple fare. This means that if the Church is to expand and flourish it must fulfil the command of Christ: “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them… and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Lourie is ready and able to do this – according to his lights. And so already his tentacles extend from St. Petersburg and Moscow to Paris and Berlin to Boston and New York…

*The Lourie/HOCNA Connection: A “Fatal Attraction”*

If Lourie’s planned union with HOCNA takes place (see my “Open Letter”), this will unite two consciously cosmopolitan jurisdictions, one with its roots in Greek Orthodoxy and the other in Russian Orthodoxy, with a potentially global outreach and appeal. Lourie will accept HOCNA as his representative on the American continent and Africa, while HOCNA will accept Lourie as their representative in Russia and probably also in Western Europe (although this and other “geopolitical” questions will obviously have to be negotiated between them). For many, very many people just coming to the light of Orthodoxy, this genuinely global jurisdiction, transcending narrowly phyletistic divisions, yet with a traditionalist, anti-ecumenist ethos and a strong emphasis on the teaching of the Universal Faith, will be undeniably – fatally – attractive.

But are there no theological differences between the two groups?

There are. HOCNA will have to accept – or agree to ignore – Lourie’s name-worshipping and other heresies, including punk orthodoxy. And Lourie will have to accept – or turn a blind eye to - HOCNA’s veneration of Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky and his “Dogma of Redemption”, which Lourie rejects. But these differences are not insuperable; for, for all their claims to strict, patristic Orthodoxy, Metropoulos and Lourie are pragmatists...
in theological matters; they can “drop” a theological crusade as quickly as they take it up if that is “for the benefit of the Church”…

So how are we to combat this “fatal attraction”?

Only by returning to the “basic instincts” of the Orthodox world-view. One of these is: never trust a morally corrupted person, however brilliant his talents and convincing his arguments. Secondly: never trust a man or a movement that is not founded upon the rock of the confession of the Russian Catacomb Church – whose representatives in the form of the ROAC Catacomb hierarchs have delivered (however clumsily and even, from a formal point of view, uncanonically) a crushing verdict on the teachings of Fr. Gregory Lourie. And thirdly: never lose the hope that God will save His Church. And without the help of man if necessary; for “this is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying: not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord…” (Zechariah 4.6).

An Afterthought

A final thought. Supposing Lourie succeeds in building up a flourishing Church organisation, whether or not in union with HOCNA. What will be the relationship of this organization to other Church jurisdictions in Russia?

Lourie has already given an answer to this: the ROAC as he envisages it to be under his hidden or overt leadership will not be a rival to the MP, but an alternative. The problem with this is: the MP brooks no rivals, and no alternatives. So for its long- or even middle-term survival, Lourie’s ROAC will have to move closer to the MP, and eventually into union with it.

But that will be no problem for Lourie. For, as we have seen, he wants to be head of an elite. But an élite presupposes a common mass of men who are not the élite, but who are in some kind of communion with the élite. So Lourie will return to the MP with which he has spiritually never really broken, having a position a good deal more influential than that which will be reserved for the returning Lavrites...

And what will HOCNA do then?

September 23 / October 6, 2005.

Conception of St. John the Baptist.
28. SERMON IN PRAISE OF THE BRITISH SAINTS

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Congratulations, dear brothers and sisters, on our new feast of all Saints of the British Isles! Our numbers are relatively few, and yet our church today is full as at no other time. For, as we sang in the kontakion of the feast: Today the choir of the Saints who pleased God in our land standeth before us in church and invisibly prayeth to God for us. As we heard in the litany that we chanted yesterday, there are many hundreds of such saints whom we know by name. And many hundreds more whose names are known to God alone.

Let me say a few words about how this feast came into being.

Holy Orthodoxy came to our land at the time of the holy apostles: St. Peter, according to Greek tradition, was in England when he received the command from an angel to go to Rome to suffer for the faith; St. Simon the Zealot preached in England before being martyred in the Caucasus; and Righteous Joseph of Arimathaea with twelve companions founded the first church dedicated to the Mother of God at Glastonbury.

In the Roman period, the Church developed relatively slowly in Britain. However, by the early fourth century there was a large basilica in London, and we already had our first martyrs – St. Alban, protomartyr of Britain, SS. Julius and Aaron of Caerleon in Wales, and St. Augulus, bishop of Augusta (probably London). Moreover, it was from Roman Britain that Christian statehood took its origin, when St. Constantine was proclaimed emperor by the Roman legions in York in 306, exactly 1700 years ago.

When the Roman legions left Britain in 410, the Church entered a very difficult period, with invasions of barbarians from the north, the east and the north-west. Many British Christians fled to the west, where “the last of the Romans”, Ambrosius Aurelianus, and his successor, the famous King Arthur, fought a stubborn rearguard action against the pagan Saxons. It was in the West that we see the flourishing of the Celtic Church, which in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries produced so many of our most famous monastic and missionary saints: Patrick and David, Nectan, Samson and Columba.

Meanwhile, however, not wishing that the Angles and Saxons of Eastern Britain should perish, the Lord enlightened the heart of St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, to send a missionary expedition to “the land of the Angels”. He wished to lead this expedition himself, but was forced in the end to send St. Augustine, first archbishop of Canterbury. By Christmas, 597, he and his band of forty monks, preceded by an icon of the Lord, had converted many thousands, including King Ethelbert of Kent, to the Orthodox Faith.
With the help of foreign missionaries from Ireland, France, Italy, Greece and North Africa, the Anglo-Saxons were soon producing great saints of their own: Cuthbert, Bede, Chad, Cedd, Guthlac, Aldhelm, Egwin, Wilfrid, Eanswythe, Mildred, Etheldreda and many others. And in the eighth century, a great wave of English missionaries led by St. Boniface, Archbishop of Mainz, undertook the conversion of their kinsfolk in Holland and Germany. The invasion of the Vikings in the ninth century produced a great number of martyrs and the near-extinction of Anglo-Saxon Christian civilization. But under King Alfred the Great and his successors, the Church recovered all the ground she had lost to the pagans. By the time of King Edgar the Peaceable (+975) and St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury (+988), the English Orthodox kingdom embraced Saxons, Celts and Danes in a multi-ethnic state that was a model of what a Christian kingdom can and should be.

However, the murder of St. Edward the Martyr in 979 signalled the beginning of the end of English Orthodoxy: a second wave of Viking invasions led to the conquest of the kingdom by the Danish King Canute in 1016. Although he and much of his Scandinavian empire embraced English Christianity, and although King Edward the Confessor restored the native English dynasty in 1042, corruption from within and the pressure of the now-heretical Roman papacy from without was undermining the foundations of English piety. On October 14, 1066 – the most tragic day in English history – the last English Orthodox king, Harold II Godwinson, was killed at Hastings by Duke William “the Bastard” of Normandy, who had been blessed to conquer “schismatic” England by Pope Alexander II. During the next four years English Orthodoxy was destroyed by fire and sword: all the bishops were removed and replaced by French papists, the cathedrals were destroyed to make way for Norman ones, the relics of the English saints were abused, and perhaps 20% of the population was killed. The cream of the aristocracy fled to Constantinople and Kiev, where the daughter of King Harold married Great Prince Vladimir Monomakh of Kiev.

And so the thousand-year history of English Orthodoxy came to an end. The next thousand years were to see the rise of England to world power and the most extensive empire the world has ever seen. But “what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul?” England had lost her soul, her Orthodox faith. And now, at the beginning of the third millennium of Christian history, she is morally and spiritually as low as she has ever been.

An illustration of how far we are from the traditions of our ancestors can be found in today’s newspapers, where it is reported that the Synod of the Anglican Church has decided to “demote” St. George from his status as patron saint of England because his existence is supposedly doubtful. Some want to make St. Alban our patron saint instead. While St. Alban is a most worthy candidate, the Anglicans appear to have forgotten that already in 758 Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury and his Synod appointed three patrons of
the English Church and land: Saints Augustine of Canterbury, Cuthbert of Lindisfarne and Boniface of Mainz…

Nevertheless, in the twentieth century there was the beginning of a return of Orthodoxy to the English land. In 1922 the diocese of Thyateira and Great Britain was founded under the Ecumenical Patriarchate. And a few years later Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) handed the archpastoral staff to the Russian Bishop Nicholas of London (+1932).

After the Second World War Archbishop John (Maximovich) of Western Europe appointed Bishop Nikodem to look after the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, and himself restored St. Alban and St. Patrick to the calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Renowned missionary that he was, Archbishop John (who was canonized in 1994) knew that the renewal of the veneration of the Western Saints was a vital first step to the renewal of Orthodoxy in the western lands. And in September, 2000, following a petition of our English Orthodox parish, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church in Suzdal blessed the creation of a new Feast of the Saints of the British Isles on the Third Sunday after Pentecost, together with the service to the saints that we used today.

Why is the restoration of the veneration of the British Saints so important for us?

The first reason is that the British saints, having been appointed by God to intercede for their native land, are an indispensable source of strength and grace. What builder would set about building a house while ignoring the fact that its foundations have already been laid, solid and true, in the only place fitting for construction? And if the Church as a whole is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20), the Church in the British Isles has already been built upon the foundation of her apostles and other saints. Of course, the saints intercede for us even when we do not ask for their prayers. But by honouring them and asking for their prayers in a conscious, reverend and ardent manner, as we have today, we attract the waters of salvation to our parched land and further our personal salvation and regeneration.

Secondly, our faithfulness to the British saints is a criterion of the correctness of our struggle in Orthodoxy. The British saints warred against paganism, Arianism, Pelagianism, Monothelitism, Catholicism and other heresies; and the Russian missionary bishops who have worked in Britain in our time have warred against the contemporary heresies of Protestantism, Ecumenism and Sergianism. By venerating them, we affirm their faith and protect ourselves against falling into the heresies they condemned.
Thirdly, by venerating the saints of our native land we give expression to an ecclesiastical patriotism which is not only not nationalistic in a pejorative sense, but actually reinforces the unity of the Church of Christ throughout the world and in all nations. For the true object of worship of all the saints is the same: God, Who “is wondrous in His saints” of all nations, sanctifying them all with the same Holy Spirit. And so by venerating the saints of our native land we come closer to understanding and loving the saints of other lands; in venerating them we come closer to the God Who unites all in one Body and one worship, in the one “Church of the saints” (Psalm 149.1) and in the one “hymn of all His saints” (Psalm 148.14), so that we are now “no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2.19).

Therefore let us be unstinting in our praise of the British saints, and untiring in our efforts to imitate their faith and love of God, their single-minded devotion to “the one thing necessary”, “the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6.33). Then we will have good hope of joining them in the choir of all the inhabitants of heaven, in that unity-in-diversity which God the Holy Spirit created when He descended in tongues of fire on the apostles at Pentecost. Then the prayer of the Great High Priest will be one step closer to fulfilment: “That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17.21).

Third Sunday After Pentecost, 2006.
Feast of All Saints of the British Isles.
29. THE UNITY OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH

There can be no doubt that the main problem facing the True Orthodox Church today is the establishment of unity in prayer between its various jurisdictions. In view of the urgency of the problem it is surprising that it is so little discussed in print. One reason for this is probably the sheer intractability of the problem; another – the opinion that the solution is actually very simple: everybody must submit to such-and-such a leader or jurisdiction.

However, where angels fear to tread Fr. Gregory Lourié has boldly stepped forward in a four-part report for portal-credo.ru (October 12, 2006). Of course, it is ironical that this sower of heresy and schism should now be discussing ways of achieving unity in the truth. But this should not prevent us from examining his arguments, which, even if flawed, can perhaps help us to come to a clearer assessment of the way forward.

Lourié does not look at the whole Church, nor even the whole of its Russian part, but only those jurisdictions - some only in the process of being formed - which derive their origin from the Russian Church Abroad: ROAC (under Metropolitan Valentine), RTOC (under Metropolitan Tikhon), ROCOR (V) (Bishops Vladimir, Bartholomew, Anthony and Anastasy), ROCOR (V-A) (Bishops Victor and Anthony) and ROCOR (A) (Bishop Agathangelus).

I. Dogmatic Differences. First he looks at dogmatic differences, and concludes, somewhat optimistically, that while there is a dogmatic abyss separating True Orthodoxy from “World Orthodoxy”, there are no serious dogmatic differences among the True Orthodox jurisdictions.

(a) Cyprianism. With regard to Cyprianism, Lourié notes that while ROCOR in 1994 officially accepted the Cyprianite ecclesiology, and while there is still some sympathy for it in RTOC and ROCOR (A), “in the True Orthodox Churches of the Russian tradition Cyprianism has not found firm and consistent supporters”.

So that’s alright then… Or is it? Certainly, the general rejection of Cyprianism in this group of Churches is to be welcomed. But it is worth noting that the assumption that Cyprianism is a heresy in the full sense of the word creates problems for Lourié’s approach to unity. For if ROCOR officially accepted a heresy that is called Cyprianism in 1994, then according to the strict, anti-Cyprianite ecclesiology, all those Churches that consider ROCOR to have remained Orthodox after 1994 and to have derived their own existence from the post-1994 ROCOR trunk – that is, all of the Churches under consideration except ROAC - fell away into heresy with ROCOR at that time.

In fact, the further consequence follows that if one considers a Church which officially accepts the heresy of Cyprianism to be still Orthodox, one is oneself—a Cyprianite! For then one is forced to accept that there can be heretics who are still members of the True Church. They may be “sick” in the faith through their acceptance of heresy, but they are still in communion with the “healthy” members, and therefore still in the Church—which is precisely the doctrine of Cyprianism!

As far as I know no bishop—with the single exception of the maverick “Archbishop” Gregory of Colorado, USA—believes that ROCOR fell away from the Church in 1994 as a result of its acceptance of Cyprianism. It follows either that Cyprianism is not a heresy in the strict sense of the word but only a “leftist deviation”, or that the label of “Cyprianism” has been used unscrupulously as a stick with which to beat others by those whose own ecclesiology is only a little to the right of Metropolitan Cyprian’s. In either case, the issue needs to be studied more closely and honestly than Lourié has done here…

**(b) The Gracelessness of World Orthodoxy.** The second dogmatic difference considered by Lourié is closely related to the first: the recognition of the gracelessness of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Churches of World Orthodoxy.

Lourié first congratulates the Russian True Orthodox that, unlike the Greek True Orthodox, they have not adopted the so-called “switch off” theory, “that is, as if by certain actions of Church authorities the grace of sacraments could be ‘switched off’ suddenly. Glory to God, in the Russian Church environment there dominates the understanding that the loss of grace in heretical and schismatic communities is a process, and not a moment. If we don’t have to discuss this, it will be simple enough to understand each other in all the rest.”

Such a sharp contrast between the Greeks and the Russians on this question is, I think, highly debatable. Moreover, the difference between the “process” and “switch-off” theories, as we shall see, is not that simple. However, let us continue with his argument.

“If we do not dispute that ecumenism is a heresy, nor that all the church organizations of World Orthodoxy that confess ecumenism are heretical communities, then we are all agreed that this leads to the loss by these communities of the grace of church sacraments. There can be disagreements only about whether to consider the process of this loss to be already completed by such-and-such a period of time. At the same time, none of us will dispute that it is impossible for the Church to produce a formula to calculate the ‘half-life’ of grace. The gracelessness of this or that community that has fallen away from the Church is established only by ‘the expert path’—through the consensus of the Fathers, that is, the agreed opinion of the saints.
I think that none of these principles can elicit objections on the part of any of the True Orthodox Churches of the Russian tradition.

“If that is so, then the difference in views regarding the presence of the grace of sacraments in the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and in World Orthodoxy as a whole lies in the domain of economy, and not dogmatics (where there can be no economy of any kind). In other words, if anybody admits the presence of the grace of sacraments in the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, and this opinion is unjust, it does not follow that this person is a heretic with whom there must not be any ecclesiastical communion...”

On this basis Lourié suggests: “It is sufficient only to anathematize ecumenism and define all the ecclesiastical organizations of World Orthodoxy as heretical communities, ecclesiastical communion with whom is not possible in any circumstances. As regards the question of the grace or lack of grace of the sacraments of the ecumenists, this can be left to time to decide. In a peaceful atmosphere undisturbed by unneeded polemics, the overwhelming majority of the believers will themselves come to the correct conclusion.”

But what about the anathema against ecumenism of 1983? Is that not valid? Why introduce a new anathema when the old one – passed under a leader, Metropolitan Philaret, of undisputed authority – stands? And if the old anathema stands, does it not anathematize those very people who consider that there is the grace of sacraments among the heretics, since they “do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation”? So would not the new anathema proposed by Lourié have the effect of contradicting the old anathema, or at any rate of weakening it?

Lourié anticipates this objection in part when he writes: “The anathema against the heresy of ecumenism produced by the ROCOR Council in 1983 turned out to be powerless to guard against this Church from falling into ecumenism because at that time, in 1983, the Council described the sickness, but did not indicate who were the sick – which left an open door to unscrupulous re-interpretations that began immediately after the death of the holy First-Hierarch Metropolitan Philaret (1985).”

