

ESSAYS IN ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY

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<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	6
1. THE CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST	7
1. The Oneness of the Church.	12
2. The Holiness of the Church.	15
3. The Catholicity of the Church.	18
4. The Apostolicity of the Church.	19
2. CYPRIANISM AND THE SACRAMENTS OF HERETICS	22
3. THE BRANCH AND MONOLITH THEORIES OF THE CHURCH	44
4. LETTER ON THE MATTHEWITES AND FLORINITES	54
5. THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER	58
6. THE CYPRIANITES, THE TIKHONITES AND BISHOP AGATHANGELUS	64
7. WHAT IS THE LOCAL CHURCH?	68
1. Basic Principles	68
2. The Patriarchal System	69
3. Nationalism and the Church	72
4. The Global Jurisdictions	75
5. The Restoration of Local Churches	77
Conclusions	80
8. THE HERESY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ELITISM	81
9. ON THE CONDEMNATION OF HERETICS	85
1. Who Represents the Church?	85
2. When is a Schism not a Schism?	88
3. Can a Local Council Cast Out Heretics?	89
4. When is a New Council Necessary?	92
5. Who has the Right to Anathematize?	93
6. The Fifteenth Canon	94
Conclusions	96
10. THE CESSATION OF DIALOGUE	99
11. THE LIMITS OF THE CHURCH: A REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT	102
12. "THERE IS NONE THAT WATCHETH OUT FOR MY SOUL"	111
13. PATRISTIC TESTIMONIES ON THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST	117
14. SCRIPTURAL AND PATRISTIC TESTIMONIES ON THE NECESSITY OF HAVING NO COMMUNION WITH HERETICS AND SCHISMATICS	126
15. KHOMIAKOV ON SOBORNOST'	129
16. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT	134
1. The Father of the Faithful	134

2. The Peoples of the Covenant	134
3. The Judaizing of Christianity	138
4. The Christianizing of Judaism	141
Conclusion	147
17. THE UNITY OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH	148
I. Dogmatic Differences.	149
II. Canonical Differences.	154
III. Politico-Economic Differences.	156
IV. Psychological Differences	157
V. Arguments For and Against.	158
Conclusion: The Path to True Unity.	160
18. ON NOT ROCKING THE BOAT	164
19. ORTHODOXY, UNIVERSALISM AND NATIONALISM	173
20. IN DEFENCE OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF GREECE	191
21. THE POWER OF ANATHEMA	197
I. On Anathemas in General	197
II. On Some Anathemas in Particular	201
III. Who has the Power to Anathematize?	212
Conclusion	213
22. THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION OF THE ROMANIAN OLD CALENDARIST CHURCHES	214
23. IS THE SERBIAN TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH SCHISMATIC?	223
24. TOWARDS THE EIGHTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL	246
25. THE KALLINIKITE UNIA	253
26. TOWARDS THE "MAJOR SYNOD" OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH	264
1. The Question of Grace	264
2. The Question of the Authority of Local Councils.	265
3. The Question of Repentance	268
Conclusion	271
27. THE KALLINIKITE UNIA - CONTINUED	273
28. THE CYPRIANITES GO MARCHING ON	276
29. THE 1983 ANATHEMA AGAINST ECUMENISM	280
30. BISHOP AUXENTIOS OF PORTLAND - GTOC'S TROJAN HORSE	290
31. FORGIVENESS AND THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY	294
32. TRUE ORTHODOXY AND THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT	298
33. THE MYSTERIOUS ECCLESIOLOGY OF BISHOP ANDREI ERASTOV	304

34. SUPER-ECUMENISM, THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION	313
35. THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHURCH AND STATE IN IVAN THE TERRIBLE	326

INTRODUCTION

This book collects into one place various articles on ecclesiological themes that I have written in the last twenty years or so. It is hoped that they will help the reader to gain a deeper understanding of contemporary controversies in the Orthodox, and especially the True Orthodox world.

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

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1. THE CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

There is no Christian dogma so fiercely under attack today, or subject to such many and varied interpretations, as the dogma of the Church. If the critical question dividing men is still the same that Christ asked the Apostles: "Whom do men say that I am?" (Matthew 16.13), then that question must now be understood to refer, not only to the single Person of Christ, but also to His many-personed Bride, the Church. For many are those who, while looking up to Christ as the Son of God and God, look down on His Church as "having no form or comeliness" (Isaiah 53.2), as a merely human and fallen institution with no part in His Divinity.

And yet the main image of the Church that we find in the Holy Scriptures – the Church as the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5.32) – presupposes that Christ and the Church are united in the way that a bridegroom and a bride are united, consubstantial in the way that a Bridegroom and Bride are consubstantial, sharing not only in Christ's Humanity but also in His Divinity, since Christians are "partakers in the Divine nature", in the Apostle Peter's words (II Peter 1.4) Therefore the attempt to place an unbridgeable gulf in dignity between Christ and the Church that is characteristic of Protestantism and Ecumenism, is contrary to the sacred symbolism of the Holy Scriptures.

Let us look at this symbolism a little more closely.

The essential idea of marriage is the creation of unity out of multiplicity; for the husband and wife "are no more two, but one flesh" (Matthew 19.6). In the Church this unity proceeds in both a vertical and a horizontal direction, as it were, both between Christ and the individual believer, and between the believers. And the foundation and model of both kinds of union is the union between the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Thus the Lord prayed for the unity of the Church during the Mystical Supper - "that they all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one (John 17.21-22).

St. Cyril of Alexandria comments on this passage in an illuminating manner: "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 people 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".

It is striking that St. Cyril here refers to the union in one flesh of a Christian marriage not simply as an image of the union of all believers in the Church, but as the base, the lowest cell, as it were, of that union. It is not simply that the Christian family is a "house church", in St. Paul's phrase (Romans 16.4), or a "little church", in St. John Chrysostom's. The Church is both made up of small families, or little churches, and is one big family or Great Church - "the whole family in heaven and on earth" that is named after Christ (Ephesians 3.15). And while, of course, not all Christians are united in the bond of marriage, they are all united, first through the bond of the marriage of Adam and Eve, which created our original, fallen human nature, and then through the bond of the marriage of the new Adam and the new Eve, Christ and His Church, which created the new, redeemed nature of mankind. Thus every Christian is born into the little church through the union in the flesh of his parents, and is reborn into the Great Church through the union in the flesh of his spiritual parents, Christ and the Church.

Indeed, if the union of Adam and Eve was the first "little church", the first unit in, and icon of, the Great Church of all redeemed humanity, we can take that union as defining the nature of the union between Christ and the Church, so that just as Eve was formed from the flesh of Adam, so the new Eve, the Church, was formed from the blood and water that flowed from the side of the new Adam, Christ. As the eighth-century English Orthodox Father, St. Bede the Venerable, writes: "The woman was made out of the side of Adam to show how strong that union must have been. But that it was done in his sleep, and flesh filled up the place whence the bone had been taken, was for a higher mystery. For it signified that the sacraments of salvation would come out of the side of Christ as He slept in death on the cross - that is, the blood and water from which the Church was created as His Bride... It was to typify this same mystery that Scripture says, not 'made' or 'formed' or 'created', as in all the previous works, but 'the Lord God *built* the rib which He had taken from Adam into a woman', not as if it were a human body, but rather a house, which house we are if we keep our faithfulness and glory of hope right up to a strong end."

Again, the words "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2.18) indicate, not only that it is not good for fallen man to remain unmarried, but also that it is not good for man to be out of communion with the Church, the new Paradise. And the words "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2.23) signify, not only the consubstantiality of a man and his wife, but the consubstantiality of all Christians through participation in the new tree of life, "the true Vine" (John 15.1) - the Body and Blood of Christ. Finally,

the words "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1.28) signify, not only that marriage is meant to produce children and thereby populate the whole earth, but also that the union between Christ and His Church is meant to bring forth many new Christians and subdue the whole earth to the teachings and commandments of the Christian faith.

"But now I want to show," continues St. Cyril, "that there is what we might call a unity of nature by which we are bound to one another and are all bound to God... The Only-Begotten, through the wisdom which is His and through the counsel of the Father, found and wrought a means by which we might come into unity with God and with one another - even we ourselves, although by our differences we are separate individuals in soul and body. For by one body, and that His own, He blesses those who believe in Him by a mystical communion and makes them of one body with Himself and one another... For if we all partake of the one loaf, we are all made one body; for it is not possible that Christ be divided. Therefore the Church is called 'the Body of Christ' of which we are individually members, according to Paul's understanding. For we are all united to the one Christ through His holy body, inasmuch as we receive Him Who is one and undivided in our own bodies... Now if we are all of one body with one another in Christ, and not only with one another but with Him Who assuredly is within us through His own flesh, clearly we are all one, both in one another and in Christ. For Christ, Who is both God and man in one person, is the body of unity."

As a contemporary Father, St. John Maximovich, puts it: "For the full sanctification of man, the body of the servant of the Lord must be united with the Body of Christ, and this is accomplished in the mystery of Holy Communion. The true Body and Blood of Christ which we receive, becomes a part of the great Body of Christ... 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."

"Of course," continues St. John, "for union with Christ, the mere conjoining of our body with the Body of Christ does not suffice. The consumption of the Body of Christ becomes beneficial when in spirit we strive toward Him and unite ourselves with Him. Reception of the Body of Christ, with aversion to Him in spirit, is like the approach to Christ of those who struck Him and mocked and crucified Him. Their approaching Him served not for their salvation and healing, but for their condemnation. But those who partake with piety, love and readiness to bring themselves to serve Him, closely unite themselves with Him and become instruments of His divine will."

"With regard to union in the Spirit," writes St. Cyril, "we shall say again that we have all received one and the same spirit, namely the Holy Spirit, and are,

so to speak, mingled with one another and with God. For Christ makes the Spirit of the Father Who is also His own Spirit to dwell in each of us individually, many as we are, yet the Spirit is one and undivided; and in that individuality which is His by nature He holds together in unity those spirits which are separated from unity one with another, showing them all to be as one in Himself. For as the power of the holy flesh makes those in whom it may come to dwell to be of one body, in the same way, I hold, the one indivisible Spirit dwells in them all and binds them all into a spiritual unity."

Thus we become one in the Body of Christ by partaking in His Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist, and we become one in the Spirit of Christ by partaking in His Spirit through being sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit at the sacrament of Holy Chrismation.

This essentially sacramental, mystical concept of the Church is opposed both to the Catholic and Sergianist concept, which places organisational unity above sacramental unity, and to the Protestant (and Ecumenist) concept, which effectively eliminates any notion of sacramental unity and replaces it by a vague notion of faith alone.

Now unity of faith is, of course, fundamental to the Orthodox concept of the Church, and is the first criterion for distinguishing between the One True Church and the many false ones. For, St. Maximus the Confessor declared, "Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the faith." But faith alone, without participation in the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist, that is, without union to Christ in spirit, soul and body, is not enough to make one a member of His Church.

Thus we read in the *life* of the fourth-century French Saint, Martin of Tours, that one of his catechumens died while he was away on a journey. On returning, St. Martin raised him from the dead and baptised him. Then the catechumen related that "when he left the body he was taken to the court of the Judge and that he heard the grim sentence that he was to be condemned to the dark places [i.e., to hell] and to the hordes of common people. Then two angels pointed out to the Judge that this was the man for whom Martin was praying and so the order was given for him to be taken back the two angels, handed over to Martin and restored to his former life."

Thus true faith, with repentance, makes one eligible for entrance into the Church, enrolling one in the ranks of the catechumens; but it is participation in the sacraments that actually effects that entrance; for in a sense the sacraments *are* the Church - the Body (of Christ in the Eucharist) *is* the Body (of Christ as the Church).

Thus in order to be united with the Head, which is Christ, it is not enough to believe in Him; one must be united to His Body. As St. Augustine writes: "Our Lord Jesus Christ is as one whole perfect man, both head and body. We acknowledge the Head in that Man who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father, from thence we look for Him to come to judge the living and the dead. This is the Head of the Church (Ephesians 5.23). The body of this Head is the Church, not the church of this country only, but of the whole world; not that of this age only, but from Abel himself down to those who shall to the end be born and shall believe in Christ, the whole assembly of Saints belonging to one City, which City is Christ's body, of which Christ is the head."

As Nicetas of Remesia, wrote in the fourth century: "After confessing the blessed Trinity, you go on to profess that you believe in the Holy Catholic Church. What else is the Church than the congregation of all the saints? From the beginning of the world, all righteous men who have been, are or shall be, whether they be patriarchs, - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, - prophets, apostles, martyrs or any other righteous man, are one Church because they are sanctified by one faith and life, sealed by one Spirit, made into one Body; of which Body the Head is Christ, as it is written (Ephesians 1.22; 5.23; Colossians 1.18)."

Union with Christ has several degrees, teaches the fourth-century Western Father, St. Hilary of Poitiers. It begins with unity in the one faith, continues with unity in the one baptism, whereby we become "one by regeneration into the same nature", and is consummated by unity in the one Eucharist, which is "the sacrament of perfect unity". "Now how it is that we are in Him through the sacrament of the flesh and blood bestowed upon us, He Himself testifies, saying, '... because I live ye shall live also; because I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you'. If He wished to indicate a mere unity of will, why did He set forth a kind of gradation and sequence in the completion of the unity, unless it were that, since He was in the Father through the nature of the Deity, and we on the contrary in Him through His birth in the body, He would have us believe that He is in us through the mystery of the sacraments?... I have dwelt upon these facts because the heretics [Arians] falsely maintain that the union between the Father and Son is one of will only, and make use of the example of our own union with God, as though we were united to the Son and through the Son to the Father by mere obedience and a devout will, and none of the natural verity of communion were vouchsafed us through the sacrament of the Body and Blood; although the glory of the Son bestowed upon us through the Son abiding in us after the flesh, while we are united in Him corporeally and inseparably, bids us preach the mystery of the true and natural unity."

In the light of the above discussion, let us now turn to the particular marks of the Church as listed in the Symbol of Faith: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

1. The Oneness of the Church. The Church is one both in the sense that there is only one Church, and in the sense that her members are united both with Christ and with each other. This unity is of the closest possible kind, both spiritual and bodily, and analogous to the unity of a man and his wife, being a participation, through the sacraments, in the union effected by Christ with human nature at the Annunciation. Christ is the Head and Bridegroom of the Church, and all the individual members of the Church are united with Him as with their Head and Bridegroom; for as the friend of the Bridegroom said, "I have betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one Husband" (II Corinthians 11.2; cf. John 3.29).

Now the oneness and unifying power of the Church can be derived from the meaning of the word "Church", *ekklesia* in Greek. For this literally signifies the calling out of those who before were separated into unity with each other. As St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, "it is rightly called 'Church' [*ekklesia*] because it calls forth and assembles together all men."

Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) has developed this idea as follows: "It is very important to understand correctly the derivation and meaning of the word 'Church'. E. Bogdashevsky gives a fine, brief philological explanation of the word: 'By simple philological derivation the Church (in Greek, *ecclesia*) is an assembly; this word corresponds to the Hebrew *qahal*. But not every assembly is the Church. An assembly of the most prominent people of the state, officials, consuls, etc., is not the Church (*ecclesia*), but is termed a *synklesia* (a convocation). The Athenians distinguished two types of assemblies, the *ecclesia* and the *agorai*. The former signified a legally empowered assembly of the citizens (i.e. those persons who had the right to participate in the discussion of state affairs) summoned by the authorities through a herald in a lawful manner; the latter were mixed assemblies without any order when a crowd of all sorts of people simply collected together. This philological information leads to the following conclusion:.. The members of the *ecclesia* are members of the same city, ruled by the same laws, having the same religion; the Church is not a spiritual aristocracy, but neither is it a motley crowd; it contains those who have been called or summoned by the grace and power of God' [On the Church, Kiev, 1904, p. 4].

"..[Archbishop Ilarion] Troitsky.. adds a profound observation. 'The Hebrew word which signifies *ecclesia* - Church - is *qahal*. *Qahal* is a solemn designation of a religious assembly, of society in its relationship to God. Therefore this name was applied to the Hebrew nation as a whole. The word *ecclesia* is encountered

twice altogether in the Gospel and both times in the Gospel of St. Matthew which was written for the Jews and so clearly reflects the Old Testament world-view. The Gospel says only that Christ will found His Church, and not just a Church. The fact that from the very beginning the term which was chosen to designate the Christian Church was this very word *ecclesia*, which has a close connection with Old Testament terminology, speaks of the consciousness of unity which imbued the early Church. In the Old Testament there was a single *qahal*, the people of the Lord or the commonwealth of the Lord (Numbers 16.3; 20.2-4,9). Equally in the New Testament there also is a single Church of God' [*New Testament Teaching on the Church*, St. Petersburg, 1904, p. 15].

"To this one can add Bolotov's observation: 'The circumstance that Christ called the society He founded an *ecclesia* has a special polemical significance against Protestantism. The Protestant conception is obsessed with an invisible Church. But the concept of the *ecclesia* includes a strong element of visibility. Therefore the expression 'invisible Church' contains a *contradictio in adjecto* (internal contradiction). There cannot be any sort of invisible Church. One can participate only spiritually in the invisible, but in the *ecclesia* not otherwise than with the body.' [*Lectures on the History of the Early Church*, part I, Introduction, St. Petersburg, 1907, p. 13]."

But if the Church is one, how are we to understand the divisions in the Church?

These are of two major kinds: the more easily comprehensible divisions that have taken place from the unity of the Church (the heresies, schisms, unlawful assemblies, etc.), when a group has been officially cut off from the unity of the Church by an act of the Church herself; and the more puzzling kind of divisions that have taken place within the unity of the Church, when communion in the sacraments has been broken, but the conscience of the Church recognises that both sides still remain within the Body of Christ. The latter kind of division is puzzling because if the Church is one, and her unity is an organic and visible unity created by unity of faith and participation in the sacraments, it is difficult to see how there could be such a thing as a division *within*, as opposed to *from*, the Church. Is Christ divided? Can there be more than one body rightly calling itself the Body of Christ?

In considering this problem, it is useful to examine a distinction made by the Russian New Martyr (perhaps Martyr-Bishop) Mark (Novoselov) between the Church as organism and the Church as organisation: "It is necessary to distinguish between the Church-organism and the Church-organisation. As the apostle taught: 'You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it' (I Corinthians 12.27). The Church-organism is a living person, and just as the cells of our body, besides having their own life, have the life that is common to our

body and links between themselves, so a man in the Body of Christ begins to live in Church, while Christ begins to live in him. That is why the apostle said: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2.20).

"The basis for the affirmation of the Church-organism is love for Christ. The Lord Himself saw the basis of His Church precisely in love for Him. He asked Peter: did he love Him? And He added: 'Feed My sheep'. The Church of Christ is the union of mutual love of the believers ('United by the bond of love and offering themselves to Christ the Lord, the apostles were washed clean', *Canon of Holy Thursday*). Only in the Church organism can true democratism, equality and brotherhood come into being; we are equal and brothers only if we are parts of one and the same living body. In the organisation there is not and cannot be organisational equality and brotherhood."

In other words, the unity of the Church is organic rather than organisational. Divisions from the Church constitute divisions from both the organism and the organisation of the Church. Divisions within the Church, on the other hand, are divisions within the organisation only; the organism remains undivided.

Now this distinction might seem to recall the Protestant definition of the Church as "the invisible community of all believers". However, if the Church-organism is defined in terms of participation in the sacraments, it is no less visible than the Church-organisation; for participation in the sacraments is a visible act. Moreover, there can be no participation in the sacraments, and therefore no Church-organism, where there is no priesthood, i.e. no Church-organisation. Therefore, as Hieromartyr Mark goes on to say, the Church as organisation and the Church as organism are in the end inseparable.

Nevertheless, discerning whether a man is communing of the True Body and Blood of Christ is not a discerning of the fleshly eyes, but of the mind enlightened by grace. Therefore, like everything else in the spiritual life, we must conclude that the unity of the Church is both visible and invisible. Or rather, just as many of those who saw Christ walking in the flesh upon earth "seeing [Him] did not see" and "hearing [Him] did not hear", so it is with the Church, which is the continuation of His Body in space and time: many see it and yet do not see it, for they do not see the Body and Blood in the bread and the wine, or the fire of the Divinity in the flesh of the Humanity. We, however, as Christians "henceforth know no man after the flesh: yea, though we have know Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him [and His Body, the Church] no more [in this manner]" (II Corinthians 5.16).

Whether a man is a member of the Church-organism depends, ultimately, on whether he continues to commune of the true Body and Blood of Christ. Such communion does not exist outside the single, undivided Church-organism, and

does not exist in heretical bodies which have been expelled from the Church organism by a lawful act of the Church hierarchy. But it can continue to exist outside a particular Church-organisation, as has been shown many times in history when saints have appeared in different Church organisations having no communion with each other.

Bishop Ignaty (Brianchaninov) compared the organisational divisions within the Church of the last times to the different parts of a shipwreck: "God desires and seeks the salvation of all. And He is always saving all who wish to be saved from drowning in the sea of life and sin. But He does not always save in a boat or in a convenient, well-equipped harbour. He promised to save the holy Apostle Paul and all his fellow-travellers, and He did save them. But the Apostle and his fellow-passengers were not saved in the ship, which was wrecked; they were saved with great difficulty, some by swimming and others on boards and various bits of the ship's wreckage."

Elder Anatolius (Potapov) of Optina used the same analogy to describe the divisions within the True Church of Russia after 1917: "There will be a storm. And the Russian ship will be destroyed. Yes, it will happen, but, you know, people can be saved on splinters and wreckage. Not all, not all will perish..." But he also prophesied that canonical unity would be restored: "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..."

2. The Holiness of the Church. The Church of Christ is One because the Body of Christ is One, and all Christians partake in this unity through the sacraments. In the same way the Church of Christ is Holy because the Body of Christ is Holy, and all Christians partake in this holiness through the sacraments.

The distinction between the Church as organism and the Church as organisation is useful again here. Thus Hieromartyr Mark writes: "Only to the Church-organism can we apply such titles as we meet in the Word of God, for example: 'glorious, holy, spotless' (Ephesians 1.4); 'the Bride of the Lamb' (Revelation 19.7; 21.9); 'the Body of Christ' (Ephesians 1.23; Colossians 1.24); 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (I Timothy 3.15). These concepts are inapplicable to the Church-organisation (or applicable only with great qualifications); they lead people into perplexity and are rejected by them. The Church-organism is the pure 'Bride' of Christ (Revelation 21.2), but the Church-organisation has all the faults of human society and always bears the marks of human infirmities... The Church-organisation often persecutes the saints of God, but the Church-organism receives them into her bosom... The Church-organisation rejects them from its midst, deprives them of episcopal sees, while they remain the most

glorious members of the Church-organism. It is possible to belong externally to the visible Church (organisation), while one belongs only inwardly to the Body of Christ (organism), and the measure of one's belongingness is determined by the degree of one's sanctity."

Thus the Church as organism is one and holy, while the Church as organisation is often divided and impure. As an image of this distinction let us consider the two Marys, Mary the Mother of God and Mary Magdalene, who went together to the tomb to meet the Risen Lord (Matthew 28.1). The one Mary, the Mother of God, is already "holy and without blemish", "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5.27); while the other, Mary Magdalene, is "black, but comely" (Song of Songs 1.5), being not yet completely purified through repentance. The one represents the Church Triumphant, already "full of grace" (Luke 1.28) and crowned with the Bridegroom at the right hand of the Father; while the other is the Church Militant, still having to struggle with sin both within and outside her.

Mary Magdalene mistakes Christ for the gardener - we remember that the first Adam was a gardener. But like Eve after the Fall Mary is not yet allowed to touch the Tree of Life: "Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20.17). The other myrrhbearers, however, "took hold of His feet and worshipped Him" (Matthew 28.9). Again we have a distinction between two kinds of believers: those who through purity and repentance have been initiated into the mysteries and can enter into full union with the Bridegroom, and those whose thoughts have not yet ascended far enough above earthly things to grasp the Divinity of Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father. For now, in the light of the Resurrection, it is no longer permitted to love the Lord as a man only. As St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "As long as He was a servant, all men had power over His Body, since publicans and sinners came to touch Him. But once He was established as Lord, the fear which He inspired was the fear of God."

Just as, in a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, the unbelieving partner is sanctified through the union with the believer, and their children, too, are sanctified (I Corinthians 7.14), so in the marriage between God and man that takes place in the Church, man is sanctified through his union with God. St. John Chrysostom puts it as follows: "God desired a harlot... and has intercourse with human nature, [whereby] the harlot herself... is transformed into a maiden." Again, Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "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, and the only mystery that exceeds it 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."

The Church remains holy as long as she remains faithful to her Bridegroom. The holiness of the Church which is communicated through the sacraments is not tarnished by the personal sinfulness of the priest who administers them as long as he remains within the Body. But immediately he steps outside the Body and commits spiritual adultery with a heretical body, he ceases to be a channel of holiness, and the so-called "sacraments" he administers are not a source of holiness, but of defilement.

Thus, as the Martyr-Bishop Cyprian of Carthage wrote in the third century: "Whoever breaks with the Church and enters on an adulterous union cuts himself off from the promises made to the Church; and he who turns his back on the Church of Christ will not come to the rewards of Christ: he is an alien, a worldling, an enemy. You cannot have God for your Father if you no longer have the Church for your mother. If there was any escape for one who was outside the ark of Noah, there will be as much for one who is found to be outside the Church. The Lord warns us when He says: 'He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth'. whoever breaks the peace and harmony of the Church acts against Christ; whoever gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ."

The individual Christian participates in the holiness of the Church as long as he remains faithful to her and does not enter into communion with heretics. Thus St. John the Almsgiver writes: "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 have 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?" For the heretical communions "have ceased to be holy Churches," writes Nicetas of Remesiana, "inasmuch as they have been deceived by doctrines of demons, and both believe and do otherwise than is required by the commands of Christ the Lord and the traditions of the Apostles."

This teaching is confirmed by all the Fathers of the Church. Thus St. John of Damascus writes: "With all our strength let us beware lest we receive Communion from or give it to heretics. 'Give not what is holy to the dogs', says the Lord. 'Neither cast ye your pearls before swine', lest we become partakers in their dishonour and condemnation." St. Theodore the Studite writes: "Chrysostom calls enemies of God not only the heretics, but also those who communicate with such people." And again: "Some have suffered complete shipwreck in the faith. But others, even if they have not drowned in their thoughts, nevertheless perish through communion with heresy." As we chant in the Divine Liturgy: "Holy things to the holy!"

3. The Catholicity of the Church. The word "Catholic" comes from the Greek *kath'olon*, "according to the whole". It expresses a quality of wholeness whereby each part of the Church contains the whole within itself, and the whole is expressed in every part. Like the Holy Trinity, of which she is in this respect the image, the nature of the Catholic Church is contained undivided in each of the persons that compose her, in spite of their many differences, so that in her "there is neither Greek nor Jew, nor circumcision nor uncircumcision, nor Barbarian nor Scythian, nor bond nor free, but Christ is all in all" (Colossians 3.11). As St. Maximus the Confessor defines it: "Men, women and children, profoundly divided as to race, nation, language, manner of life, work, knowledge, honour, fortune... are all recreated by the Church in the Spirit. To all equally she communicates a divine aspect. All receive from her a unique nature which cannot be broken asunder, a nature which no longer permits one henceforth to take into consideration the many and profound differences which are their lot. In that way all are raised up and united in a truly catholic manner."