Fair enough: but what is Lourié’s conclusion: that the anathema of 1983 did in fact fall upon the heretics of World Orthodoxy, or not? If it did, then the need for a new – and weaker – anathema falls away: in fact it becomes harmful as casting a shadow on the validity and sufficiency of the 1983 anathema. If, on the other hand, it did not, then is not Lourié a “crypto-Cyprianite” in that, like the Cyprianites, those “crypto-ecumenists”, as Lourié calls them, he considers the heretics to be “as yet uncondemned”? The fact that no specific heretics were named does not entail that no specific heretics
were anathematized, both because there have been many “anonymous” anathemas in Church history, and because, as “I.M.” writes: “There is no heresy without heretics and their practical activity. The WCC in its declarations says: The Church confesses, the Church teaches, the Church does this, the Church does that. In this way the WCC witnesses that it does not recognize itself to be simply a council of churches, but the one church. And all who are members of the WCC are members of this one false church, this synagogue of Satan. And by this participation in the WCC all the local Orthodox churches fall under the ROCOR anathema of 1983 and fall away from the True Church. In their number is the Moscow Patriarchate…”

The above, “strong” statement, relying on the conciliar definition of ROCOR’s 1983 anathema, and on the consensus of the great majority of the hierarch-confessors of the Catacomb Church, is a sounder basis on which dogmatic unity among the True Orthodox of Russia can be attained than Lourié’s weaker statement, which while “walling off” the True Orthodox from the heretics of World Orthodoxy, and while anathematizing them precisely as heretics (and presumably by name), nevertheless refuses to say whether they have grace or not. Lourié’s proposed anathema might indeed have been useful if there had not already been an anathema against ecumenism, and if Cyprianism were now, as in the period 1986-2001, the de facto (and, from 1994, the de jure) ecclesiology of the Russian Church Abroad. But now the Russian Cyprianites (unlike the Greek Cyprianites, who have proved firmer in the faith) have either died or signed the Act of Canonical Communion with the Moscow Patriarchate; so there is no good reason why there should not be a substantial consensus for the stronger statement among the hierarchs of the True Orthodox Church.

Instead of bringing to an end arguments about the faith, Lourié’s anathema might give an excuse for their renewal. For if the question of grace is deliberately fudged, and left, in effect, to the discretion of individual hierarchs, then Hierarch X will receive penitents from the Moscow Patriarchate in a strict manner, as not only heretics, but also graceless heretics, while Hierarch Y will be more lenient, arguing à la Lourié that “the loss of grace is a process, and we cannot be sure that it has been completed” - which will give the supporters of Hierarch X the excuse to call Hierarch Y and his supporters “crypto-ecumenists” or worse. In other words, the scenario of the Greek Old Calendarist Church after 1937 will be repeated in Russia – but with much less reason, because the leaders of World Orthodoxy are much more obviously and deeply heretical now than then.

453 “Iskazhenie dogmata ‘O edinstve Tserkvi’ v ispovedaniakh very Sinodom i Soborom Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej “ (Distortion of the Dogma ‘On the Unity of the Church’ in the Confessions of Faith of the Synod and Sобор of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad) (MS) ®.
The important point is that, however we understand the process of the loss of grace in a Church, it is not possible that the imposition of an anathema on the Church, if it is accepted as valid and canonical, can be understood in any other way than that the Church in question has lost the grace of sacraments. Before the imposition of the anathema, there is room for argument, for a diversity of opinions: after the anathema, there can be no more arguing, the Church has spoken, the candlestick has been removed (Revelation 2.5), for that which the Church binds on earth is bound also in heaven. Dissenters may argue that the anathema is not valid for one reason or another – for example, because the hierarchs have not understood the essence of the question, or because they are too few in number, or because only Ecumenical Councils have the authority to anathematize. What they cannot deny is that if the anathema is valid, then those anathematized are outside the Church and therefore deprived of the grace of sacraments; for there are no sacraments outside the Church.

For the zealots of True Russian Orthodoxy, the question in relation to the Moscow Patriarchate has already been decided, for the Church has already spoken with sufficient clarity and authority: first in the early Catacomb Councils that anathematized it because of sergianism (it was on the basis of these anathemas that Metropolitan Philaret declared that the Moscow Patriarchate was graceless already in 1980), and then in ROCOR’s 1983 Council, which anathematized it because of ecumenism. What is needed now is not a new anathema that denies for itself the force of an anathema, but the signatures of the new generation of hierarchs under the old anathemas. And if further clarification is needed, that clarification should come only in the form of specifying precisely those patriarchs who fall under the anathemas.

(c) Sergianism. Lourié says nothing directly about Sergianism as a possible source of dogmatic differences. The reason for that is simple: it is because Lourié himself is a Sergianist. (And a Stalinist: we remember his famous “thank you to Soviet power” and his statements: “I respect Stalin” and “Comrade Stalin was completely correct in his treatment of the intelligentsia”.) Lourié’s Sergianism is obvious from many of his articles, in which he describes even the pre-revolutionary Church as “Sergianist”, thereby depriving the term of its real force, and also from his Live Journal, where he writes most recently: “It is necessary to recognize in general any authority whatever. It is wrong only to allow it [to enter] within Church affairs.”

With such a statement not even “Patriarch” Sergius would have disagreed, and it differs not at all from the “Social Doctrine” of the Sergianist Moscow Patriarchate as approved in their Jubilee 2000 Council. But it was rejected by all the confessing hierarchs of the Catacomb Church and ROCOR. For those hierarchs refused to recognize Soviet power, considering it to be that “authority” which is established, not by God, but by Satan (Revelation 13.2). It was in recognition of this fact that the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox

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Church, which Lourié rejects as “a tragic-comic farce” (!), anathematized Soviet power in 1918. And so Sergianism is not, as Lourié implies, simply one historical, rather extreme instance of “caesaropapism”, but the recognition of, and submission to, the power of the Antichrist.

In essence, the power of the Antichrist is both political and religious; for, like the Pope, he combines in himself both political and religious authority. Therefore one cannot recognize his power on the grounds that it is “merely” political, and that “all [political] power is from God”; one cannot say to the Antichrist: “I recognize you, but please stay out of my internal affairs.” One has to anathematize it and treat it as an enemy to be resisted in every way and to the limit of one’s strength.

But is this relevant now, after the fall of communism, the Soviet Antichrist? Yes, for several reasons. First, Church life must be built on a correct evaluation of her past history, otherwise those past conflicts will come back to haunt us again. Secondly, the Soviet Antichrist is not dead, but only wounded: since the year 2000, Putin’s regime has been turning the clock back to the Soviet Union in many ways, making it more and more a “neo-Soviet” regime that considers itself, and is, the “lawful” successor to the Soviet Antichrist. Therefore the True Church will sooner or later again have to define its attitude to the regime, and probably reject it as the Local Council of 1917-18 rejected it. And thirdly, since 1917 the Church has entered the era of the Antichrist, and can expect only temporary relief from the struggle against it until the Second Coming of Christ. The Antichrist appeared openly for the first time in 1917 in a relatively crude form. His next appearance will be more subtle, and probably still more lethal. Sergianism is therefore only the first appearance of what is likely to be the dominant phenomenon of Church life in the last days: the attempt, in ever more subtle and “reasonable” ways, to make the Church make its peace with the enemy of God, forgetting that “friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4.4).

II. Canonical Differences. Lourié goes on to consider the canonical differences between the True Orthodox jurisdictions, which, he says, constitute 99% of their mutual accusations. He divides these into two kinds: those that relate to injustices of one kind or another, and those which involve schisms, the break-up one group of bishops into two or more sub-groups. The latter kind is the more important, in his view, and therefore he concentrates on that.

He begins by pointing out that, apart from the Holy Canons of the Universal Orthodox Church as published in The Rudder, there is only one Church decree generally accepted by all that is relevant to determining the guilty party in a schism - the famous ukaz N 362 of November, 1920 issued by Patriarch Tikhon and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was on the basis of this ukaz that the Russian Church Abroad based its
autonomous existence in the 1920s (although the ukaz almost certainly did not envisage the creation of an extra-territorial Church on the global scale of ROCOR), as did ROAC in the 1990s and RTOC in the 2000s. The problem is that not only does the ukaz not provide any sanctions against schismatics: it also fails to provide a criterion for determining who is schismatrical - for the simple reason that it in effect decentralizes the Church on the presupposition that a central Church authority, in relation to which alone a church body could be defined and judged as schismatitical, no longer exists or cannot be contacted. In 1990s the Synod of ROCOR in New York briefly tried to set itself up as the central authority for the whole of the Russian Church, inside as well as outside of Russia. But this attempt had a firm basis neither in the Holy Canons of the Universal Church nor in the ukaz N 362, and therefore only succeeded in creating schisms and weakening its own, already shaky authority. In view of this, Lourié comes to the conclusion that “no decrees of ecclesiastical authorities issued specially in order to regulate the life of the True Orthodox Church of the Russian tradition can include any special rules that the hierarchs are obliged to carry out. The only thing that is obligatory is all that is decreed by the Canons of the Universal Church.”

With this conclusion (to his surprise) the present writer is in broad agreement. (It is an interesting question whether a similar conclusion can be drawn with respect to the Greek Old Calendarist Church. But that question goes beyond the bounds of this article.) De jure, there has been no central authority in the Russian Church since the death of Metropolitan Peter in 1937. De facto, depending on one’s opinions, there has been no such authority since 1986, 1994, 2001 or 2006 – and that only if we allow that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia had the right to regulate Church life within Russia. Now, with the fall of the New York Synod into heresy and the death of Metropolitan Vitaly, no Church grouping or Synod can claim, whether de jure or de facto, to be that unique Church centre in relation to which all other independent groupings and Synods are schismatical. This is not to say that no grouping or Synod has acted in a schismatic spirit or been guilty of the sin of dividing the flock of Christ. What it does mean that there is at present no grouping or Synod that can claim to be the judge of that, and impose sanctions for it, from a strictly canonical point of view.

This might appear to be a dispiriting conclusion that can only lead to chaos. However, chaos has existed in Russian Church life since at least 1937, if not 1927 or even 1922; and it can be argued that ukaz N 362 was composed in anticipation of that chaos and in order to minimize its effects – to control it, as it were, and stop it spreading and deepening. The tragedy of the last twenty years has consisted not so much in the presence of chaos, which has already existed for many decades, but in the misguided attempts to restore order by unlawful means, by creating a Church centre that did not have the sanction of a lawfully convened Church Council. The result, as pointed out earlier, has been the creation of further chaos, as this artificial Church centre,
ignoring not only the Holy Canons of the Universal Church, but also ukaz N 362 and even its own “Statute”, has expelled large groups of bishops and parishes without even a trial or summons to a trial. This unlawful usurpation of Church power has now received its just reward, as, suddenly feeling that its own authority rested on sand, it surrendered itself and the flock that still remained loyal to it to what it perceived to be the “real” Church centre - the Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate.

But there is a silver lining to this cloud: there has never been a more opportune time in recent history to convene that lawful Church Council which alone can create a lawful Church centre having the power finally to resolve the chaos within the True Orthodox Church. On this, at any rate, we can agree with Lourié. The question is: is there the will to adopt this, the only way?

III. Politico-Economic Differences. Lourié points out that the economic interests which have played such an important part in the MP-ROCOR union have played very little part in the differences between the True Orthodox Churches – for the simple reason that the True Orthodox Churches have very little money or property.

The only real difference has consisted in the fact that, early in the 1990s, the Suzdal diocese under Bishop Valentine tried to obtain a number of churches, mainly in the Suzdal region, by legal representations to the authorities, whereas the dioceses under Bishops Lazarus and Benjamin chose to continue to serve, catacomb-style, in flats. Valentine had considerable success early on in his drive, which was reflected in his larger number of priests and parishes; but the cost, in terms of hassle and money, has been great; and in recent years the MP has taken back several of the churches (the latest was the church of St. Olga in Zheleznovodsk). In some minds this difference between the “possessors” and “non-possessors” is connected with a more sinister political difference, the inference being that Bishop Valentine was continuing to use his continuing links with the (post-) Soviet authorities for base material ends, whereas Bishop Lazarus was free of such contaminating links.

Not surprisingly (in view of his possession of an above-ground church), Lourié backs the possessors in this argument. He makes the valid point that it is not “dirty” to try to acquire church property, and that many confessors have died in defending the property of the Church (e.g. the thousands who were imprisoned or killed in 1922 for resisting the Bolshevik campaign of requisitioning church valuables). Many people who might otherwise be drawn to the True Orthodox Church are put off by having to worship in flats, so the Church’s material possessions and buildings have a direct spiritual value in the gathering and saving of souls.
Lourié ascribes the ROCOR-ROAC schism of 1995 to analogously “spiritual” economic motives, that is, the need to defend the property of the Church inside Russia against the threat to it posed by the “Act” of the 1994 Lesna Sobor, which proposed redrawing the boundaries of the Russian bishops’ dioceses in such a way as would have necessitated re-registering hundreds of parishes and church buildings, which in turn would almost certainly have led to the loss of most of those buildings to the Moscow Patriarchate. So the insistence – by most of the Russian clergy – that certain changes be made to the Act was completely natural and right. Of course, the motives of this “economic warfare” on the part of the New York Synod led by Laurus and Mark were purely political: to give them an excuse to expel the Russian bishops, who, as they well knew, having burned their bridges with the MP, would never have agreed to the Synod’s plan to unite with it.

IV. Psychological Differences. Under this seemingly innocuous heading are concealed all the most intractable differences lying in the path of the unification of the True Orthodox Church. Lourié calls them “psychological” because he wants to emphasize that they are not fundamental, and can be overcome if only the leaders of the Churches would, if not dismiss their suspicions with regard to the other leaders, at any rate take a more strictly pragmatic view of the profit to be gained by communion with them – if they would demonstrate, in short, more Christian love. For one who, like the present writer, knows Lourié’s complete ruthlessness and lack of Christian love towards his ecclesiastical opponents, this lengthy sermon is somewhat nauseating. However, suppressing such feelings, and trying to do justice to the basic thought within it, we have to agree: if all the leaders of the Churches, and all of us True Orthodox Christians in general, were to make a determined effort to display more love towards our opponents, then all these problems would probably vanish overnight. Provided that this love is not sentimental and self-serving, and that justice and truth are not lost along the way...

But the suspicion remains that Lourié’s concept of love does not conform with such a proviso...

We noted, in the section on canonical differences, that Lourié divides the canonical differences between the True Orthodox jurisdictions, - which, he says, constitute 99% of their mutual accusations - into two kinds: those that relate to injustices of one kind or another, and those which involve schisms, the break-up one group of bishops into two or more sub-groups. In that section he dismissed the first kind as unimportant, but did not explain why they could be so easily dismissed. In this section, it seems, he is obliquely returning to these “unimportant” canonical grievances and trying to bury them on the grounds that it would be “unloving” to bring them up.

But, of course, many of these accusations are important. Is it not important whether Bishop X was, or was not, a KGB agent - or a Mason? Or whether
Bishop Y is, or is not, a homosexual – or a thief? Or whether Bishop Z did, nor
did not, ordain a divorced man for personal advantage - or drove out another
priest because he was a witness to his crimes?

However, if bishops were allowed to raise accusations of this kind against
each other, the Sobor would probably not last more than one, extremely bad-
tempered hour – if it started at all.

The question, then, is: is the attainment of unity among the True Orthodox
so great a prize that we are prepared to sweep all such accusations under the
carpet? Lourié would probably reply: yes, for that is what love demands. Let
us examine the arguments for and against.

V. Arguments For and Against. There can be no question that the
attainment of unity is a very great prize – probably the greatest that could be
given to us in the present ecclesiastical situation. Not the least of its blessings
would be the creation of a Church court that would be competent to judge
just such accusations as we have mentioned above and to make its verdicts
stick – that is, be accepted by the Church as a whole.

The first problem with Church courts in small jurisdictions is that it is
difficult to find a sufficient number of judges to meet the requirements laid
down by the holy canons. Thus according to the canons a priest must be tried
by six bishops, and a bishop by twelve. And yet how many trials conforming
to this requirement have been carried out in the True Orthodox Church? Only
one instance springs to the mind of the present writer: the trial of Archbishop
Auxentius (Pastras) of Athens in 1985, in which thirteen bishops delivered
their guilty verdict.

The second problem is that it is virtually impossible to bring a first-
hierarch to trial in a small jurisdiction, because to the other bishops –
especially those who owe their promotion to him - that would be like putting
themselves on trial. The example of Archbishop Auxentius in 1985 again
appears to be the only significant exception. And yet even there a minority of
bishops refused to admit the right of the majority to bring their first-hierarch
to trial.

A third problem is that those brought to trial in a small jurisdiction will
often refuse to stand before such a court, but will cite all kinds of procedural
irregularities and then “jump ship” and join another jurisdiction. Thus the
leaders of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston left ROCOR even
before the trial against them began in December, 1986. Then, having joined
the (tiny) jurisdiction of a bishop whom they knew beforehand was on their
side – the already-defrocked Archbishop Auxentius again – they graciously
allowed themselves to be tried by a court set up by him – with the entirely
predictable verdict: “not guilty”.

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All these problems could be avoided in a united True Orthodox Church with a comparatively large number of bishops, few of whom owe their position to the patronage of the first-hierarch, and from whose judgements there is no escape in this life – except by fleeing to manifest heretics.

A great prize indeed…

But let us now look at the other side of the coin. That is, let us see the possible negative consequences of the convening of a Sobor of all the True Orthodox bishops in the present situation.

A hypothetical Bishop A: “At present I know my flock, and my flock knows me. There is mutual trust and love among us. If I suppress my suspicions about Bishops X, Y and Z, this situation will change – and almost certainly for the worse. Several members of my flock joined me from the jurisdictions of X, Y and Z. When they see me concelebrating with them, they will be dismayed, and perhaps leave me. Nor will I be able to convince them by saying that Bishops X, Y and Z, whatever their personal sins, are not heretics. They did not leave the jurisdictions of Bishops X, Y and Z because they were heretics but because their personal sins were so serious and so blatant that to remain in communion with them would have been equivalent to becoming accomplices in their sins. But now I, and they through me, am becoming complicit in the sins of these bishops, in defiance of the apostle’s word: ‘Do not partake in other men’s sins: keep yourself pure’ (I Timothy 5.22). They will feel betrayed, and I will feel that I am betraying them, however much I argue with them, and with myself, about the need for unity. In other words, the small-scale but real unity that already exists will be undermined for the sake of a larger-scale, but weaker, and even chimerical, unity.

“It is no consolation to me to argue that after the union, a spiritual court binding on all the bishops will be in existence, and I will be able to bring Bishops X, Y and Z to trial before this court. How can I rejoice in union with them around the Lord’s Table on one day, and then accuse them of the direst sins on the next? They will feel deceived, and perhaps with reason. They will say: ‘If you fostered such suspicions against us, it was your duty to express them, honestly and openly, during, and not after, the union negotiations.’ Moreover, they will refuse to allow me to be one of their judges. And the same will apply to others of my colleagues who share the same suspicions about them.

“Let us recall what happened with our brother bishops in the Greek Old Calendarist Church. In 1986, for the sake of a greater Church unity, Archbishop Chrysostom (Kiousis) of Athens agreed to enter into communion with Metropolitan Euthymius of Thessalonica. But his flock in Thessalonica
never accepted Euthymius, having a multitude of accusations against him. Nor was Chrysostom able to bring him to court, because a coterie of bishops consistently opposed him. Finally, in 1995, Euthymius fled, taking other bishops with him into schism. So the union proved to be illusory and even harmful…

“Our Russian Church, after priding ourselves on being more stable than the Greeks for many years, now have as many, if not more divisions than they. This should be a reason for humility – and for caution. Let us learn from the mistakes of our brothers and not repeat them out of a misguided feeling that we are better than they…”

**Conclusion: The Path to True Unity.** The arguments for and against seem finely balanced. On the one hand, the commandment of love and the great prize of unity requires, as Lourié rightly says, that for the sake of this goal we abandon personal prejudices, dislikes and grudges, swallow pride and ambition, and give practical, visible expression to the fact that we are indeed united in the dogmas of the Orthodox Faith (although that dogmatic unity cannot include Lourié himself unless he abandons the heresies of his that the True Orthodox are united in rejecting). On the other hand, we must be realistic and accept that unity in the truth but not in justice is an illusory unity which will fall apart immediately a serious attempt to correct injustice is made. For what value can a union of bishops have in God’s eyes if it is used by some to cover up the most glaring iniquities? How can we say that “righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psalm 84.10) if we win peace at the cost of perpetuating unrighteousness?

The present writer has no ready solution to this dilemma. However, some historical parallels may provide some hope.

First, the last True Council of the whole Russian Church, the Moscow Council of 1917-18, was also preceded by quarrels and disputes of all kinds, both dogmatic and non-dogmatic. Nor did the first two months that the Council was in session provide any relief. Paradoxically, it was the October revolution that triggered a change. One of the delegates, Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris and Western Europe, described the change thus: “Russian life in those days was like a sea tossed by the storm of revolution. Church life had fallen into a state of disorganization. The external appearance of the Council, because of the diversity of its composition, its irreconcilability and the mutual hostility of its different tendencies and states of mind, was at first matter for anxiety and sadness and even seemed to constitute a cause for apprehension… Some members of the Council had already been carried away by the wave of revolution. The intelligentsia, peasants, workers and professors all tended irresistibly to the left. Among the clergy there were also different elements. Some of them proved to be ‘leftist’ participants of the previous revolutionary Moscow Diocesan Congress, who stood for a
thorough and many-sided reform of church life. Disunion, disorder, dissatisfaction, even mutual distrust… such was the state of the Council at first. But – O miracle of God! – everything began gradually to change… The disorderly assembly, moved by the revolution and in contact with its sombre elements, began to change into something like a harmonious whole, showing external order and internal solidarity. People became peaceable and serious in their tasks and began to feel differently and to look on things in a different way. This process of prayerful regeneration was evident to every observant eye and perceptible to every participant in the Council. A spirit of peace, renewal and unanimity inspired us all…”

So the Grace of God is able to work miracles even in the most unpromising and intractable of situations so long as a critical mass of people is present who want the miracle and believe in its possibility and are prepared to take the preliminary steps to make it possible.

Secondly, there is the example of the First Ecumenical Council. The 318 bishops who were ordered to appear at Nicaea were far from being at peace with each other, even in non-dogmatical questions. But the emperor was not going to allow their mutual accusations to stop the attainment of the unity he so longed for, and so, before the dogmatic discussions began, he ordered all the mutual accusations to be placed in an urn in front of him, and burned…

Although the idea of hoping in the appearance of a True Orthodox emperor to solve the problem of True Orthodox unity is anathema to the anti-monarchist Lourié, there can be no doubt that such a figure would greatly help the achievement of that unity for which he argues. For history shows that emperors have more than once provided the focus of unity for the Church when the quarrels of bishops have threatened to tear it asunder.

Thus at the time of the Fourth Ecumenical Council St. Isidore of Pelusium declared that some “interference” by the emperors (Marcian and Pulcheria) was necessary in view of the sorry state of the priesthood: “The present hierarchs, by not acting in the same way as their predecessors, do not receive the same as they; but undertaking the opposite to them, they themselves experience the opposite. It would be surprising if, while doing nothing similar to their ancestors, they enjoyed the same honour as they. In those days, when the kings fell into sin they became chaste again, but now this does not happen even with laymen. In ancient times the priesthood corrected the royal power when it sinned, but now it awaits instructions from it; not because it has lost its own dignity, but because that dignity has been entrusted to those who are not similar to those who lived in the time of our ancestors. Formerly, when those who had lived an evangelical and apostolic life were crowned with the priesthood, the priesthood was fearful by right for the royal power; but now

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the royal power is fearful to the priesthood. However, it is better to say, not ‘priesthood’, but those who have the appearance of doing the priestly work, while by their actions they insult the priesthood. That is why it seems to me that the royal power is acting justly…”\textsuperscript{456}

Such “interference” was justified, in St. Isidore’s view, because “although there is a very great difference between the priesthood and the kingdom (the former is the soul, the latter – the body), nevertheless they strive for one and the same goal, that is, the salvation of citizens”.\textsuperscript{457}

So the dream of a True Orthodox tsar – not a dream only, but a future directly prophesied by several prophecies – is not only one more factor uniting the True Orthodox, but the one that may be decisive in making that unity visible in one Church jurisdiction. This is not to say that we can simply fold our hands and wait for the tsar. Rather we must raise our hands and plead for his coming – and later, perhaps, set about electing him ourselves. For, as Archbishop Theophan of Poltava said: “The Lord will have mercy on Russia for the sake of the small remnant of true believers. In Russia, the elders said, in accordance with the will of the people, the Monarchy, Autocratic power, will be re-established…”

Through this tsar, continues the prophecy, the heretical hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate will be removed and a united Russian Church will be re-established. For, as St. John of Kronstadt said: “I foresee the restoration of a powerful Russia, still stronger and mightier than before. On the bones of these martyrs, remember, as on a strong foundation, will the new Russia we built - according to the old model; strong in her faith in Christ God and in the Holy Trinity! And there will be, in accordance with the covenant of the holy Prince Vladimir, a single Church!... The Church will remain unshaken to the end of the age, and a Monarch of Russia, if he remains faithful to the Orthodox Church, will be established on the Throne of Russia until the end of the age.”

And so our present disunity will be overcome, difficult as it is to see the path to that end now. As St. Anatolius the Younger of Optina said: “A great miracle of God will be revealed. And all the splinters and wreckage will, by the will of God and His might, be gathered together and united, and the ship will be recreated in its beauty and will go along the path foreordained for it by God. That's how it will be, a miracle manifest to all…”

Let us remind ourselves, finally, that we are talking about a true unity on the basis of the True Orthodox faith, not the false ecumenist unity offered by the Moscow Patriarchate. As Fr. Basil Redechkin writes: “In these 70 years there have been a large quantity of people who have been devoted in mind and heart to Russia, but we can still not call them the regeneration of Russia.

For such a regeneration a real unity into a society is necessary. Such a unity in fulfilment of the prophecies is possible only on the basis of true Orthodoxy. Otherwise it is in no way a regeneration. Thus even if a tsar is elected, he must unfailingly belong to the true Orthodox Church. And to this Church must belong all the people constituting a regenerated Russia…"458

Hieromartyr Hierotheus, Bishop of Athens.

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458 Redechkin, “Rossia voskresnet” (“Russia will be resurrected”), Pravoslavnaia Rus' (Orthodox Russia), № 18 (1495), September 15/28, 1993, p. 11 (in Russian).
30. HAS THE REIGN OF THE ANTICHRIST BEGUN?

For several decades now, beginning in some of the Protestant Churches, and spreading to the Orthodox, there has been speculation that the reign of the Antichrist has begun, and that his servants are already being sealed with his seal and with the number “666”. There has been no agreement about what the seal of the beast really is, nor about the meaning of his number. Nor has any Orthodox Church Council given an authoritative interpretation of the thirteenth to twentieth chapters of Revelation and their symbols – the first beast, the second beast, the horns and heads of the beast, his seal and image and number, the whore of Babylon, etc. In spite of this absence of authoritative interpretation and guidance, schisms have already begun to appear on this soil in more than one Orthodox country. This is a tragic phenomenon, and would appear to make a fresh attempt to achieve clarity and consensus on this question urgent.

However, we have to accept from the beginning: God may have deliberately concealed the interpretation of these texts because the time is not ripe, because the Antichrist in his last, personal incarnation, has not yet appeared. If so, then any attempt to fix the correct interpretation may be not only premature, but harmful and impious because bound to be mistaken. After all, did not the holy theologian, speaking in the Holy Spirit, say: “Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast” (Revelation 13.18)? In other words, a special gift of wisdom, of spiritual understanding, is required in order to understand this mystery. And who, in our corrupt generation can claim to have that gift, which was not given to the Holy Fathers of earlier generations and has not been given to the leaders of the Church in the present generation? It is precisely for this reason that no attempt will be made in this article to provide a definitive answer to the question: who (or what) is the beast, and what is the meaning of his number? Instead, a different, but perhaps more necessary question will be addressed: do we have good reason to believe that we have reached the very last times of the world? More precisely: have all the prophecies relating to the times preceding the appearance of the Antichrist already been fulfilled?

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One of the most recent saints of the Orthodox Church, Holy New Martyr James (Arkatov) of the Altai in Siberia (+1991), who had the gift of prophecy, once said in conversation with some Old Ritualists: “You have already been talking for an hour about the coming Antichrist, but allow me to ask you: to what seal or trumpet or cup, or in general to what powers, do you relate this [Soviet] regime under which we are living?” At first the guests were perplexed by the presence of a stranger, and even the master of the house was embarrassed. One of them said: “If you want to say something, say it.”
Then James briefly expounded his understanding of the basic prophecies. “First, all the prophecies spoke not only about one time of the reign of the Antichrist, but about three sections of the last times: the first was called ‘the beginning of sorrows’, according to the prophetic word of the Saviour, or ‘apostasy’, according to the Apostle Paul, and in the Revelation of the Apostle John it is referred to as the coming out and reign of the beast from the sea with his head-followers. The second section of the last times is ‘the beast was and is not’ or the time of the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, and, finally, the third period, which is in fact the time of the enthronement of the Antichrist. The Saviour calls it ‘the end’, the beginning of which is the placing of ‘the abomination of desolation’ or the coming ‘out of the beast from the abyss’ (St. John the Theologian), who is the eighth in number in the dynasty of the beasts and is of the number of the seven, or the appearance of ‘the man of sin’ (St. Paul the Apostle). As for the ‘whore’, is it not clear to you that this image refers to a traitor-church that has betrayed Christ, that which should be ‘the bride of Christ’, but which has been united with the scarlet beast. In the Apocalypse there are three ‘women’, and all three signify the Church, it is only by their clothes and their activity that we can distinguish them: on the way into the wilderness she is clothed in the sun, but there she is divided into her who is clothed in scarlet and her who goes out to meet Christ, clothed in pure white, which is the righteousness of the saints.”

And so the holy martyr divides the last times into three stages: (1) the Soviet period, which began in 1917 and has not fully come to an end yet; (2) the Triumph of Orthodoxy, which will see the spread of the True Faith throughout the world for a short time; and (3) the reign of the Antichrist.

St. James’ schema was not unique to himself: many saints of the Russian Catacomb Church expressed similar thoughts. All agreed that the abdication of the tsar, “he who restrains”, according to St. Paul (II Thessalonians 2.7), marked the beginning of the last times, the reign of the Antichrist. However, Soviet power was not the Antichrist in the literal, personal sense, but the collective Antichrist. He had his own seals, the red star and the hammer and sickle, if not his own number. He had his own “abomination of desolation”, “priests” appointed by himself, whom he put in the churches of God to defile them. And all those who were sealed with his seal in the spiritual sense – that is, accepted communism, or did not resist it spiritually – fell away from Christ. As for the “whore”, this was the false church of the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate, which, by accepting the joys and sorrows of the collective Antichrist as its own joys and sorrows, had clearly accepted his seal and fallen away from Christ and Orthodoxy.

But the Catacomb saints did not believe that the period of Soviet power, or the collective Antichrist, would be followed immediately by “the end”, the reign of the personal Antichrist, the false king of the Jews. On the contrary: they believed that after the violent overthrow of Soviet power (in a war with
China, according to several elders) True Orthodoxy would be re-established in Russia under a True Orthodox tsar. Moreover, some also believed that this would lead to the spread of Orthodoxy throughout the world, in accordance with the words of the Lord: “This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24.14). For, as St. John Maximovich (+1966) once explained, this prophecy of the Lord has not yet been fulfilled. “The Gospel of the Kingdom” must refer to the Orthodox Gospel, and not to Catholic or Protestant heresies; and we cannot say that the Orthodox Gospel has yet been preached to all nations.

In fact, if we include the pre-revolutionary saints who prophesied the fall and resurrection of Russia, we have a “great cloud of witnesses” who clearly imply that today, in the year 2007, we have not yet reached “the end”, the reign of the personal Antichrist, and that many great – and greatly joyful – events have to take place before his coming: Monk Abel the Prophet, Elder Seraphim of Sarov, Elder Porphyrius of Glinsk, the Elders of Valaam, Elder Barnabas of Gethsemane Skete, Righteous John of Kronstadt, Elder Aristocles of Moscow, Martyr-Eldress Dunyushka of Siberia, Hieromartyr Andronicus of Perm, Elder Anatolius of Optina, Elder Alexis (Mechev) of Moscow, Elder Nectarius of Optina, Martyr-Eldress Agatha of Belorussia, Elder Theodosius of Minvody and others.

So why do people find it so difficult to believe that there can be any improvement before the end, and insist that the very last days, the reign of the personal Antichrist, are upon us already?

* Many saints believed that they were living just before the end. We may recall two fairly recent examples. In 1848 St. Callinicus of Cernica in Romania decided not to build a church because he believed that the end was so near, and was only persuaded to build it by the appearance to him of Saints Nicholas and George. Again, St. John Maximovich believed that the Antichrist had been born in 1962...

Paradoxically, such a mistake is more characteristic of saints than of sinners because saints feel the growth of evil around them more acutely; their spiritual senses are trained to feel the increase in iniquity and the love of many growing cold, whereas sinners, being immersed in evil, are less sensitive to this. And there is no doubt that evil has grown today to unprecedented proportions. This fact, combined with the weakening of the Church on earth, and its ever-increasing divisions, must lead the deeply thinking Christian to wonder: how long can this continue? “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6.10).
These words were spoken by “the souls of them that were slain for the word of God” (Revelation 6.9), and remind us of another fact that is too easily forgotten: that our age has produced not only the greatest evil, but also the greatest good – in the form of the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of martyrs that have shone forth, especially in Russia, but also in other lands. Now in earlier ages periods of martyrdom have always been followed by periods of missionary expansion, in accordance with the principle: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” Thus the martyrs of the Roman catacombs produced the vast expansion of the Church in the time of St. Constantine the Great, and the martyrs of the iconoclast period produced the conversion of the Slavic lands. Why should not the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia bring forth a still greater harvest of souls – especially since some of the prophecies say that this is precisely what will happen?