This understanding of Catholicity was developed especially by Russian Slavophile theologians, especially Alexis Khomiakov. They saw in Cyril and Methodius' translation of the Greek word by the Slavonic word *sobornaia* a divine inspiration illuminating the meaning of the Greek original. For *sobornaia* is derived from *sobor*, meaning "council" or a large church with two or three altars; and the Slavophiles saw in the Church's "catholicity" or *sobornost* - her conciliarity, the vital quality that distinguishes her from Roman pseudo-Catholicism and Protestantism.

The essential difference between Orthodoxy and the West, according to Khomiakov, consists in Orthodoxy's possession of Catholicity, whereas the Papists have substituted for it *Romanism*, mechanical obedience to the Pope, and the Protestants - the papism of each individual: "The Apostolic Church of the ninth century (the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius) is neither the Church according to the understanding of each, as the Protestants have it, nor the Church according to the understanding of the bishop of Rome, as is the case with the Latins; it is the Church according to the understanding of all in their

unity, the Church as it existed prior to the Western split and as it still remains among those whom God preserved from the split: for, I repeat, this split is a heresy against the dogma of the unity of the Church."

Among the Papists, the Church is expressed by the fiat of one man, which guarantees external unity, but no inner consensus. Among the Protestants, however, every man believes as he thinks fit, which guarantees neither unity nor consensus. Only among the Orthodox is there true Catholicity, which is expressed in Councils that express the Consensus of the Church, not only in the present, but in all generations. For, as Fr. Michael Pomazansky writes, "Catholicity refers to the fact that the Church is not limited to space, by earthly boundaries, nor is it limited in time, that is, by the passing of generations into the life beyond the grave. In its catholic fullness, in its catholicity, the Church embraces both the Church of the called and the Church of the chosen, the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven."

According to another Slavophile, Khomiakov's friend Ivan Kireyevsky, just as, in a marriage, separation or divorce takes place when one partner asserts his or her self against the other, so in the Church schisms and heresies take place when one party asserts itself over against catholic unity. Thus the Roman patriarchate tore itself away from the unity and catholicity of the Church by an unbalanced, self-willed development of its own particular strength, the logical development of concepts. It introduced the *Filioque* into the Symbol of the Faith against the theological consciousness of the Church as a whole, and was then compelled to justify it by other false dogmas, such as the infallibility of the Pope, thereby destroying her catholicity - but not the catholicity of the Eastern Patriarchates that remained faithful to the Truth. As Khomiakov put it: "having appropriated the right of independently deciding a dogmatic question within the area of the Ecumenical Church, private opinion carried within itself the seed of the growth and legitimation of Protestantism, that is, of free investigation torn from the living tradition of unity based on mutual love." Or, as Kireyevsky put it: "In the ninth century the western Church showed within itself the inevitable seed of the Reformation, which placed this same Church before the judgement seat of the same logical reason which the Roman Church had itself exalted... A thinking man could already see Luther behind Pope Nicolas I just as... a thinking man of the 16th century could foresee behind Luther the coming of 19th century liberal Protestantism..."

4. The Apostolicity of the Church. The Unity of the Church is in the image of God's absolute Unity, her Holiness - in the image of His Holiness, her Catholicity - in the image of His Unity-in-Trinity. However, it is possible for a community to be one, holy and catholic in this way only if it also apostolic. For it is through the Apostles and the Apostolic Teaching that individual believers and communities are betrothed to Christ; as the Apostle Paul says: "I feel a

divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one Husband" (II Corinthians 11.2).

Now apostolicity is not acquired, as the Protestants think, by a quasi-archaeological restoration of the faith and worship of the Early Church, but rather through a literal grafting-in to the True Vine (John 15), the Natural Olive Tree (Romans 11) of the Orthodox Church. This Church does not need to be "resurrected" or "recreated" because she has always existed in unbroken succession from the time of the Apostles and will continue to exist to the end of time (Matthew 16.18, 28.20). The grafting-in to the Church is accomplished, not through faith alone, but through the participation in the sacraments, the "oil and wine" which "the Good Samaritan", Christ Himself, gives to the faithful through the Apostles and their lawfully ordained successors, which are maintained by strict adherence to the Holy Scriptures and Tradition of the Church, the "two pence" which Christ entrusted to the "innkeeper", the priesthood (Luke 10.29-37), and which will not fail even in the times of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6.6).

Those who assert that it is possible to be joined to the Apostolic Church - even "resurrect" the Apostolic Church - without being organically joined to that Church which has existed since the time of the Apostles, are like those who say that it is possible to be married to someone without having participated in the sacrament of marriage. Their claim to be already united to Christ will be seen by Him, the True Bridegroom, as spiritual fornication; for they have united themselves, not with Christ, but with a figment of their imagination, or with a demon posing as Christ. For, as St. Basil the Great says, "fornication is not marriage, nor even the beginning of marriage".

It is impossible for a believer to be united in spiritual marriage with Christ if he has not been joined to him by the Apostles or their lawful successors, having first studied and fully accepted the teaching of the Apostles and Fathers of the Church. The West's superficial and flippant attitude towards apostolicity, and therefore to all those schisms and heresies which violate apostolicity, is a consequence of its essentially amoral attitude to sexual relations in general. For now that fornication is hardly considered to be a sin, and even homosexuality is deemed acceptable, it is hardly surprising that spiritual fornication and the wholesale spiritual promiscuity and perversity of such organisations as the World Council of Churches are also condoned. For spiritual chastity is required in order to perceive the spiritual beauty of Christ's marriage to His Church. And only when chastity has been regained through repentance, the recognition that the years of wandering outside the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Unity of the Church have been barren and fruitless, will the individual soul or community be able to say: "I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better for me than now" (Hosea 2.6).

Therefore just as a bridegroom has only one bride, with whom he lives in an unbroken spiritual and physical union through the grace given them in the sacrament of marriage and their determination to remain faithful to each other, so the Apostolic Church is that one Church which has lived in an unbroken spiritual and physical union with Christ through the grace of the Spirit that was bestowed upon her at Pentecost and the determination to remain faithful to the teaching of the Apostles to the end of the age. This One Apostolic Church is the Orthodox Church. For, as Bishop Theophanes the Recluse writes: "There is no truth outside the Orthodox Church. She is the single faithful keeper of all that was commanded by the Lord through the holy Apostles, and she is for that reason the only really Apostolic Church. The others have lost the Apostolic Church, and since according to their Christian conscience they have the conviction that only the Apostolic Church can faithfully keep and point to the truth, they have thought of constructing such a church themselves, and they have constructed it, and given this name to it. They have given the name, but the essence they have not been able to communicate. For the Apostolic Church was created in accordance with the good will of the Father by the Lord Saviour with the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. It is not for men to create such a thing. Those who think to create such a thing are like children playing with dolls. If there is no true Apostolic Church on earth, then there is no point in wasting effort on creating her. But thanks to the Lord, He has not allowed the gates of hell to prevail over the Holy Apostolic Church. She exists and will continue to exist, in accordance with His promise, to the end of the age. And this is our Orthodox Church. Glory to God!"

*June 19 / July 2, 1999.
St. John Maximovich.*

2. CYPRIANISM AND THE SACRAMENTS OF HERETICS

No question divides contemporary True Orthodox Christians more than whether or not the ecumenist Orthodox, i.e. those Orthodox who are members of Churches belonging to the World Council of Churches, possess the grace of sacraments. Some have argued that "the question of grace" is a secondary issue. The important thing, they say, is to agree that Ecumenism is a heresy and flee from communion with the heretics. However, a moment's thought will demonstrate that there can hardly be a more important question than whether some millions of people calling themselves Orthodox Christians have the grace of sacraments and are therefore members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church having a good hope of salvation, or, on the contrary, do not have the grace of sacraments and are therefore outside the Church and on the path to destruction. Hard as one may try, it is impossible to escape this question; for the answer one gives affects in a significant way one's attitude to the ecumenist Orthodox. Are they like the people of whom the Apostle Jude says: "On some have compassion, making a difference" (v. 22), since their sin is not a sin unto death, a sin that estranges them completely from the Church? Or are they like those of whom he says: "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (v. 23), because their sin is not only a sin unto death, estranging them completely from the Church, but also contagious, liable to contaminate us if we are not extremely careful in our relations with, and attitude towards them?

For many years, this question was hotly debated in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR), but no official statement was issued that decided the matter once and for all. In 1983, however, in the wake of the horrific apostasy of the ecumenist Orthodox at the Vancouver General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the Synod of ROCOR formally anathematized the ecumenist Orthodox, 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."

It should be noted that this anathema condemns not only Ecumenism and the ecumenists in a general sense, but also all those "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" - that is, what is

now called “Cyprianism” and the Cyprianites.

In other words, if it is accepted that the ecumenists are heretics, it is no longer permissible to say that their priesthood and mysteries are the priesthood and mysteries of the One, True Church.

In 1984, the year after this anathema was delivered, the Greek Old Calendarist hierarch, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, issued a challenge to its validity and teaching without directly naming it. In his “Ecclesiological Position Paper”, he argued that while the new calendarists are ecumenists, they nevertheless have the grace of sacraments because they have not yet been condemned by a “Unifying Council” of the Orthodox Church, and that it is sufficient for the True Orthodox simply to “wall themselves off” from the ecumenists’ errors by refraining from communion with them. Ten years later, in 1994, ROCOR entered into official communion with Metropolitan Cyprian, declaring that her ecclesiology was identical with that of Metropolitan Cyprian.

The contradiction between this ecclesiology and that contained in the anathema of 1983 is manifest – but only one ROCOR hierarch, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), seemed to notice or care about it. In his article “The Dubious Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Cyprian’s Group”, Bishop Gregory wrote: “By not investigating the matter seriously and by forgetting about this previously confirmed anathematizing of the New Calendarists/Ecumenists [in 1983] (or perhaps not venturing to abrogate this resolution) our Sobor, frightful as it may be to admit it, has fallen under its own anathema.”

The present article presents a critique of Metropolitan Cyprian’s position as presented in his 1984 position paper.

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“The Orthodox Church as a whole is unerring and invincible,” writes Metropolitan Cyprian. “It is possible, however, for Christians and for local Churches to fall in faith; that is to say, it is possible for them to suffer spiritually and for one to see a certain ‘siege of illness within the body of the Church’, as St. John Chrysostom says. It is possible for Christians to separate and for ‘divisions’ to appear within the Church, as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians. It is possible for local Churches into fall into heresy, as occurred in the ancient Orthodox Church of the West, which fell into the heresies of Papism and Protestantism and finally into the panheresy of ecumenism.

“Spiritual maladies within the Church are cured either by repentance or by judgement. Until the judgement or expulsion of a heretic, schismatic, or sinner

- either by the Church or, in a more direct manner, by the Lord - the opinion of a believer cannot be a substitute for the sentence of the Church and of her Lord, Jesus Christ, even if the resolution of a situation be prolonged until the Second Coming. As is well known, in the Scriptures, the Church is likened to a field full of 'wheat' and 'tares', in accordance with Divine and ecclesiastical economy. Sinners and those who err in correctly understanding the Faith, yet who have not been sentenced by ecclesiastical action, are simply considered ailing members of the Church. The Mysteries [sacraments] of these unsentenced members are valid as such, according to the Seventh Ecumenical Council, as, for example, the President of the Synod, St. Tarasios, remarks: '[the iconoclasts'] Ordination' 'is from God'. By contrast, should expositors of heresy punish the Orthodox opposed to them, these punishments are ecclesiastically invalid and groundless 'from the time their preaching began' (i.e., from the moment they began preaching heresy), as St. Celestine of Rome wrote and as the Third Ecumenical Synod agreed."

When a bishop preaches heresy "publicly and bareheaded in the Church", continues the metropolitan, the Orthodox Christians should immediately separate themselves from him, in accordance with the 31st Apostolic Canon and the 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Synod of Constantinople. Such action by the Orthodox does not introduce schism, but rather serves to protect the Church from schisms and divisions. "He who preaches heresy or he who brings innovation into the Church divides her and abrogates her oneness or unity. He who opposes the preaching of heresy, or who separates himself from it, is eager to save the oneness or unity of the Church. The aim of opposition and separation is the combatting of heresy, the defense of the Orthodox Faith, and the preservation of the unity of the Orthodox Church, indeed of Orthodoxy itself."

So far so good. However, at this point, as he turns to apply these principles to the heresy of ecumenism and its forerunner, the innovation of the new calendar, the metropolitan makes some distinctly controversial statements. "With regard to the innovation in the festal calendar, Orthodox are divided into two parts: into those who are ailing in Faith and those who are healthy, into innovators and opposers - into followers of innovation, whether in knowledge or in ignorance, and those opposed, who have separated themselves from heresy, in favor of Orthodoxy. The latter are strugglers for oneness among the 'divided', as the Seventh Ecumenical Synod calls those who so separated for the Orthodox unity of the Church. The followers of the festal calendar innovation have not yet been specifically judged in a Pan-Orthodox fashion, as provided for by the Orthodox Church. As St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain writes, the violator of established precepts is considered sentenced, insofar as he is judged by 'the second entity (which is the council or synod).' Since 1924, the innovators have been awaiting judgement and shall be judged on the basis of the decisions of the holy Synods, both Oecumenical and local, and, to be sure,

on the basis of the ecclesiastical pronouncements of the sixteenth century against what were then Papal proposals for changes in the festal calendar. In this respect, those who have walled themselves off from the innovators have actually broken communion 'before [a] conciliar or synodal verdict,' as is allowed in the Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod. That is to say, the innovators are still unsentenced. Consequently, their Mysteries are valid..."

"Every innovationist member of the divided Greek Church is capable of changing over to opposition against the Ecumenist innovation. This can be accomplished through repentance... A return to Orthodoxy can also take place through a formal renunciation of heresy... Therefore, the Orthodox Tradition of the Holy Oecumenical Synods and of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church prescribes that that part of the divided Greek Church that is ailing in Faith be received by one of the foregoing means of repentance and returned to the ranks of Orthodoxy. For they are not condemned schismatic or heretical Christians, but members of the Church who have not yet been brought to trial."

That the innovators "are still unsentenced", as Metropolitan Cyprian supposes, is a historical mistake. In May, 1935, all the truly Orthodox (i.e. Old Calendar) Metropolitans of the Church of Greece came together and synodically condemned the new calendarists as schismatics without the grace of sacraments: "Those who now administer the Church of Greece have divided the unity of Orthodoxy through the calendar innovation, and have split the Greek Orthodox People into two opposing calendar parts. They have not only violated an Ecclesiastical Tradition which was consecrated by the Seven Ecumenical Councils and sanctioned by the age-old practice of the Eastern Orthodox Church, but have also touched the Dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Therefore those who now administer the Greek Church have, by their unilateral, anticanonical and unthinking introduction of the Gregorian calendar, cut themselves off completely from the trunk of Orthodoxy, and have declared themselves to be in essence Schismatics in relation to the Orthodox Churches which stand on the foundation of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the Orthodox laws and Traditions."

Concerning the implications of this declaration with regard to the question of grace, the metropolitans made themselves crystal clear in an encyclical issued on June 8/21, 1935: "We recommend to all those who follow the Orthodox Calendar that they have no spiritual communion with the schismatic church of the schismatic ministers, from whom the grace of the All-Holy Spirit has fled, because they have violated the decisions of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Pan-Orthodox Councils which condemned the Gregorian calendar. That the schismatic Church does not have Grace and the Holy Spirit is affirmed by St. Basil the Great, who says the following: 'Even if the Schismatics have erred about things which are not Dogmas, since the head

of the Church is Christ, according to the divine Apostle, from Whom all the members live and receive spiritual increase, they have torn themselves away from the harmony of the members of the Body and no longer are members [of that Body] or have the grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he who does not have it cannot transfer it to others.’”

Now some have argued that this conciliar decision was later rejected by the leader of the Greek Old Calendarists, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina, and that it therefore represents only an “extremist”, “Matthewite” position. However, the doctrine that schismatics have no grace is not a specifically “Matthewite” position, but is based on many canons and patristic sayings, notably the First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil the Great. In fact, as Bishop Ephraim of Boston points out, the new calendarists and the Moscow Patriarchate have adopted a distinctly “Matthewite” position in relation to the True Orthodox, declaring that they have no grace of sacraments – while at the same time declaring that the Western heretics do have grace!

In any case, it is not true that Metropolitan Chrysostomos renounced the Council of 1935. From 1937 to 1950 he appeared to doubt it, introducing the notion (unknown in patristic literature, as Bishop Ephraim again correctly points out), of “potential schism”. But in 1950 he repented of these doubts and openly and unambiguously returned to the confession of 1935. Some have said that in private correspondence he claimed to have been pushed into making this confession by “extremists”, that he made it for the sake of unity and that it did not represent his true thinking. I do not believe that such a great confessor could have dissembled in his confession of faith. But in any case, it is by his public confession, not his hypothetical doubts, that we must judge him.

Now Metropolitan Cyprian does not mention the Council of 1935. Nor does he mention Metropolitan Chrysostomos’ encyclical of 1950, nor the Old Calendarist Council under the presidency of Archbishop Auxentius in 1974 (which Metropolitan Cyprian presumably signed since he was himself in the Auxentiite Synod), which explicitly declared that the new calendarist ecumenists had no grace of sacraments. The reason for these omissions cannot be that he does not know of their existence. The reason can only be that he rejects their validity, or at any rate the validity of their decisions in relation to the ecumenists. To understand why he does this, let us now turn to the metropolitan’s theory of the Councils and their relationship to heretics.

Of central importance in Metropolitan Cyprian’s argument is his concept of the “Unifying Synod”. A “Unifying Synod” is one that unites the heretics to Orthodoxy, such as the Seventh Ecumenical Council. By implication – although he does not state this explicitly here – a Synod that simply condemns the heretics without uniting them to Orthodoxy (such as the decisions of the Greek

Old Calendarist Councils of 1935 and 1974 against the new calendarists, or the 1983 anathema of the Russian Church Abroad against Ecumenism) is of less significance and is not in fact competent to expel heretics from the Church.

Indeed, it is difficult to see, according to Metropolitan Cyprian's theory, how or when any heretic has been expelled from the Church. For if, before the convening of a Unifying Synod, the heretics or not outside the Church but simply an ailing faction *within* the Church, and if a Unifying Synod does not expel heretics from the Church but simply unites the ailing and the healthy parts of the same Church in a closer union, there seems to be no mechanism for the expulsion of heretics *from* the Church altogether - in other words, there are no *Separating* or *Expelling* Synods. It would not be inconsistent with his theory to suppose that those heretics who refuse to be unified by the Unifying Synod are thereby expelled from the Church altogether; but this is not stated explicitly (at any rate, in the position paper under review), so heavy is the emphasis on the supposed fact that these Synods unified rather than expelled the heretics.

Metropolitan Cyprian develops his concept of a "Unifying Council" as follows: "During the reign of the iconoclastic innovation, for example, it was impossible for an Orthodox Synod of the entire Church to be convened. For this reason, such a Synod was convened when the iconoclastic heresy was no longer in power, that is, in 787, as the Seventh Oecumenical Synod of union. The same Seventh Oecumenical Synod writes through its Fathers that the Synod took place 'so that we might change the discord of controversy into concord, that the dividing wall of enmity might be removed and that the original rulings of the Catholic [Orthodox] Church might be validated.' That is, it was convened so that the differing factions of the Church, divided up to the time of the Synod - the Iconoclasts disagreeing with the Orthodox belief and the Orthodox opposed to the iconoclastic heresy - might be united by means of an agreement within Orthodoxy."

This is inaccurate both as regards the Ecumenical Councils in general and as regards the Seventh Council in particular. First, there were some Ecumenical Councils which took place without the participation of heretics - the Second and the Fifth. According to the reasoning of Metropolitan Cyprian, these must be considered not to be "Unifying Councils" and therefore lacking in full validity! And yet there are no higher, "more valid" Councils in the Orthodox understanding than the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

Moreover, after several of the Ecumenical Councils many of the heretics were not only not "united", but remained in bitter enmity to the Orthodox Church. Thus there were many Arians after the First Council, many Nestorians after the Third and many Monophysites after the Fourth - in fact, all three heresies are very numerous to the present day. Even the Seventh Council was only

temporarily “unifying”, since the iconoclastic heresy broke out again some years later. Thus according to the reasoning of Metropolitan Cyprian, we must eliminate the First, Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils from the category of “Unifying Council”.

Secondly, even those Councils which took place with the participation of heretics did not receive them into communion until they had renounced their heresies. They made it quite clear that the heretics were *outside* the Church until such a renunciation. However, if, as Metropolitan Cyprian asserts, heretics cannot be considered to be outside the Church until they have been condemned at a “Unifying Council” in which they themselves participated, then not only were the Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites and others still “members of the Church weak in faith” until the Unifying Councils that condemned them, but, as Hieromonk Nectarius (Yashunsky) points out, “we shall have to recognize the Roman Catholics and Protestants as ‘as yet uncondemned members of the Church’, because since the time of their separation there has not been (and until ‘their union in Orthodoxy’ there cannot be) a Council of the united (undivided Universal Church) in common with them!”

“As far as the Seventh Council is concerned,” continues Hieromonk Nectarius, “not only did it not consider the iconoclasts to be a part of the Church, but they themselves did not pretend to be such.” In support of this statement, Fr. Nectarius quotes from the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. “These are the words of the uniting iconoclasts. Thus Basil, bishop of Ancyra, said: ‘As far as I was able, I investigated the question of the icons and converted to the Holy Catholic Church with complete conviction.’ Theodore, bishop of Myra, said: ‘... I beseech God and your holiness to unite me, the sinful one, to the Holy Catholic Church.’” (pp. 41, 43 in the 1901 edition of the Kazan Theological Academy). And here are the witnesses of the holy Fathers of the Council: “His Holiness Patriarch Tarasius said: ‘What is now to be our relationship to this heresy that has again arisen in our time?’ John, the most beloved of God, locum tenens of the apostolic throne in the east, said: ‘Heresy divides every man from the Church.’ The Holy Council said: ‘That is evident.’ The Holy Council said: ‘Let the bishops who are standing before us read their renunciations, insofar as they are now converting to the Catholic Church.’” (p. 48).

Thirdly, the exceptional importance of Ecumenical or “Unifying” Councils should not lead us to cast doubt on *Local Councils’* authority to expel heretics from the Church. Many of the heretics of the early centuries were first cast out of the Church by local Councils. For example, Arius was cast out by a local Council presided over by St. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, in 321 and again in 323 (the First Ecumenical Council did not take place until 325). Again, local Councils convened at Rome condemned the Nestorians (under Pope St. Celestine), the Monothelites (under Pope St. Martin) and the Iconoclasts (under

Pope Gregory III) – in each case *before* the convening of the Third, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils, which never disputed the validity of these Local Councils, but rather *confirmed their decisions*.

Thus when the heretical bishop Theodosius in conversation with St. Maximus the Confessor disputed the validity of the local Council under St. Martin that condemned the Monothelites on the grounds that it was not convened by an emperor, St. Maximus replied that the validity of a Council depended on its recognising “the true and immutable dogmas”, not on who convened it or how general it was. Again, when the same saint was asked in the Emperor’s palace why he was not in communion with the Throne of Constantinople, he replied: “... 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?” Again, Bishop Theophan the Recluse points out that before the start of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, its president-to-be, St. Tarasius, bewailed the fact that “we (the iconoclastic Church of Constantinople) are being anathematised by them (the other Local Churches in Local Councils) every day”, which implies that Local Councils have the power to anathematize...

If local Councils did not have the authority to expel heretics from the Church, we should have to condemn many Local Councils for exceeding their competency and assuming an authority that did not belong to them. These would include many of the Councils of the Early Church, which expelled such heretics as Marcion and Sabellius; the local Councils of the Great Church of Constantinople between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries that expelled the Roman Catholics; and the Councils of the Russian Church presided over by Patriarch Tikhon that anathematized the communists and their co-workers in 1918 and the renovationist heretics in 1923. However, the Church, which has the mind of Christ, has accepted all of these acts as lawful and valid. To think otherwise is to suppose that for the last several hundred years the Church has – God forbid! – lost her God-given power to bind and to loose since the convening of the last Ecumenical or Pan-Orthodox Council!

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Let us now turn from consideration of Metropolitan Cyprian’s position to the question: when are we entitled to consider that a heretic is outside the Church and, consequently, deprived of the grace of sacraments? In particular, are we entitled to consider the “Orthodox” heretics belonging to the World Council of Churches as still belonging to the Church and having the grace of sacraments? We shall not discuss here the question why these “Orthodox” should be considered to be heretics, since Metropolitan Cyprian himself accepts that they

are.

Now the Sacred Canons of the Church, notably Apostolic Canons 46, 47 and 68, and the First Canon of St. Basil the Great, all teach that heretics and schismatics are outside the Church and have no sacraments. These heretics and schismatics are to be received in various ways – some by baptism, some by chrismation, some by simple confession – but, as Bishop Gregory Grabbe insisted in various of his writings, this does not alter the basic principle. Moreover, Apostolic Canon 46 declares not only that heretics and schismatics are outside the Church, but also that those who recognise the sacraments of heretics or schismatics should be deposed: “We order that a bishop or priest who accepts the baptism or sacrifice of heretics be deposed. For what agreement has Christ with Beliar? Or what part has the faithful with an infidel?”

Is a conciliar verdict necessary in order to expel a heretic? At first sight it would seem that the answer to this question is: yes. However, there are grounds for thinking that Arius was invisibly expelled from the Church not only before the First Ecumenical Council of 325, but even before the Local Councils of 321 and 323.

For when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria, in the form of a twelve year old child in torn clothing, and was asked by St. Peter: “O Creator, who has torn Your tunic?”, the Lord replied: “The mindless Arius; *he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood.*” And this took place before St. Peter’s martyrdom in 311.

The question arises, then: What is the purpose of the Councils? Is it they, and they alone, which bind heretics and cast them out of the Church? Or do they simply *discern* that binding has *already* taken place, “knowing,” as the apostle says, “that he that is such [a heretic] is subverted, and sinneth, *being condemned of himself*” (Titus 3.11)?

Of particular importance in this context is the 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople (861), which declares that those who withdraw from a bishop for public preaching of heresy “condemned by the holy Councils or Fathers... not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a Bishop before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honour which befits them among Orthodox Christians; for they have defied, not Bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers, and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.”

It should be noted, first, that the canon is here speaking about heresies that have been condemned “by the holy Councils or Fathers”. This would imply that a conciliar judgement – or, at any rate, a patristic judgement – is indeed necessary before one can leave a heretic (not necessarily, however, the judgement of an *Ecumenical* Council). Secondly, however, such a conciliar or patristic judgement need not be a contemporary one, for the canon explicitly states that it is praiseworthy to leave such a heretic “before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered”. In other words, no additional, contemporary Council has to be convened to confirm the decision of the earlier “Councils or Fathers” in relation to the contemporary heretic. And thirdly, a man who preaches such a heresy publicly is *already* a “pseudo-bishop” on the basis of the early “Councils or Fathers” alone.