One harvest of souls that is clearly prophesied before the end is that of the Jews. St. Paul writes: “Blindness in part is come to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. And so shall all Israel be saved. As it is written: There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, who will turn away impiety from Israel” (Romans 11.25-26). The fulfilment of this prophecy, the conversion of the Jews, has certainly not taken place yet.

Some argue that this is impossible because it is precisely the Jews who destroyed the Russian empire and who are controlling the present descent of the world into the depths of depravity and antichristianity. But does not the example of St. Paul himself persuade us that the Lord is capable of making the greatest sinners into the greatest saints? And would not the conversion of the Jews be the greatest demonstration of God’s long-suffering mercy?

Again, others argue that the Jews will be converted only during the reign of the Antichrist. However, St. Paul says that the sign for the conversion of the Jews will not be the reign of the Antichrist but the “coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles” – that is, the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world. This spiritual resurrection of the Jews will not be total, and a large part of them will again apostasize and follow the Antichrist; but the fact of the resurrection cannot be denied and must modify our attitude towards this race, which, though cursed by God, has nevertheless not been totally abandoned by Him, and has been preserved in existence when many other nations have perished.

And who will convert the Jews if not the Russians, who have suffered so much from them, but whose history and culture has become the history and culture of a large part of the Jewish race itself (one sixth of all Israelis are Russian Jews)?

If this seems fantastic in view of the present collapse of Russian civilization, let us remember the interpretation of a passage from the book of...
the Apocalypse given by the holy new Hieromartyr Bishop Mark (Novoselov): “[St. John] with complete clarity speaks about the conversion of the God-fighting people to the Church of Christ, when she, few in numbers and powerless from an external point of view, but powerful with an inner strength and faithfulness to her Lord (Revelation 3.8) will draw to herself the ‘remnant’ of the God-fighting tribe. ‘Behold, says the Lord to the Angel of the Church of Philadelphia, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and make obeisance before they feet, and to know that I have loved thee.’

"Gazing with the eye of faith at what the Lord has done, and applying the ear of our heart and mind to the events of our days, comparing that which is seen and heard with the declarations of the Word of God, I cannot but feel that a great, wonderful and joyous mystery of God's economy is coming towards us: the Judaizing haters and persecutors of the Church of God, who are striving to subdue and annihilate her, by the wise permission of Providence will draw her to purification and strengthening, so as ‘to present her [to Christ] as a glorious Church, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she should be holy and blameless’ (Ephesians 6.27).

"And in His time, known only to the One Lord of time, this, according to the son of thunder's strict expression ‘synagogue of Satan’ will bow before the pure Bride of Christ, conquered by her holiness and blamelessness and, perhaps, frightened by the image of the Antichrist. And if the rejection of the Apostle Paul's fellow-countrymen was, in his words, ‘the reconciliation of the world, what will be their acceptance if not life from the dead?’ (Romans 11.15)."459

The famous monarchist writer Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov agrees with this interpretation: “Is this conversion of the Jews that salvation of ‘all Israel’ which the Apostle Paul foretold? In the Apocalypse it is said that the saved will come ‘of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie’. But not the whole of the ‘synagogue’ will come, but only ‘of the synagogue’, that is, a part of it. But even here, where the Apostle Paul says that ‘the whole of Israel will be saved’, he means only a part: ‘for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel… They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed’ (Romans 9.6,8).

“The opinion is widespread among us that the conversion of the Jews will take place at the very appearance of the Saviour, when they shall cry out: ‘Blessed is He That cometh in the name of the Lord’. But this is not evident from the Apocalypse. But if the Philadelphian conversion will bring ‘all Israel’ that is to be saved to Christ, then this will, of course, be a great event, fully explaining the rejoicing of the Heavens. Israel is a chosen people with whom

459 Novoselov, Pisma k Druziam (Letters to Friends), Moscow, 1994, p. 125 (in Russian).
it will not be possible to find a comparison when he begins to do the work of God. The Jews will, of course, multiply the forces of Christianity for the resistance against the Antichrist. 'If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world,' says the Apostle Paul, 'what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?' (Romans 11.15).”

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And so our answer to the question: “Has the Reign of the Antichrist Begun?” is: “Not yet: many prophecies concerning the resurrection of Orthodoxy before the end have not yet been fulfilled, and even if it is difficult, in the present, extraordinarily corrupt state of the world, to see how this could possibly happen, it is necessary to believe the Word of God and the prophecies of the saints more than our own ears and eyes; for ‘with God all things are possible’.”

But the objection will arise: what about the bar-codes, the passports, the bio-chips – all the technology which seems, for the first time in history, to show in a concrete manner how the prophecy concerning the seal of the Antichrist could be fulfilled? We are not denying that the Antichrist, when he comes, may well use this technology, or its more sophisticated successor, to seal his servants. But the appearance of the technology is not the same as the fulfilment of the prophecy. Here we must be wise, as the son of thunder warns. We must not take a shadow, or foreshadowing of the truth, for the truth itself.

Let us consider first: is the number “666” evil in itself? The answer, according to St. Gregory Palamas, is: no; this number, like all the other numbers, has been created by God, and so is good. What is evil is not the number itself, but the end to which it is used.

How will it be used? We know from the Holy Fathers that the seal will be used as a sign that the person sealed willingly and consciously accepts and believes in the Antichrist. Thus St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher prophesied: 'On the seal will be written the following: 'I am yours.' 'Yes, you are mine.' 'I go willingly, not by force.' 'And I accept you in accordance with your will, and not by force.' These are four utterances, or inscriptions, which will be written in the middle of this accursed seal...”

Now has anyone discovered that these four inscriptions are to be found on any modern technological device? As far as the present writer knows, the answer to that question is: no. In any case, such inscriptions make no sense before the appearance of the Antichrist himself. For what does “I am yours”

461 St. Gregory Palamas, P.G. 151, 224; E.P.E. 9, 492.
mean if we do not know who “you” is? It follows that before the actual appearance of the Antichrist, and the people’s willing and conscious acceptance of him as the true King of the Jews and God, the prophecy cannot be fulfilled.

At the same time, the appearance of the technology is undoubtedly a sign of the times (Matthew 16.3), a sign that we are approaching the end, and that we must prepare ourselves spiritually for the coming of the Antichrist.

The world has probably been close to the end many times before – for example, in the time of Julian the Apostate, who tried to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. But each time the Lord has delivered the world from the Antichrist. As L.A. Tikhomirov writes: “In history there have been times when the pressure of evil has been so strong that it seemed that there was no further reason for the world to exist, and if the anti-God mood had become finally entrenched then the end of the world would have come. The multitude of small ‘potential’ antichrists, of whom the Apostle John already spoke, would immediately have promoted from their midst someone capable of growing into the real Antichrist. Such epochs, of which ours is one, in their character truly constitute the last times. But are they chronologically the last? We cannot know that, because if the free will of men, amazed by the disgusting sight of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, strives again towards God, the Antichrist, already ready to enter the world, will again be cast into the abyss until conditions more favourable for him arise, while the Lord will again lengthen the term of life of the world so that new members should be prepared for the Kingdom of God.”

One day, however, the Antichrist will indeed come, and we will have to be prepared. And even if his coming is not “at the doors”, we must still be prepared, because we can receive the seal of one of his forerunners. So the appearance of signs of the times, and signs of the end, is God’s mercy to us, a wake-up call, a call to vigilance which must not be ignored.

Let us recall the context of St. Paul’s words on the Antichrist in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Many Thessalonians were so convinced that the Second Coming of Christ was at hand that they had even stopped working. St. Paul considered this harmful, and asked them “not to be quickly shaken from your mind, nor to be disturbed, neither through a spirit, nor through a word, nor through a letter supposedly from us, that the Day of the Lord has come. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless there is first the apostasy and the man of sin, the son of destruction, is revealed…” (2.2-3).

These words are a warning also for us. Although we are, of course, much closer to the reign of the Antichrist and the Second Coming of Christ than the...
Thessalonians in the first century, nevertheless we also must not “be shaken from our minds” and believe that these events are already upon us when they are not. Technology alone can never separate us from Christ. We can be separated from Christ only by willingly and consciously accepting a lie – a heresy like ecumenism, or an evil leader like the Antichrist. The importance of the seal consists in its being an outward and visible sign of this inward and invisible apostasy. The seal will be destructive for those who receive it, because it will be a sign of their acceptance of the heresy of the Antichrist. But the seal has no power on its own – that is, before the appearance of the heresy and before anyone has consciously accepted it.

There is a danger that in our eschatological speculations we may, like the Jews, become fixated on the letter (or number) of the law while completely ignoring its spirit, its inner content, and so fall away from the true faith. That this is a real danger is shown by the fact that recently some zealot monks, in their zeal to avoid what they consider to be the seal of the Antichrist, have broken communion with a truly confessing bishop who does not accept their eschatology and joined a heretical bishop who does. In other words, in order to avoid a future heresy that has not yet appeared and has not yet been identified and condemned by the Church, they have embraced a past heresy (Apollinarianism) that was identified and condemned centuries ago! In the same way, many Orthodox Christians today claim to see the Antichrist in many phenomena – in new passports and globalization, in American foreign policy and the European Union – but completely fail to see that their ecumenist hierarchs are heretics who are leading them into the abyss of the Church’s condemnation. Truly they are “blind guides who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23.24)!

May the Lord grant us that most valuable of gifts, the gift of discernment, so that we may discern the signs of the times, not selectively and not in the wrong order, but in conformity with the witness of Holy Scripture and Tradition as a whole. For, as St. John Chrysostom says, it is those who do not have this depth of Scriptural knowledge who will bow down to the Antichrist...

Apodosis of Pentecost.
ALEXANDER KALOMIROS’ 1980 article, “The River of Fire”, has acquired for many English-speaking Orthodox the status of a classic of Orthodox soteriology. However, many also dispute this status, and regard it as a dangerously Protestantizing work. The purpose of this article is to examine whether “The River of Fire” truly reflects the patristic consensus or not.

Kalomiros’ main thesis is that our salvation depends primarily on ourselves, on our acceptance or rejection of God’s love for mankind. God’s grace shines on the just and on the unjust alike, and is never turned away from sinners, even in the depths of hell. But we experience that grace in different ways depending on our inner disposition: as paradise if we return love with love, and as hellfire if we return love with hatred. God does not punish except pedagogically, and that only within the bounds of our earthly life. Even at the Last Judgement God does not punish the unjust – to do so would be pointless and cruel, since it could have no pedagogical purpose. Rather, the “river of fire”, God’s grace, proceeding, as we see on icons of the Last Day, from under God’s judgement seat, enlightens and warms those who love God while burning and consuming those who hate Him. God plays no active part in this: it is we who freely choose heaven or hell for ourselves.

In support of his thesis, Kalomiros quotes from the Holy Fathers, in particular St. Isaac the Syrian’s Homilies and St. Basil the Great’s Against Those Who Say that God is the Author of Evils. From St. Isaac he derives the teaching that since God is all-merciful towards us, forgiving us even when we sin again and again, we cannot speak of His being just towards us – mercy on this scale excludes justice. From St. Basil he derives the teaching that since all the apparent “evils” that God sends upon us – illnesses, calamities, sufferings of all kinds – are in fact designed to deliver us from the only real evil, which is sin, He cannot be said to punish us in any real sense.

In sum, therefore, Kalomiros’ thesis amounts to the assertion that God is love, but not justice, and that He corrects, but does not punish.

So I propose to examine his thesis under two heads: 1. Is God Just? and 2. Does God Punish?

463 I shall be quoting from the text to be found at http://www.stjamesthejust.com/features/(050)%20Kalomiros,%20THE%20RIVER%2...
1. Is God Just? The answer to this question is so obviously: yes, that readers may be inclined to think that I am being unjust to Kalomiros in asserting that he believes otherwise. Of course he believes that God is just! He simply defines the word “justice” in a different way...

Yes, that is precisely what he does. He redefines “justice” in such a way as to abolish it in the sense that it is usually understood. Let us examine how he accomplishes this...

“What Westerners call justice,” writes Kalomiros, “ought rather to be called resentment and vengeance of the worst kind”. This is especially evident, he says, in the western (Catholic) dogmas of original sin and redemption. Thus according to the western dogma of original sin, justice “is not at all just since it punishes and demands satisfaction from persons who were not at all responsible for the sin of their forefathers”. Again, the western dogma of redemption contains “the schizoid notion of a God who kills God in order to satisfy the so-called justice of God” (p. 5). The origin of western atheism, according to Kalomiros, lies in a (healthy) reaction against this false dogmatizing, whose origins go back to Augustine in the fourth century.

I will not here attempt to examine whether Catholic theologians’ concept of justice is really “resentment and vengeance of the worst kind”, nor whether western atheism really originates in a reaction against it. I will only point out how strange it is that the Holy Fathers said so little about this, and that we had to wait until the appearance of Alexander Kalomiros (and his immediate forerunners, such as John Romanides) before it was revealed that a false conception of justice was the core heresy of the West. The Holy Fathers who spoke most, and most authoritatively, about the western heresies - SS. Photius the Great, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus – spoke much about such heresies as the Filioque, papal absolutism and created grace, but very little, to my knowledge, about a false conception of justice in the dogmas of original sin and redemption. This is not to say that there were no distortions in western thinking on these subjects – heresy in one area of theology tends to introduce subtly distorted thinking in several other areas. But evidently the Holy Fathers did not consider these distortions serious enough to make them major stumbling-blocks to union with the West. Nor did they agree with Kalomiros in considering Augustine of Hippo to be the fount of the western heresies. On the contrary, the Fifth Ecumenical Council proclaimed him “holy”, and St. Photius the Great “embraced” him, while not accepting his errors on free will, the baptism of heretics, etc.

But Kalomiros goes still further back than St. Augustine is his search for the origins of this conception. The Greek word for “justice”, δικαιοσύνη, is, he argues, pagan in origin and is “charged with human notions which could easily lead to misunderstandings. First of all, the word δικαιοσύνη brings to mind an equal distribution. This is why it is represented by a balance. The
good are rewarded and the bad are punished by human society in a fair way. This is human justice, the one which takes place in court. Is this the meaning of God’s justice, however? The word δικαιοσύνη, ‘justice’, is a translation of the Hebraic word tsedaka. This word means ‘the Divine energy that accomplishes man’s salvation’. It is parallel and almost synonymous to the other Hebraic word, hesed which means ‘mercy’, ‘compassion’, ‘love’, and to the word emeth which means ‘fidelity’, ‘truth’. This, as you see, gives a completely other dimension to what we usually conceive as justice.” (p. 6).

Knowledge of the Hebrew may well give an extra dimension to the understanding of “justice”, but it does not change its essential, root meaning, which remains that of equity and balance. We see this very clearly in the Kontakion of the Ninth Hour: “In the midst of two thieves, Thy Cross was found to be a balance of justice”. Justice means nothing if it does not mean a balancing of good against evil, so that evil is destroyed through its being outweighed by the good. Thus the supremely good work that Christ did on the Cross is balanced against all the evil committed by all men from the beginning to the end of time – and the good outweighs the evil. In that consists our salvation and redemption, the propitiation for our sins, as St. John the Theologian puts it, or our justification, as St. Paul puts it.

In any case, there is surely no contradiction in meaning between the two words for “justice” - Kalomiros’ conjectural Hebrew word tsedaka and the Greek δικαιοσύνη. Justice as “the Divine energy that accomplishes the salvation of man” is perfectly compatible with justice as the restoration of a state of balance, that is, righteousness or blamelessness in man's relationship with his fellow man and with God. Sin upset the balance in this relationship, creating injustice. Justice is restored through the destruction of sin: on the part of God, by His perfect Sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of all men, and on the part of man by true faith in that Sacrifice.

Paradoxically, there is something western and rationalist and Kalomiros’ attempt to demote the supposedly pagan word δικαιοσύνη in favour of the Hebrew tsedaka. God the Holy Spirit decreed that the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament should be written in Greek, the language having the greatest philosophical precision and sophistication in the ancient world. The Greek text cannot therefore be said to be in any way a translation of, or derivation from, a supposedly “purer”, more “godly” Hebrew original: it is the original. Hebrew is the original text of the Old Testament. And yet we do not have the original Hebrew text. We have the Massoretic text, which dates from many centuries after Christ and has probably been corrupted by the rabbis. The text that probably corresponds most closely to the original, but now lost Hebrew is probably the early Greek translation by the Seventy, which remains to this day the official text of the Old Testament in the Orthodox Church.
Western scholars since Luther have loved trying to unearth the “real” meaning of the Greek Scriptures by going to the Hebrew. Comparisons with the Hebrew are not necessarily illegitimate, and can be genuinely illuminating in the hands of truly Orthodox scholars such as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow (see his Commentary on Genesis). But as often as not such comparisons are illegitimate attempts to prove a false theological theory by “getting round” the plain meaning of the text.

In Kalomiros’ case, he is clearly trying to prove that “justice” does not mean what it quite plainly means in the writings of the apostles, but rather “mercy”, “love” and “truth”, on the grounds that the Hebrew word for “justice” is etymologically related to the words for “mercy”, “love” and “truth”. Now nobody doubts that God’s justice is related in a profound way to His mercy, love and truth. It could not be otherwise, since He is the fount of all good, and of all true values. Nevertheless, it is obvious that “justice” is not equivalent to “mercy”, “love” and “truth”, however closely these values are related. And it is equally obvious, contrary to Kalomiros, that the root meaning of justice has to do with “equity”, “balance” and “compensation”. The question for the theologian is: how is God’s justice to be reconciled with His mercy, love and truth? By simply redefining “justice” in terms of “mercy”, “love” and “truth”, Kalomiros has not answered this question, merely bypassed it through a verbal sleight of hand.

At this point Kalomiros brings in St. Isaac: “How can you call God just, when you read the passage on the wage given to the workers? ‘Friends, I do thee no wrong; I will give unto this last even as unto thee who worked for me from the first hour. Is thine eye evil, because I am good?’ How can a man call God just when he comes across the passage on the prodigal son, who wasted his wealth in riotous living, and yet only for the contrition which he showed, the father ran and fell upon his neck, and gave him authority over all his wealth? None other but His very Son said these things concerning Him lest we doubt it, and thus He bare witness concerning Him. Where, then, is God’s justice, for whilst we were sinners, Christ died for us!”

Kalomiros then comments on this: “So we see that God is not just, with the human meaning of this word, but we see that His justice means His goodness and love, which are given in an unjust manner, that is, God always gives without taking anything in return, and He gives to persons like us who are not worthy of receiving. That is why Saint Isaac teaches us: ‘Do not call God just, for His justice is not manifest in the things concerning you. And if David calls Him just and upright, His Son revealed to us that He is good and kind. “He is good,” He says, “to the evil and impious”.’” (p. 6)

Now if we take St. Isaac’s words literally and unintelligently, we will be forced to say that he is in contradiction with a vast number of texts from the Holy Scriptures and Fathers that clearly proclaim the justice of God, and that
on this point, at any rate, he is not in accord with the consensus of the Fathers. This is a possible conclusion, since several of the Fathers have been at one time or another not in accord with the patristic consensus. However, I do not think that we are forced to draw such a conclusion if only we try and put his remarks in the context of the whole of Orthodox soteriology.

The main point St. Isaac is making is that God gives us abundantly more than we deserve if we consider only our works. So if we consider only our works, we must conclude that God is unjust. As the saint puts it: “His justice is not manifest in the things concerning you”. No amount of good works by us can merit the Kingdom of heaven. Even the righteousness of the righteous is “dust and ashes” in God’s eyes. However, if we broaden our perspective to include not only our works, the things concerning us alone, but also the Work of Christ, we must come to a quite different conclusion. For the Work of Christ, His Sacrifice on the Cross, abundantly makes up for the inadequacy of our works. So the saint’s words are perfectly acceptable within the narrow context of our sinful works. But there is no reason to believe that he rejected that justice is nevertheless done through the Work of Christ on the Cross.

However, it is precisely this that Kalomiros denies. He rejects the idea that justice is done by Christ’s Sacrifice on the Cross; that the inadequacy of our own works is made up for by the Supreme Work of Christ. Similarly, he rejects the idea that the human race was justly condemned to hell through the original sin of Adam and Eve. Both these events offend his sense of justice. But instead of confessing that his own sense of justice is probably narrow and limited, he on the one hand unjustly caricatures the traditional theological understanding of Divine justice as “bloodthirsty”, “vengeful”, etc., and on the other hand decides to abolish the notion of justice altogether by redefining it in such a way as to remove from it the idea of balance and equity.

Both the doctrine of original sin and the doctrine of redemption can be seen to be expressions of the most perfect justice – but only if we broaden our ideas of justice to the most cosmic level and see each as only one part of the overall scheme. The two doctrines must be seen together, the latter being the reversal of the former, with the apparent “injustice” of the one cancelling out the apparent “injustice” of the other. So let us go along with Kalomiros to this extent: let us concede that the doctrine of original sin, whereby the sin of Adam and Eve is passed on to their descendants, is unjust from a narrowly human point of view. And let us further concede that Christ’s salvation of mankind on the Cross when mankind took no part in His Sacrifice is similarly “unjust”. We neither deserve the punishment of the original curse, nor the salvation of the subsequent redemption. However, the “injustice” of our salvation perfectly balances, matches, and blots out the “injustice” of our original condemnation. And thereby justice is achieved in the most perfect way. This balance, or parallelism, between our fall in the first Adam and our resurrection in the second, is the central theme of St. Paul’s Epistle to the
Romans. And cognates of the Greek – according to Kalomiros, pagan Greek – word for “justice”, δίκαιος, occur throughout. Thus: “as through one offence condemnation came upon all men, so through one righteous act [δικαιωματος] [the free gift] came upon all men unto justification [δικαιωσιν] of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous [δικαιο]” (Romans 5.18-19).

There are further paradoxes here. Sin, that is, injustice, is completely blotted out - but by the unjust death and Sacrifice of the Only Sinless and Just One. Christ came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8.3) and died the death of a sinner, though He was sinless. The innocent Head died that the guilty Body should live. He, the Just One, Who committed no sin, took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. When we could not pay the price, He paid it for us; when we were dead in sin, He died to give us life. "For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust" (I Peter 3.18). And the greatness of this Sacrifice was so great in the eyes of Divine justice that it blotted out the sins of the whole world - of all men, that is, who respond to this free gift with gratitude and repentance.

For only one work is required on our side – the “work” of true faith, of rightly believing in the Sacrifice - precisely the work that Kalomiros would have us deny, or at any rate reinterpret in such a way as to deny its true nature. For as the Lord Himself says: “This is the work of God – that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent” (John 6.29), that is, on Him “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood... that He might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3.25, 26). If we accept God’s Work of justice with true faith and gratitude, then this faith of ours, like that of Abraham, “is accounted to us for righteousness” (Romans 4.3) - that is, for our justification, our loosing from all injustice, or sin.

The Church has expressed this paradox of Divine Justice with great eloquence: "Come, all ye peoples, and let us venerate the blessed Wood, through which the eternal justice has been brought to pass. For he who by a tree deceived our forefather Adam, is by the Cross himself deceived; and he who by tyranny gained possession of the creature endowed by God with royal dignity, is overthrown in headlong fall. By the Blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away; and the curse of a just condemnation is loosed by the unjust punishment inflicted on the Just. For it was fitting that wood should be healed by wood, and that through the Passion of One Who knew not passion should be remitted all the sufferings of him who was condemned because of wood. But glory to Thee, O Christ our King, for Thy dread dispensation towards us, whereby Thou hast saved us all, for Thou art good and lovest mankind.”

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464 Menaion, September 14, Great Vespers of the Exaltation of the Cross, “Lord, I have cried”, “Glory... Both now...”
2. Does God Punish? Kalomiros writes: “God never takes vengeance. His punishments are loving means of correction, as long as anything can be corrected and healed in this life. They never extend to eternity…” (p. 6)

But how can this be true?! What about the sentence of death passed on all mankind, which is called a “curse” in so many church texts? Is that not a punishment? What about the terrible deaths of various sinners, such as Ahab and Jezabel, Ananias and Sapphira, Heliodorus and Herod and Simon Magus? How can they be said to have been “loving means of correction”, since they manifestly did not correct the sinners involved, who were incorrigible? And what about the torments of gehenna? Do they not extend to eternity? Will not the Lord Himself say to the condemned at the Last Judgement: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25.41)?

Kalomiros writes: “Death was not inflicted upon us by God. We fell into it by our revolt.” (p. 6). And he quotes St. Basil: “God did not create death, but we brought it upon ourselves”.

Certainly God did not create death. And certainly we brought it upon ourselves by our wilful transgression of His commandment. But does this mean that God was completely inactive in His pronouncement of the sentence on Adam and Eve, in their expulsion from Eden, in His placing the cherubim with the sword of fire to prevent their return? Of course not! God did not will our first parents to fall. Nor did He, being Life Itself, create death. However, He allowed our first parents to fall, and He permitted death to enter into their life. Why? Partly in order to correct them, to humble them and lead them to repentance. Partly in order to cut off sin and allow the dissolution of the body for the sake of its future resurrection. And partly because crime requires punishment, because God is the just Judge Who cannot allow sin to go unpunished.

This is confirmed by St. John of Damascus, who writes: "A judge justly punishes one who is guilty of wrongdoing; and if he does not punish him he is himself a wrongdoer. In punishing him the judge is not the cause either of the wrongdoing or of the vengeance taken against the wrongdoer, the cause being the wrongdoer's freely chosen actions. Thus too God, Who saw what was going to happen as if it had already happened, judged it as if it had taken place; and if it was evil, that was the cause of its being punished. It was God Who created man, so of course he created him in goodness; but man did evil of his own free choice, and is himself the cause of the vengeance that overtakes him.”

So man is the ultimate cause of his own misery: but that by no means implies that God does not punish him.

Again, St. Photius the Great writes: “Let us comprehend the depths of the Master’s clemency. He gave death as a punishment, but through His own death He transformed it as a gate to immortality. It was a resolution of anger and displeasure, but it announces the consummate goodness of the Judge…”\textsuperscript{466}

Thus the truth is more complex than Kalomiros would have it. Death is both a punishment and, through Christ’s own Death, a deliverance from death. It is both judgement and mercy. Nor could it be otherwise; for God is both love and justice. As St. John of the Ladder says, He is called justice as well as love.\textsuperscript{467}

Turning now to the question of eternal torments, we note that Kalomiros does not deny their existence, but denies that they are inflicted by God because “God never punishes” (p. 19). Rather, they are self-inflicted. “After the Common Resurrection there is no question of any punishment from God. Hell is not a punishment from God but a self-condemnation. As Saint Basil the Great says, ‘The evils in hell do not have God as their cause, but ourselves.’” (p. 16).

Kalomiros here deliberately confuses two very different things: the crime of the criminal, and the sentence of the judge. If the judge sentences the criminal to prison for his crime, it is obvious that the primary cause of the criminal’s being in prison is his own criminal actions: it is the criminal himself who is ultimately responsible for his miserable condition – this is clearly the point that St. Basil is making. Nevertheless, it is equally obvious that the judge, too, has a hand in the matter. It is he who decides whether the criminal is guilty of innocent, and the gentleness or severity of the sentence. In other words, there are two actors and two actions involved here, not one.

Kalomiros also deliberately confuses the free acts of the criminal and his coerced, unfree submission to his sentence. Thus, corrupting the words of Christ in Matthew 25.41, he writes: “Depart freely from love to the everlasting torture of hate” (p. 20). But the sinners do not freely depart into the everlasting fire! On the contrary, they “gnash their teeth” in the fire, witnessing, as the Fathers explain, to their fierce anger and rejection of the justice of their punishment. We may agree that they have been brought to this plight by their own sinful acts, freely committed. But they do not freely and willingly accept the punishment of those acts! The God-seer Moses and the Apostle Paul were willing to be cast away from God for the sake of the salvation of their brethren, the Jews – here we see the free acceptance of torture and punishment, but out of love. The condemned at the Last Judgement, however,

\textsuperscript{466} St. Photius, Letter 3, to Eusebia, nun and monastic superior, on the death of her sister; translated by Despina Stratoudaki White.
\textsuperscript{467} St. John of the Ladder, The Ladder of Divine Ascent, 24.23.
will be quite unlike these saints, and will be cast against their will into the eternal fire.

Again, Kalomiros distorts the nature of heaven and hell. In a thoroughly modernist, rationalist manner he reduces them to psychological states: a state of supreme joy and love enlightened by the fire of God’s grace, on the one hand, and a state of the most abject misery and hatred, burned but not enlightened by the fire of God’s grace, on the other. “This is hell: the negation of love; the return of hate for love; bitterness at seeing innocent joy; to be surrounded by love and to have hate in one’s heart. This is the eternal condition of all the damned. They are all dearly loved. They are all invited to the joyous banquet. They are all living in God’s Kingdom, in the New Earth and the New Heavens. No one expels them. Even if they wanted to go away they could not flee from God’s New Creation, nor hide from God’s tenderly loving omnipresence…” (p. 20).

Like all heretics, Kalomiros mixes truth with falsehood. So let us first freely admit what is true in his account. It is true that a large part of the torment of hell will be the hatred and bitterness that continues to seethe in the sinner’s heart – together with remorse, shame and the most soul-destroying despair. It is also true that that bitterness will be exacerbated by the thought of the “innocent joy” of the blessed in Paradise. (This was an insight granted also to the atheist Jean-Paul Sartre: “Hell is other people”, he said.) It is true, furthermore, that in a certain sense it is precisely God’s love that torments the sinners in hell. For, as Archbishop Theophan of Poltava writes: “In essence the wrath of God is one of the manifestations of the love of God, but of the love of God in its relation to the moral evil in the heart of rational creatures in general, and in the heart of man in particular” (On Redemption).

However, it is stretching traditional theological understanding far too far to say that those condemned in the eternal fire of gehenna are at the same time “all living in God’s Kingdom, in the New Earth and the New Heavens”! There is no place for the damned in God’s Kingdom! As was revealed to St. John in the last chapter of Revelation: “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (22.14-15). In other words, the New Earth and the New Heavens, Paradise and the City of God, will not be accessible to the condemned sinners; they will not be living there!

Nor is it true that even the damned will be “invited to the joyful banquet” and that “no-one will expel them”. In this life, yes, even sinners are invited to the joyful banquet of communion with God in His Holy Church. But on the last Day, when the sinner is found to have no wedding garment, the King will say to His servants: “Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast
him into outer darkness: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22.13).

God is not as passive as Kalomiros makes out. He acts – and acts to expel the unrepentant sinner from His presence. Thus to the “inner darkness” of the sinner’s hate-filled, graceless soul will be added the “outer darkness” of the place that is gehenna, where the river of fire will consume his body as well as his soul. This outer aspect of the eternal torments appears to have been ignored by Kalomiros in his over-psychological, over-abstract and over-sophisticated understanding of the torments of hell. And if he were to object: “There is no space or time as we understand it in the life of the age to come”, I would reply: “As we understand it, in our present fallen and limited state - yes. And yet we cannot get rid of the categories of space and time altogether. Only God is completely beyond space and time. The idea of a body burning in hell is incomprehensible if it is not burning somewhere. Nor is the idea of our earth being transfigured into Paradise comprehensible if it not located in any kind of space…”

Kalomiros makes all these errors and distortions of Holy Scripture because he refuses to admit that God punishes, not only pedagogically, to correct and rehabilitate the sinner, but also retributively, as a pure expression of His justice. Since retributive punishment does not lead to the rehabilitation of the sinner, he considers it pointless and cruel, and therefore unworthy of God. In other words, he sees no value in justice in itself, independently of its possible pedagogical effect.

And yet Holy Scripture is full of the idea of retributive justice as being the norm of existence, proceeding from the very nature of God. Thus: “The Lord is the God of vengeances; the God of vengeances hath spoken openly. Be Thou exalted, O Thou that judgest the earth; render the proud their due” (Psalm 93.1-2). And again: “They [the martyrs] cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6.10). It goes without saying that in neither of these quotations are God or the saints understood as being vengeful in a crudely human and sinful manner, as if they were possessed by a fallen passion of anger. As the Venerable Bede writes: "The souls of the righteous cry these things, not from hatred of enemies, but from love of justice."468

So the desire that justice should be done is not necessarily sinful; it may be pure, proceeding not from the fallen passion of anger, but from the pure love of justice. Indeed, when the Lord says: “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay”, He is not saying that justice - and clearly it is retributive justice that is meant here - should not be desired, but rather that it should be sought, not through the

468 St. Bede, On Genesis 4.10.
exercise of the fallen human passions, but through God, Who always acts
with the most perfect and passionless impartiality.

Even St. Basil the Great, upon whom Kalomiros relies so heavily, does not
deny the idea of retributive justice in God – and precisely in the context of the
river of fire. As he writes, commenting on the verse: “The voice of the Lord
divideth the flame of fire” (Psalm 28.6): “The fire prepared in punishment for
the devil and his angels is divided by the voice of the Lord. Thus, since there
are two capacities in fire, one of burning and the other of illuminating, the
fierce and punitive property of the fire may await those who deserve to burn,
while its illuminating and radiant part may be reserved for the enjoyment of
those who are rejoicing.”