Now this attitude towards heretics was disputed by the fourteenth century opponent of St. Gregory Palamas, Acindynus. Writing to Barlaam, he gently chides him for calling Gregory a heretic; “for it was against canon law to treat a man as a heretic before he had been formally condemned. ‘Therefore, be more moderate towards Palamas,’ he repeated.”

Vasily (now Igumen Gregory) Lourié has supplied a fitting riposte to this: “It is characteristic that the latter remark was expressed by Acindynus – that is, by one who was himself a heretic. The church canons distinguish two cases. 1. If the heretic is not a bishop (in which case it is no longer important who he is: a layman, a monk, a deacon, a priest, a superior, etc.). Here the words of the Apostle Paul retain their full force: ‘A heretic after the first and second admonition reject’ (Titus 3.10). No church canons have been added to them. This means – and it is precisely such an understanding that is confirmed by the practice of the holy fathers, – that one should not wait for any church condemnations of, for example, a heretical priest. One must immediately cease to pray and concelebrate with him, and to receive confession and communion from him. One must *first* break communion in prayer with him, and only then, if possible, appeal to a church court (juridical power over a priest is given to a bishop). 2. If the heretic is a bishop. Here the Church has at various times introduced various elaborations of the apostolic formula. In force at the present time is Canon 15, which was introduced at the so-called First-and-Second Council of Constantinople in 861. After discussing those who, on the pretext of various accusations, separate from their bishop, [the canon] says that it is quite another matter if the separation takes place as a result of heresy...”

This enables us to answer the question whether the contemporary new calendarists and ecumenists, including the Moscow Patriarchate, are in the Church and have the grace of sacraments. The answer is that they are not in the Church, and do not have the grace of sacraments, because according to the 15th Canon their bishops are “pseudo-bishops” as having been condemned “by the

holy Councils or Fathers” – specifically, in the case of the new calendarists, by the Pan-Orthodox Councils that anathematized the new calendar in 1583, 1587 and 1593. No contemporary Council is needed to apply those earlier decisions to the contemporary heretics, although in fact there have been such contemporary Councils – specifically, the Greek Old Calendarist Councils of 1935 and 1974, together with the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in 1983, which did not condemn new-calendarism as such, but rather Ecumenism, of which, as Metropolitan Cyprian agrees, new-calendarism is the first stage, as it were.

Already in the nineteenth century, Bishop Theophan the Recluse was saying that there was no need for further conciliar anathemas to condemn the heretics of his day since they had all already been condemned by earlier decisions. Commenting on St. Paul’s words, “If anyone preaches any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema” (Galatians 1.8), he writes: “The apostle laid only the beginning to anathematization. Since then all the opinions worthy of this punishment have already been marked out by the Church. At the present time there is no point waiting for a special ecclesiastical act to strike the evildoers with this judgement. They themselves are placing their own heads under this sword immediately they acquire opinions contrary to the truth and stubbornly begin to insist on them.”

And yet, of course, new Councils and new anathemas have been found to be necessary in this century. What, then, has been the purpose of these new Councils? First of all, to point out to the faithful that the old heresies have reappeared in a new form – idol-worship, for example, in the form of Sergianism, and *all* the old heresies in the form of Ecumenism, “the heresy of heresies”. And secondly, in order to make a clear separation between light and darkness, between the Church of the faithful and the “Church of the evildoers”, lest the latter swallow up the former entirely. And thirdly, to reverse the act that the Church carried out when she made the heresiarchs pastors and bishops.

It is for this last reason that contemporary Councils *are* necessary to depose contemporary heretics, even if they already fall under earlier anathemas. For, as St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite explains in his commentary on the 30th Apostolic Canon: “The Canons ordain that a synod of living bishops should defrock priests, or excommunicate or anathematize laymen, when they transgress the Canons. However, if the synod does not put into practical effect the defrocking of the priests, or the excommunication or anathematization of the laymen, these priests and laymen are neither defrocked nor excommunicated nor anathematized in actuality []. However, they are subject to defrocking and excommunication here, and to the wrath of God there.”

Here, and here only, is there some ground for speaking in a very restricted

sense about heretics having grace. For between the first appearance of a heresy in modern times and its first condemnation by a local Council, there is a period in which the heretic, although already self-condemned and subject to the condemnation of *God* if he dies now, has the possibility of repenting and returning to the truth before being subject to the condemnation of *the Church*. Nestorius, for example, was given a short time to repent by St. Celestine before he was condemned at a local Council in Rome. This is that period of which the Lord says in relation to Jezebel in the Thyateiran Church: "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not" (Revelation 2.21).

In this period, the heretic, although already deprived of grace in a *personal* sense (for all sin deprives the sinner of grace), may continue to preserve the *priestly* grace which the Church gave him at his ordination and which she deprives him of only through another public, conciliar act. In the period before the conciliar deposition of the heretic, not only is he given time to repent, but his flock are enabled to continue receiving the true sacraments – although, as Hieromartyr Cyril of Kazan writes, they will receive them to their condemnation if they are conscious of their hierarch's heresy. After his conciliar deposition, however, the hierarch is no longer a hierarch, and the flock that remains with him no longer receives true sacraments from him; for "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15.14).

However, this very restricted sense in which heretics retain the grace of the priesthood until they have been formally deposed does not help Metropolitan Cyprian's case, because, as noted above, several local Councils composed of undoubtedly canonical and Orthodox bishops have *already* expelled the ecumenist Orthodox from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. And in particular, they have been expelled by the 1983 anathema hurled at them by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR), a Church with which Metropolitan Cyprian is in communion and whose conciliar acts concerning heresy he and his Synod (and still more, of course, the hierarchs of ROCOR) are consequently bound to accept. Therefore the "space to repent" has run out, the door has been closed, the spiritual sword has fallen; and it remains only for every faithful Orthodox Christian to echo the verdict of the Church: Anathema.

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Let us now turn to some arguments that have been made against the position defended in this article:-

The Ecclesiology of Hieromartyr Cyril of Kazan. In the early years after the Sergianist schism of 1927, until about 1934, Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan took the position that, while he could not concelebrate with Metropolitan Sergius because of his usurpation of Church power, he did not consider him to be a

schismatic deprived of the grace of sacraments. As he wrote to Sergius: "I refrain from liturgizing with you not because the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ would not be actualized at our joint celebration, but because the communion of the Chalice of the Lord would be to both of us for judgement and condemnation, since our inward attitude, disturbed by a different understanding of our church relation to each other, would take away from us the possibility of offering, in complete calm of spirit, the mercy of peace, the sacrifice of praise." Again he wrote to an unknown hierarch: "It seems to me that both you yourself and your correspondent do not distinguish those actions of Metropolitan Sergius and his partisans, which are performed by them in proper order by power of those grace-given rights received through the mystery of the priesthood, from those other activities which are performed with an exceeding of their sacramental rights and according to human cunning, as a means of protecting and supporting their self-invented rights in the Church. Such are the actions of Bishop Zacharius and Priest Patapov of which you speak. These are sacramental acts only in form, while in essence they are a usurpation of sacramental activity, and therefore are blasphemous, without grace, non-ecclesiastical. But the Mysteries performed by Sergianists who are correctly ordained and not prohibited to serve as priests, are undoubtedly saving Mysteries for those who receive them with faith, in simplicity, without deliberations and doubts concerning their efficacy, and who do not even suspect anything incorrect in the Sergianist order of the Church. But at the same time, they serve for judgement and condemnation for the very performers of them and for those who approach them well understanding the untruth that exists in Sergianism, and by their lack of opposition to it reveal a criminal indifference towards the mocking of the Church. This is why it is essential for an Orthodox Bishop or priest to refrain from communion with Sergianists in prayer. The same thing is essential for laymen who have a conscious attitude to all the details of church life."

These letters make clear that while Metropolitan Cyril was quite prepared to say of certain hierarchs (the renovationists, Bishop Zacharius) that they were deprived of the grace of sacraments, he was not prepared to say this - yet - of Metropolitan Sergius, "until a lawful Council by its sentence shall utter the judgement of the Holy Spirit concerning him". He gave as one reason for his hesitation - or "excessive caution", as his correspondent put it - "an incomplete clarification of the conditions which surround me and all of us". We may suppose that another reason was the fact that both Sergianists and True Orthodox were still linked, albeit tenuously, by their common commemoration of Metropolitan Peter, who, because of his imprisonment beyond the Arctic Circle, had not been able officially to remove Metropolitan Sergius from his post as his deputy - although he had urged the other bishops to remove him.

In fact, according to Hieromartyr Maximus of Serpukhov and other sources,

there had been a secret Council in 1928 that anathematized the Sergianists. But the inability of the first-hierarchy of the Church to make his own position publicly and officially known – which inability was, of course, engineered by the Bolsheviks – prevented the Catacomb hierarchs from deposing Sergius in a manner that would have been accepted as canonical by all. As Metropolitan Cyril wrote: “For me personally, it is impossible at the present time to step forth, since I am entirely unsure of the character of the attitudes of Metropolitan Peter, in order to be convinced of his actual views and to decide how to act...”

The situation changed, however, in August, 1936, when the Bolsheviks issued the false information that Metropolitan Peter had died, and Metropolitan Sergius promptly – and completely unlawfully – arrogated to himself Peter’s title of Metropolitan of Krutitsa and patriarchal locum tenens. Almost immediately we see a significant hardening in Metropolitan Cyril’s position. Thus in March, 1937 he wrote: “With regard to your perplexities concerning Sergianism, I can say that the very same questions in almost the same form were addressed to me from Kazan ten years ago, and then I replied affirmatively to them, because I considered everything that Metropolitan Sergius had done as a mistake which he himself was conscious of and wished to correct. Moreover, among our ordinary flock there were many people who had not investigated what had happened, and it was impossible to demand from them a decisive and active condemnation of the events. Since then much water has flowed under the bridge. The expectations that Metropolitan Sergius would correct himself have not been justified, *but there has been enough time for the formerly ignorant members of the Church, enough incentive and enough opportunity to investigate what has happened;* and very many have both investigated and understood that Metropolitan Sergius is departing from that Orthodox Church which the Holy Patriarch Tikhon entrusted to us to guard, and consequently there can be no part or lot with him for the Orthodox. The recent events have finally made clear *the renovationist nature of Sergianism.* We cannot know whether those believers who remain in Sergianism will be saved, because the work of eternal Salvation is a work of the mercy and grace of God. But for those who see and feel the unrighteousness of Sergianism (those are your questions) it would be unforgivable craftiness to close one’s eyes to this unrighteousness and seek there for the satisfaction of one’s spiritual needs when one’s conscience doubts in the possibility of receiving such satisfaction. Everything which is not of faith is sin...”

So from 1937 Metropolitan Cyril considered that the faithful had had enough time to work out the “renovationist” nature of Sergianism. Moreover, by calling Sergianism “renovationist” Metropolitan Cyril was placing it under the category of *an already condemned heresy*, whose adherents had already been declared by Patriarch Tikhon to be deprived of the grace of sacraments in 1923. Strictly speaking, therefore, no new conciliar sentence was necessary, just as no

new conciliar sentence is required to condemn each new Pope of Rome.

Metropolitan Cyril was shot on the eve of the feast of St. Michael, November 8/21,1937 together with Metropolitan Joseph, whose followers, as is well-known, declared that the Sergianists had no grace. According to Catacomb nuns who were able to communicate by secret signs with the two hierarchs as they walked through the prison yard shortly before their execution, Metropolitan Cyril indicated that he was not only in full agreement with Metropolitan Joseph, but that *he recognized Joseph's leadership of the Russian Church* as blessed by Metropolitan Peter in the event of his death. (Metropolitan Peter had been shot in October, 1937.) There is therefore every reason to believe that at the time of their joint martyric deaths Metropolitan Cyril differed in no way in his confession from the "extremist" Metropolitan Joseph...

But in any case, can there be any doubt about what Metropolitan Cyril would have said if he had been alive *now*, more than sixty years later? In 1934, he said that he viewed the disorder in the Russian Orthodox Church "not as concerning the teaching which She holds, but as concerning administration". Now, however, Sergianism has metamorphosed into something infinitely worse than administrative disorder, worse even than the heresy of renovationism. It has evolved into "the heresy of heresies": first, through the filling up of its hierarchy with renovationists in 1943-45 (so that most of the post-war sergianists have not satisfied Metropolitan Cyril's criterion of correct ordination); then through its idolatrous glorification of Stalin, and persecution of the Catacomb Church and Russian Church Abroad, in the years after the war; then through its entry into the World Council of Churches in 1961; then through its adoption of the gospel of Communist Christianity; and finally through its inter-religious "super-ecumenism" in the 1980s and 1990s, which in 1983 received a definitive conciliar anathematization to which Metropolitan Cyril has no doubt added his authoritative voice in the Church Triumphant in the heavens...

The Validity of the 1983 Anathema. It is sometimes argued that ROCOR's 1983 anathema against Ecumenism lacks force, if not validity, because no specific names are mentioned in it. If so, it is surprising that such a formidable canonist as Bishop Gregory Grabbe should have continued to consider it valid. Moreover, there is strong evidence to suggest that both Metropolitan Philaret, the first-hierarch of ROCOR at the time, and Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, the second hierarch, considered not only that it was valid, but that the Moscow Patriarchate fell directly under it.

Is it absolutely necessary for names to be mentioned for an anathema to be valid? A brief look at the Order for the Triumph of Orthodoxy will establish that *most* of the anathemas there are not specific as to name. Patriarch Tikhon's anathema against the communists and their co-workers in 1918, which was

solemnly confirmed by the Local Council of the Russian Church then in session, mentioned neither Lenin nor anyone else by name. (In the 1970s the Synod of ROCOR did anathematize Lenin by name.) The same is true of the anathematization of the renovationist heretics.

What are we to say about all these anathemas? That they are invalid because the names of the heretics are not mentioned? But is it possible for there to be a heresy without a heretic, or an anathema without any individual falling under it?

Of course, in borderline cases, where it is not quite clear whether a particular Church or hierarch falls under the anathema, it would be desirable to have a list of names – although no list of names could be exhaustive. However, to say that a heretical hierarch does not fall under an anathema unless his name is specified in black and white is legalistic at best, casuistical at worst. And before we could accept such an idea we would need to see patristic support for it... But let us suppose that those who would reject the 1983 Council on those grounds are right, that the correct procedure for the valid anathematization of heretics was not carried out in this case. What, then, must we do?

Two things would be obligatory if this were the case. First, the anathema against Ecumenism would have to be removed from the Order for the Triumph of Orthodoxy so that the faithful should not be misled into believing that it actually has any *weight* or *power* in God's eyes. And secondly, a fresh Council would have to be immediately convened – it could now be considerably larger than the 1983 Council, having hierarchs from Russia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece as well as from ROCOR – to anathematize the ecumenists *by name*. Such a Pan-Orthodox Council would then settle the issue once and for all.

But there seems no sign of either of these things taking place. Therefore the suspicion remains that those who contest the validity of the 1983 Council – or, more often, simply ignore it, trying to suppress all discussion of it – are not doing so out of a laudable concern for correct procedure, but because *they do not want to obey its decisions*. We must exempt Metropolitan Cyprian from such a suspicion because he has given a quite clear – although, as we have argued, invalid – reason for waiting: only a “Unifying Council”, in his view, – a Council embracing both Orthodox and heretics – could decide such a matter, and such a “Unifying Council” cannot be convened in present circumstances. But some of the hierarchs in ROCOR quite clearly have a different motivation, and are not at all concerned about the theory of Unifying Councils. They reject the Council of 1983 because *they believe that the ecumenist heretics are in fact Orthodox and want to unite with them...*

Bishop Ephraim and the Excuse of Ignorance. We have seen that by 1937

Metropolitan Cyril considered that time enough had passed for the faithful to come to a clear appreciation of “the renovationist nature of Sergianism” and flee from it. Now the “argument from ignorance” which Metropolitan Cyril implicitly employed in the early years of the Sergianist schism has been developed further by Bishop Ephraim of Boston. Let us examine it more closely.

Bishop Ephraim rejects as unpatristic Metropolitan Chrysostomos’ concept of “potential schism”. “Schism is schism and heresy is heresy from the very start”. And he accepts that the Matthewites’ view that schismatics and heretics have no grace has patristic backing – and is not confined, even in our day, to the Matthewites. However, he is unhappy with the Matthewites’ idea that grace is simply “switched off” like electricity at the beginning of a schism. The problem is that the people in a heretical or schismatical communion are not all at the same level of knowledge. Some do not know what it is all about; and the point at which these (shall we call them: “potential”?) heretics “become confirmed heretics, knowingly and stubbornly and unrepentantly, may take some time”.

It is evident that Bishop Ephraim, while rejecting the concept of “potential schism” and “potential heresy”, is nevertheless reintroducing some such concept “by the backdoor”. He does not say explicitly that “potential” or “unconfirmed” heretics receive true sacraments, but the implication is there. Thus instead of the metaphor of electricity, Bishop Ephraim quotes from St. Athanasius’ use of the metaphor of the severed branch (which in turn, of course, derives from the Lord’s use of it in [John 15](#)): “The Church of Christ is the tree of life. Therefore, just as a branch which has been cut off from a healthy tree withers away little by little, and becomes dry and fuel for the fire, so is it in this case as well. The proof is this: many people, after the economy of Christ my God’s incarnation in the flesh, cut themselves off from the life-giving tree, from the Church, I mean, either through heresy or schism. And the tree of life, the Church, given water and light by Christ my Saviour, continues to flourish; but they who have apostasized from Her have perished, since of their own will they removed themselves far from God” (Letter 34).

Bishop Ephraim clearly prefers this metaphor because it contains the idea of *gradualness*. Just as a severed branch only gradually withers away, he appears to be saying, so a schismatic or heretical Church only gradually loses grace.

However, the metaphor need not – and should not – be interpreted in this way. For while the withering away of the branch may be gradual, *its cutting off is sudden* – and it is the cutting off that corresponds to the loss of grace. The withering away, on the other hand, corresponds to the *consequences* of the loss of grace in the gradual loss even of the *external appearance* of a true, grace-filled Church.

Bishop Ephraim ridicules the idea that grace could have been “switched on and off” each time St. Athanasius returned from exile and was then exiled again by the Arians. I don’t find the idea ridiculous at all. Something very similar must have happened in the period 1922-24 in Russia, when churches ruled by renovationists lost the grace of sacraments – as Patriarch Tikhon himself declared – and then received it again when their hierarchs repented or were replaced by Orthodox ones.

But what about the people who were confused or ignorant at that time? In order to answer this question, let us consider two kinds of ignorance: ignorance caused by a lack of zeal for the faith, and ignorance caused by genuine incapacity of some kind - extreme youth, mental deficiency, distance from sources of accurate information, etc. If an Orthodox Christian is ignorant that his hierarch is a heretic because of his own lack of zeal for the faith, then he himself is largely to blame, as Bishop Ephraim appears to concede when discussing the indifference of present-day ecumenists. Very often the seemingly ignorant are actually simply indifferent. Let us remember that the main reason for the appearance of the Antichrist, according to St. Paul, will be *the lack of love for the truth* among contemporary Christians (II Thessalonians 2.10).

But let us suppose that the Christian really loves the truth, but is uneducated or unintelligent or a long way from good pastors or surrounded by misinformed or malicious people. Then we believe that God will enlighten him in one way or another, or simply *move* him out of danger. There are many, many examples from the lives of the saints to show that God does not abandon His faithful sheep when they are in danger of going astray; for, as the Lord said, “*no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand*” (John 10.29).

For there is such a thing as genuine, unwitting ignorance, and it does serve as an excuse in God’s eyes. If ignorance did not serve as some kind of excuse, then the Lord would not have cried out on the Cross: “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23.24). Nor would the Apostle Peter have said to the Jews: “*I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers*” (Acts 3.17; cf. 17.30). Again, St. Paul says that he was forgiven his persecution of the Church because he did it unwittingly, out of ignorance and unbelief (I Timothy 1.13).

But those who crucified Christ certainly sinned; and neither the Lord nor St. Peter said that they had *not* sinned. He pleaded for forgiveness for them, not because they had not sinned, but because there was some excuse for their sin (their ignorance of His Divinity). St. Paul also was guilty, but again there were “*extenuating circumstances*”: his lack of knowledge of the mystery. And when that knowledge was given him, he repented.

And so sin remains sin, whether it is committed in knowledge or in ignorance; only sin committed in knowledge is more serious and is punished more severely than sin committed in genuine ignorance.

The Lord put it as follows: "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke 12.47-48).

On which Blessed Theophylact makes the following comment: "He too was punished because he was able to learn the will of the master, but did not want 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. Brothers, let us tremble with fear. If even he who knows nothing deserves to be beaten, what excuse will deliver those who are brimming with knowledge, especially those who are teachers? Their condemnation will be even more severe..."

How does this all relate to the question of the grace of sacraments? Only obliquely, in my opinion. There is nothing in Holy Tradition to lead us to believe that when an Orthodox Christian goes up to receive communion in the church of a publicly condemned and deposed heretic, he receives the true sacrament out of condescension to his ignorance.

Or, if this does sometimes happen, it is by a special *oeconomia* of God which we cannot know about except by special revelation, and which cannot therefore play a part in our public discussion. God is sovereign, and so may break His own rules. But we are His subjects and must follow the rules He has given us. We shall not be condemned if we follow the rules God has given us in the Holy Canons, even if He, in His sovereign mercy, sometimes practises *oeconomia*. But we shall be condemned if we cast doubt on the canons concerning heretics on the basis of private and quite possibly quite unfounded speculations.

However, it would not be inconsistent with the Holy Canons to suppose that, depending on the degree and nature of the ignorance of the Orthodox Christian - which is, of course, known to God alone, - he may be protected to a greater or lesser extent from the effects of his partaking of "the devil's food", as the Fathers call the communion of heretics. I think it is perfectly possible, for example, that there are many people in the remoter parts of the Russian countryside who do not know much about the heresy of Ecumenism and therefore sin less gravely when they partake of the "sacraments" in the patriarchate than do the priests and, even more, the hierarchs. But this is really only speculation that has very little bearing on the dogmatic issue. Neither I nor anyone else knows how many

such people there are, how ignorant they really are, how much they are sinning by staying in the false patriarchate, and to what extent they are protected by God. I do not know, and I do not have to know *that*: the only thing I *have* to know is what the Church teaches about heretics, which I have to obey and confess, and the necessity of keeping away from them.

Bishop Ephraim goes on to cite the example of the Western schism, its lack of clarity (from a human point of view), the fact that there was heresy in the West *before* 1054, and communion between parts of the East and West in parts *after* 1054. He makes some good points here, but again they are not directly relevant to the question at issue. The fact that it is sometimes difficult to determine precisely when a schismatic or heretical community falls from grace does not mean that there was not in fact a precise cut-off point – or the cut-off point may be at different time in different places. We mustn't confuse the Divine judgements, which are always clear and precise, with human knowledge of His judgements, which are often weak and clouded because of sin.

Thus I believe that the traditional cut-off point of 1054 is the correct one for the Pope of Rome himself – the lights went out in Rome the day the Local Council of the Great Church of Constantinople pulled the switch. Some local Churches in the West continued to keep the light for a few more years yet – England, for example, was only formally integrated into the papist church only on August 29, 1070, after a bitter war in which one-fifth of the population was exterminated, and the last pre-schism archbishop was defrocked, and his papist successor installed in his place. I think it is also possible that Ireland and Scandinavia, whose direct contact with Rome was minimal and whose Churches were therefore *de facto* autonomous, retained the grace of sacraments even into the early part of the twelfth century.

Is the idea of “gradually receding grace” being reintroduced here “by the back-door”? I don't think so. As even the ecumenist “Metropolitan” Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh once admitted when discussing the sacraments of papists, we cannot talk about “half sacraments”; on any one altar at any one time there either is or is not the true sacrament of Christ, and the angel sent by God to guard that altar either is or is not present. Grace does not “gradually recede” from that altar; it goes suddenly and decisively. In some historical cases it is, I agree, difficult to determine with precision whether or when grace has left a particular church, or diocese, or even patriarchate. But by a careful study of the facts – the canonical facts and the historical facts – we can come closer to precision than some people allow. St. Macarius the Great once saw the grace of baptism leave his disciple when he had apostasized during conversation with a Jew – and by his prayer and fasting obtained its restoration. I believe that the same sudden, decisive loss of grace takes place in churches, too – although, because of our sins, we cannot see it as St. Macarius did. There is another story

about a priest at the monastery of St. John Chozeva in Palestine. He was counted worthy of seeing the Uncreated Light of God descend upon the Holy Gifts at the time of the consecration. But his deacon accused him of heresy. And he no longer saw the Divine Light. Puzzled, he asked the angel who always accompanied if this accusation was true. The angel said: yes. But why then why have you not warned me? Because God wanted your fellow-server to point out the truth to you, thereby demonstrating his love for God and neighbour...

The concept of “degrees of grace” does have application in certain contexts – but not to the Body and Blood of Christ. St. Seraphim said that the aim of the Christian life is to acquire the grace of the Holy Spirit. This “personal” or “pneumatological” grace is clearly a matter of degree – insofar, that is, as we can use such categories in talking about the uncreated and unquantifiable energies of God. Saints have more grace than ordinary Orthodox Christians; and some saints shine more brightly in the firmament of grace than others. We can grow in grace and decrease in grace. But the holiness and grace of the Eucharist depends neither on the celebrant’s nor on the communicant’s degree of grace. For It is Christ Himself, no less...

The important question is: is it *in principle* possible to determine, with God’s help, whether or not a community has the grace of sacraments? I believe that the whole body of the holy canons and patristic writings presupposes that it is indeed possible – and this determination *must* be done to the extent of our ability. And I believe that Bishop Ephraim is actually of the same view. Only he tends to cloud the issue by discussing all the practical difficulties involved in applying the canons in particular circumstances. These difficulties clearly exist, I do not deny it; but they should not divert us from the main dogmatic point without which we will never attain clarity or truth in this matter – the point, namely, that from the time of their canonical deposition heretics do not have the grace of sacraments.

A last important point has been made in this connection by Protopriest Lev Lebedev. It is, of course, a terrible tragedy that an individual or community should be deprived of the grace of sacraments. But it is a still greater tragedy that a person should receive the True Body of Christ when he is, wittingly or unwittingly, not in a condition to receive it without condemnation. Therefore a community’s being deprived of the grace of sacraments may actually be a mercy of God at the same time that it is clearly a judgement. Moreover, we may better bring people to partake once more of the True Body and Blood of Christ to their salvation by gently but firmly pointing out to them that they are *not* partaking of It now in their heretical churches, which they must leave and renounce if they are to make themselves worthy of It again...

March 9/22, 1998; revised November 11/24, 2021.