So the river of fire is punitive – for “those who deserve to burn”. And it is
punitive in a retributive sense, as expressing the pure love of justice that is
part of the nature of God. Of course, God longs to have mercy even on the
most inveterate sinner. But if that sinner does not wish to believe and repent,
thereby destroying his own sin, He wills that the sinner should be punished.
Even though the punishment can have no rehabilitative effect...

3. Love and Justice. If we seek for a deeper cause of Kalomiros’ heresy, we
may find it in the very modernist error of disconnecting, as it were, the values
of love, truth and justice. Modern man believes in love, but it is a false,
sentimental of love because it is not linked to truth and justice. More precisely,
modern man thinks that it is possible to sacrifice truth and justice for the sake
of love. We are familiar with the sacrifice of truth for the sake of “love” in the
modern pan-heresy of ecumenism. Kalomiros’ heresy may be described as an
analogue to ecumenism; only the value that he wishes to sacrifice is
justice.

However, love and justice, mercy and judgement, are inseparably related
in God’s economy. As we have seen, God condemned man to death in Eden both
because that was the just punishment of his sin and because through
death, paradoxically, the spread of sin would be cut short, man would be led
to repentance and Christ would descend into hades to save mankind. Again,
Christ’s Sacrifice on the Cross was both a supreme act of love for fallen
mankind and the restoration of justice in God’s relationship with man.

The obverse of God’s love for mankind is His wrath and hatred of the sin
that tears mankind away from eternal life in Him. St. John of Damascus writes:
“By wrath and anger are understood [God’s] hatred and disgust in relation to
sin, since we also hate that which does not accord with our thought and are
angry with it”. Now hatred of sin is the same as the love of justice, since
justice is the destruction of sin and the restoration of the state of sinlessness. It
follows that he who does not love justice for its own sake does not hate sin.

And he who does not hate sin does not love God, Who hates sin so much that He gave His Only-Begotten Son to die in order that sin should be destroyed and man restored to his original condition of sinlessness.

In conclusion, let us listen to the words of St. Gregory Palamas, who can in no way be accused of “scholasticism”, but who emphasizes, as if anticipating the debates of our time, the critical importance of justice: “The pre-eternal, unincircumscribed and almighty Word and omnipotent Son of God could clearly have saved man from mortality and servitude to the devil without Himself becoming man. He upholds all things by the word of His power and everything is subject to His divine authority. According to Job, He can do everything and nothing is impossible for Him. The strength of a created being cannot withstand the power of the Creator, and nothing is more powerful than the Almighty. But the incarnation of the Word of God was the method of deliverance most in keeping with our nature and weakness, and most appropriate for Him Who carried it out, for this method had justice on its side, and God does not act without justice. As the Psalmist and Prophet says, ‘God is righteous and loveth righteousness’ (Psalm 11.7), ‘and there is no unrighteousness in Him’ (Psalm 92.15). Man was justly abandoned by God in the beginning as he had first abandoned God. He had voluntarily approached the originator of evil, obeyed him when he treacherously advised the opposite of what God had commanded, and was justly given over to him. In this way, through the evil one’s envy and the good Lord’s just consent, death came into the world. Because of the devil’s overwhelming evil, death became twofold, for he brought about not just physical but also eternal death.

“As we had been justly handed over to the devil’s service and subjection to death, it was clearly necessary that the human race’s return to freedom and life should be accomplished by God in a just way. Not only had man been surrendered to the envious devil by divine righteousness, but the devil had rejected righteousness and become wrongly enamoured of authority, arbitrary power and, above all, tyranny. He took up arms against justice and used his might against mankind. It pleased God that the devil be overcome first by the justice against which he continuously fought, then afterwards by power, through the Resurrection and the future Judgement. Justice before power is the best order of events, and that force should come after justice is the work of a truly divine and good Lord, not of a tyrant….

“A sacrifice was needed to reconcile the Father on High with us and to sanctify us, since we had been soiled by fellowship with the evil one. There had to be a sacrifice which both cleansed and was clean, and a purified, sinless priest… It was clearly necessary for Christ to descend to Hades, but all these things were done with justice, without which God does not act.”

“Justice before power”, the Cross before the Resurrection. And “all things done with justice, without which God does not act.” Clearly, justice is no secondary aspect of the Divine economy, but its very heart and essence…

Vladimir Moss.

September 21 / October 4, 2007.

Apodosis of the Exaltation of the Honoured and Life-Giving Cross of the Lord.
“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1) – we all know this very important commandment of the Lord. We know what it means: to express condemnation of a person with hatred or derision. And we know, if we are honest with ourselves, that we very often sin against it... However, the word “judge” has many meanings in the English language; and there is a tendency to use the commandment not to judge in this sense as an excuse for inaction, as a stick with which to suppress dissident opinions, and even, sometimes, as an argument in favour of ecumenism. Let us look at these different meanings.

First, it is important not to confuse judging in the sense of passionate condemnation with rebuking or reproving. Blessed Theophylact writes: “He forbids condemning others, but not reproving others. A reproof is for another’s benefit, but condemnation expresses only derision and scorn. You may also understand that the Lord is speaking of one who, despite his own great sins, condemns others who have lesser sins of which God will be the judge.”

To reprove with meekness, and without passionate condemnation or hypocrisy, is a very difficult art. But a vital one. The clergy especially have to rebuke. As the Apostle Paul says to Timothy: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (I Timothy 5:20), “in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (II Timothy 2:25). But ordinary Christians, too, must sometimes employ rebukes. Parents must reprove their children, spiritual fathers have to reprove their children, brothers in the Church must reprove each other when they see each other going wrong. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Galatians 6:1). If we did not exhort and reprove each other as the Gospel commands (I Thessalonians 4:18; Hebrews 12:5; Ephesians 5:1), our communities would very soon lose grace. Well-directed reproof is the wine that the Good Samaritan poured into the wounds of the man attacked by robbers, the salt that keeps the body of the Church from corrupting.

We may refrain from reproving others for good or bad reasons. Good reasons include: fear of hypocrisy out of a consciousness of one’s own great sinfulness; fear of mistakes out of insufficient knowledge of the person; and fear of one’s own fallen nature, which is constantly ready to add the sinful element of derision or scorn to the sinless element of reproof. But there are bad reasons, too: fear of losing the other person’s favour – in other words, man-pleasing or social cowardice; and simple indifference to the other

person’s salvation – in other words, lack of love. Man-pleasing is a particularly widespread and dangerous vice in our times, as has been recently pointed out by his Grace, Bishop Photius of Marathon. Indifference to the salvation of others is perhaps the most characteristic vice of our time, in accordance with the word of the Lord: “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold” (Matthew 24.12).

Secondly, we must not confuse judging in the sense of condemnation with discernment of the truth about a person or situation. The Apostle Paul uses the word “judge” in the sense of “discern” when he says: “He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man” (I Corinthians 2.15). Discernment, the gift of seeing the difference between good and evil in men and situations, is another vital gift, without which salvation is impossible.

Now discernment is acquired, above all, by examination of oneself and one’s own sins rather than those of others. And preoccupation with the sins of others may lead to pharisaism, blindness to one’s own sins and therefore to the opposite of true discernment. Nevertheless, fear of pharisaism should never be used as an excuse to refuse to see the evil that is in front of one’s eyes and that necessitates action from us.

Thirdly, “judging” as sinful condemnation must be distinguished from “judging” as “executing justice” or “following the judgement of a properly qualified judge”, whether ecclesiastical or secular. This confusion is often made by ecumenists, who accuse the Orthodox of “judging” when we are simply following the judgements of the Lord and His Holy Church. We are supposedly not allowed to “judge” heretics and apostates when it is not a question of personal, sinful condemnation, but of loyalty and obedience to the decrees of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

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Particular attention should be made to the “refusal to judge” argument in the context of ecumenism.

Now ecumenism can be described as the refusal to accept the judgement of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church on the heretics of all ages. We see how the contemporary ecumenists of World Orthodoxy have trampled on the judgements of the Church on the heretics of the period of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, such as the Nestorians and Monophysites, as well as on the heretics of the second millennium of Church history, the Roman Catholics and Protestants. If a True Orthodox Christian says that, for example, the Anglicans are heretics and outside the Church, or that the Anglicans will go to hell after death if they do not repent, he as often as not receives the reply:

“Don’t judge”. The more extreme ecumenists say that everyone, even the heretics, will be saved; while the more moderate ones, and even some “moderate traditionalists” such as the Cyprianites, are simply agnostic, saying that we do not know who will be saved, it is up to God alone to judge.

So the question arises: What do we know for certain? Can we make judgements about the salvation or damnation of those outside the Church? And if so in what sense of the word “judge”?

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to deal with the objection that we should not even be discussing this question, because, as the Fathers say, we must concentrate on our own sins rather than the sins of others.

In the context of personal asceticism, this is perfectly true. In that context, to wonder whether our neighbour will be saved or not is at best a distraction, at worst a serious temptation. However, the context of this discussion in not personal, but dogmatic. As is well-known, the ecumenists often assert that it would be unjust of God and contrary to His merciful loving-kindness to condemn those outside the Church. And from this they deduce the idea that there is salvation outside the Church and even, in more contemporary forms of the heresy, that everybody will be saved. This false idea must be refuted for the sake of the defence of Orthodoxy. And so it is legitimate to discuss the question of the salvation of those outside the Church in this context.

Now two different meanings of the words “salvation” and “hell” in English need to be distinguished. Sometimes we mean by “salvation” the deliverance of the soul from hell – that is, hades - immediately after death, at the “particular judgement” of the individual soul. At other times, however, we mean “final” salvation, that is, salvation from gehenna - at the Last Judgement of all souls. Now it is obvious that a person who is delivered to hades after his death is in very great danger of being cast into gehenna at the Last Judgement. Nevertheless, there is a difference between being in hades and being in gehenna. Thus we know from Holy Tradition and the Lives of the Saints that some people in hades have been saved through the prayers of the Church; but we also know that nobody who is cast into gehenna will ever escape from it. Cases of deliverance from hades are doubtless rare; and in themselves they are not enough to create a dogma of the faith. Nevertheless, they indicate the possibility, if nothing more, that a person who is in hades will not be cast into gehenna at the Last Judgement and the General Resurrection.

In this sense we can agree with the “moderate traditionalists” – and indeed, with all the Holy Fathers of the Church – that we do not know who will be saved. We know neither whether we who are in the Church will be saved, nor even whether those who die outside the Church will be saved at the Last Judgement. For it is possible even for one who is in hades to be saved from it and therefore also from the eternal fire.
Therefore: **1. We cannot say with certainty that all those who die outside the True Faith and the True Church will be condemned to the eternal fire of gehenna.**

We shall call this, not a dogma of faith, for faith apprehends only certainties (Hebrews 11.1), but a postulate of hope and an object of love – that love which “hopeth all things” (I Corinthians 13.7)

However, this is not the end of the story. Some things about salvation we do know for certain, including the following: **2. We can say with certainty that all those who die outside the True Faith and the True Church will be sent to hades after death.**

The proof of this second statement is found in the completely categorical words of the Lord Himself: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Unless a man is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God” (John 3.5). And again: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6.53). Here the Lord is emphasizing that the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Divine Eucharist are an absolutely necessary condition of entrance into the Kingdom of God. It is impossible for a man who has not been baptized to enter Paradise, because he remains in original sin, burdened with all his personal sins and without the purification and enlightenment that comes from baptism alone. He has not been born again in the womb of the Church; he has not been buried with Christ, and so cannot be resurrected with Christ.

Another absolutely necessary condition of entrance into the Kingdom of God is the true faith: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16.16). So both true faith and true baptism are necessary. But neither of these are possessed by heretics, pagans and unbelievers. For heretics by definition do not have the true faith. And the Holy Church teaches us that they do not have grace-filled sacraments either.

This point is proved by two canons. The first is the 46th of the Holy Apostles: “We order that a bishop or presbyter that recognized the baptism or sacrifice of heretics be defrocked. For ‘what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?’” The second is the 1st of the Council of Carthage (of St. Cyprian): “We declare that no one can possibly be baptized outside the Catholic (i.e. the Orthodox) Church, there being but one baptism, and this existing only in the Catholic Church.”

To these scriptural and canonical witnesses we may add the witness of Holy Tradition, in the form of the experience of Blessed Theodora, who, after passing through the toll-houses and being returned to her body, was told by the angels: "Those who believe in the Holy Trinity and take as frequently as
possible the Holy Communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, our Saviour's body and Blood - such people can rise to heaven directly, with no hindrances, and the holy angels defend them, and the holy saints of God pray for their salvation, since they have lived righteously. No one, however, takes care of wicked and depraved heretics, who do nothing useful during their lives, and live in disbelief and heresy. The angels can say nothing in their defence... [Only those] enlightened by the faith and holy baptism can rise and be tested in the stations of torment [that is, the toll-houses]. The unbelievers do not come here. Their souls belong to hell even before they part from their bodies. When they die, the devils take their souls with no need to test them. Such souls are their proper prey, and they take them down to the abyss.\textsuperscript{474}

Someone may argue: “Even if an unbaptized person cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven, that does not mean that he is in hell.” To this we reply: “There are only two places a soul can go to after death: heaven or hell (hades). So if he is not in heaven, he must be in hell. There is no third possibility, since the Orthodox do not believe like the Latins in purgatory or any such place.”

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It will be useful to test these conclusions by reference to an article by Archimandrite (Metropolitan) Philaret of blessed memory entitled “Will the Heterodox be Saved?”\textsuperscript{475} There is nothing in this article that contradicts the two propositions asserted above. However, the metropolitan introduces some valuable nuances into the argument, as follows:

1. The metropolitan writes: “What should one say of those outside the Church, who do not belong to her? Another apostle provides us with an idea: ‘For what have I to do to judge them that are without? Do ye not judge them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But then that are without God judgeth’ (I Corinthians 5.12-13). God ‘will have mercy on whom He will have mercy’ (Romans 9.18). It is necessary to mention only one thing: that to ‘lead a perfectly righteous life,’ as the questioner expressed it, means to live according to the commandments of the Beatitudes - which is beyond the power of one, outside the Orthodox Church, without the help of grace which is concealed within it.”

It is not quite clear what the metropolitan is saying precisely here. One possible interpretation is: rather than say that the heterodox will not be saved, which is beyond our knowledge, for “those who are outside [the Church] God will judge”, it is better to say essentially the same thing in a more positive,

\textsuperscript{474} Quoted by David Ritchie, “The ‘Near-Death Experience’,\textit{ Orthodox Life}, vol. 45, no. 4, July-August, 1995, pp. 22-23.
\textsuperscript{475} Metropolitan Philaret, “Will the Heterodox be Saved?”, \textit{Orthodox Life}, vol. 34, no. 6, November-December, 1984, pp. 33-36.
less “judgemental” way: that the grace which enables us to fulfil the commandments of God is given to people only in the Orthodox Church.

Whether or not this is a correct interpretation of the metropolitan’s words, it will be useful to examine more closely what the passage from I Corinthians 5 that he quotes really means by looking at it in its wider context.

“It is reported continuously,” writes the apostle, “that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you…” (5. 1-2).

We can draw two immediate conclusions: (1) this was not a matter of faith, but of morality, and (2) the Corinthians were “looking through their fingers”, as the Russian expression goes, at the fornication of their brother; they neither rebuked him nor excommunicated him, as the canons required. The apostle, far from praising them for their “refusal to judge”, reproved them for being “puffed up” – that is, proud. This again shows that the “refusal to judge” may proceed, not from humility, but from its opposite...

“For I verily,” continues the apostle, “although absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” (5. 3-7).

We can now draw a third conclusion: (3) the context of this passage is not the rightness or wrongness of “judging” sinners in the sense of censuring or criticizing them, but rather the rightness or wrongness of “judging” them in the sense of bringing them to trial. In the case of a sinner within the Church, the apostle declares that it is necessary to excommunicate him and deliver him to bodily punishment at the hands of Satan for the sake of his salvation through Christ in the Day of Judgement. The setting is a parish or diocesan assembly at which the apostle is not present but at which he presides in spirit. The Corinthians are rebuked once again for pride, “glorying”, because they complacently considered that they could not be infected by the bad example of their sinning brother. But the leaven of sin infects the whole lump, the whole church community, if it is not cast out by the judgement of the community – that is, through the judgement of a properly convened ecclesiastical court. Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us in order to cast...
out sin from our souls and bodies, and do we then with such vainglorious complacency allow sin to come back into our lives?!

The importance of this passage is shown, as Archbishop Averky points out, by its being placed in the liturgy of Holy and Great Saturday. It teaches that we who are about to receive the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ for the remission of our sins must take special care to cleanse ourselves of all sin, not only personally, but in the community as a whole. It also shows the danger that comes if we do not judge the sinners within our own ranks – the word “judge” being used here in the triple sense of “discern” their sin, “reprove” their sin, and “pass judgement” formally on their sin.