3. THE BRANCH AND MONOLITH THEORIES OF THE CHURCH

The February, 2004 (N 145) issue of *Orthodoxos Pnoi*, the organ of the Matthewite Metropolitan Kyrikos of Mesogaia, contains an extraordinarily bitter and unjust attack on his brother bishop Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kition (Cyprus). This attack actually highlights in a very instructive manner not only what is wrong with the Matthewites – more precisely: with the Kyrikite offshoot from the Matthewites, but also how a fanatically unbalanced attack on one heresy can lead to a fall into the mirror-image of that heresy, just as unbalanced attacks on Nestorianism lead to Monophysitism, and on Catholicism – to Protestantism. In this case, the heresy under attack is the ecumenist “branch theory” of the Church, whose mirror-image, into which the attackers are in danger of falling, is what I shall call the “monolith theory” of the Church.

The cause of the present quarrel is Metropolitan Epiphanius’ founding, in January/February of this year, of a mission of the True Orthodox Church of Cyprus in Russia. The initial perplexity of the Kyrikites on hearing of this event would appear to be understandable. After all, the Greek Matthewites (with whom Metropolitan Epiphanius is in communion) already have a mission in Russia under Metropolitan Kyrikos, so why create a second administration of the same Church there?

However, a closer examination of this quarrel reveals that the Kyrikites have already in effect created a schism from the Matthewites, so their accusing Epiphanius of schismatical activity is hypocritical. For in what other way can we characterize the language that the editor of *Orthodoxos Pnoi* uses about the Greek Matthewite Archbishop Nicholas, with whom all the Matthewites, including Metropolitan Kyrikos, are still formally in communion? He calls him “the pseudo-archbishop Mr. Nicholas” (p. 44)!!! This language is repeated by the theologian Eleutherius Goutzides, who calls him “Mr. Nicholas Messiakaris” (p. 62) and mocks Metropolitan Epiphanius’ description of him as “a canonical and Orthodox archbishop” (p. 62). Again, Goutzides writes: “His Beatitude Andreas [the former Matthewite archbishop] has fallen as far as possible with the abomination of his resignation in favour of Mr. Nicholas Messiakaris of the Piraeus” (p. 47)!

Since the Kyrikites reject them so violently, it is hardly surprising that the Matthewites under Archbishop Nicholas feel that they are entitled to found their own mission in Russia independently of the Kyrikite mission. (It appears that Metropolitan Epiphanius’ step was taken with the full agreement of Archbishop Nicholas). The Kyrikites cannot have it both ways. Either they recognize Archbishop Nicholas as the lawful archbishop, in which case they have a right to feel indignant if the archbishop founds a second mission on “their” territory (although, of course, it is the territory of the Russian Church).

Or they reject Archbishop Nicholas as a “pseudo-archbishop”, in which case the archbishop has every right to pay no attention to their “rights”, since schismatics have no ecclesiastical rights...

But the Kyrikites have another argument: they claim that their flock in Russia (five priests, one deacon, several hundred parishioners) *is* the Catacomb Church of Russia, so that Epiphanius is, in effect, trespassing on the canonical territory, not simply of another diocese (that of Mesogaia), but of another Local Church (the Russian).

Leaving aside for the time being the question how the Kyrikites can claim that their very small flock constitutes the *whole* of the Catacomb Church of Russia, let us consider another canonical problem that their position raises. Since a Local Church cannot exist without at least one bishop, and since the Russian Kyrikites have no other bishop than Metropolitan Kyrikos, we must presume that the Kyrikites consider Metropolitan Kyrikos to be the head of the Catacomb Church of Russia. But he is also, at the same time, a bishop (one of the very few) of the True Orthodox Church of Greece! So he belongs at the same time to two autocephalous Churches! But this is clearly anti-canonical!

The resolution of this anti-canonicity can proceed in one of two ways. Either Metropolitan Kyrikos renounces for his flock the title “*the* Catacomb Church of Russia”. Or he consecrates a bishop for Russia, who will be entirely a Russian bishop – that is, living in Russia, working only for his Russian flock, and making no claim to have any jurisdiction outside Russia.

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Let us now look a little more closely at the concept of the Catacomb Church. The term brings to mind the situation of the Christians in Roman times, and again during the iconoclast persecutions, when the Church was forced to live in a semi-legal or illegal position vis-à-vis the State. If such a move was necessary under the pagan Roman emperors and heretical Greek emperors, then it was only to be expected that it would again become necessary under the militant atheist commissars of the Soviet anti-State, whose enmity towards religion was much fiercer than that of the pagan Roman and heretical Greek emperors.

The idea that the Russian Church might have to descend into the catacombs, in imitation of the Christians in early Rome, was suggested as early as 1909 by the future head of that Church, Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) of Petrograd: “Now many are complaining about the hard times for the Church... Remembering the words of the Saviour with complete accuracy, we must expect still worse times for the Church... Without any exaggeration, she must truly live through a condition close to complete destruction and her being overcome

by the gates of hell. Perhaps with us, exactly as in the land of freedom, America, they will drive the Name of Christ out of the schools. They will adapt prayer assemblies into ordinary meetings permitted by the police, as in that other land of freedom, France, and will convert the heritage of the Church, together with the very right of faith, into the property of the state. Perhaps the faith of Christ will again hide in the woods, the deserts, the catacombs, and the confession of the faith will be only in secret, while immoral and blasphemous presentations will come out into the open. All this may happen! The struggle against Christ will be waged with desperation, with the exertion of the last drop of human and hellish energy, and only then, perhaps, will it be given to hell and to mankind to assure us with complete obviousness of the unfailing power and might of the priceless promise of Christ: 'I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against her' (Matthew 16.18)."

The first Catacomb hieromartyr was probably the priest Timothy Strelkov, who, after being executed by the Bolsheviks in June, 1918 and then having his severed head miraculously restored to his body, was forced to go into hiding until he was caught and executed for the second time in 1930. In the same year of 1918, Patriarch Tikhon himself had called on the faithful to form unofficial, quasi-catacomb brotherhoods to defend the Orthodox Faith. Shemetov writes: "The brotherhoods which arose with the blessing of the Patriarch did not make the parishes obsolete where they continued to exist. The brotherhoods only made up for the deficiencies of the parishes."

In fact, the organization of unofficial, catacomb bodies like the brotherhoods became inevitable once it became clear that the God-hating State was bent on destroying the Church. Thus according to Archbishop Lazarus (Zhurbenko), "the catacombs began in 1922, when renovationism began. The Optina elders blessed the Christians to go into the catacombs..." Meanwhile, the "Danilovites" in Moscow and the "Andrewites" in the Urals were already preparing for a descent of the Church into the Catacombs. They clearly saw that the Church could no longer at the same time serve openly and have a pure confession of faith, untainted by compromise with the communists or renovationists. The history of the Church in the late 1920s and 1930s was to prove them right...

Shortly before his death, on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1925, the Patriarch confided to his personal physician and friend, Michael Zhizhilenko, that he felt that the unceasing pressure of the government would one day force the leadership of the Church to concede more than was right, and that the true Church would then have to descend into the catacombs like the Roman Christians of old. And he counselled his friend, who was a widower, that when that time came, he should seek the monastic tonsure and episcopal consecration.

That time came in 1927 with the notorious declaration of Metropolitan

Sergius; and Michael Zhizhilenko, following the advice of his mentor, was consecrated as the first bishop (with the name Maximus) of the anti-sergianist Catacomb Church in 1928, for which he paid with his life in Solovki in 1931. Thus was the concept and even the name of the Catacomb Church foreseen by the Martyr-Patriarch himself; it was, and is the “Tikhonite” Church.

Now one of the disadvantages of a Church in a catacomb situation, hiding from State power, is that it is almost impossible to maintain the organizational integrity of the Church, to have regular Councils to resolve problems and disputes; for the central authority may be unable to contact all the bishops, still less convene them in one place. Even worse will be the situation if the central authority, in the person of the Patriarch, is himself killed, and it proves impossible to elect a new one. Anticipating this, Patriarch Tikhon and his Synod issued ukaz № 362 dated November 7/20, 1920, whose first three points were as follows:

“1. With the blessing of his Holiness the Patriarch, the Holy Synod and the Higher Church Council, in a joint session, judged concerning the necessity of... giving the diocesan Hierarch... instructions in case of a disconnection with the higher church administration or the cessation of the activity of the latter...

“2. If dioceses, as a result of the movement of the front, changes of state boundaries, etc., find themselves unable to communicate with the higher church administration or the higher church administration itself together with his Holiness the Patriarch for some reason ceases its activity, the diocesan hierarch will immediately enter into relations with the hierarchs of neighbouring dioceses in order to organize a higher instance of church authority for several dioceses in the same conditions (in the form of a temporary higher church government or metropolitan region, or something similar).

“3. The care for the organization of the higher church authority for the whole group who are in the situation indicated in point 2 is the obligatory duty of the eldest ranked hierarch in the indicated group...”

Now it was anticipated that these autonomous groups of bishops would remain in communion with each other, even if communication was difficult. However, it was also tacitly admitted that if the persecutions intensified (which they did), then communication between groups might be broken entirely. With the loosening of communication, differences were likely to arise between the groups; there might even be ruptures of communion because different groups might suspect each other of canonical irregularities, or even of falling away from the faith; and with the absence of any central authority recognised by both sides, there might be no means of healing the divisions thus created. Such a scenario had taken place in other periods of Church history when the faith had

been persecuted – for example, in the second half of the fourth century in Asia Minor. So it was only to be expected that it would happen during the much more severe persecutions of the 20th century.

So where, in such a situation, was the Church? And on what basis could the Church still be called “one” if she was in fact divided into many parts unable to commune or communicate with each other? Could two autonomous jurisdictions of the Catacomb Church both be said to be part of the One Church if they not only could not commune with each other, but did not do so because of mutual suspicions of anticanonicity?

A very partial and schematic answer to these questions was provided by the Russian Church Abroad in its All-Emigration Council in Serbia in 1938: “We must follow the example of the Church prior to the Council of Nicaea, when the Christian communities were united not on the basis of the administrative institutions of the State, but through the Holy Spirit alone.” In other words, administrative unity was not the criterion of Church unity in the deep sense. The Holy Spirit can “jump the gap” created by administrative disunity to preserve true unity in the Mystery of the One Church.

A little earlier, in July, 1937, the Ust-Kut Council of the Catacomb Church had come to a similar, but slightly more detailed conclusion in its four canons:

“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!**

“4. All branches of the Church which are on the common trunk – the trunk is our pre-revolutionary Church – are living branches of the Church of Christ. We give our blessing to common prayer and the serving of the Divine Liturgy to all priests of these branches. The Sacred Council forbids all those who do not consider themselves to be branches, but independent from the tree of the Church, to serve the Divine Liturgy. The Sacred Council does not consider it necessary to have administrative unity of the branches of the Church, but unity of mind concerning the Church is binding on all.”

So the mystical unity of the One Church is not destroyed by administrative

disunity. But “unity of mind concerning the Church is binding on all”. And anyone who remains in communion with the official, “Soviet church” of the Moscow Patriarchate, or who discredits or separates himself from the Sacred Council of 1917-18, is outside the One Church.

Of course, these two conciliar decisions are only schematic; they do not solve, or pretend to solve, any particular quarrel between jurisdictions. Such quarrels can only be resolved with the re-establishment of central authority – that is, a canonical Patriarch and Holy Synod – after the persecutions have come to an end (which time has still not yet come today, in 2004). At the same time, these decisions enable us to say that a jurisdiction such as the Russian Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) under Metropolitan Lavr is outside the unity of the True Church of Russia insofar as it does allow its members to commune from the clergy of the Soviet church. What these two conciliar decisions exclude is the idea the Church as an administrative monolith. On the contrary, the Church is like a “tree”, of which the different catacomb jurisdictions are the “branches”.

Is this a form of the ecumenist branch theory of the Church? No, because the branch theory that was anathematised by ROCOR in 1983 spoke of branches “which differ in doctrine and way of life”, whereas the different branches of the Church envisaged in the conciliar decisions quoted above are understood to have the same faith and way of life, even if they may not agree about everything. In other words, the Catacomb Church has branches in the same sense that the pre-revolutionary Orthodox Church had branches (in the form of national churches such as the Greek, the Russian, the Syrian, etc.) rather than in the sense that the World Council of Churches has branches made up of denominations with completely different faiths.

In view of the above, it is clear that the Kyrikites have no right to call their own tiny Russian flock the Catacomb Church. It may be one branch on the tree of the pre-revolutionary Russian Church – and that only if its bishop ceases to be a hierarch of the Greek Church. But it cannot claim to be the one and only branch unless it can be proved that every other branch has not only committed some kind of canonical transgression which merits excommunication, but is completely graceless – and such proof the Kyrikites have never provided.

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However, the Kyrikites have to prove that all other branches of the Catacomb Church are graceless for another reason: that they hold to the “monolith” theory of the Church, according to which there can be only one True Church on any one territory, while all others are false. Of course, they apply this theory not only to Russia, but also to Greece, which is why they refuse to accept that any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Greece, whether of the Old or the new

calendar, can have the grace of sacraments. And this is also the reason why they are so passionately opposed to Metropolitan Epiphanius, whom they accuse (whether rightly or wrongly is not the subject of this article) of practising “Old Calendar ecumenism”, that is, of believing that there might be more than one Old Calendar jurisdiction in Greece having the grace of sacraments.

Their reasoning is as follows. If we are true, then they are false, and if they are true, then we are false. But we know that we are true, so they must be false. This theory is held completely sincerely; they see no other way of understanding the dogma of the Unity of the Church. If we are not to fall into the ecumenist branch theory, they think, we have to believe in the monolith theory.

But their reasoning is false because they confuse the Unity of the Church as understood in the Symbol of the Faith, which is a dogmatic and mystical unity, with canonical or administrative unity. St. Maximus the Confessor says: “Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the faith.” Thus faith alone is the criterion of unity.

And that does not mean agreement on absolutely every Church question. Even the apostles did not have such agreement. Thus the Apostles Paul and Barnabas could not agree on how to conduct the mission to the Gentiles – but both remained in the True Church because both had “the true and saving confession of the faith”. As long as the Church on earth exists, there will be such disagreements. But they will not lead to anyone falling away from the Church as long as the true confession of the faith is maintained.

Of course, the two kinds of unity, dogmatic and administrative, are related. Dogmatic unity should be expressed in administrative unity, so that the inner unity of faith of the Christians is expressed outwardly as well; hence the canonical requirement that there should be only one ruling bishop in any one territory. But history shows that there have been many occasions when there has been administrative disunity in the Church while dogmatic unity – and therefore the grace of sacraments – has been preserved.

“Ah, but it is not only heresies that lead to falling away from the Church,” they will object, “but also schisms, in which there are no dogmatic disagreements.” True, but is every division in the Church leading to a break in communion equivalent to a full schism leading to the loss of the grace of sacraments on one side? Church history seems to indicate otherwise, as the following divisions show:-

- (i) between the Roman Church and the Asian Churches over the date of Pascha (late 2nd century),

- (ii) within the Roman Church over the legitimacy of Pope Callistus (early 3rd century),
- (iii) between the Roman Church under St. Stephen and the African Church under St. Cyprian over the question whether schismatics have the grace of sacraments (3rd century),
- (iv) within the Antiochian Church over the legitimacy of St. Meletius (4th century),
- (v) between St. Epiphanius of Cyprus and St. John Chrysostom (early 5th century),
- (vi) between the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Churches over the date of Pascha (6th-7th centuries),
- (vii) between St. Wilfrid of York and the rest of the English Church over the division of his diocese (7th-8th centuries),
- (viii) between St. Theodore the Studite and St. Nicephorus over the lawfulness of restoring Priest Joseph to his rank (9th century),
- (ix) between St. Photius the Great and St. Ignatius over who was lawful patriarch of Constantinople (9th century),
- (x) between the Arsenites and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the forcible deposition of Patriarch Arsenius (13th-14th century),
- (xi) between the Serbian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over Serbian autocephaly (14th century),
- (xii) between the Russian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over Russian autocephaly (15th-16th centuries),
- (xiii) between the Greek kollyvades and the Ecumenical Patriarchate (18-19th centuries) over various matters of Holy Tradition,
- (xiv) between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek State Church over the Greek War of Independence (1821-52),
- (xv) between the Bulgarian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the Bulgarian exarchate (1872),
- (xvi) between two contenders for the throne of the Cypriot Church (late 19th – early 20th centuries),
- (xvii) between two contenders for the throne of Antioch (late 19th – early 20th centuries),
- (xviii) between several contenders for the throne of Constantinople (late 19th – early 20th centuries),
- (xix) between the Russian Church and the Georgian Church over Georgian autocephaly (1917),
- (xx) between the Russian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the latter's seizure of many Russian territories (1920s).

Now some may argue that some of these divisions were in fact full schisms, leading to the falling away of one of the parties for a greater or longer period. Perhaps... But this list proves one thing: that the mere fact of a break of communion between two ecclesiastical bodies does not necessarily entail that

one or other of the parties has become schismatic and lost the grace of sacraments. Why? Because in several of these instances there were saints of the Church on opposite sides of the debate.

Consider, for example, the division in the Church of fourth-century Antioch. On the side of Meletius (himself a saint) were Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, while on the side of Paulinus were St. Athanasius the Great and Rome. If this were a schism in the full sense of the word, we should have to conclude that either Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom or St. Athanasius the Great and the Church of Rome fell away from the Church and became schismatics! But nobody, not even the Kyrikites, believes this.

Again, let us take the Bulgarian "schism" of 1872. The Kyrikites, being Greeks, would probably argue that the Ecumenical Patriarchate's anathema against the Bulgarian Church was valid, so that the Bulgarians ceased to be Orthodox at that time. However, both the Russian Church and the Church of Jerusalem remained in communion with the Bulgarians, and the Russians even provided the Bulgarians with holy chrism. According to the logic of the Kyrikites, therefore, the Churches of Russia and Jerusalem fell away from the Church and became schismatics at that time, because "he who communicates with an excommunicate is himself excommunicate", as St. John Chrysostom says! But nobody, not even the Kyrikites, believes this in the strictest, most monolithic sense. And who will dare to say that the Bulgarian Metropolitan Clement of Trnovo, who died early in the twentieth century in communion with Russia and Jerusalem but not with Constantinople, but whose relics were found to be incorrupt in the 1950s, was in fact a graceless schismatic?

It follows that the monolithic theory of the Church is false. The Church is not divided into different branches differing in faith and life - that is the heresy of ecumenism. But neither is it an absolutely monolithic structure in which the slightest deviation from the norm of unity as understood in the holy canons immediately entails the deviant "branch" being deprived of grace.

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We can better understand the meaning of Church Unity by studying a distinction made by the Catacomb Church Hieromartyr, Bishop Mark (Novoselov) of Sergiev Posad: "It is necessary to distinguish between the Church-organism and the Church-organization. As the apostle taught: 'You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it' (I Corinthians 12.27). The Church-organism is a living person, and just as the cells of our body, besides having their own life, have the life that is common to our body and links between themselves, so a man in the Body of Christ begins to live in Church, while Christ begins to live in him. That is why the apostle said: 'It is no longer I

who live, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2.20).

"The basis for the affirmation of the Church-organism is love for Christ. The Lord Himself saw the basis of His Church precisely in love for Him. He asked Peter: did he love Him? And He added: 'Feed My sheep'. The Church of Christ is the union of mutual love of the believers ('United by the bond of love and offering themselves to Christ the Lord, the apostles were washed clean', *Canon of Holy Thursday*). Only in the Church organism can true democratism, equality and brotherhood come into being; we are equal and brothers only if we are parts of one and the same living body. In the organization there is not and cannot be "organic" equality and brotherhood."

"Only to the Church-organism can we apply such titles as we meet in the Word of God, for example: 'glorious, holy, spotless' (Ephesians 1.4); 'the Bride of the Lamb' (Revelation 19.7; 21.9); 'the Body of Christ' (Ephesians 1.23; Colossians 1.24); 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (I Timothy 3.15). These concepts are inapplicable to the Church-organization (or applicable only with great qualifications); they lead people into perplexity and are rejected by them. The Church-organism is the pure 'Bride' of Christ (Revelation 21.2), but the Church-organization has all the faults of human society and always bears the marks of human infirmities... The Church-organization often persecutes the saints of God, but the Church-organism receives them into her bosom... The Church-organization rejects them from its midst, deprives them of episcopal sees, while they remain the most glorious members of the Church-organism... It is possible to belong externally to the visible Church (organization), while one belongs only inwardly to the Body of Christ (organism), and the measure of one's belongingness is determined by the degree of one's sanctity."

The unity of the Church as organism can remain intact even when her unity as an organization is damaged. A person or church body is cut off from the Church as organism only when the damage done to the Church as organization reaches a certain critical degree, or when union is effected with another, heretical body. In the same way, a couple can remain married even when one spouse walks out on the other. Separation leads to final divorce only when a certain degree of alienation is reached, or when one of the spouses commits adultery. May God preserve us from the spiritual adultery that leads to a falling away from the Body of Christ, and also from a rationalist, mechanical understanding of Church unity which makes the reconciliation of warring spouses impossible!

*May 12/25, 2004; revised November 29 / December 12, 2016 and November 21 /
December 4, 2020.*

4. LETTER ON THE MATTHEWITES AND FLORINITES

As one who is neither Matthewite nor Florinite, but who has belonged to both Churches, I should like to summarise what I think are the strengths and weaknesses of the two sides. My aim is eirenic: that is, if what I write is accepted (a big “if”, of course!), I think it will be seen that there is in fact not only a large measure of agreement on the two sides, but that with some good will unity could be reached without the sacrifice of any fundamental principles on either side.

The Constantinopolitan Patriarchate fell into heresy in 1920 with its ecumenist encyclical “To all the churches everywhere”. Since nobody believes that the patriarchate was actually deprived of grace in that year, and since everybody remained in communion with a patriarchate that had officially and openly and without any ambiguity confessed the pan-heresy of our time, I think it must be accepted that some leeway, some “grey area” between the official confession of a heresy by a church and the latter’s complete falling away from the One, Holy, Catholic Church, does indeed exist.

In 1924 heresy was compounded by schism, the schism of the new calendar, which was introduced in the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, the official Church of Greece, and the Romanian Church. That this was indeed a schism requiring decisive action on the part of the faithful was indicated by the Lord Himself through the appearance of the Honourable Cross in the sky over the Old Calendarists in 1925. The Greek and Romanian Old Calendarists, to their eternal honour and glory, broke communion with the innovators at that time. But none of the other patriarchates did. Again, I think we must conclude that it is possible to remain in communion with heresy and/or schism for a time without oneself falling into heresy or schism.

In 1935 the three metropolitans returned to the new calendar and, together with the four new bishops they consecrated, proclaimed that the new calendarists were schismatics and deprived of the grace of sacraments. Since the Old Calendarist bishops constituted 100% of the confessing bishops of the Church of Greece, and since they were simply confirming the decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Councils of 1583, 1587 and 1593, I can see no canonical reason for doubting the validity of this decision, at least as it related to the official Greek Church.

In 1937 Metropolitans Germanos of Demetrias and Chrysostomos of Florina declared that the new calendarists were only potentially, but not actually schismatics, which led to a schism between them and Metropolitans Germanos of the Cyclades and Matthew of Bresthena. Insofar as Metropolitans Germanos and Chrysostomos repudiated a canonical conciliar decision which they had themselves signed, they must be considered primarily responsible for introducing confusion and division in the ranks of the Old Calendarists. The two metropolitans would have been justified in going back on their original decision only if they had succeeded in demonstrating that the original decision was uncanonical. This, in my view, they failed to do. Their main argument, that the local council of 1935 needed to be confirmed by a Pan-Orthodox or Ecumenical Council was unsound: first, because local Councils are sufficient to expel heretics or schismatics from the Church, and secondly, because in any case several Pan-Orthodox

Councils had already condemned the new calendarists. I believe that the two metropolitans' motivation was not in fact evil: they were very hopeful of getting support from some of the patriarchates, and feared that the sharply worded decision of 1935 would put them off. However, such tactical considerations, even if they had had some basis in fact (which is dubious in view of the later history of these patriarchates), could not justify the repudiation of a canonical decision of the True Church and the consequent confusion and division that this repudiation caused. In retrospect, I think M. Chrysostomos recognised this, which is why he humbly and openly repented of his actions in 1950.

In the same year of 1937 Bishops Germanos of the Cyclades and Matthew of Bresthena separated from the other two metropolitans. Matthew called the president of the Synod "the former metropolitan of Demetrias", as if he had already been defrocked. Although understandable in view of the situation, such extreme language was, in my view, unjustified and could not fail to inflame tempers and make reconciliation more difficult. It is not clear to me whether Matthew actually considered Chrysostomos to have fallen away from grace - his remark on his deathbed: "Why are we divided?" appears to imply not. Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades certainly did not. In any case, such a conclusion is, in my view, impossible to sustain. At worst, Metropolitans Germanos of Demetrias and Chrysostomos of Florina transgressed the 46th Apostolic canon: they were sinners, but not heretics or schismatics. There was no way they could be compared to the Roman Catholic heretics or the new calendarist schismatics. The other main charge against Chrysostomos, that he refused to consecrate any more bishops, likewise does not constitute heresy or schism: no bishop can be forced to ordain other bishops against his will, whatever the motivation for his refusal. In any case, a canonical trial was required in order to defrock him, and no such trial took place. He remained Orthodox. And that, in my view, is the reason why the majority of the Old Calendarists remained with him. My reading of the evidence is that the majority did not in fact believe that the new calendarists were still Orthodox: the predominant confession of the Old Calendarists of both factions remained that of the 1935 Council. But they were convinced that Chrysostomos had been treated unjustly, that he was still Orthodox, and they refused to be separated from their Orthodox archpastor.

In 1948, after years of hesitation, Bishop Matthew, having by this time separated also from Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades, consecrated a bishop on his own. In this way the Matthewite hierarchy was formed. I have described his separation from Metropolitan Chrysostomos in 1937 as "extreme akriveia": this act, by contrast, I would describe as "extreme oikonomia". As such, it was bound to be contested; for it formally transgressed the 1st Apostolic Canon. Many - not only Florinites, but also Matthewites - felt that, since there were at least two Orthodox bishops in Greece at the time (Metropolitans Germanos and Chrysostomos), - three if we include Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades - it was an unjustified oikonomia. The issue is not whether, under certain conditions, a single-bishop consecration is valid - there are several examples of it from Church history. The issue is whether the conditions warranted such oikonomia in this case.

In the same year of 1948, Metropolitan Chrysostomos began to recognise his error of 1937, which enabled Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades to return into communion with him without

demanding any public repentance or “reconciliation with the Church”. This, in my view, is how the Matthewites should have acted later, just after Bishop Matthew’s death in 1950, when Metropolitan Chrysostomos issued a public encyclical repenting of his erroneous statements since 1937. Church history shows that such statements have been quite sufficient to resolve Church disputes which did not involve major heresy. If the Matthewites had united with Chrysostomos at that point, the Old Calendarist movement would have been united under two metropolitans confessing that the new calendarists were real schismatics with no grace of sacraments. But the glittering prize of unity in the truth was lost because the Matthewites distrusted Metropolitan Chrysostomos. In view of his later behaviour, they say, and in view of his refusal to consecrate more bishops, the whole thing would have ended in tears. But how do we know? How do we know that the very opposite would not have happened – that God, seeing the love and humility of His servants, would have strengthened them in the struggle for the truth faith, overcoming their weaknesses and allaying their fears? In any case, speculations about the future should play no part in such decisions. Metropolitan Chrysostomos admitted his guilt: no more was required. He sought forgiveness and reconciliation: it should have been given him.