However, continues the apostle, it is quite a different matter with people who sin against us from outside the Church. “For what have I to do with judging those who are outside? Do ye not judge those that are inside?” (5.12-13). Or, as Bishop Theophan puts it: “We ourselves judge our own sinners here, and through that, by disposing them to repentance, deliver them from the judgement of God. But the pagans do not have a mediating corrective court: what awaits them without mediation is the judgement of God.”

Nor, says the apostle, should we take such sinners to a civil court. For “does any of you dare, if he has something against another person, to go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints [the Christians]? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (6.1-2). Or, as Bishop Theophan puts it: “Having spoken about the inner Church court in spiritual matters, the apostle wishes that everyday matters also should be examined by the Christians themselves without taking them to pagan courts... If court justice is necessary, then they must seek it before righteous people – the holy Christians... The Christians are holy, and by their example of faith and love they will be the accusers of the impious world at the Judgement of Christ, so are they really unworthy now to examine their own affairs that are of little importance?” (p. 146)

We may conclude that this passage is not relevant to the question whether it is right or wrong to say that heretics go to hell. For the context is not sins against the faith, but moral sins, and the “judging” in question is not passionate condemnation, but the taking of a sinner to trial in an ecclesiastical or civil court. Moreover, the only kind of “judging” that the apostle is explicitly condemning is the taking of pagans to trial in a civil court.

2. The metropolitan continues: “In attempting to answer this question [can the heterodox be saved?], it is necessary, first of all, to recall that in His Gospel the Lord Jesus Christ Himself mentions but one state of the human soul which unfailingly leads to perdition – i.e. blasphemy against the Holy

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Spirit (Matthew 12.1-32). The same text makes it clear that even blasphemy against the Son of Man – i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God Himself may be forgiven men, as it may be uttered in error or in ignorance and, subsequently may be covered by conversion and repentance (an example of such a converted and repentant blasphemer is the Apostle Paul. (See Acts 26.11 and I Timothy 1.13.) If, however, a man opposes the Truth which he clearly apprehends by his reason and conscience, he becomes blind and commits spiritual suicide, for he thereby likens himself to the devil, who believes in God and dreads Him, yet hates, blasphemes and opposes Him.

“Thus, man’s refusal to accept the Divine Truth and his opposition thereto makes him a son of damnation. Accordingly, in sending His disciples to preach, the Lord told them: ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned’ (Mark 16.16), for the latter heard the Lord’s Truth and was called upon to accept it, yet refused, thereby inheriting the damnation of those who ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (II Thessalonians 2.12).

“The Holy Orthodox Church is the repository of the divinely revealed Truth in all its fullness and fidelity to apostolic Tradition. Hence, he who leaves the Church, who intentionally and consciously falls away from it, joins the ranks of its opponents and becomes a renegade as regards apostolic Tradition. The Church dreadfully anathematized such renegades, in accordance with the words of the Saviour Himself (Matthew 18.17) and of the Apostle Paul (Galatians 1.8-9), threatening them with eternal damnation and calling them to return to the Orthodox fold. It is self-evident, however, that sincere Christians who are Roman Catholics, or Lutherans, or members of other non-Orthodox confessions, cannot be considered renegades or heretics – i.e. those who knowingly pervert the truth... They have been born and raised and are living according to the creed which they have inherited, just as do the majority of you who are Orthodox; in their lives there has not been a moment of personal and conscious renunciation of Orthodoxy. The Lord ‘Who will have all men to be saved’ (I Timothy 2.4), and ‘Who enlightens every man born into the world’ (John 1.43), undoubtedly is leading them also towards salvation in His own way.”

Confusion may be caused by the holy metropolitan’s unusual and somewhat paradoxical definition of the word “heretic”, which is much narrower than the usual definition. The usual definition is very simple: a heretic is a person who believes a heretical teaching, that is, a teaching contrary to the Orthodox Faith – regardless of whether he was brought up in the truth or not, or has consciously renounced Orthodoxy or not. “Sincere Christians who are Roman Catholics, or Lutherans, or members of other non-Orthodox confessions” are heretics, according to this definition. They are not as guilty as those who have known the truth but have personally and consciously renounced it, who are not only heretics but also apostates...
(renegades). But they are nevertheless in error, heterodox rather than Orthodox, and therefore cannot receive the sanctification that comes from the knowledge of the truth (John 17.18).

However, this difference in the definition of the word “heretic” does not affect the validity of the metropolitan’s main point, which may be formulated as follows:

3. We may be certain that at the Last Judgement the lot of those who have known the truth but have consciously rejected it will be worse than those who have remained in error out of ignorance.

This third major conclusion of ours in no way contradicts the first two. All heretics in the usual sense of the word will go to hell (hades) after death because they do not know the truth and have not received the baptism by water and the Spirit that alone, according to the Lord’s infallible word, delivers a soul from hades and brings it into the Kingdom of Heaven. However, those who have been brought up in error and have never been confronted with the truth, and therefore never rejected the truth personally and consciously, are much more likely to attract the mercy of God at the Last Judgement, and so be delivered from the eternal fire, than those who, having known the truth and been baptized in it, have consciously rejected it.

Some may interpret the metropolitan’s words to mean that “sincere Christians who are Roman Catholics, or Lutherans, or members of other non-Orthodox confessions” can be saved in the sense that they can go to Paradise immediately after death. But the metropolitan does not say that (and if he had said that, we would be forced to come to the conclusion that he, the author of the renowned 1983 anathema against ecumenism, was an ecumenist!). Rather, he is speaking about salvation at the Last Judgement, a different matter, about which we can say much less with certainty...

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Finally, it may be useful to say a few more words about the word “ignorance” in this context. Ignorance - real, involuntary ignorance - is certainly grounds for clemency according to God’s justice, as it is according to man’s. The Lord cried out on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23.24); and one of those who were forgiven declared: "I obtained mercy because I acted in ignorance" (I Timothy 1.13; cf. Acts 3.17, 17.30). For our Great High Priest is truly One "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" (Hebrews 5.2).

However, there is also such a thing as wilful, voluntary ignorance. Thus St. Paul says of those who do not believe in the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, that "they are without excuse" (Romans 1.20), for they deny the
evidence from creation which is accessible to everyone. Again, St. Peter says: "This they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men" (II Peter 3.5-7). Again, claiming knowledge when one has none counts as wilful ignorance. For, as Christ said to the Pharisees: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9.41).

Wilful ignorance is very close to conscious resistance to the truth, which receives the greatest condemnation according to the Word of God. Thus those who accept the Antichrist will do so "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” (II Thessalonians 2.10). Wilful ignorance is therefore the same as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which we have already discussed. Metropolitan Philaret's definition of this sin is essentially the same as that of Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), who in turn follows the definition of the Seventh Ecumenical Council: "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or 'sin unto death', according to the explanation of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (VIII, 75), is a conscious, hardened opposition to the truth, 'because the Spirit is truth' (I John 5.6).” 477 Another similar, but somewhat broader definition is given by St. Ambrose of Milan: all heretics and schismatics are blasphemers against the Holy Spirit insofar as they deny the Spirit and Truth that is in the True Church. 478

Wilful ignorance can be of various degrees. There is the wilful ignorance that refuses to believe even when the truth is staring you in the face – this is the most serious kind, the kind practised by the Pharisees and the heresiarchs. But a man can also be said to be wilfully ignorant if he does not take the steps that are necessary in order to discover the truth – this is less serious, but still blameworthy, and is characteristic of many of those who followed the Pharisees and the heresiarchs. Thus we read: "That servant who knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and he to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12.47-48). To which the words of St. Theophylact of Bulgaria are a fitting commentary: "Here some will object, saying: 'He who knows the will of his Lord, but does not do it, is deservedly punished. But why is the ignorant punished?' Because when he might have known he did not wish to do so, but was the cause of his own ignorance through sloth." 479

Or, as St. Cyril of Alexandria puts it: "How can he who did not know it be guilty? The reason is, because he did not want to know it, although it was in his power to learn." ⁴⁸⁰ To whom does this distinction apply? St. Cyril applies it to false teachers and parents, on the one hand, and those who follow them, on the other. In other words, the blind leaders will receive a greater condemnation than the blind followers - which is not to say, however, that they will not both fall into the pit (Matthew 15.14). For, as Bishop Nicholas Velimirovich writes: "Are the people at fault if godless elders and false prophets lead them onto foreign paths? The people are not at fault to as great an extent as their elders and the false prophets, but they are at fault to some extent. For God gave to the people also to know the right path, both through their conscience and through the preaching of the word of God, so that people should not blindly have followed their blind guides, who led them by false paths that alienated them from God and His Laws." ⁴⁸¹

The ecumenists often bring up the example of the Hindus and Buddhists and others who have lived their whole lives in non-Christian communities. Can they be said to be wilfully ignorant of the truth? Of course, only God knows the degree of ignorance in any particular case. However, even if the heathen have more excuse than the Christians who deny Christ, they cannot be said to be completely innocent; for no one is completely deprived of the knowledge of the One God. Thus St. Jerome writes: "Ours and every other race of men knows God naturally. There are no peoples who do not recognise their Creator naturally." ⁴⁸² And St. John Chrysostom writes: "From the beginning God placed the knowledge of Himself in men, but the pagans awarded this knowledge to sticks and stones, doing wrong to the truth to the extent that they were able." ⁴⁸³ And the same Father writes: "One way of coming to the knowledge of God is that which is provided by the whole of creation; and another, no less significant, is that which is offered by conscience, the whole of which we have expounded upon at greater length, showing how you have a self-taught knowledge of what is good and what is not so good, and how conscience urges all this upon you from within. Two teachers, then, are given you from the beginning: creation and conscience. Neither of them has a voice to speak out; yet they teach men in silence." ⁴⁸⁴

Many have abandoned the darkness of idolatry by following creation and conscience alone. Thus St. Barbara heeded the voice of creation, rejected her father's idols and believed in the One Creator of heaven and earth even before she had heard of Christ. And she heeded the voice of her conscience, which recoiled from those "most odious works of witchcrafts, and wicked sacrifices;

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⁴⁸² St. Jerome, *Treatise on Psalm 95*.
and also those merciless murderers of children and devourers of man's flesh, and the feasts of blood, with their priests out of the midst of their idolatrous crew, and the parents, that killed with their own hands souls destitute of help" (Wisdom of Solomon 12.4-6). But her father, who had the same witnesses to the truth as she, rejected it – and killed her.485

Thus there is a light that "enlightens every man who comes into the world" (John 1.9). And if there are some who reject that light, abusing that freewill which God will never deprive them of, this is not His fault, but theirs. As St. John Chrysostom says, "If there are some who choose to close the eyes of their mind and do not want to receive the rays of that light, their darkness comes not from the nature of the light, but from their own darkness in voluntarily depriving themselves of that gift."486 If the Light of Christ enlightens everyone, then there is no one who cannot come to the True Faith, however unpromising his situation. If a man follows the teachers that are given to everyone, creation and conscience, then the Providence of God, with Whom "all things are possible" (Matthew 19.26), will lead him to the teacher that is given at the beginning only to a few - "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth" (I Timothy 3.15). For "it is not possible," writes St. John Chrysostom, "that one who is living rightly and freed from the passions should ever be overlooked. But even if he happens to be in error, God will quickly draw him over to the truth."487 Again, St. John Cassian says: "When God sees in us some beginnings of good will, He at once enlightens it, urging it on towards salvation."488

This leads us to draw the following further conclusions: 4. The Providence of God is able to bring anyone in any situation to the True Faith and the True Church, providing he loves the truth. Therefore 5. Although we cannot declare with certainty that those who die in unbelief or heresy will be damned forever, neither can we declare that they will be saved because of their ignorance; for they may be alienated from God "through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4.18), and not simply through the ignorance that is caused by external circumstances.

For the Orthodox do not believe in the Roman Catholic concept of “invincible ignorance”. No ignorance that is truly ignorance is invincible – that is, cannot be conquered by the Almighty Providence of God. The only ignorance that God cannot and will not conquer – because to do so would be to violate the free will of man – is the ignorance that is wilful and artificial, being created by man himself through his stubborn refusal to learn the truth.

November 1/14, 2007.

486 St. Chrysostom, Homily 8 on John.
487 St. Chrysostom, Homily 24 on Matthew, 1.
488 St. Cassian, Conferences, XIII, 8.
33. WHAT’S WRONG WITH FORNICATION?

“Why can’t I sleep with her, if she agrees, and I love her?” Very many Orthodox Christian parents must have heard these or similar words from their children. It is easy to give a correct, albeit rather short, answer, “Because God says you can’t”, much harder to give an answer that will convince a young person exposed to the full blast of today’s permissive society.

It is a truism to say that the temptation to commit fornication is more powerful than ever today. The very word “fornication” has almost disappeared from contemporary English, and not many people below a certain age now talk about “chastity”. Adultery is still considered a sin by most – but for reasons that have nothing specifically to do with Christianity. Adultery is considered wrong because, if discovered, it causes mental anguish to the deceived third person – and pain is, of course, a negative value – in fact, the only negative value – in a strictly utilitarian morality. Even if not discovered, adultery is usually disapproved of because it is “cheating” – and some value is still attached to honesty and the keeping of promises. But there are signs that “cheating”, too, is no longer abhorred as much as it used to be. After all, if a man (or woman) “can’t get no satisfaction”, is he not obliged to protect his mental and physical health by seeking satisfaction elsewhere? It was for similar reasons that a local council in Britain recently paid for a handicapped person to receive the services of a prostitute. Divorce on grounds of “incompatibility” alone is now considered perfectly okay – it is only the bad effects on the children that are regrettable. True, the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to marry Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles because they are both divorced (or, more probably, because they are both hated by large sections of the public for “cheating” on the idolised (and extremely promiscuous) Princess Diana). But he did give them a “blessing” in a public service more splendid than most marriages in church. So that’s alright then... However, if some opprobrium still attaches to adultery and divorce in more conservative circles, none at all, it would appear, attaches to straightforward fornication. Fornication is now healthy and normal at all times and for all people, even those destined to become the heads of Churches. Thus Prince Charles’ sons live openly with their mistresses, and nobody, whether in Church or State, raises even a whimper of protest…

If we are to help our children acquire the strength to withstand the temptation of fornication, it is not sufficient to tell them that God disapproves, nor even that fornicators go to hell according to the Apostle (1 Corinthians 6.9). They must be given at least some indication why God disapproves of it, and why it is such a serious sin that it leads to hell. There are two basic approaches to this problem: the approach from the point of view of sacramental theology, and the approach from the point of view of conventional morality.

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Fr. Demetrius Kaplun gives a clear example of the moral approach: “There is an idea,” he writes, “that marriage and fornication are in no way different from each other. ‘Why go to church’, ‘why put a stamp in the passport’ – that is how some irresponsible people reason. But even if we ignore the mystical aspect of the Church’s sacrament of marriage, even a marriage recognised by society, marriage ‘with a stamp’, is different from fornication in exactly the same way as a serious and strong friendship is distinguished from companionship in some enterprise – by the degree of mutual obligations. When companions begin some enterprise, they act together only to the degree that they are useful to each other, but friendship presupposes moral obligations in addition. Just as bandits who get together only in order to carry out a crime more easily (one slips through the ventilation pane well, while another breaks the safe), so a couple living in fornication are only useful to each other for this or that reason. For example, the woman cooks well, the man has got money, they love each other – but take no responsibility upon themselves. If one ‘companion’ decides tomorrow to find himself another ‘companion’, there is nothing to keep them together and bind them any longer. When a man easily changes friends and retains no obligations, he is called a traitor. It is impossible to rely on such a man. Unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities, they are condemned by God and man.

“And so the first thing that is valued in marriage is faithfulness, holiness of mutual obligations. The bonds of marriage are holy: they truly bind and limit a man, place on him the burden of service. On entering into marriage, a man can demonstrate his worthiness by the fact that he preserves his faithfulness, his honour in a holy manner. Just as for a soldier there is no greater shame than desertion, going under the flag of the other army, so for an honourable spouse there is no greater baseness that to defile the holiness of the marital bond. Spouses are to a definite degree like soldiers; they must preserve and guard the honour of the family for the shame of lust, falling, inconstancy, from the encroachment of sin.

“In ancient Rome brave and faithful soldiers were crowned with the wreath of a conqueror. Therefore the ecclesiastical sacrament of marriage, too, is called the Sacrament of Crowning. The spouses are crowned as a sign of the incorruption of their lives, as a sign of their faithfulness to each other, as a sign of the fact that they are acquiring a royal, masterly dignity in the circle of their descendants. During the Sacrament of Crowning rings are placed on the hands as a sign of their mutual agreement, and those being married are led three times around the analog with the cross and the Gospel ‘in the form of a circle’, signifying the inviolability and eternity of the marital union, since the circle indicates eternity; the circle has no beginning or end. ‘What God has joined together, let no man put asunder’ (Matthew 19.6).”