The division continued, and in 1955 Metropolitan Chrysostomos, the last remaining Florinite bishop, died without consecrating any more bishops. According to some reports, he advised his flock to turn to the Matthewite bishops. Should they have done that? I can’t make up my mind. On the one hand, such an act would have been an act of obedience to their beloved archpastor. On the other hand, it would have involved accepting that that same archpastor died as a schismatic, and that they themselves were returning from schism to Orthodoxy. And that was not only objectively false: it was subjectively impossible for anyone who sincerely believed he was already a member of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

And so, in the early 1960s, the Florinites sought the restoration of their hierarchy through the Russian Church Abroad, and in 1969 Metropolitan Philaret and the Synod of the Russian Church Abroad officially accepted the consecrations of Archbishop Akakios and the other Florinite bishops. In view of this act, I think all discussion of the canonicity of the original consecrations is pointless and quite unnecessarily divisive. The fact is that the Russian Church Abroad, which both sides accepted to be a true Church, accepted them. That should have been the end of the argument. The argument put forward by some Matthewites that the Russians were illegally interfering in the affairs of the Greek Church is, in my view, (i) hypocritical, insofar as the Matthewites themselves asked for the Russians’ mediation only two years later, (ii) invalid, insofar as local Churches have often asked other local Churches to intervene in their affairs. Only on the assumption that the Matthewites were the only True Orthodox of Greece and the Florinites were schismatics could the Russians be said to be illegally interfering. But the official Matthewite publications for the period 1971-76 themselves refute that idea.

In 1971 unity was achieved between the Russians, the Matthewites and the Florinites. This was a golden opportunity to put the past behind them, to forgive if not to forget, for the sake of Church unity and the strengthening of the True Orthodox Church as a whole. That is why I fully understand the desire of the Florinites to discuss only events since 1971 in their

discussions with the Matthewites. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the divisions of the period 1937-71, the two sides were now united not only in a common confession of faith (the Florinites reaffirmed the 1935 confession in 1974 and have never repudiated it since), but were actually in eucharistic communion. Of course, many things have happened since 1971, and since more divisions have arisen in both factions, they cannot be ignored. But I believe that the events before 1971 can be, if not ignored, at any rate recognised as not being ultimate barriers to unity in that differences of opinion about those events did not prevent eucharistic communion being achieved in 1971. And for that reason, I am convinced, those differences of opinion should not be resurrected. If we still disagree about them, we should agree to disagree, and get on with other matters. Of course, there are those who consider that the union of 1971 was a false union, a trap, a betrayal. It was not firm, obviously; and it would be naïve to assume that the motivations of all the actors in it were perfectly pure. But the sanctity of the initiator of the union, Metropolitan Philaret, is clearly witnessed to by the incorruption of his relics; and in my view we can all agree that he would never have consented to put his stamp on an act that was a betrayal of the Orthodox Faith. .

5. THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul?
Mark 8.35.

Recently Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople visited the London School of Economics, and gave a lecture in which he contrasted two principal models of Church-State relations in contemporary Europe: the total separation exemplified by France, and the closer relationship to be found in such countries as Britain, Denmark and Greece.

According to Marcus Plested, writing in the London *Times* (November 26, 2005, p. 82), the patriarch argued that “either model... is perfectly acceptable from a religious perspective. What is more important is that governments and faith communities should work together in the common cause of toleration, respect and mutual understanding. We need, in other words, to find a model of positive co-operation and not mere separation or indeed exclusive patronage of a particular religious tradition.

“He called this new model one of ‘symphonia’ – working together in unison. Symphonia is an old notion deriving from the Byzantine model of harmony between Church and empire – both instituted by God to provide, respectively, for the spiritual and temporal needs of the people.

“The Patriarch has given this ancient notion a new interpretation, turning it into a startlingly prophetic call for a re-imagining of the relation between religion and politics free from the tired dichotomies of the 19th and 20th centuries.

“Recent world events, from September 11, 2001, and July 7 this year, to the riots on the streets of Paris, have reminded us that religion is not simply going to disappear as a major social and political issue. It remains a deep-seated force. The great virtue of the Patriarch’s lecture was to provide a vision for the channelling of all this religious energy to the service of the greater social good, for the welfare of those of all faiths and those of none.”

What are we to say of this model of Church-State relations? Does it correspond in any way with the Byzantine “symphonic” model?

What does the “symphony” that the Ecumenical Patriarch proposes promise for us?

Symphony or Cacophony?

The Byzantine model of Church-State relations is formulated in the Emperor Justinian's *Sixth Novella* as follows: "The greatest gifts given by God to men by His supreme kindness are the priesthood and the empire, of which the first serves the things of God and the second rules the things of men and assumes the burden of care for them. Both proceed from one source and adorn the life of man. Nothing therefore will be so greatly desired by the emperors than the honour of the priests, since they always pray to God about both these very things. For if the first is without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God, and the other adorns the state entrusted to it rightly and competently, a good symphony will exist, which will offer everything that is useful for the human race. We therefore have the greatest care concerning the true dogmas of God and concerning the honour of the priests..., because through this the greatest good things will be given by God - both those things that we already have will be made firm and those things which we do not have yet we shall acquire. Everything will go well if the principle of the matter is right and pleasing to God. We believe that this will come to pass if the holy canons are observed, which have been handed down to us by the apostles, those inspectors and ministers of God worthy of praise and veneration, and which have been preserved and explained."

It is not any kind of harmony or co-operation that is in question here, but only a true symphony that comes from God. As I.N. Andrushkevich points out, the word "symphony" (*consonantia* in the original Latin) here denotes much more than simple agreement or concord. Church and State can agree in an evil way, for evil ends. As A.V. Kartashev, the minister of religions under the Russian Provisional Government, points out, "this is no longer symphony, but cacophony". True symphony is possible only where both the Church "is without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God", and the State is ruled "rightly and competently" - that is, in accordance with the commandments of God. It presupposes that both sides in the "symphony" are Orthodox. "Symphony" in any other context is inconceivable.

Now the Ecumenical Patriarchate is far from being "without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God". Since its notorious encyclical of 1920, and especially since its entry into the World Council of Churches in 1948, it has been an enthusiastic participant in "the heresy of heresies", ecumenism. And ecumenism is not its only major sin against the Orthodox Faith...

However, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the Ecumenical Patriarch is Orthodox. The question then arises: with what government, and under what conditions, can it enter into a truly "symphonic" relationship?

The Global Patriarch

Patriarch Bartholomew's see is in Turkey. But a "symphonic" relationship with an Islamic power is out of the question. Most of his flock lives in Western Europe, North America and Greece. But the western powers, too, are not Orthodox. The President of Greece could be said to be Orthodox. But his "symphonic partner" is the Archbishop of the State Church of Greece.

In the absence of an Orthodox emperor, or of an Orthodox ruler who does not already have his own "symphonic partner" in the form of the head of his Local Church, the Ecumenical Patriarch is forced to embrace... the *oikoumene* – that is, the whole inhabited earth! Crazy as it may seem, there is a kind of logic in this. Let us see what it is.

In the 1920s the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletius IV (Metaxakis) stole large areas of Europe from the jurisdiction of the Russian and Serbian patriarchates, and created one Archdiocese of North and South America and another of Australia. This might seem to indicate only that the patriarchate had believers scattered all over the world. However, there was more to it than that...

In 1938 St. John Maximovich, then Bishop of Shanghai, 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 [in 1686], 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 [from the Russian to the Ecumenical Patriarchate], 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."

Patriarch Bartholomew has continued this trend. In July, 1993 he convened a “great and super-perfect Synod” to judge Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem and certain of his collaborators for their supposed interference in the Australian Archdiocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and certain other questions. The main problem was a very valuable property in Australia which the owner and founder, Archimandrite Hierotheus, refused to give to the Greek Archdiocese, but donated to the patriarchate, which accepted it and sent two bishops, Hesychius and Timothy, to arrange the transfer and establish an exarchate there. It was assumed, completely contrary to the canons, that Jerusalem was “interfering” in Australia on the grounds that the Ecumenical Patriarchate had sole jurisdiction in all lands not directly within the boundaries of any other patriarchate, and therefore in Australia also, in spite of the fact that the Jerusalem Patriarchate had had a mission in Australia since 1892, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate – only since 1924.

The clear implication of this action is that *only* the Ecumenical Patriarchate has jurisdiction in Australia, Western Europe, North and South America, Asia and Antarctica. This is not quite the whole *oikoumene* – but not far off it! Moreover, if we remember that Bartholomew is also contesting the Russian Church’s jurisdiction in the Ukraine and Estonia, it will become clear that even the territories of the other established patriarchates are not safe from his rapacity! Since Jerusalem’s capitulation to him at the “super-perfect” Synod, the Eastern patriarchates are effectively in his pocket. As for the territories of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia, since they were they all under the jurisdiction of Constantinople at one time or another in the past, so why, he could argue, should they not be so now?

However, there is one patriarchate that Bartholomew would not dream of upsetting or encroaching upon – that of Rome, which through the ecumenist heresy he recognises as his own Church’s elder sister (or second lung, as at Balamand). But Rome already claims jurisdiction over the whole *oikoumene*. So Bartholomew’s ambitions to rule the whole of Orthodoxy worldwide, on the one hand, and his recognition of the Pope of Rome’s authority, on the other, lead to a most paradoxical state of affairs, in accordance with which, as A.D. Delimbasis writes, Bartholomew is “trying to put Jerusalem [under] Antioch, Antioch under Alexandria, Alexandria under Constantinople and Constantinople under the heresiarch Pope...”

The Global State

So far we have been talking mainly about Churches. But symphony is between the Church and *the State*. So we return to the question: what is the State with which Bartholomew, as Ecumenical Patriarch of the East in subjection to the Ecumenical Pope of the West, wishes to be in symphony?

There is no State in the ordinary sense of the word that could be the partner to such a Global Patriarch. It could only be a *Global State*, or World Government – the government of that “international community” of western nations that likes to speak as if it were the whole world.

However, this World Government or “New World Order” is not wedded to any particular faith, unless that faith is the purely secular one of democracy and human rights. Hence the need for the patriarch to emphasise in his lecture (according to the newspaper report) that his symphonic model does not involve the “exclusive patronage of a particular religious tradition”, but is aimed at “the welfare of those of all faiths and those of none”.

But what concord or symphony can there be between Orthodoxy and heresy, between faith and unbelief?

In his *Novella 131* the Emperor Justinian decreed: “The Church canons have the same force in the State as the State laws: what is permitted or forbidden by the former is permitted or forbidden by the latter. Therefore crimes against the former cannot be tolerated in the State according to State legislation.” This is true symphony: the State recognises that it is pursuing the same aim as the Church, and therefore legislates in all things in accordance with the legislation of the Church. For, as Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes, “in their single service to the work of God both the Church and the State constitute as it were one whole, one organism – ‘unconfused’, but also ‘undivided’. In this lay the fundamental difference between Orthodox ‘symphony’ and Latin ‘papocaesarism’ and Protestant ‘caesaropapism’.”

Bartholomew, however, is both a Latin papocaesarist through his submission to the Pope and a Protestant caesaropapist through his submission to the Protestant-dominated New World Order.

Perhaps he is something even worse...

In Russia, the main accusation against the founder of the present-day Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Sergius, was that he proclaimed the joys and sorrows of the God-fighting Communist State to be the joys and sorrows of the Church. In other words, he identified the interests of the Orthodox Church with those of the Communists. His successors even called Stalin “the new Constantine”... This heresy has been called “Sergianism”, and has been anathematised by the True Orthodox Church of Russia.

Has not Patriarch Bartholomew become a sergianist in that, under the guise of the Orthodox doctrine of the symphony of powers, he has in fact identified

the interests of the Church with the interests of the antichristian world?

Conclusion: The False Prophet

The journalist who reported the patriarch's speech praised him for "living up to his title of Ecumenical Patriarch - a title which underlines the universality of his ministry.

"This ecumenical vocation is not only to foster unity within the Orthodox Church, or even within fractured Christianity itself, but also to build bridges between faith traditions and to defend and argue the merits of the centrality of religion in human affairs.

"In all these areas, the Ecumenical Patriarch has shown us that he is no mere relic of a lost empire but rather a voice, and perhaps even a prophet, for our own times."

We may agree that the Ecumenical Patriarch is a voice - but not like the voice of the Baptist crying in the wilderness the message of repentance, but rather the voice of the serpent that lulls the conscience and whispers: "You shall not die" (Genesis 3.5). We may even agree that he is a prophet - but a prophet like Caiaphas, who, "being high priest that year, prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11.51). For Bartholomew, while preaching the most complete toleration for men of all faiths and even of no faith, "prophesies" that the holy monastery of Esphigmenou should die for the sake of the Greek nation, and himself sends his servants with spades and pick-axes to carry out the "prophecy"!

But he is closest of all to another false prophet - that false prophet of whom the Apostle John writes in Revelation that "he had two horns like a lamb, and spoke as a dragon... and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast" (13.11,12) - the Antichrist. For by pretending that he, as supposedly the first bishop of Orthodoxy, can enter into a "symphonic" union with the New World Order, as if the latter were the government of a new Constantine or Justinian, he is betraying his flock into the hands of the son of perdition. For it is precisely out of this New World Order, this "sea" of peoples (Revelation 13.1) "of all faiths and of none", that the beast who is to take the place of Christ and sit in the temple as God will arise...

*November 19 / December 2, 2005.
St. Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow.*

6. THE CYPRIANITES, THE TIKHONITES AND BISHOP AGATHANGELUS

The fall of ROCOR into heresy and schism on May 17, 2007 has produced a flurry of activity from the Cyprianites (especially Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna) and the Romanian and Bulgarian Old Calendarists that are in communion with them. Overtures appear to have been made to two groups that separated from ROCOR: the Tikhonites (so called from their leader, Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia), who separated from the apostasizing part of ROCOR under Lavr over five years ago, and Bishop Agathangelus of Odessa, who separated on May 17.

The overtures to the former group would seem to be doomed since on November 7/20, 2005 Metropolitan Cyprian, having received Igumen George (Pukhaev) from the Tikhonites in 2003, consecrated him as Bishop of Alania, with his see in Tskhinval, South Osetia. The Tikhonites are unlikely to take kindly to this “poaching”, especially since it took place on what they consider to be the canonical territory of the Russian Church (although South Osetia is in Georgia), where they consider the Greek Old Calendarists to have no jurisdiction. Moreover, the Tikhonite ecclesiology in relation to the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy is stricter than that of the Cyprianites.

At first sight, it would seem that the Cyprianites are unlikely to be more successful in relation to Bishop Agathangelus, who has issued a statement declaring his lack of interest in any union with non-Russian Churches. Moreover, he was a member of the compromised Lavrite Synod that, among other things, broke communion with the Cyprianites themselves in 2005. However, the very fact that Agathangelus remained for so long with the Lavrites when they had clearly embarked on a pro-MP, ecumenist course may have encouraged the Cyprianites to think that he embraces the same “moderate” (i.e. neither one thing nor the other) ecclesiology as themselves.

In any case, the Romanian Metropolitan Vlasie, and the Bulgarian Bishop Photius of Triaditsa, who are in communion with Metropolitan Cyprian, have offered to help Bishop Agathangelus to ordain bishops for his group, which would seem to indicate that the Cyprianite group of Churches is looking to Bishop Agathangelus as the best candidate for the title “last remaining true ROCOR bishop(s)”.

This probably explains the panicky, explosive reaction of the Cyprianite Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna on hearing that Bishop Agathangelus’ clergy in the USA had had informal talks with clergy of the True Orthodox Church of Greece (the so-called “Chrysostomites”) – by far the largest Greek Old Calendarist Church, comprising 70% of all the Greek Old Calendarists, which

defrocked Metropolitan Cyprian in 1986 for communion with the new calendarists. The Cyprianite Chrysostomos, as is his wont, launched into a very fierce and slanderous attack against the True Orthodox Church of Greece.

However, this did not stop the development of friendly relations between the “Agathangelites” and the “Chrysostomites”. Thus on May 25, 2007 Archbishop Chrysostom (Kiouisis) of Athens and his Synod sent a letter to Bishop Agathangelus, in which they congratulated the “Agathangelites” for refusing to follow ROCOR into “ecclesiastical non-existence”. Fr. Victor Dobrov, speaking on behalf of the “Agathangelites”, said he was “very pleased” by this letter. But he stressed that the Chrysostomites, unlike the Cyprianites, had *not* offered to help to consecrate any bishops for their group, and that they were not in fact interested in consecrations.

On July 1 an anonymous “Greek Old Calendarist” (why anonymous?) returned to the attack against the Chrysostomites. Dismissing all non-Cyprianite accounts of the history of the Greek Old Calendarists, including that of the present writer, as “full of errors and omissions”, he proceeds to “set the record straight”. However, this “putting the record straight” is so short, so full of personal bile and so lacking in theological content or historical accuracy as to make any detailed refutation pointless.

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One statement of his, however, does call for comment: “Though some might argue that the Cyprianites have a debatable ‘ecclesiology’, (but only in theory), our experience with them is that most of them conduct themselves as true Christians”. We have no wish to deny the possibility that the great majority of Cyprianites behave as true Christians (except, it would seem, when they tell lies about the True Orthodox Church of Greece!). But the phrase “debatable ‘ecclesiology (but only in theory)’” requires further comment.

How can an ecclesiology be debatable “in theory” but not in practice?! An ecclesiology is by definition a theory, not a practice – or rather, it is a teaching, a teaching about the nature of the Church. As such, it is either true or false, whereas a practice is either good or bad, productive or unproductive, efficient or inefficient. Now the Cyprianite ecclesiology is that heretics and schismatics are “sick” members of the True Church. That includes, in their opinion, the Moscow Patriarchate, the new calendarists and “World Orthodoxy” in general. That teaching is false – as even the anonymous “Greek Old Calendarist” seems to acknowledge by calling it “debatable” and by refusing to discuss it in detail.

If the Cyprianite ecclesiology is false, then it is completely irrelevant how good or bad individual Cyprianites may be. Unfortunately, however, the

Cyprianite arguments often seem to come down to a comparison between personalities. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and the anonymous "Greek Old Calendarist" both praise Metropolitan Cyprian to the skies, while condemning Chrysostomite hierarchs in equally personal terms. In fact, many have remarked that Cyprianism seems to be built, on the one hand, on a false ecclesiology of accepting the ecumenist heretics as Orthodox, and on the other hand, on an attitude of hero-worship, *prosopolatria*, in relation to their leader. This makes the charge of "papism" directed against Archbishop Chrysostom of Athens sound particularly hypocritical...

In an earlier article ("The Cyprianites and ROCOR", *Vernost'*, 85, May, 2007) the present writer concluded: "If there is one lesson to be drawn from the fall of ROCA, it is that provided by St. Mark of Ephesus: there is no mid-point between truth and falsehood, no "moderate" position that can keep clear of the abyss of heresy while refusing to condemn and anathematize it and its leaders. The fall of ROCA has been the direct result of their rejection of their own anathema against ecumenism, under whose curse they have now fallen. The only condition for the continued survival of the anti-uniates is a return to humble obedience to that anathema and a firm rejection of those siren voices coming from the Cyprianites and elsewhere that preach acceptance of the enemies of God as one's brothers in Christ."

It also should be remembered that the Cyprianites, while being in schism from their own "Mother Church", the True Orthodox Church of Greece, have only a superficial understanding of the situation in the Russian Church. This is proved by their Synod's official statement of May 10/23, 2007, which in its ninth point declares that "the historical basis and occasion for the rift among the Russians (1917-) has been removed and no longer exists, it was quite different from the dispute which divided, and continues to divide - since it still exists and is, indeed, reinforced daily, - the Orthodox into *ecumenists and resisters* (1920, 1924-)."

This appears to be saying that the only real issue dividing Russian Orthodox Christians today is *ecumenism*, while the issue of *sergianism* "has been removed and no longer exists". The present writer asked one of the Cyprianite bishops whether this was a correct interpretation. He conceded that this point was "not so well-phrased", but tried to rescue the situation by saying that "the intent was the emphasise that, even if one takes the attitude that the Bolshevik regime has passed and that thus this motive for division has disappeared, there still remains the other prime motive, which is that which caused the division outside the range of communist influence, that is the issue of ecumenism".

We shall have to wait for statements from other Cyprianite bishops - preferably from the whole Synod - to know whether this official statement of

May 10/23 was imply “not so well-phrased” and should be reinterpreted in the way indicated above. Until then, however, we have to take the statement at its face value. And that means that, for the Cyprianites, sergianism is no longer an issue separating True Russian Christians from the Moscow Patriarchate.

But this is unacceptable for any True Russian Christian. The issue of sergianism remains as vital as ever. The MP, even after the fall of communism (if it has truly fallen, which seems extremely debatable), still remains a creation of Soviet power, and therefore extra-ecclesiastical and even anti-ecclesiastical in its origin. It supports the neo-Soviet regime of Putin, is headed by KGB agents and in general has not changed its attitude to the collective antichrist that gave it birth. It is, therefore, not only the question of ecumenism that divides all True Russian Christians from the Soviet church. In fact, sergianism is still more fundamental than ecumenism, for it was because of its sergianist submission to the Bolsheviks that the MP joined the ecumenical movement in 1961, and it is because of its continued sergianism to the neo-Soviet regime of Putin that it remains in the ecumenical movement now.

In view of this, those Russian groups who are being courted by the Cyprianites should consider the following questions:

1. How can we benefit from union with a Church that officially accepts the Moscow Patriarchate as being within the True Church?
2. How can we benefit from union with a Church which conducts such a fierce, and fiercely personal, war against the True Orthodox Church of Greece, whose only major canonical (as opposed to personal) “sin”, in its eyes, lies in the TOC’s categorical rejection of World Orthodoxy as being outside the Church?
3. How can we benefit from union with a Church that regards the issues of communism and sergianism as being out-of-date, so that the only real issue that separates it from the Moscow Patriarchate is that of ecumenism?

June 22 / July 5, 2007.

7. WHAT IS THE LOCAL CHURCH?

The Russian church writer Lev Regelson has recently pointed out: “The concept of the ‘Local’ [*pomestnoj*] Church has long ago lost its literal sense. Nobody is surprised any longer by the existence of communities of the Russian Church in Africa, consisting of local aborigines. So that now it would be more correct to speak about the Autocephalous Russian Church as the historical successor of the Orthodox Church of the Russian Empire, which has gone beyond the bounds of the territorial, state or national principle.” In fact, not only has the concept of the Local Church been lost: the administration of the Orthodox Church as a whole has been in a state of increasing anarchy since the fall and break-up of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires in 1917-18. The resultant enormous political changes, combined with the creation of large Orthodox minorities of various nationalities in the non-Orthodox countries of the West, have created huge problems of administration that have stretched the concept of the Local Church almost to breaking point. If these problems have afflicted the heretical, but more-or-less well-organized Churches of “World Orthodoxy”, they threaten completely to tear apart the right-believing, but divided True Orthodox Churches. This article is an attempt to introduce some clarity into the debate by going back to basic principles, on the one hand, and the witness of Church history, on the other.

1. Basic Principles

The first principle of Church organization, according to canon law and the early patristic sources (such as St. Ignatius of Antioch), is that the primary unit of the Local Church is *the bishop* and the Christians of the territory he administers. There can be only one bishop for any one given territorial unit. All the Christians living within that territory, whatever their nationality, must submit to the bishop of the territory. It is forbidden to create sub-units within the territorial unit on the basis of race, class or any other criterion unless they are blessed by the bishop and under his overall control. It is forbidden to divide the territorial unit into smaller sub-units, each with his own bishop, without the agreement of the bishop of that territory.

Although the power of the bishop is largely autocratic within his diocese so long as he rightly divides the word of truth, he is obliged to join with other bishops of neighbouring territories to form *synods* presided over by the senior of the bishops - the metropolitan or archbishop. This rank does not constitute a fourth level of the priesthood above bishops, priests and deacons, and a metropolitans or archbishop cannot impose his will on the other members of his synods. At the same time, the bishops of a synod cannot make any decisions in synod without the agreement of the metropolitan or archbishop.

Synods of bishops have the right to investigate complaints against the behaviour of an individual bishop within his diocese and to discipline, or even to defrock, him if he is found to have transgressed the dogmas or canons of the Church. Moreover, they, and they alone, have the right to ordain the successors of bishops who have been defrocked or who have died, and to create new dioceses. It is this collective, collegial character of the episcopate, as expressed in the meetings and decision-making of synods of bishops, that both ensures apostolic succession within individual dioceses and the organizational unity of the Orthodox Church as a whole.

In essence, these two levels of Church organization – that of the individual diocese, and that of the metropolitan or archiepiscopal district – are the *only* levels of Church organization that are required in order that the Church should carry out all her essential functions...

2. The Patriarchal System

The third level of Church organization with which we are familiar today – that of the patriarchate – did not come into being formally speaking until the fourth century, although there are signs of it already in the second. It was immediately accepted by the Church, and therefore undoubtedly constituted a natural development. It consisted in bringing the main centres of Church life and authority into correspondence with the five main centres of political power and cultural life in the Roman Empire – Rome, Antioch and Alexandria, in the first place, joined later by Constantinople and Jerusalem (Jerusalem was not important *politically*, but it was important spiritually and historically as being “the Mother of the Churches”). This was a natural development because, on the one hand, these centres contained larger numbers of Christians living in the midst of more, and more varied, temptations, who therefore needed more, and more experienced and educated clergy to serve them, and on the other, there was an obvious need for Christians to establish good relations with the political authorities and, if possible, convert them to the faith. And so the metropolitans of these large urban centres acquired great prestige, becoming “super-metropolitans”, or patriarchs, exercising authority over a wider area and a larger number of bishops and metropolitans.

However, problems began to arise when the Empire began to lose territory in some directions, and acquire it in others. Thus from the seventh century three of the five patriarchates – Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem – found themselves outside the bounds of the Roman Empire under Muslim rule and administering a much smaller proportion of the local population than before (for most had become heretics or Muslims). Inevitably, this led to a decline in their de facto importance (even if they retained de jure their titles and places in the pentarchical order), and a corresponding increase in the importance of the

new “duarchy”, Rome and Constantinople.

But Rome and Constantinople had problems caused by their very success in converting the barbarians. The Roman pope, although technically still a subject of the Eastern Roman Emperor until the mid-eighth century, had to deal with several newly converted kings over whom the Emperor had no real suzerainty, and whose power could have been used to create national Churches independent of Rome. Some of the remoter Western Churches, such as the Irish, *were* essentially autocephalous; but Rome was remarkably successful, partly through her own skilful and energetic diplomacy, and partly because of the genuine reverence of the Germanic peoples for Roma Aeterna, in containing the threat of “ecclesiastical nationalization” until the late eleventh century, when theological differences with the Eastern Church, on the one hand, and the secession, first of England, and then of the German “Holy Roman Empire”, on the other, precipitated the transformation of the patriarchate into a semi-ecclesiastical, semi-political institution with strongly militaristic tendencies – the heretical papacy of Roman Catholicism.

Now the Latins effectively deny the concept of the Local Church. For them, there is only one Church, the Roman, which is not local, but universal. All local churches around the world are simply parts of the Roman Church. The idea of a Local Church standing alone in the world, without the symbiotic link to Rome, is unthinkable – Rome is the Church, and no Church can exist outside or independently of the Church that is in Rome. For the Orthodox, on the other hand, a Local Church contains within itself the fullness of God’s grace, and if all the other Local Churches in the world fell away from the truth, it could continue to exist on its own. So the idea of an “ecumenical” or “universal” patriarchate is incompatible with the Orthodox concept of the Universal Church as a family of Local Churches whose only Head is Christ. Moreover, as St. Gregory the Dialogist, Pope of Rome, pointed out to St. Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria, when refusing the latter’s offer of the title “ecumenical”, if there is an ecumenical or universal patriarchate, when that Church falls, the whole Church falls with it...

Unfortunately, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, while not falling into the heresy of Papism, did accept the title “ecumenical” and began to act in some ways like an eastern papacy. The concept of the Local Church was not denied, as in Romanism, but the Local Churches increasingly came to be seen as satellites of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP) whose independent status could be ignored as and when necessary. Within the bounds of the Orthodox Empire, in which the EP was also the Church of the Orthodox Emperor, a certain degree of ecclesiastical centralization was perhaps natural and even beneficial. Thus a small, Greek-speaking Local Church such as Cyprus would naturally look for support to the Orthodox Emperor, and therefore come within the orbit of the

Imperial Church, too. But what about Local Churches that were outside the Empire and not Greek-speaking?

A critical test-case came with the conversion of the Bulgarians to Orthodoxy. The Bulgarian Tsar Peter wanted an autocephalous Church for his independent kingdom. This, at first, the Greeks were prepared to give – especially since Pope Nicholas I would offer it if they did not. However, the Bulgarians later overplayed their hand, demanding not only an autocephalous Church, but even that their tsar should be in the place of the Roman Emperor. But since the threat here was as much political as ecclesiastical, it elicited a politico-military response: the Byzantine emperors, especially Emperor Basil “the Bulgar-killer”, invaded Bulgaria, made the country again a part of the Empire, and removed the autonomous status of the Bulgarian Church. The patriarchate undoubtedly agreed with the emperors in this action, but its symphonic relationship with the Empire delivered it from the necessity, unlike Rome in relation to England or Germany, of dirtying its hands by direct political action in order to bring her insubordinate daughter to heel.

However, the threat posed by Bulgarian (and, in the fourteenth century, Serbian) claims to ecclesiastical autonomy, raised a question that the Byzantines were never really able to answer satisfactorily: what was to be the status of the Churches in newly converted territories beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire? The original web of Local Churches, Metropolias and Patriarchates had grown up within the cocoon of the Empire, and was held together, not only by unity of faith, but also by the Roman Emperor, who convened Councils and enforced discipline when necessary. There had been bishoprics and even Local Churches outside the Empire from an early date (in Ireland, Abkhazia, Armenia, Georgia, Persia, Arabia, Ethiopia), but they lived in lands that were not a threat to the Empire politically (except Persia) and therefore could be treated as honorary confederates of the Empire. However, by the eleventh century at the latest it was evident that the idea of a Universal Church coterminous with a Universal Empire was a myth that had outlived its usefulness. Large numbers of Orthodox Christians lived in independent States that were either friendly (Russia, Georgia) or only intermittently friendly (Bulgaria, Serbia) or openly hostile to the Empire (the Arab Caliphate, the “Holy Roman Empire”). And yet the Byzantines continued to cling on to the idea of a pentarchy of autocephalous Churches, all obliged to pay formal allegiance to the Emperor in Constantinople, in spite of the fact that his Empire was becoming steadily smaller and less powerful. The idea of expanding the pentarchy to admit new Local Churches, or patriarchates, that did not owe civil allegiance to the Emperor was accepted only with great difficulty. But the irony is that when the Empire did eventually fall, in 1453, the Balkan Orthodox peoples were not freed to form their own autocephalous Churches, but came under a new uniting power: the Ottoman Sultan, who appointed the

Ecumenical Patriarch as “ethnarch”, or ruler, of the “millet”, or race-as-defined-by-religion, of all Orthodox Christians of all nationalities. Evidently, it was not pleasing to Divine Providence that the centrifugal forces of ecclesiastical nationalism should be given free rein just yet...

3. Nationalism and the Church

This situation began to change in the early nineteenth century, when the Greek and Serbian revolutions set off revolutions against Ottoman rule throughout the Balkans, with the result that by the end of the century the Greeks, Serbs, Bulgars and Romanians had all acquired independent States and Churches. However, this essentially political achievement came at a heavy spiritual price: a schism between the newly-autocephalous Church of Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which remained under Ottoman rule, and another schism between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Church. Thus in 1872 the Ecumenical Patriarchate condemned the Bulgarian Church’s attempt to claim that all Bulgarians living in Turkey, that is, on the territory of the patriarchate, belonged to her jurisdiction. This was a clear violation of the principle of territoriality, and was condemned as the heresy of “phyletism”. Unfortunately, however, it was not difficult to accuse the Greeks of the same heresy they had just condemned. For centuries during the Turkish yoke, the Phanar had appointed Greek bishops serving only in Greek over Serbian, Bulgarian and Romanian congregations. The “phyletism” of the Bulgarians, though wrong, had been elicited to a large degree by the nationalism of the Greeks of the Phanar...

Moreover, independence did not bring with it any obvious spiritual fruit: on the contrary, monasticism declined sharply throughout the liberated regions, while the essentially western-inspired doctrine of nationalism brought with it, as Constantine Leontiev noted, other western diseases, such as liberalism, ecumenism and modernism. The Russians, while sympathetic to the desire of the Balkan Orthodox to be liberated from Ottoman rule (it was Russian armies that liberated Bulgaria in 1877-78), were worried that their success in liberating themselves would encourage separatist movements in their own empire. Some of the Russian Tsars, such as Nicholas I, as well as some of the Greek elders, such as Athanasios Parios, even doubted whether the Balkan Orthodox had the right to rebel against the Sultan; for “all authorities are of God”, including the Sultan, and it would have been better for them to remain in obedience to him until they were liberated from outside.

Nevertheless, the new State Churches of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania came to be universally recognized (though in the case of the Bulgarian Church, not until 1945). However, problems relating to the legitimacy of self-proclaimed autocephaly remained. Thus:- On what basis can a group of

Orthodox bishops break free from their ecclesiastical head and form a new, autocephalous Church? Is it sufficient simply that political conditions should change, placing the group in a different State from its former head? But surely nothing is done in the Church without obedience and the blessing of higher authorities? Surely their previous head should bless it? And perhaps even that is not enough, perhaps the approval of all the autocephalous Churches has to be obtained in an Ecumenical Council? What if the bishops and flocks involved do not represent more than a small minority of the population of the State they live in? Could not this lead to evident absurdities, such as autocephalous Turkish and Albanian Orthodox Churches (both of which “absurdities” actually came into existence in the early twentieth century)?

In 1906 an important conference took place in St. Petersburg to discuss the issue of Georgian Church autocephaly. In 1783, at the Treaty of Georgievsk, the Georgian king had given control of the foreign policy of the kingdom to Russia in exchange for the preservation of its territorial integrity and royal dynasty. However, in 1800 the Russians violated the treaty, annexing the country and abolishing its royal dynasty and ecclesiastical autocephaly. Now the Georgians were agitating for restoration of ecclesiastical autocephaly, if not for political independence.

The Georgians’ case for autocephaly was strong, since nobody denied that the Georgian Church had been autocephalous since the fourth century, and that autocephaly had been abolished without their consent. However, most delegates at the conference argued that in one state there should be only one Church administration, so that the Georgian Church, as existing on the territory of the Russian Empire, should remain part of the Russian Church. Moreover, to encourage a division of Church administrations would encourage political separatism, would undermine the unity of the Empire, and therefore work against the interests of all the Orthodox of the Empire (and beyond it). This view prevailed. The delegates accepted a project put forward by Protopriest John Vostorgov (the future hieromartyr) giving the Georgian Church greater independence in the sphere of the use of the Georgian liturgical language, of the appointment of national Georgian clergy, etc., but the project for Georgian autocephaly was rejected.

A minority view was put forward by the Georgian Bishop Kirion, who after the revolution became leader of the Georgian Autocephalous Church. In his report, “The National Principle in the Church”, he argued, as Pavlenko writes, that “Georgia ‘has the right to the independent existence of her national Church on the basis of the principle of nationality in the Church proclaimed at the beginning of the Christian faith.’ What does principle consist of, and when was it proclaimed? ‘It is sufficient to remember,’ writes Bishop Kirion, ‘the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, who immediately began to glorify God in

various languages and then preached the Gospel to the pagans, each in their native language.’ But in our [Pavlenko’s] view, references to the preaching of the apostles in connection with the affirmation of the national principle in the Church have no firm foundation. The preaching of the apostles in various languages was necessary in order to unite the peoples in the Truth of Christ, and not in order to disunite them in accordance with the national principle. That is, the principle of nationality is precisely that which Christianity has to overcome, and not that on which the Church must be founded. Since the Bulgarian schism phyletistic argumentation has characteristically sought support in references to the 34th Apostolic canon. ‘The basic canonical rule,’ writes Bishop Kirion, ‘by which the significance of nationality in relation to Church administration is recognised, is the 34th Apostolic canon which is so well known to canonists... According to the direct meaning of this canon in the Orthodox Church, every nationality must have its first hierarch.’ But the 34th Apostolic canon... has in view ‘bishops of every territory’ and not ‘bishops of every people’. The word *ethnos*, which is employed in this canon in the ancient language and in the language of Christian antiquity, is translated in the dictionary of Liddell and Scott first of all as ‘a number of people accustomed to live together’, and only then as ‘a nation’. It is precisely the first sense indicated here that points to the territorial meaning of the Apostolic canon. So references to its national meaning are groundless.”

Bishop Kirion also argued that dividing the administration of the Church along national, racial lines had the advantage of preserving the idiosyncrasy of each nation. And in support of his argument he cited the 39th Canon of the Council in Trullo in 692, which allowed Archbishop John of Cyprus to retain all his rights as the head of the autocephalous Church of Cyprus while living, not in Cyprus, but in the Hellespont, to which he had been exiled because of barbarian invasions. Bishop Kirion argued that this canon prescribed the preservation of Cypriot idiosyncrasy, and so “acquires a very important significance from the point of view of Church freedom”.

However, as Pavlenko points out, in this canon “not a word is said about ‘national religious-everyday and individual particularities’ and the like, but there is mention of the rights of first-hierarchs over bishops and their appointment. ‘Let the customs of each [autocephalous] Church be observed,’ it says in this canon, ‘so that the bishop of each district should be subject to his president, and that he, in his turn, should be appointed from his bishops, according to the ancient custom.’ The émigré Church of Cyprus, of which mention is made in this canon, did not become the national Church of the Cypriots, but took into herself all the peoples of the Hellespont district where they emigrated [the bishop of Cyzicus, who was under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was temporarily placed in subjection to the Archbishop of Cyprus]. Where is mention made here of a conciliar sanction for

the preservation of 'local ecclesiastical traditions' with the aid of administrative isolation?"

The example of the Cypriot Church paradoxically once again demonstrates the priority of the territorial principle over the racial principle. For the Cypriots living in the Hellespont were not allowed to form a second Church administration on the territory of the Hellespont in addition to that of the Bishop of Cyzicus. Rather, the two "races" were placed under a single Church administration – only, perhaps unexpectedly, it was not the Cypriots who were subordinated to the Cyzican bishop, but the other way round...

4. The Global Jurisdictions

However, there is at least one clear example in Church history when the territorial principle yielded to the racial principle with, it would seem, the blessing of God. The Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR) began its autonomous existence in 1920, when a number of South Russian bishops together with their flocks fled to Constantinople, and from there to Serbia. The Serbian Church, grateful to the Russians for their defence of Serbia in the First World War, not only offered the émigrés hospitality, but allowed them to form an essentially autonomous administration on Serbian territory. Although this situation is sometimes compared to that of the Cypriot Church discussed above, it in fact differs from it in one very important aspect; the Russian hierarchs were *not* placed in subjection to, or integrated into, the Serbian Church hierarchy. So here we have a clear violation of the territorial principle: two Church administrations occupying the same territory. Moreover, the Russian Church Abroad established similarly autonomous dioceses in many other parts of the world, making it a truly global Church – but the global Church (outside Russia) of a single nation.

There were powerful reasons, besides gratitude, for making this exception to the rule. First, Russian hierarchs were clearly better able to look after the spiritual needs of their Russian émigré flock than Greek or Serbian or Bulgarian or Arab hierarchs; and the trauma of revolution and persecution in the Homeland combined with poverty and homelessness abroad made the pastoral needs of the Russian émigré flock paramount. Secondly, the reputation of the Russian Church, and in particular of the leader of the Church Abroad, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev, was very high throughout the Balkans and the Middle East. Metropolitan Anthony was an internationalist in the best sense of the word, enjoying close relations from well before the revolution with the leading hierarchs of the non-Russian Churches; and if anyone could have maintained peaceful relations with the non-Russian hierarchies, it was he. Thirdly, it was in the interests of all the Orthodox that the terrible threat posed to them all by Soviet communism should have a powerful

rebuker in the form of an autonomous Russian Church Abroad, which witness would be lost if the Russians merged into the various jurisdictions of the Local Orthodox Churches.

If the violation of the territorial principle could be justified in the case of the Russian Church Abroad on the basis of pastoral considerations and for the sake of the Orthodox faith, the same could not be said of the “ecclesiastical imperialism” indulged in after the First World War by the EP. The patriarchate did sometimes bow to force majeure, as when it recognized the annexation to the Serbian Church of all areas within the boundaries of Yugoslavia in 1922, and agreed to the inclusion within the State Church of Greece of a number of dioceses in the Greek State, and recognized the autocephaly of the Albanian Church in 1937. However, where it saw political weakness it pounced like a bird of prey. Thus as the Russian Empire disintegrated Patriarch Meletius Metaxakis and his successors carved out autonomous jurisdictions around its edges in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary – and later even penetrated closer to the heart of the empire in the Ukraine. And in America, where before the revolution all the bishops of all nationalities had been subject to a Russian archbishop (the future Patriarch Tikhon), it formed a purely Greek “archdiocese of North and South America”, thereby encouraging the formation of other racially defined Churches on American territory. All this was justified on the basis of a perverse interpretation of the 28th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which supposedly transferred all the “barbarian territories” into the jurisdiction of Constantinople. And yet the irony was that on the Ecumenical Patriarch’s own canonical territory of Turkey Orthodoxy was declining very sharply while his own power was severely limited by the secular authorities.

The example provided by the EP encouraged other Local Churches to carve out overseas empires for themselves. Thus, as pointed out by Lev Regelson at the beginning of this article, the Moscow Patriarchate now has “colonies” in Africa and all around the world; and the same applies to the Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Antiochian, Alexandrine and even Albanian Churches. The only Local Churches which still apply the territorial principle in anything like its original meaning are the State Church of Greece and, to a lesser extent, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which do not allow any other jurisdictions on their canonical territories and are severely restricted (by the Ecumenical Patriarchate) in having “colonies” overseas. The absurdity of the situation is illustrated by the names of the bishops. Take, for example, Britain, where the bishops of Thyateira, Diokleia, Telmessus, Sourozh and Sergievo all have flocks - but none in their titular dioceses, which have been defunct for centuries (except for Sergievo)! Only the ROCOR bishop was (until the 1980s) more realistically called “of Richmond and Great Britain”. By their titles these bishops evidently wanted to indicate their submission to their imperial heads in Moscow or

Constantinople rather than the real identities of their flocks. Only the ROCOR bishop, being a “rebel”, could preserve the territorial principle in his title.

After the fall of communism in 1991, some of the global jurisdictions began to falter. The most dramatic collapse was that of ROCOR, which (apart from substantial “rebel” groups) entered into communion with the MP in 2007. This demonstrates *both* the importance of having a territorial base (which the MP had but ROCOR did not) *and* the continuing pull of ethnic ties in World Orthodoxy. And by “ethnic ties” we mean old, Orthodox ethnic ties (Greek, Russian, etc.); for Local Churches based on more recent ethnic groups seem to be less successful. Thus the “Orthodox Church of America” attracts only a minority of the American Orthodox, and has no global empire...

5. The Restoration of Local Churches

The canonical differences among the True Orthodox often come down to the question: where or what is the Local Church (of Greece, Russia, etc.)? Now if the hierarchy of a Local Church has fallen into heresy and therefore out of the Orthodox Church, it is reasonable to assume that that minority of hierarchs, priests and laity who remain faithful to the truth now constitute the Local Church. For, as St. Sophronius of Jerusalem writes: “If any should separate themselves from someone, not on the pretext of a [moral] offence, but on account of a heresy that has been condemned by a Synod or by the Holy Fathers, they are worthy of honour and approbation, for they are the Orthodox.” And, as St. Nicephorus of Constantinople writes: “You know, even if very few remain in Orthodox and piety, then it is precisely these that are the Church, and the authority and leadership (concerning) the ecclesiastical institutions remains with them.”

However, two problems tend to arise at this stage. The first is that the True Orthodox are divided among themselves – about, for example, the degree of the fall of the official Local Church, whether it still has grace or not. In this case, it is not obvious how to decide which of the two or more groups constitutes the true Local Church, or whether several or all of them do. The former mechanism for settling ecclesiastical disputes – appeal to the decision of the Synod of the official Local Church – no longer exists. Sometimes appeal can be made to another Local TOC to mediate, as when the “Matthewite” TOC of Greece appealed to ROCOR in 1971. But it is not clear whether any of the groups is obliged to accept the decision of this “foreign” TOC...

A second problem relates to the *size* of the TOC, and whether it has bishops or not. It may be that the TOC in question has no bishops, and is obliged to turn for help to other TOCs. The question then arises: is the very small TOC now truly autocephalous, or does it form part of the larger TOC to which it has

turned for help?

The example of the TOC of Greece is important here. In 1924 the official Church of Greece fell into schism by introducing the new, Grigorian calendar. Those who refused to follow the official Church into schism formed the movement of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece. At first, the TOC consisted almost exclusively of laypeople with a very few priests (although more priests came to their help from the autonomous monastic republic of Mount Athos). By the early 1930s the movement had swelled to some hundreds of thousands of people – in spite of the fact that they had no bishops. In 1935 three bishops joined them from the official Church. In 1955 they again found themselves without bishops, but in 1971 ROCOR officially restored their hierarchy. Throughout the period from 1924 to the present day the True Orthodox Christians of Greece have considered themselves to be the Local Church of Greece – and there is no good reason to deny them this title. Nor did ROCOR attempt to subsume them into their own Church or in any way restrict their independence, as befitted a true Local Church. In supplying the Greeks with bishops the ROCOR bishops saw themselves as helping a sister Church to re-establish herself – no more.

A similar example is provided by the True Orthodox Christians of Cyprus. This Church was in communion with the “Matthewite” True Orthodox Christians of Greece, and received her first bishop from them in 1948. Although small and at no time with more than one bishop, this Church’s autocephaly was recognized by the TOC of Greece.

A third example is provided by the True Orthodox Christians of Romania. After the calendar change in 1924, the True Orthodox Christians of Romania had no bishop and only one priest. In spite of this, and fierce persecutions from the State Church, they received their first bishop in 1955 and now have a large Church with a full complement of bishops.

From these examples it follows that smallness of size cannot invalidate the right of those few Orthodox Christians who have resisted a dominant heresy on the territory of a Local Church to call themselves the true successors of that Church. We have quoted the words of St. Nicephorus that the authority of the ecclesiastical institutions remains with those who remain in Orthodoxy, however few they may be. This must be affirmed, however difficult it may be for these few to preserve an independent ecclesiastical existence...

Against this thesis it may be objected that to call a group of Christians without a bishop a Local Church is to contradict our first basic principle: “the primary unit of the Local Church is *the bishop* and the Christians of the territory he administers”. Moreover, if the mark of a Local Church is its autocephaly (or,

at any rate, autonomy), how can it be autocephalous (that is, with its own head) if it is in fact “acephalous” (without a head)? Is not any other view a form of Protestantism?

Of course, if a group of Christians finds itself deprived of true bishops in their own Local Church, they should seek to find one in another Local Church; for there is no doubt that without a bishop they will be severely hampered in their activity and cannot survive in this condition for long. However, this does not mean that they are necessarily “acephalous” if they do not have an earthly bishop. If they are baptized and confess the true faith, and are *involuntarily* without a bishop, then they remain members of the Church, whose Head is Christ. “For it is better to be led by no one,” says St. John Chrysostom, “than to be led by one who is evil. For the former indeed are often saved, and often in peril, but the latter will be altogether in peril, being led into the pit of perdition”.

Even if these are without a bishop on earth, they are still under the omophorion of the Bishop of bishops, the Lord Jesus Christ. For “where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18.20), said the Lord. And again the Apostle Peter says: “You were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd *and Bishop* of your souls” (I Peter 2.25). It is not Protestantism to consider such Christians within the Church: rather, it is Romanism to consider that a Christian without an earthly bishop is necessarily outside the Church. So a Local Church that has been deprived of its Local Head is not dead so long as there are members of the Church that still retain their bond with the Head of the Universal Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moreover, even if the members of this Local Church acquire another Local Head from another Local Church, this must be considered only a temporary “transplant”, as it were, until the Local Church can acquire a bishop of its own again. Let us take as an example the Church of Serbia, which fell into the heresy of ecumenism in the 1960s. In the 1990s, a revival of Orthodoxy took place there when some Serbian monks from Mount Athos returned the True Faith to their Homeland. Since then, the Serbs have been served by a bishop from the TOC of Greece – but without ceasing to call themselves, and being in fact, the TOC of Serbia. Now the desire of all those who love Serbian Orthodoxy must be that the TOC of Serbia will become strong enough to cease to need a “transplant” from her sister Church, and will acquire a bishop or bishops of her own in order to demonstrate to the world, and especially to the apostate ecumenists in Serbia itself, that the Local Church – the *true* Local Church – of Serbia is alive and well.

For if a Local Church has only recently fallen into heresy, it must be desirable to attempt to restore this Church by giving her her own bishops as soon as possible, rather than destroying her as an independent unit and subsuming her

indefinitely under some other Local Church. And this for two major reasons: it will strengthen those who have remained faithful to Orthodoxy, and it will facilitate the conversion of those who have fallen away. For historical experience has demonstrated without a doubt that faith is strengthened in a people if the faith can be shown to be *native*, that is, already linked to the land by deep bonds of language, race, tradition and statehood; so that in converting to Orthodoxy the people feel that they are returning to their own native Church rather than joining a foreign one.

It is a different matter, of course, if the Local Church has been dead for many centuries, or if the land is pagan. In this case, the land must be considered to be *missionary* territory, and remain under the tutelage of a “Mother Church” in another country until Orthodoxy is firmly implanted in it. Even then, however, as is proved by the practice of the best missionaries, such as St. Innocent in Alaska or St. Nicholas in Japan, the aim must be to create the conditions for Local, autonomous or autocephalous Churches, with their own native clergy and with services in the native language, as soon as possible...

Conclusions

- I. I. The Orthodox Church, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, is composed of Local Churches governed on the territorial principle by Synods of Bishops.
- II. II. The boundaries of Local Churches have fluctuated greatly depending on political changes, the movements of peoples, and the rise and fall of Orthodoxy in different parts of the world.
- III. III. Over the centuries the territorial principle has been distorted by political pressures and heterodox ideologies, such as phyletism and global imperialism, until now it is hardly to be found.
- IV. IV. The restoration of the Local Church must go hand-in-hand with the restoration of the territorial principle. Where possible, the pre-revolutionary Local Churches should be restored with bishops and priests living on the territory of the Local Church.
- V. V. It is impossible to predict the future map of the Local Orthodox Churches. Much will depend on whether an Orthodox empire will arise to regulate the relations of the Churches. In any case, it is hoped that the distortions of the past will be eliminated, and the principle of territoriality reasserted.

March 28 / April 10, 2008; revised November 6/19, 2021.

8. THE HERESY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ELITISM

The Cyprianites have published on their website an account of their Hierarchical Council of October 4/17, 2008. It contains interesting and revealing information on their “efforts at union with the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece” – that is, the GOC headed by Archbishop Chrysostom (Kiouisis) of Athens. It reveals that since February five meetings have taken place between the two sides (three Bishops from both sides), which have “now reached a historical turning-point”.

Although still striving for unity with the GOC, the Cyprianites reveal that they cannot accept the ten “non-negotiable points” laid down by the GOC on September 9/22. Since the Cyprianites regard these points as “inappropriate for publication”, and since the GOC have also not published them, we can only guess at what they might be. Nevertheless, from what the Cyprianites write, and from other sources, it is clear what the main stumbling-blocks are: the GOC’s insistence that Metropolitan Cyprian created a schism in the 1980s, and that the new calendarists must be anathematized.

Regarding these ten points, the Cyprianite Synod came to the following conclusions “after a very protracted discussion”:

“In principle, it would be possible for us to agree with several of these points, once various improvements and modifications have been made to the wording thereof.

“However, any final ‘convergence’ of both sides on these points would be rather artificial and superficial, as long as there remain crucial ‘points’ on which there is no possibility of concession on our part – that is, on points non-negotiable in terms of a theology of Orthodox resistance.

“These crucial ‘points’ (the repetition of Chrismation and Baptism – even when simply improperly performed – and the nominal anathematization of New Calendarists), if adopted and explicitly proclaimed by us, would lead to a different interpretation of the other ‘points’ as well, and to an outright denial of our ecclesiological principles.”

Put in less diplomatic terms, this amounts to a rejection of the GOC’s ecclesiology. Some points relating to their ecclesiological principles are rejected outright; others require “various improvements”. *Nothing* is accepted unconditionally.

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Since the GOC's points were laid down as "non-negotiable", this looks like the end of the road for the unity talks. However, the Cyprianites still desperately cling on to the hope of unity through a vague kind of doctrinal compromise: "There arises the question of the extent to which, for the sake of the supreme good of unity, we can without absolute ecclesiological uniformity on both sides - as was the case at least up until 1984 - achieve oneness with the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece on the basis of fundamental points of agreement, leading to a General, Pan-Orthodox, or Oecumenical Synod for decisive adjudication and resolution of those points still in dispute." In other words: let's agree to disagree on certain things, and just get together on the basis of what we do agree on - a truly Anglican solution!