Now this approach is certainly valid and useful as far as it goes. But the suspicion remains that it does not go far enough, and fails to take into account the idealism of the emotion of falling in love, especially first love. For no young Romeo and Juliet will disagree with the idea that “unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities”. In fact, they couldn’t agree more, and often swear undying constancy towards each other. Nothing could be further from their minds than the thought that their love might die, and they might move on to other partners. In fact, it is precisely the strength and intensity of their love for each other that leads them, in many cases, to scorn the idea that this profound feeling needs to be bolstered by a mere legal contract, a “scrap of paper”. They feel that love is not love if it needs an external support.

Even if social, legal or moral considerations lead them to accept the desirability of marriage, these are unlikely to deter them from sleeping together before the marriage date. After all, they consider themselves already married in each other’s eyes. Moreover, the considerations that deterred lovelorn couples in earlier ages - the disapproval of parents and relatives, the shame of the bride going to the altar with a prominent bump in her stomach, the financial and legal disincentives – are all largely irrelevant today when parents are desperate to show that they are not “behind the times”, when brides sometimes go to the altar, not merely with a bump in the stomach, but with a whole bevy of already born children, and when the State goes out of its way, as in Britain today, not only to remove all stigmas attached to single mothers, but even to make the production of children out of wedlock a financially attractive proposition.

There are some who argue that fornicating before marriage is actually a sensible way of testing whether a proposed marriage is likely to be lasting. After all, if a couple are about to commit themselves to lifelong unity and fidelity, it is only prudent to make sure beforehand that they are physically compatible with each other. If the experience proves to be a failure, then they can abort the marriage before it takes place, thereby saving two people a lifetime of misery and probable divorce. Of course, this argument is false: all the evidence indicates that couples who sleep together before marriage are less rather than more likely to be faithful to each other and remain together. In any case, statistical arguments are a feeble rampart against fallen human nature stirred up by the spirits of evil...

So let us turn to the sacramental argument, as developed by the Holy Apostle Paul, who defines fornication for a Christian as uniting the Body of Christ – for the body of every Christian is a part of the Body of Christ – to a body that is not Christ’s. “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body [with her]? For two, saith He, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with Him].” (I Corinthians 6. 15-17).
This argument depends on the premise that there is a most intimate connection between two sacramental mysteries: the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and the sacrament of marriage. Both are mysteries of fleshly union, and in this sense both are marital mysteries. The mystery of the marital union of each believer with Christ in the Eucharist is the higher mystery of which the lower mystery of human marriage is the type and the icon. That is why, when the Apostle Paul is talking of the lower mystery of human marriage, his mind is immediately lifted to its archetype: “but I speak of Christ and the Church” (Ephesians 5.32). Even earlier in the chapter he switches easily from the lower mystery – “so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies” (v. 28) – to the higher – “for we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (v. 30).

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich comments on this passage from Ephesians as follows: "It is a great mystery when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. The Apostle himself, who has been raised to the third heaven and beheld many heavenly mysteries, calls the marriage of natural man on earth a great mystery. It is the mystery of love and life... The only mystery that exceeds this [the mystery of human marriage] is the mystery of Christ's bond with His Church. Christ calls Himself the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride. Christ so loves the Church that He left His heavenly Father for her - though remaining equal with Him in unity of essence and divinity - and came down to earth and clave to His Church. He suffered for her sake that He might, by His Blood, cleanse her from sin and from all impurity and make her worthy to be called His Bride. He warms the Church with His love, feeds her with His Blood, and enlivens, enlightens and adorns her with His Holy Spirit." 490

So, combining the teaching of the holy Apostle in I Corinthians and Ephesians, we can reconstruct his argument as follows: (1) Every act of sexual intercourse, whether inside or outside marriage, effects an ontological change, making two people one in the flesh. (2) Every Christian who has received the Body and Blood of Christ is united to Christ in a marital bond, becoming one with Him in flesh and in spirit. Therefore (3) every Christian who has sexual relations with a woman is uniting, not only his flesh with hers, but also her flesh with Christ's. But (4) Christ does not want to be united in the flesh with a person with whom He is not united in the spirit, through faith. Therefore (5) a Christian cannot be united in the flesh with a person who is not herself also united with Christ in spirit and in body, and whose union with the Christian has not been sanctified and raised to a true iconic resemblance to the marriage between Christ and the Church through the sacrament of marriage.

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Let us study the steps in this argument in more detail.

1. The act of sexual intercourse effects an ontological change, making two people one in the flesh. The basis of this assertion is the words of Adam repeated by the Lord Himself in His discussion of divorce: “They two shall be one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh’ (Matthew 19.6) – that is, as Holy New Hieromartyr Gregory (Lebedev) writes, “the people have ceased to exist separately even in the physical sense. They have become one physical body, ‘one flesh’. That is what the fulfilment of the will of God has done... It has not only completed and broadened their souls in a mutual intermingling, it has changed their physical nature and out of two physical existences it has made one whole existence. That is the mystery of marriage. Having explained it, the Lord concludes with a mild reproach to the Pharisees: ‘Well, what do you want? What are you asking about? How, after this, can a man leave his wife? That would be unnatural! In marriage we have a natural completion of life! But you want Me to approve of the destruction of this life?! And in marriage we have a creative act, an act of God, Who creates one life... How can you want Me to destroy life created by God? This is unnatural... Don’t think of encroaching on marriage! What God has joined together, let man not put asunder.”

So lawful marriage is not so much a means towards procreation, as an act of creation, the creation of a new personal unit. Moreover, the same can be said about an act of fornication insofar as “he who is joined to an harlot is one body [with her]”. Except that the creation of a new unit here destroys the old unit of the lawful marriage, and also the marriage with Christ...

2. The believer is married to Christ in the Eucharist. This thought is found in many of the Holy Fathers. Thus St. Macarius the Great writes: “Let your soul have communion with Christ, as bride with bridegroom.” And Blessed Theophylact writes: “He took human nature as His bride and united her to Himself, wedding her and cleaving to her, becoming One Flesh. Indeed, He did not make just one wedding, but many. For every day the Lord in heaven is wedded to the souls of the saints.” For, writes St. Symeon the New Theologian, “it is truly a marriage which takes place, ineffable and divine: God unites Himself with each one – yes, I repeat it, it is my delight – and each becomes one with the Master. If therefore, in your body, you have put on the total Christ, you will understand without blushing all that I am saying.”

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491 Hieromartyr Gregory, Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark, Moscow, 1991, p. 106 (in Russian). As Blessed Theophylact says, “since they have become one flesh, joined together by means of marital relations and physical affection, just as it is accursed to cut one’s own flesh, so is it accursed to separate husband and wife” (Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 162).

492 St. Macarius the Great, Homily 38, 5.


Again, Georgios Mantzaridis writes, interpreting St. Gregory Palamas: “The union between God and man achieved in Christ far surpassed all human relationship and kinship. On assuming flesh and blood, the Logos of God became a brother to man; but He became our friend as well, in that He ransomed us from slavery and made us participate in His sacraments. Indeed, Christ Himself said to His disciples that He does not call them servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing, but He calls them friends, because He has made known to them all that He heard from His Father. Christ is also men’s father and mother, for He gives them new birth through baptism and nourishes them like children at the breast – not only with His blood instead of milk, but with His body and spirit. Joined in one flesh with the faithful through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Christ becomes, in addition, the bridegroom of mankind. The similarity between God’s love towards humanity and conjugal love was familiar and widespread among the Old Testament writers, and particularly so among the mystical theologians of the Church. Palamas recognizes conjugal love as being the most exalted degree of worldly love, and he stresses the vastness of God’s love towards men in contrast to it, especially as this finds expression in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. In marriage, he says, there is a cleaving ‘in one flesh’ but not ‘in one spirit’ [Homily 56, 6]. Through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, however, we not only cleave to the body of Christ, we intermingle with it, and we become not merely one body with Him, but one spirit: ‘O many-sided and ineffable communion! Christ has become our brother for He has fellowship with us in flesh and blood…. He has made us His friends, bestowing on us by grace these His sacraments. He has bound us to Himself and united us, as the bridegroom unites the bride to himself, through the communion of His blood, becoming one flesh with us.’ [Homily 56, 7].”

Again, Nicholas Cabasilas writes: “The sacred meal effects between Christ and us a closer union than that which was realized by our parents when they begat us. In truth He does not only share with us some particles of His flesh or some drops of His blood, but gives us both in all their fullness; He is not only a principle of life as are our parents, but in very truth Life Itself.”

Again, St. John of Kronstadt writes: “The Liturgy is the continually repeated solemnization of God’s love for mankind, and of His all-powerful mediation for the salvation of the whole world, and of every member separately: the marriage of the Lamb - marriage of the King’s Son, in which the bride of the Son of God is every faithful soul, and the giver of the Bride is the Holy Spirit.”

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496 Nicholas Cabasilas, The Life in Christ, 612 C, D.
3. Every Christian who has sexual relations with a woman is uniting, not only his flesh with hers, but also her flesh with Christ's. This takes place within lawful marriage as well as in fornication. However, in lawful marriage there is no scandal, because the wife as well as the husband already belong to Christ in spirit and in flesh. The horror comes in the case of fornication, when, as the apostle puts it, the believer “takes the members of Christ and makes them the members of an harlot?”

4. Christ does not want to be united in the flesh with a person with whom He is not united in the spirit, through faith. In the Old Testament the lawgiver Ezra, with the consent of the leaders of Israel, dissolved all marriages of the Israelites with pagans (Ezra 10). But the matter is still more serious in the New, where the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist have created a mystical union of spirit and flesh between Christ and the Christians that is far higher and more intimate than the union between God and the Old Israel. That is why mixed marriages with heretics, schismatics or atheists are forbidden by the Holy Church. As the holy canons declare: “Let no Orthodox man be allowed to contract a marriage with a heretical woman, nor moreover let any Orthodox woman be married to a heretical man. But if it should be discovered that any such thing is done by any one of the Christians, no matter who, let the marriage be deemed void, and let the lawless marriage be dissolved.”

Similar reasoning underlies the prohibition on the faithful receiving communion in heretical churches. Since the mystery of the Eucharist is a marital mystery, it is forbidden to the faithful to communicate anywhere else than in the Church of Christ. Thus the Apostle Paul says: “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” (I Corinthians 10.21-22).

Jealousy is the natural response of a lover at the sight of his beloved’s adultery, and adultery was what St. John the Almsgiver considered receiving communion from heretics to be: “Another thing the blessed man taught and insisted upon with all was never on any occasion whatsoever to associate with heretics and, above all, never to take the Holy Communion with them,

Heaven made a marriage for His son, but used the words ‘nuptials’ in the plural? Because whenever Christ, the Bridegroom of pure souls, is mystically united with each soul, He gives the Father to rejoice over this as at a wedding” (Homily 41, 9).

498 Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 72. Cf. 14th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council; 10th and 31st Canons of the Council of Laodicea; 58th rule of the Nomocanon. Although Peter the Great pressured the Russian Church into allowing marriages with Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Presbyterians (but not Molokans, Baptists and Stundists), the Church in her ukazes of August 18, 1821 and February 28, 1858 reminded the faithful that such unions could not be allowed until the sectarians accepted Orthodoxy. See Bishop Nathaniel of Vienna, “On Marriage with the Heterodox”, Orthodox Life, vol. 44, № 3, May-June, 1994, pp. 42-45.
‘even if’, the blessed man said, ‘you remain without communicating all your life, if through stress of circumstances you cannot find a community of the Catholic Church. For if, having legally married a wife in this world of the flesh, we are forbidden by God and by the laws to desert her and be united to another woman, even though we have to spend a long time separated from her in a distant country, and shall incur punishment if we violate our vows, how then shall we, who have been joined to God through the Orthodox Faith and the Catholic Church – as the apostle says: ‘I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ’ (II Corinthians 11.2) – how shall we escape from sharing in that punishment which in the world to come awaits heretics, if we defile the Orthodox and holy Faith by adulterous communion with heretics?’

Christians can be “crowned into one flesh”, as the marriage rite puts it, only if they have already been crowned into one flesh with Christ. That is why joint participation in the Eucharist is both a necessary condition of a valid marriage in the Church and the culminating point in the marriage service itself (as it is meant to be celebrated). Indeed, according to St. Symeon of Thessalonica, it is joint participation in the Eucharist that seals a couple’s marriage, making it valid: “(The priest) takes the holy chalice with the Presanctified Gifts and exclaims: ‘The Presanctified Holy things for the Holy’. And all respond: ‘One is Holy, One is Lord’, because the Lord alone is the sanctification, the peace and the union of His servants who are being married. The priest then gives Communion to the bridal pair, if they are worthy. Indeed, they must be ready to receive Communion, so that their crowning be a worthy one and their marriage valid. For Holy Communion is the perfection of every sacrament and the seal of every mystery. And the Church is right in preparing the Divine Gifts for the redemption and blessing of the bridal pair; for Christ Himself, Who gave us these Gifts and Who is the Gifts, came to the marriage (in Cana of Galilee) to bring to it peaceful union and control. So that those who get married must be worthy of Holy Communion; they must be united before God in a church, which is the House of God, because they are children of God, in a church where God is sacramentally present in the Gifts, where He is being offered to us, and where He is seen in the midst of us. After that the priest also gives them to drink from the common cup, and the hymn ‘I will take the cup of salvation’ is sung because of the Most Holy Gifts and as a sign of the joy which comes from divine union, and because the joy of the bridal pair comes from the peace and concord which they have received. But to those who are not worthy of communion - for example, those who are being married for a second time, and others - the Divine Gifts are not given, but only the common cup, as a partial sanctification, as a sign of good fellowship and unity with God's blessing.”

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500 St. Symeon of Thessalonica, Against the Heresies and on the Divine Temple, 282, P.G. 155:512-3.
5. A Christian cannot be united in the flesh with a person who is not herself also united with Christ in spirit and in body, and whose union with the Christian has not been sanctified and raised to a true iconic resemblance to the marriage between Christ and the Church through the sacrament of marriage. This means that not only is fornication forbidden, but also civil marriages in a register office.

Those who think that civil marriage is sufficient for Christians fail to realize that there is a fundamental difference between fleshly union in the Body of Christ and fleshly union outside It. In the former three people are involved – the couple and God: in the latter – only two. In the former marriage fulfils only certain biological, social and legal functions; in the latter it also accomplishes a sacramental and iconic function – the creation of a new cell in the Body of Christ and the imaging of the marriage between Christ and the Church.

When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, they also said that a third person was involved in all marriages – but the third person was Lenin, not God. Then, on the principle that sexual relations had no more significance than drinking a glass of water (the words of Commissar Alexandra Kollontai, Lenin’s lover), they introduced civil marriage and divorce-on-demand for one rouble. The Russian Orthodox Church resisted this innovation fiercely, insisting that civil marriage was not enough for a Christian.

The leader of the Russian Church at the time was New Hieromartyr Tikhon. Before he became Patriarch, when he was still Archbishop in America, he wrote: 'In order to be acceptable in the eyes of God, marriage must be entered into 'only in the Lord' (I Corinthians 7.39), the blessing of the Church must be invoked upon it, through which it will become a sacrament, in which the married couple will be given grace that will make their bond holy and high, unto the likeness of the bond between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5.23-32), which will help them in the fulfilment of their mutual duties. Sometimes, as in this country, for instance, Church marriage is deemed unnecessary. But if without the help of God we can accomplish no perfect and true good (John 15.5), if all our satisfaction is from God (II Corinthians 3.5), if God produces in us good desires and acts (Philippians 2.14), then how is it that the grace of God is unnecessary for husband and wife in order to fulfil their lofty duties honourably? No, a true Orthodox Christian could not be satisfied with civil marriage alone, without the Church marriage. Such a marriage will remain without the supreme Christian sanction, as the grace of God is attracted only towards that marriage which was blessed by the Church, this treasury of grace. As to civil marriage, it places no creative religious and moral principles, no spiritual power of God’s grace, at the basis of matrimony
and for its safety, but merely legal liabilities, which are not sufficient for moral perfection.\textsuperscript{501}

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We are now in a position to understand the full force of St. Paul’s words: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is outside the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought for a price. Therefore glorify God both in your bodies and in your souls, which are God’s.” (I Corinthians 6.18-20).

Through the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist we are temples of the Holy Spirit and brides of Christ. Therefore what we do with our souls and bodies does not concern ourselves alone, but also God, Who dwells in our bodies and has united His Body with ours. Moreover, this indwelling of God in our souls and bodies was achieved at a most high price – the Incarnation and Death of the Son of God.

The body of a Christian is holy because it is united to the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore it cannot be united with a body that is not also Christ-bearing and Spirit-bearing. This fact makes a betrayal of that union through fornication or adultery a greater sin; for in committing fornication, a man not only unlawfully unites his own body with the body of another, but unites the Body of Christ with the body of another who is not Christ’s.

All sin is committed with the help of the body (if only through the action of the brain), but only one kind of sin is committed against the body as such: fornication. And this not only because the consequences of this sin are often felt in the body (I Corinthians 5.5; Romans 1.27), but also because it violates in an especially intimate way the marriage in the flesh between Christ and the individual Christian. All fornication is adultery from God insofar as the soul and the body is married to God through the sacrament of the Eucharist.

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