In fact, the Cyprianite ecclesiology is reminiscent of the Anglican Church's "High", "Middle" and "Low" structure. As is well-known, the Cyprianites believe that the Church is composed of "healthy" members (the Orthodox) and "sick" members (the heretics) until and unless a "Unifying Ecumenical" Council decides to expel the heretics. We might call this the division of the Church into "High" and "Low". But now, through their suggestion of a compromise union with the GOC, they are also adding a "Middle" layer - the GOC itself. So the Greek Church, in their understanding, is composed of three levels: a "High", or supremely healthy level, composed of the Cyprianites, who alone hold the true ecclesiology; a "Middle" level, composed of Old Calendarists who reject ecumenism but are unfortunately tainted with the illness of an over-zealous ecclesiology (often labeled "Matthewite"); and a "Low" level, composed of the new calendarists, who are sick with the still worse illness of the pan-heresy of ecumenism, but still remain members of the Church.

But this is the broad way of the Broad Church which, as the Lord says, leads so many to destruction! Of course, it is true that differences of opinion have always existed in the One True Church, and there have probably always been hidden heretics within the Church's single organizational structure. As long as these differences remain relatively hidden, and there is no open challenge to the Church's position, they are tolerable in the sense that they are not driven out by official decree, it being hoped that the erring will come to their senses through a process of reasoned argument at a personal level within the Church. But the Church can never be officially reconciled with differences on dogmatic questions; it must always seek to eradicate them and remove impenitent heretics; it can never say: "You are a heretic, nevertheless you are a member of the True Church and are permitted to receive the Body of Christ". The Cyprianites' elitist, quasi-Anglican model seeks to *institutionalize* dogmatic differences, making them *the norm*. It is the dogmatic equivalent of the Tolstoyan moral teaching on the necessity of non-resistance to evil.

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It should be remembered that in 1984 Metropolitan Cyprian broke communion with his first-hierarchy, Metropolitan Callistus, and with all the other "Florinite" hierarchs, explicitly for reasons of the faith. He regarded the confession of faith of Metropolitan Callistus, which is identical to the confession of faith of today's GOC, as "without witness, unproven, anti-patristic, and hence un-Orthodox" (*Agios Kiprianos*, July, 1983, p. 210). In other words, he regarded Metropolitan Callistus' views to be *heretical* – even if he did not use the word "heretical" for diplomatic reasons. This was an open schism, and an open challenge to the faith of the Church, which received its due rebuttal in 1986, when Metropolitan Cyprian was condemned as a heretic by the GOC Synod.

Now, believing his false "Ecclesiological Theses" (1984), it was quite natural for Metropolitan Cyprian to break communion with Callistus and to refuse to enter into communion with any hierarchy who thought like him. But then why are his successors now seeking to re-enter communion with our Church, although our hierarchs have not changed their confession in any way? Either Metropolitan Cyprian was wrong to break communion with Metropolitan Callistus, or the present Cyprianite hierarchs are wrong to seek to enter into communion with the GOC hierarchs who think like Metropolitan Callistus – there is no "third way".

The present Cyprianite hierarchs are trapped by their loyalty to their founder, by their refusal to admit that he made a serious mistake. How different has been the behaviour of the Tikhonites (the True Orthodox Church of Russia under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk), who in their recent Odessa Council clearly and unambiguously renounced Cyprianism and admitted that the ROCOR hierarchs' entrance into communion with the Cyprianites in 1994 was wrong. This is the way forward: to place the True Confession of Faith as the first value, and to admit honestly and honourably that mistakes can and have been made in relation to it even by the most distinguished of hierarchs – there is no place for man-pleasing or man-worship in the Church of Christ.

Nor is there any place for elitism, for a hierarchy of Orthodox, semi-Orthodox and heretics within the One Church. The Body of Christ is composed solely and exclusively of those who confess the True Orthodox Faith in its entirety, and those who publicly reject any part of that Faith cannot be admitted to the Holy Mysteries. If this were not so, then the Church would not be One, but would actually be an aggregate or confederation or alliance of many sub-churches, differing from each other in one or more articles of the Faith, on the model of the Anglicans or the World Council of Churches.

At the First Ecumenical Council St. Nicholas of Myra slapped the face of the heretic Arius. He did not wait for the Council to condemn him officially – and

the Lord and the Mother of God approved of his act. If the Cyprianites claim to have the same faith and zeal as St. Nicholas, let them (metaphorically) slap the face of the ecumenist heretics and confess that they are outside the One True Church and deprived of the grace of sacraments. Then there will truly be a sound basis for them to re-enter the True Church, having sincerely repented of the schism they created. But if they do not repent, then the True Church, holding fast to the principles of the true ecclesiology, must refuse them entry; for, as the Prophet says, “how can two walk together if they be not agreed?” (Amos 3.3).

December 6/19, 2008; revised August 15/28, 2020.

Addendum. In 2014, after the deaths of both the heretic Metropolitan Cyprian and the right-believing Archbishop Chrysostomos, the GOC Synod under Archbishop Callinicus received the Cyprianites into communion with themselves. A very lengthy confession of faith was accepted by the two sides, which, however, contained no condemnation of Cyprianism, no repentance of the Cyprianites for their schism of 1984, and no explicit, clear statement that the new calendarists now (that is, in 2014) are outside the Church with no grace of sacraments. In the months that followed, the Cyprianites made no secret of their lack of repentance: Archbishop Chrysostomos and Bishop Auxentius said openly that they had nothing to repent of, and Bishop Ambrose also refused to repent (in public, at any rate). So the present GOC Synod can be said to be now a Cyprianite ecclesiastical structure, with healthy members that confess the faith of the Church and sick members who deny it – publicly.

9. ON THE CONDEMNATION OF HERETICS

The writers of the article “On the Status of Uncondemned Heretics”, published by the Synod in Resistance, take issue with two ecclesiological theses:

1. “It has been argued that the ecumenists, and, more generally, the ecumenist Churches, have already fallen away from the Body of the Church entirely, that is, they are branches that are automatically cut off from the Vine, and this, indeed, can be demonstrated from the fact that we do not have Mysteriological (Sacramental) communion with them.”
2. “It has also been asserted that the Fifteenth Canon of the First-Second Holy Synod in Constantinople, under St. Photios the Great (861), in characterizing the Bishops who preached heresies that had previously been condemned as ‘pseudo-bishops’ and ‘pseudo-teachers’, opened up a new era in a certain way, giving us the right to consider such Bishops, henceforth, as *automatically* deposed, ‘prior to a synodal decision’, and no longer as being Bishops.”

It is not made clear who is supposed to uphold these two theses, but this is perhaps not important. More surprisingly and more importantly, the article contains only a very brief discussion, with no names or dates, of the heresy of ecumenism, and the synodal verdicts against it: almost the whole of the article is taken up with a discussion of general principles regarding the condemnation of heretics in the context of the period of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. We shall discuss these general principles in a moment. But it is necessary to point out at the beginning that, by refusing to discuss twentieth-century Church history in more than a very superficial way, the article has proved nothing one way or the other with regard to the status of the ecumenist heretics. For how can we say whether the ecumenist heretics are already condemned or not, if we do not discuss the various synodal verdicts that have been considered, rightly or wrongly, to be relevant to their status?

1. Who Represents the Church?

The only discussion of ecumenism in the article in question comes in the context of the declaration of certain “basic principles”, such as: “a. First and foremost, it is not correct, or even just, that a local Church should be characterized and regarded as ecumenist *in toto*, simply because a number of Her clergy – and sometimes a small number, at that – are actually ecumenists: *they* are certainly not to be equated with the local Church.”

Who, then, *is* to be equated with the local Church? The first-hierarchy? The

Synod of Bishops? What if the heads of the Churches have endorsed clearly ecumenist statements published jointly with *already-condemned* heretics, as has happened many times in the World Council of Churches since the 1960s, and at Chambesy in 1990 and Balamand in 1994? What if joint prayers with heretics continue at the highest level (for example, the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople in the Vatican itself or in the Phanar) over a period of *decades*, if not *generations*? We seek in vain for answers to these questions in this article. In fact, no answer is given to the question it itself raises: who can be said to represent the Local Church?

“b. The local Orthodox Churches today are fundamentally anti-ecumenist; the inertia of the silent majority does not in any way imply agreement with, or endorsement of, ecumenist activities and teachings.”

No evidence is given for this extremely surprising statement. In fact, all the evidence points in the opposite direction. For example, the Phanar and the Vatican appear to be as close as they have ever been. Again, there has been a notable *increase* in the ecumenical activity of the Moscow Patriarchate since it engulfed ROCOR in May, 2007, including an increased representation at the World Council of Churches. Again, the Antiochian Patriarchate shows no signs of breaking its union with the Monophysites, and the Alexandrian Patriarchate appears to be following its example. The Local Orthodox Churches have been falling over themselves to tread the path to Rome and other heretical centres. Their main quarrel has been not with the heretics, but with each other, as was recently demonstrated at the Orthodox-Catholic talks in Ravenna.

As for the “silent majority”, we cannot determine what they believe for the simple reason that they are silent! But if they are silent, this does not speak in their favour, for, as St. Gregory the Theologian says, “By your silence you can betray God”. Indeed, when the majority is silent in the face of massive betrayal of the faith carried out over *generations*, there are only two possible conclusions: either they agree with their heretical hierarchs, or they are too indifferent to questions of the faith to make any protest. But such Laodicean indifference to the truth is itself the characteristic feature of the ecumenist heresy, as Metropolitan Philaret of New York pointed out ...

In any case, the Holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils did not come to their decisions after taking democratic opinion polls of the opinions of their flock. For a true bishop, a successor of the apostles and therefore the representative of his diocese, does not need to consult his flock in order to know whether a certain teaching is truth or heresy – he consults only his conscience and the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

“c. It should not be forgotten that no local Church has proclaimed *synodally*

that the primary dogma of the ecclesiological heresy of ecumenism is a teaching of the Orthodox Church that must be believed and that it is necessary for salvation; and neither has this even been proclaimed in a pan-Orthodox manner.”

The Constitution of the World Council of Churches commits all its members to a Protestant theory of the Church – essentially the ecumenist branch theory. Insofar as each Local Church approved its entry into the WCC at a synodal level, it proclaims ecumenism *synodally*. Moreover, there are many ecumenist decisions of the World Council of Churches that have been accepted in an official manner by the Local Churches. For example, in 1982, at a conference in Lima, Peru, the Protestant and Orthodox representatives to the WCC agreed that the baptism, eucharist and ordinations of *all* denominations were valid and acceptable. In 1983 the ROCOR Council of Bishops specifically anathematized not only the branch theory, but also this particular manifestation of the branch theory: “to those... 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... **Anathema.**”

A particularly clear example of the official acceptance by the Local Churches of the ecumenist branch theory is the Balamand agreement of 1994, 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 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 ecumenist branch theory.

Some argue that these ecumenist decisions signed by representatives of the

Local Churches are not binding, because they were not ratified by later synods. However, this is sophistry. Since the time of the First Ecumenical Council, it has been normal practice for the heads of Local Churches to send representatives to Councils, and the decisions signed by these representatives have been accepted as representing the faith of the Local Churches without the need for any further synodal “ratifications”. Of course, it is possible for a Local Church to reject decisions signed by her representatives, as the Roman Church rejected the decisions of the Council in Trullo (692), which were signed by her *apocrisarii*. But this is not the case with the ecumenist “councils” of recent decades – no Local Church has expressed any protest against the decisions signed by her representatives.

2. When is a Schism not a Schism?

The article we are examining proclaims the well-known teaching of the Synod in Resistance that the True Church contains both true believers and heretics, both “healthy” and “sick” members; for “the members of the Body can be ailing, that is, they can be in error regarding the Orthodox Faith, and in this way their spiritual communion with the God-Man can be ruptured; in spite of this, even as ailing members, they are not dead; they continue to belong institutionally to the Body, which is precisely what happens with a healthy human body, in which there can also exist unhealthy cells, or with a tree in bloom, which may also have sickly branches.”

We can agree with this if we are talking about individual lay members of the Church who do not represent the Local Church in the way that a bishop represents his diocese or a patriarch his patriarchate. It is an obvious fact that not every member of the Church has the same understanding of the faith, and some members have a purer and deeper faith than others. But when a hierarch proclaims heresy “with bared head” from the ambon, then, according to the Fifteenth Canon, he is not just a sick member of the Church but a “pseudo-bishop” and a “spiritual wolf”, from whom the other members of the Church must flee if they want to remain inside the Church.

However, the article goes on to argue that such “pseudo-bishops” or “spiritual wolves” still remain members of the True Church, with all the privileges of their Sees (“they presided over thrones and were heretics *in* the Church”). They remain “sick” members of the Church until they have been excommunicated *either* (1) by their own actions in separating themselves from the Church into schismatic communities *or* (2) through synodal verdicts. Thus “when the Holy Ecumenical Synods summoned Nestorios of Constantinople (the Third Synod in Ephesus) and Dioscoros of Alexandria (the Fourth Synod in Chalcedon) three times to appear for judgement, they acknowledged that the heresiarchs in question still occupied their Sees, up to that time, from which

they spoke and acted in the name of, and on behalf of, the Orthodox Church.”

Let us consider these two criteria: (1) the creation of a schism, and (2) condemnation by a Synod.

We can agree with the first criterion, i.e. that those who voluntarily depart from the Church into schism “sever, by themselves, their institutional connection with the healthy Body of the Church”, and “such individuals are, and should be considered to be, decisively and ‘entirely cut off’”.

But does not this criterion apply precisely to, for example, the new calendarist ecumenists, who in 1924 separated themselves from the Body of the Church by choosing to celebrate the feasts and fasts of the Church at a different time? For it is inaccurate to say that the Old Calendarists “walled themselves off” from the new calendarists. It is the other way round: the new calendarists separated from the Church by refusing to celebrate the feasts at the time appointed by the Church, while the Church – that is, the Old Calendarists – simply stood where she had always been. And then the new calendarists compounded their sin by synodically condemning the Old Calendarists...

3. Can a Local Council Cast Out Heretics?

Is a conciliar verdict necessary in order to expel a heretic, as the second criterion declares? At first sight it would seem that the answer to this question is: yes. However, there are grounds for thinking that Arius was invisibly expelled from the Church long before the First Ecumenical Council of 325. For when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria, in the form of a twelve-year-old child in torn clothing, and was asked by St. Peter: “O Creator, who has torn Your tunic?”, the Lord replied: “The mindless Arius; *he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood.*” And this took place *before* St. Peter’s martyrdom in 311. So here we see an exemplification of the Lord’s words to Nicodemus: “He that believeth not is *condemned already*” ([John](#) 3.18), and the Apostle Paul’s words: “A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject, knowing that he... is *self-condemned*” ([Titus](#) 3.10, 11).

There is a distinction between the mystical *organism* of the Church and her visible, external *organization*. This distinction was worked out in detail by New Martyr Mark (Novoselov), the leader of the Catacomb Church in Moscow, who was shot in 1938. So we could say that Arius was cut off from the mystical *organism* of the Church by Christ, but was cut off from the external *organization* of the Church by the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. But this distinction does little to help the argument of this article. For of what benefit is it to be a member of the Church’s external organization while being cut off from

her mystical organism by the Head of the Church Himself?

Moreover, we must not think, as the writers of this article appear to think, that only an Ecumenical Council can cut off a heretic from the external organization of the Church. Since this is an important point, let us examine several examples from the history of the Church:-

a. *Arius*. He was first cut off from the Church, not by the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council in 325, but by his own bishop, St. Alexander, Archbishop of Alexandria, in local Councils in 321 and 323. The Ecumenical Council was convened because in some parts of the Church St. Alexander's decision was disputed, and there were even attempts to overthrow it in other local councils. However, the First Ecumenical Council settled the dispute once and for all by *confirming* the original decision of St. Alexander – who, of course, had the complete right to defrock one of his own priests, but needed the added authority of “the great and holy Synod” of Nicaea in order to confirm his decision.

b. *Nestorius*. He was first cut off from the Church by a local Council in Rome under St. Celestine in August, 430, and then by another local Council in Alexandria under St. Cyril. Finally, in 431 the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus *confirmed* the decisions of these local Councils. Thus St. Celestine wrote to the clergy of Constantinople who were opposing Nestorius: “The authority of our Apostolic See has determined that the bishop, cleric or simple Christian who has been deposed or excommunicated by Nestorius or his followers, after the latter began to preach heresy, shall not be considered deposed or excommunicated. For he who had defected from the faith with such preachings cannot depose or remove anyone whatsoever.”

c. *Monothelism*. This heresy was first condemned by a local Council under St. Martin the Confessor in Rome in 649. It was confirmed in another local Council under St. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (a Greek from Tarsus), in Hatfield, England on September 17, 679. The decision of the English Church was then brought by St. Wilfrid, Bishop of York, to Rome, where another local Council under St. Agatho condemned the heresy for the third time, on March 27, 680. Finally, in 681 the Sixth Ecumenical Council anathematized it again, *confirming* the decisions of the three Western Councils. It should be noted that when the heretical bishop Theodosius in conversation with St. Maximus the Confessor disputed the validity of the first of these Councils, of 649, on the grounds that it was not convened by an emperor like the Ecumenical Councils, St. Maximus replied that the validity of a Council depended on its recognising “the true and immutable dogmas”, not on who convened

it or how general it was. Again, when the same saint was asked in the Emperor's palace why he was not in communion with the Throne of Constantinople, he replied: "... 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?"

d. Iconoclasm. This heresy was first condemned by a local Council in Rome under Pope Gregory III in 731. This decision was then *confirmed* by the Seventh Ecumenical Council under St. Tarasius in 787. Bishop Theophan the Recluse points out that before the start of the Seventh Council, its president-to-be, St. Tarasius, bewailed the fact that "we (the iconoclastic Church of Constantinople) are being anathematised by them (the other Local Churches in Local Councils) every day". There is no suggestion that the saint considered these local decisions to be invalid. Rather, he hastened to bring his Church out from under the anathemas by confessing the true faith. Moreover, those heretics who were united to the Church during the Council confessed that they had been *outside* the Church before this. Thus we read in the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. "These are the words of the uniting iconoclasts. Thus Basil, bishop of Ancyra, said: 'As far as I was able, I investigated the question of the icons and converted to the Holy Catholic Church with complete conviction.' Theodore, bishop of Myra, said: '... I beseech God and your holiness to unite me, the sinful one, to the Holy Catholic Church.'" (pp. 41, 43 in the edition of the Kazan Theological Academy). And here are the witnesses of the holy Fathers of the Council: "His Holiness Patriarch Tarasius said: 'What is now to be our relationship to this heresy that has again arisen in our time?' John, the most beloved of God, locum tenens of the apostolic throne in the east, said: 'Heresy divides every man from the Church.' The Holy Council said: 'That is evident.' The Holy Council said: 'Let the bishops who are standing before us read their renunciations, insofar as they are now converting to the Catholic Church.'" (p. 48).

It is clear, therefore, writes Christopher Gorman, "from the cited canonical, conciliar and Patristic witness, that when a bishop publicly and pertinaciously embraces a heresy over an extended (albeit canonically undefined) period of time, a process of deprivation begins to occur, which gradually strips him of his administrative, teaching and sanctifying authority, which can lead, in certain cases, to *de facto* deposition and expulsion from the Church, even without an official pronouncement by a competent council."

If local Councils did not have the authority to expel heretics from the Church, we should have to condemn many local Councils for exceeding their competency and assuming an authority that did not belong to them. These

would include many local Councils of the Early Church, which expelled such heretics as Marcion and Sabellius; the local Councils of the Great Church of Constantinople between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries that expelled the Roman Catholics; the local Councils of the Russian Church presided over by Patriarch Tikhon that anathematized the communists and their co-workers in 1918 and the renovationist heretics in 1923. However, the Church, which has the mind of Christ, has accepted all of these acts as lawful and valid. To think otherwise – that is, to think that the Church cannot expel heretics through local Councils, but only through Ecumenical ones - is to suppose that for the last 1231 years, since the convening of the last Ecumenical Council, the Church has – God forbid! - lost her God-given power to bind and to loose!

4. When is a New Council Necessary?

When the iconoclast heresy was revived in the time of St. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, no further Council was deemed necessary in order to pronounce the neo-iconoclasts outside the Church. Thus St. Nicephorus wrote about unrepentant iconoclasts: "Insofar as they have deprived themselves of that teaching of the faith in which they had been consecrated, they have of necessity been deprived of their ordination and deposed as teaching other things..." And again he wrote: "They must have been deprived of the anointing of the Spirit as soon as they renounced the confession, for it is impossible for them to transgress the faith with which they were anointed, and [at the same time] to carry out that which [is given] by the anointing."

A further Council was needed, not in order to pronounce the heretics outside the Church, but in order to restore penitent heretics to the Church.

Thus St. Theodore the Studite wrote to Bishop Euthymius of Sardis: "You know, your Reverence, that by the common voice of the confessors who are still on the earth and those who have departed to the Lord it has been decreed that clergy who have been once convicted of communion with heretics should be banned from serving until review by Providence on high. How can we transgress this rule and by receiving one person extend the law to all those previously banned and thereby act contrary to our divine and highest superior... and deceive others from the confessors and produce discord among people who strictly follow the rules?"

And again: "You know, honoured of God, that by common agreement of the confessors still alive on the earth and of those who have recently appeared before the Lord, it has been decided to ban from serving those who have been seduced even only once into communion with the heretics - it goes without saying, until the time of the visitation of God's Providence, that is, until the convening of a Council that re-establishes Orthodoxy."

Bishop Theophan the Recluse (+1894) said that there was no need for further conciliar anathemas to condemn the heretics of his day since they had all already been condemned by earlier decisions. Commenting on St. Paul's words, "If anyone preaches any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1.8), he writes: "The apostle laid only the beginning to anathematization. Since then all the opinions worthy of this punishment have already been marked out by the Church. At the present time there is no point waiting for a special ecclesiastical act to strike the evildoers with this judgement. They themselves are placing their own heads under this sword immediately they acquire opinions contrary to the truth and stubbornly begin to insist on them."

Here Bishop Theophan appears to be endorsing the strict, "non-heuristic" interpretation of the Canon. The "new" heretics of his time did not need synodal condemnation because their teachings were not in fact new, but known and condemned long ago by the Church. Theoretically, a new heresy not already condemned by the Councils or the Fathers would need a conciliar condemnation, but Bishop Theophan doubts that any such new heresy exists.

And yet the Church in the twentieth century continued to condemn heretics and heresies. Thus in 1901 the Church anathematized Tolstoy. Then came condemnations of the heresy of name-worshipping (1913), the Bolsheviks (1918), the renovationists (1923), the neo-renovationists or sergianists (1928, 1937), the sophianists (1935), the new calendarists (1935, 1974, 1991) and the ecumenists (1983, 1998). All of these heresies, with the possible exception of name-worshipping, were in fact old, and therefore already condemned. For is not Sergianism simply the sin of Judas in a new guise? As for ecumenism, "the heresy of heresies", "it is impossible not to recognise that it contains a multitude of old heresies [i.e. all the old heresies that the ecumenists enter into communion with], from which every one of the hierarch-ecumenists gave an undertaking to defend Orthodoxy".

What, then, has been the purpose of these recent Councils? First of all, to warn the faithful who may not be well-versed in theology that here *is* a heresy, and to explain its nature and its non-correspondence with the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church. Secondly, in order to make a clear separation between light and darkness, between the Church of the faithful and the "Church of the evildoers", lest the latter swallow up the former entirely. And thirdly, to reverse the act that the Church carried out when she made the heresiarchs pastors and bishops.

[5. Who has the Right to Anathematize?](#)

In the “Informatory Epistle” of Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili, President of the Synod in Resistance, which was published in 1998, the rights of Local Councils to expel the ecumenist heretics from the True Church are denied. Still more significantly, the right of *any* contemporary Synod to anathematize heretics is denied.

Thus Metropolitan Cyprian writes: “3 (c). The right to issue an anathema does not belong to ecclesiastical administrative bodies which have a temporary synodal structure, but which do not possess all the canonical requisites to represent the Church fully, validly, and suitably for the proclamation of an anathema - a right and “dignity” which is “granted” only to the choir of the Apostles “and those who have truly become their successors in the strictest sense, full of Grace and power...”

“5 (a). The extremely serious implications of an anathema, coupled, first, with the absence, in our day, of a synodal body endowed with all of the aforementioned canonical prerequisites for proclaiming an anathema and, secondly, with the immense confusion that prevails, on account of ecumenism, in the ranks of the local Orthodox Churches, constitute, today, a major restraint on, and an insurmountable impediment to, such a momentous and, at the same time, historic action.”

In other words, the True Church today no longer has the power to anathematize heretics! This implies that the anathema against ecumenism issued by the Russian Church Abroad in 1983 was invalid because it exceeded the competence of that, or any other contemporary Synod. It also implies that if the Antichrist were a member of one of the Local Orthodox Churches, and were to proclaim himself as God today, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church would be powerless to expel or anathematize him!

There is no doubt that the Church is in a disorganized and weakened state today. And yet the fullness of the power of God still lives in Her, and will live in Her until the end of time, as the Lord promised. She still has true bishops, and these bishops still have the power to bind and to loose that was given them by the Holy Spirit. When St. Maximus defended the right of the Lateran Council in 649 to expel the Monothelite heretics from the Church, he did not discuss a whole list of “canonical prerequisites for proclaiming an anathema”, but gave as the only “canonical prerequisite” the possession of “the true and immutable dogmas”, i.e. Orthodoxy. And so if our bishops are truly Orthodox they have the right to anathematize any heretic anywhere - to think otherwise is to lose faith in the Church Herself.

[6. The Fifteenth Canon](#)

The authors of the article we are examining declare that the Fifteenth Canon of the First-Second Council of Constantinople, which allows Christians to separate from a bishop who proclaims heresy publicly even before a synodal trial, nevertheless does not give anyone the right to declare a heretic *automatically* deposed. And in their support they cite St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite's commentary on the 30th Apostolic Canon: "The Canons ordain that a synod of living bishops should defrock priests, or excommunicate or anathematize laymen, when they transgress the Canons. However, if the synod does not put into practical effect the defrocking of the priests, or the excommunication or anathematization of the laymen, these priests and laymen are neither defrocked nor excommunicated nor anathematized in actuality. However, they are subject to defrocking and excommunication here, and to the wrath of God there."

This sounds eminently reasonable. After all, in the secular world, a man is counted innocent of a crime until he is judged guilty in a court of law; if I exceed the speed limit in my car, I am not deprived of my licence to drive until I have been judged by a competent magistrate. If such caution is exercised in secular judgements, should not even more caution be exercised in the far more important sphere of ecclesiastical jurisprudence?

And yet the Canon calls those bishops who proclaim heresy openly as "pseudo-bishops" even before a synodal decision. This is strong language, and the authors of the article try to lessen the impact of this language as follows: "*The characterization of a Shepherd as a 'pseudo-bishop' 'prior to a synodal decision' is heuristic or diagnostic in nature (the doctor ascertains the disease) and not final and juridical or condemnatory (the doctor diagnoses the incurability of the ailing member and reaches a firm decision to amputate it).*"

But this explanation is unconvincing. Why should the canon call the "uncondemned heretic" a "pseudo-bishop" if he is in fact still a true bishop, and praise those who break with him immediately if he is in fact not yet condemned? It cannot be that the Canon is inciting laymen to judge their bishops without waiting for the only competent judgement – that of bishops meeting in council. More likely: heresy is such a serious matter that everyone, according to the canon, must have the right to flee from it *immediately*, without waiting for confirmation by a higher authority, just as one would flee from a plague victim immediately, without waiting for confirmation from a doctor.

The most important point is this: that there is God's judgement and there is man's judgement, and God's judgement *precedes* man's judgement, which consists essentially in *discerning and declaring publicly that God has already judged the heretic*. So the power of anathema held by the hierarchs of the Church is not held independently of God's judgement, but strictly in

consequence of it and in obedience to it. That is why heretics are “pseudo-bishops” even before a synod of bishops has condemned them – for God has already judged them. If the bishops are true and received the gift of knowledge from God, then they will follow God’s judgement and condemn them, expelling them from the external organization of the Church.

As St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: “Insofar as the [hierarchy] makes known the judgements of God, he has also the power of excommunication. Not indeed that the all-wise Divinity gives in to his every unthinking impulse, if I may so speak with all reverence. But the hierarchy obeys the Spirit Who is the source of every rite and Who speaks by way of his words. He excommunicates those unworthy people whom God has already judged. It says: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’ And to the one enlightened by the sacred revelation of the All-Holy Father it is said in Scripture: ‘Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ Thus [Peter] himself and all the hierarchs like him have had the judgement of the Father revealed to them, and, being themselves men who provide revelation and explanation, they have the task of admitting the friends of God and of keeping away the ungodly. That sacred acknowledgement of God came to him, as Scripture shows, not on his own, not from a flesh-and-blood revelation, but as something from the understanding and under the influence of the God Who initiated him into what he knew. Similarly, God’s hierarchs must use their powers of excommunication, as well as all their other hieratic powers, to the extent that they are moved by the Divinity which is the source of every rite. And everyone else must obey the hierarchs when they act as such, for they are inspired by God Himself. ‘He who rejects you,’ it says, ‘rejects Me.’”

Conclusions

1. A heretical bishop is condemned immediately he utters his heresy publicly and unashamedly. He is cut off from the mystical organism of the Church by the invisible hand of Her Head and Chief Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, Who has “the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1.18) – that is, “authority over the death of the body and the soul” (Archbishop Averky).
2. While invisibly cut off from the mystical organism of the Church, the heretic may remain for a time a member of the visible organization of the Church. However, the faithful have the right to separate from him even while he remains within the visible organization of the Church; and in this case they, and not the heretic, should be called Orthodox. For, as St. Sophronius of Jerusalem writes: “If any should separate themselves from someone, not on the pretext of a [moral] offence, but on account of

a heresy that has been condemned by a Synod or by the Holy Fathers, they are worthy of honour and approbation, for they are the Orthodox." And, as St. Nicephorus of Constantinople writes: "You know, even if very few remain in Orthodoxy and piety, then it is precisely these that are the Church, and the authority and leadership of the ecclesiastical institutions remains with them."

3. Any Council of truly Orthodox Bishops, of whatever composition or generality, has the power to bind and to loose – that is, to cut off the heretic from the visible organization of the Church. But this power consists in discerning that God has *already* condemned the heretic in question. For, as St. Bede the Venerable 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 unworthy" – and this knowledge and power depends, not on numbers, but on grace.

4. Any man who, while not "alienated in matters concerning the Faith itself", nevertheless "separates himself for certain ecclesiastical reasons and questions capable of mutual solution", is a schismatic according to the definition of St. Basil the Great, and has "condemned himself" (Titus 3.11). For, as the Lord says, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12.3), and, as St. Cyprian of Carthage says, "there is no salvation outside the Church".

5. *Therefore* the ecumenists and new calendarists, having both uttered heresies condemned by the ancient Councils and Fathers, and having been cut off by living Councils of Bishops (i.e. Bishops contemporary with them), and having separated themselves into schismatic communities independent of the Church, belong neither to the mystical organism of the Church nor to its visible organization. For, as one of those Councils declared on June 8/21, 1935: "We recommend to all those who follow the Orthodox Calendar that they have no spiritual communion with the schismatic church of the schismatic ministers, from whom the grace of the All-Holy Spirit has fled, because they have violated the decisions of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Pan-Orthodox Councils which condemned the Gregorian calendar. That the schismatic Church does not have Grace and the Holy Spirit is affirmed by St. Basil the Great, who says the following: 'Even if the schismatics have erred about things which are not Dogmas, since the head of the Church is Christ, according to the divine Apostle, from Whom all the members live and receive spiritual increase, they have torn themselves away from the harmony of the members of the Body and no longer are members [of that Body] or have the grace of the Holy Spirit...'"

March 5/18, 2008; revised November 6/19, 2021.

10. THE CESSATION OF DIALOGUE

On May 18/31, 2009 the Cyprianites, otherwise known as “the Holy Synod in Resistance” published on their website their final summing-up of their failed dialogue with the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostom of Athens. In this document, while making some concessions to the True Orthodox, the Cyprianites in essence refused to abandon their false ecclesiology, “making excuse for excuses in sin” (Psalm 140.4). However, it will be worth examining it, for it gives us the opportunity to pinpoint their divergence from Orthodox teaching.

But first let us look at their concessions. The most important of these is that the Cyprianites admit that their “walling off” themselves from communion with the rest of the True Orthodox in 1984 was “hasty” (point 6.2). In other words, it was *wrong*. Of course, if it was hasty and wrong, then it should be reversed. But the Cyprianites do not do this. They excuse themselves on the grounds that they did it “in good faith” (?), and they offer this grudging apology only “for the sake of peace and reconciliation”. So it does not amount to repentance or a return from schism. Nevertheless, any conscientious Cyprianite who loves the truth will examine this concession and draw the conclusion: *the founding act of the Cyprianite Synod - its separation from the True Orthodox Church of Greece in 1984 - was “hasty”, wrong, uncanonical and schismatic in essence.*

The second concession is that they reject the idea of New Calendarism as being the “mother Church” (6.4). This expression, the Cyprianites admit, was “inexpert”. In other words, it was *wrong*. The question then arises: if the new calendarist church of Greece is not the Cyprianites’ “mother Church”, then what is? The answer can only be: *the True Orthodox Church of Greece.*

The third concession is that they undertake not to give Divine Communion to the new calendarists before they have been incorporated into true Orthodoxy (6.5). For the Cyprianites, however, this is not a concession, because they claim to have decreed this already.

The fourth concession is that they agree not to use in future the expression “ailing members of the Church” to refer to heretics (6.8). If only the Cyprianites had gone a little further and admitted that this expression was *wrong*, then they would have freed themselves from the charge of ecclesiological heresy - a heresy that I have called “the heresy of ecclesiastical elitism”. However, they claim that this teaching of theirs has been “misunderstood” (without explaining *how* they have been supposedly misunderstood), and promise to refrain from proclaiming it in future only “for the sake of peace”. Until they recognize that they must refrain from proclaiming it, not only for the sake of peace, but also

for the sake of the truth, without which no peace can be deep and lasting, we must conclude that their adherence to this heresy, though weaker than before, remains...

It is because they still adhere to their ecclesiological heresy that the Cyprianites refuse to accept the demand of the True Orthodox Church of Greece that they accept "the validity of the condemnation of Ecumenism by the Russian Church Abroad and by the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece". They fear to anathematize the heretics because they continue to believe that they are still inside the Church, albeit "ailing", "low" members of it. Moreover, in this document they produce a further justification of this elitist, "sitting on the fence" strategy: they reject the authority of any existing Synod to anathematize heretics. Thus they write that "so great a right and 'dignity' is 'granted' only to the choir of the Apostles 'and those who have truly become their successors in the strictest sense, full of Grace and power' (St. John Chrysostomos)". And they go on: "We are unable to understand this hasty tendency in our day to anathematize and condemn, since until such successors come into existence, 'everyone who is Orthodox in every respect anathematizes every heretic potentially, even if not verbally' (St. Theodore the Studite)" (6.10).

I have criticized this position in detail elsewhere. If there is no Synod in the world today which has the Grace and power to anathematize heretics, then the One, Holy, Catholic Church – God forbid! – has lost her power to bind and to loose! Then even if the Antichrist were to appear and pronounce himself to be God today, the Church on earth would have no power to anathematize him! Away with such blasphemy, such manifest lack of faith in the power and dignity of the Church! If, as St. Theodore says, "everyone who is Orthodox anathematizes every heretic potentially, even if not verbally", then a fortiori the hierarchs of the Church have the power to anathematize every heretic, not only potentially, but actually, and not only under their breath, but verbally and from the housetops! For, as St. John Chrysostom said, "in worldly matters we are meek as lambs, but in matters of the faith we roar like lions!"

It is clear that the Cyprianite hierarchs do not feel themselves to be successors of the Apostles "in the strict sense, full of Grace and power". In this intuition they are correct: they are not. If they said this only of themselves, then we could commend their humility and have grounds for hoping that they were on their way to becoming what they are not now: successors of the Apostles in the strict sense. However, when they say this, not only of themselves, but of the Church as a whole, then they display an arrogance – and a lack of faith – that disqualifies them from that lofty dignity. That is why the dialogue had to stop. That is why the True Orthodox Church of Greece rightly declared that she does not have the same faith as the Cyprianites. For the Cyprianites want the True Orthodox hierarchs to emasculate themselves spiritually, to renounce their God-given

right and duty to expel heretics from the Church of Christ, “only lest they themselves should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ” (Galatians 6.12).

October 21 / November 3, 2009.

11. THE LIMITS OF THE CHURCH: A REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

When looking back at the origins of the pan-heresy of ecumenism, and of the Orthodox participation in it, it becomes clear that one issue in particular has been of special importance in the formation of positions on either side of the debate: the issue of why the Orthodox Church receives certain heretics and schismatics, not by baptism, but through what the Russians call the “second” or “third” rite – chrismation or confession. This issue was addressed with characteristic forthrightness by Fr. Georges Florovsky in his article, “The Limits of the Church”, published in *Church Quarterly Review* in 1933. Because of its qualities of forthrightness and clarity, I propose to run through the article’s main points again – but then bring forward reasons for coming to an opposite conclusion to that reached by Fr. Georges.

Fr. Georges begins by citing the teaching of St. Cyprian of Carthage in the third century that there is no sacramental grace outside the Church, that the canonical limits of the Church coincide exactly with the limits of her sacramental ministrations, and that all those who separate from the Church thereby immediately lose the grace that only membership of the One Church provides. “Strictly speaking,” he concedes, “in its theological premises the teaching of St. Cyprian has never been disproved. Even Augustine was not very far from Cyprian. He argued with the Donatists, not with Cyprian himself, and did not try to refute Cyprian; indeed, his argument was more about practical measures and conclusions. In his reasoning about the unity of the Church, about the unity of love as a necessary and decisive condition for the saving power of the sacraments, Augustine really only repeats Cyprian in new words.

“But the practical conclusions drawn by Cyprian have not been accepted by the consciousness of the Church...”

The primary conclusion referred to here is the necessity, according to St. Cyprian, of receiving all converts by baptism. However, the Church, writes Fr. Georges, “customarily receives adherents from sects – and even from heresies – not by the way of baptism, thereby obviously meaning or supposing that they have already been actually baptized in their sects and heresies.” But only the Church can perform true sacraments. Therefore, concludes Fr. Georges, St. Cyprian defined the limits of the Church too narrowly: the Church extends beyond her strictly canonical bounds. “A canonical cleavage does not immediately signify mystical impoverishment and desolation. All that Cyprian said about the unity of the Church and the sacraments can and must be accepted. But it is not necessary to draw with him the final boundary around the body of the Church by means of canonical points alone.”

Fr. Georges then examines the main argument against his position: the so-called “economical” theory of the reception of heretics and schismatics. First he considers an exposition of this argument by Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky. According to this, the reception of heretics or schismatics by other means than baptism does not mean that the Church recognizes the presence of true baptism in their heretical or schismatical communities. Rather, it is a form of “economy” or condescension to the weakness of converts: baptism is not insisted on in order to make their entry into the Church easier, in order that they should not be deterred from entering by false shame at having to admit that they had never had true baptism. But it is implicitly understood that baptismal grace is given to these converts at the moment of their reception into the Church, whatever the external rite by which they are received.

Florovsky rejects this argument with indignation. “Economy”, the practice of not receiving converts by other means than baptism gives them “not only an excuse but a ground to continue deceiving themselves through the equivocal fact that their ‘baptism, worship and hierarchical system differ in little externally from those of the Church’”.

In any case, he continues, “who gave the Church this right not merely to change, but simply to abolish the external act of baptism, performing it in such cases only mentally, by implication or by intention at the celebration of the ‘second sacrament’ (i.e. chrismation) over the unbaptized... If ‘economy’ is pastoral discretion conducive to the advantage and salvation of human souls, then in such a case one could only speak of ‘economy in reverse’. It would be a deliberate retrogression into equivocation and obscurity for the sake of purely external success, since the internal enchurchment of ‘neophytes’ cannot take place with such concealment. It is scarcely possible to impute to the Church such a perverse and crafty intention. And in any case the practical result of the ‘economy’ must be considered utterly unexpected. For in the Church herself the conviction has arisen among the majority that sacraments are performed even among schismatics, that even in the sects there is a valid, although forbidden, hierarchy. The true intention of the Church in her acts and rules could appear to be too difficult to discern, and from this point of view as well the ‘economic’ explanation of these rules cannot be regarded as convincing.”

Florovsky goes on to quote Alexei Khomyakov’s exposition of this argument in his dialogue with William Palmer. Palmer was confused by the fact that the Russian Church was prepared to receive him from Anglicanism by chrismation only, whereas the Greeks insisted on baptism. Defending the Greek practice of receiving reunited Latins through baptism, Khomyakov wrote: “All sacraments are completed only in the bosom of the true Church and it matters not whether they be completed in one form or another. Reconciliation (with the Church) renovates the sacraments or completes them, giving a full and Orthodox

meaning to the rite that was before either insufficient or heterodox, and the repetition of the preceding sacraments is virtually contained in the rite or fact of reconciliation. Therefore the visible repetition of baptism or confirmation, though unnecessary, cannot be considered erroneous, and establishes only a ritual difference [between the Greek and Russian Churches] without any difference of opinion."

Florovsky's comment on this (although he was in general an admirer of Khomyakov) is very sharp: "This is impossible. The 'repetition' of a sacrament is not only superfluous but impermissible. If there was no sacrament and what was previously performed was an imperfect, heretical rite, then the sacrament must be accomplished for the first time – and with complete sincerity and candor. In any case, the Catholic sacraments are not just 'rites', and it is not possible to treat the external aspect of a sacramental celebration with such disciplinary relativism."

And he concludes: "The 'economic' interpretation of the canons might be probable and convincing, but only in the presence of direct and perfectly clear proofs, whereas it is generally supported by indirect data and most often by indirect intentions and conclusions. The 'economic' interpretation is not the teaching of the Church. It is only a private 'theological opinion', very late and very controversial, which arose in a period of theological confusion and decadence in a hasty endeavour to dissociate oneself as sharply as possible from Roman theology."

Florovsky goes on in effect to defend Roman theology, which depends on St. Augustine's distinction between the "validity" or "reality" of a sacrament and its "efficacy". "The holy and sanctifying Spirit still breathes in the sects", their sacraments are still "accomplished in reality". But since they are accomplished in violation of love, and in disunity with the Church, they are inefficacious. Just as "baptismal grace must be renewed in unceasing effort and service, otherwise it becomes 'inefficacious'", so the sects must be restored to unity with the Church, otherwise their sacraments will continue to be inefficacious. For in them, while "the unity of the Spirit" is preserved in the sacraments, "the bond of peace" with the Church (Ephesians 4.3) is broken.

Florovsky admits that "the sacramental theology of St. Augustine was not received by the Eastern Church in antiquity nor by Byzantine theology, but not because they saw in it something alien or superfluous. Augustine was simply not very well known in the East..."

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Let us now turn from an exposition of Florovsky's argument to a critique of

it.

But first its strong points must be admitted. The practice of “economy” in the reception of converts *is* often confusing – not only for the converts themselves, who are not given a clear, unequivocal sign that they are coming from darkness into light, from the sphere of the devil into the grace of God, but also for many of the Church clergy themselves, who through long practice of “economy” have come to believe what it appears, to a superficial view, to imply – that the heretics have valid baptism. The present writer vividly remembers a ROCOR priest trying to dissuade him from being baptized into Orthodoxy (although the date had already been fixed, and the local hierarch’s blessing obtained) on the grounds that he had already been validly baptized in Anglicanism...

Having said that, the practice of “economy” is not in itself deceitful, nor need it be done, as Florovsky claims, “with equivocation and obscurity”. It is quite possible to catechize without equivocation, teaching that the Orthodox Church is the True Church outside of which there are no sacraments, while going on to receive the convert by “economy” of one kind or another. The decisive argument in deciding whether to use strictness or economy remains, in all cases, the salvation of the many. This is particularly clear in the case of the reception of a large group, which may include clergy as well as laity and in which some members may be clearer in their faith and willing to accept baptism, while others are weaker and would be repelled by such a demand. In order that the group as a whole be integrated in the Church, with all the obvious advantages that would entail for the salvation of each member, condescension or “economy” may be applied for the group as a whole.

In any case, Florovsky ignores the clear evidence that the Holy Fathers rejected the doctrine of sacraments outside the canonical limits of the Church which he accepts, and accepted the “economical” interpretation that he rejects. Thus Apostolic Canon 46 decrees: “We order that a bishop or priest who has accepted the baptism or sacrifice of heretics should be deposed. For what agreement has Christ with Beliar, or what portion has a believer with an infidel?”

On which the Serbian Bishop Nikodim (Milash) of Dalmatia comments: “According to the teaching of the Church, every heretic is outside the Church, and outside the Church there cannot be either true Christian baptism, or the true Eucharistic sacrifice, or in general any true and holy sacraments. The present Apostolic canon also expresses this teaching of the Church, citing, moreover, Holy Scripture, which does not admit anything in common between those who confess the Orthodox faith and those who teach against it. We read the same also in the Apostolic Constitutions (IV, 15), and the Father and Teachers of the Church taught the same from the very beginning. Consequently,

the heretics can have neither true baptism, nor true priesthood, and the Orthodox bishop or priest who recognizes baptism or any other sacred action accomplished by a heretical priest to be correct must be, according to this canon, deprived of his priestly rank, for he thereby shows that either he does not know the essence of his own belief, or he is himself inclined to heresy and defends it. As a consequence of either the one or the other he is not worthy of the priesthood.”

As regards the true purpose of receiving heretics and schismatics by other means than baptism, St. Basil the Great writes in his First Canonical Epistle: “Although the beginning of the departure [from the Church] took place through schism, those who departed from the Church no longer had the grace of the Holy Spirit upon themselves. For the bestowal of grace had withered away, because the lawful succession had been cut off. For the first who departed had received consecration from the Fathers, and through their laying-on of hands, had the gift of the Spirit. But those who had been torn away became laymen, and could not give to other the grace of the Holy Spirit, from which they themselves had fallen away. Which is why the ancients ordered those who came from them to be cleansed again by the true Church baptism as ones who had been baptized by laymen. But insofar it was pleasing to some in Asia, for the sake of the building up of many, to accept their baptism: let it be accepted.”

Here we see what the “acceptance” of the baptism of schismatics really meant to the Holy Fathers. The schismatics had no grace of sacraments – that is made quite clear by St. Basil. But it was clearly a tradition of the Church not to insist on baptism in all or even most such cases “for the sake of the building up of the many” – so that more could be saved. Later in the canon St. Basil gives reasons for not accepting the Encratite schismatics’ baptism, and for baptizing them again. However, he writes, “if this could be an impediment to the general welfare, then again let custom be upheld, and let the Fathers who have ordered what course we are to pursue be followed. For I am under some apprehension lest, in our wish to discourage them from baptizing, we may, through the severity of our decision, be a hindrance to those who are being saved.” In other words, let “economy” be applied even in the case of the Encratites, if thereby the salvation of the many is achieved.

As another, more recent example of how the True Church thinks in the reception of converts, let us consider the decision of the Synod of ROCOR on September 28, 1971, to *suspend* the use of “economy” in the reception of Catholic and Protestant converts to Orthodoxy: “The Holy Church has from antiquity believed that there can be only one true baptism, namely that which is accomplished in her bosom: ‘One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism’ (Ephesians 4.5). In the Symbol of Faith “one baptism” is also confessed, while the 46th canon of the Holy Apostles indicates: ‘We order that a bishop or priest who has accepted

(that is, recognized) the baptism or sacrifice of heretics should be deposited.'

"However, when the zeal of any heretics in their struggle against the Church weakened, and when there was a question of their mass conversion to Orthodoxy, the Church, to ease their union, accepted them into her bosom by another rite. [There follows a discussion of St. Basil the Great's first canonical epistle.]

"And so St. Basil the Great, and through his words the Ecumenical Council, in establishing the principle that outside the Holy Orthodox Church there is no true baptism, allowed out of pastoral condescension, so-called *oikonomia*, the acceptance of certain heretics and schismatics without a new baptism. And in accordance with this principle, the Ecumenical Councils allowed the reception of heretics by various rites, taking account of the weakening of their fierceness against the Orthodox Church....

"In relation to the Roman Catholics and Protestants who claim to preserve baptism as a sacrament (for example, the Lutherans), the practice was introduced from the time of Peter the First of receiving them without baptism, through the renunciation of heresy and chrismation of Protestants and unconfirmed Catholics. Before Peter Catholics were baptised in Russia. In Greece the practice also changed, but for almost three hundred years, after a certain break, the practice of baptising those who came from Catholicism and Protestantism was again introduced. Those who are received by another rite are not recognized as Orthodox in Greece. In many cases also such children of our Russian Church were not even allowed to receive Holy Communion.

"Bearing in mind this circumstance, and the present growth of the ecumenical heresy, which tries completely to wipe out the difference between Orthodoxy and every heresy, so that the Moscow Patriarchate, in spite of the sacred canons, has issued a resolution allowing Roman Catholics to be communed in certain cases, the Hierarchical Council has recognized the introduction of a stricter practice to be necessary, that is, that all heretics coming to the Church should be baptized, and that only insofar as it is necessary and with the permission of the bishop, from considerations of *oikonomia*, should another practice be allowed in relation to certain people, that is, the reception into the Church of Roman Catholics and Protestants who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity through renunciation of heresy and chrismation."

So we may now pose the question: is the distinction between the validity and efficacy of sacraments, which was introduced by St. Augustine and supported by Florovsky, accepted by the Orthodox Church?

It is a sad but undeniable fact of the spiritual life that Christians do not

always receive the holy mysteries to our salvation. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, points out that some received the Body and Blood of Christ to their condemnation, and some had even died as a result. Thus it is possible to receive a valid sacrament which turns out to be inefficacious because of the unworthiness of the recipient.

However, the Apostle was writing to those *inside* the Church: he was not commenting on the possibility of there being sacraments *outside* the Church. And, as we have seen, the idea that there can be valid sacraments outside the Church is in fact condemned by the Tradition of the Church (Apostolic Canon 46, First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil).

So it is likely that St. Augustine's teaching was not taken up in the Eastern Church, not because it was not known, but because it was not accepted, as being contrary to Church Tradition. For the canonical boundaries of the Church *do* coincide with the limits of her sacramental ministrations.

Of course, it is not always easy to determine the canonical boundaries of the Church with precision. There are many examples of ruptures in communion in the history of the Church, where it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine with certainty whether the one or the other side - or both - were in the Church. Thus in fourth century Antioch there was a schism in which Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom supported one side, and St. Athanasius the Great and the Church of Rome - the other. Which side constituted the canonical Church of Antioch, or were they both in the Church in spite of the rupture of communion? It is very difficult to say... Again, in the nineteenth century the Ecumenical Patriarchate anathematized the Church of Bulgaria, while the Russian Church and the Jerusalem Patriarchate remained in communion with it. Was the Bulgarian Church inside the Church or not? It is very difficult to say... As for the chaos reigning among the True Orthodox Churches of Russia and Greece today, it would be a bold man who would declare with certainty exactly where the canonical boundaries of the two Churches are...

However, the difficulty, in many historical cases, of determining exactly where the canonical boundaries of the Church are does not affect the general principle: that her canonical boundaries (wherever they are, God knows where) coincide with the limits of her sacramental ministrations.

Let us consider, finally, a possible objection to this conclusion based on the teaching of the Catacomb Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov), Bishop of Sergiev Posad: that the Church as mystical *organism* is to be distinguished from the Church as a canonical *organization*. "It is necessary to distinguish between the Church-organism and the Church-organization. As the apostle taught: 'You are

the Body of Christ and individually members of it' (I Corinthians 12.27). The Church-organism is a living person, and just as the cells of our body, besides having their own life, have the life that is common to our body and links between themselves, so a man in the Body of Christ begins to live in Church, while Christ begins to live in him. That is why the apostle said: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2.20).

"The basis for the affirmation of the Church-organism is love for Christ. The Lord Himself saw the basis of His Church precisely in love for Him. He asked Peter: did he love Him? And He added: 'Feed My sheep'. The Church of Christ is the union of mutual love of the believers ('United by the bond of love and offering themselves to Christ the Lord, the apostles were washed clean', *Canon of Holy Thursday*). Only in the Church organism can true democratism, equality and brotherhood come into being; we are equal and brothers only if we are parts of one and the same living body. In the organization there is not and cannot be '*organic*' equality and brotherhood."

"Only to the Church-organism can we apply such titles as we meet in the Word of God, for example: 'glorious, holy, spotless' (Ephesians 1.4); 'the Bride of the Lamb' (Revelation 19.7; 21.9); 'the Body of Christ' (Ephesians 1.23; Colossians 1.24); 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (I Timothy 3.15). These concepts are inapplicable to the Church-organization (or applicable only with great qualifications); they lead people into perplexity and are rejected by them. The Church-organism is the pure 'Bride' of Christ (Revelation 21.2), but the Church-organization has all the faults of human society and always bears the marks of human infirmities... The Church-organization often persecutes the saints of God, but the Church-organism receives them into her bosom... The Church-organization rejects them from its midst, deprives them of episcopal sees, while they remain the most glorious members of the Church-organism. It is possible to belong externally to the visible Church (organization), while one belongs only inwardly to the Body of Christ (organism), and the measure of one's belongingness is determined by the degree of one's sanctity."

However, *both* the Church-organism *and* the Church-organization belong to the Church, whereas heretics and schismatics belong to neither. St. John Chrysostom was expelled by the canonical Church of his time, and died in exile. And in almost every age the canonical Church has acted unjustly at some times to some of its members, showing that her holiest members are by no means always her leaders. Nevertheless, this disparity in holiness in the members of the Church, which sometimes leads to open ruptures in communion, unjust expulsions and bans, does not change the boundaries of "the canonical Church" *so long as the Church remains in Orthodoxy*. But if it falls away from the truth even in one of the dogmas, then it ceases to be the canonical Church - the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church - and loses the grace of sacraments. For, as St.

Maximus the Confessor said, "Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the faith".

This truth is illustrated in the career of Florovsky himself. Although he was a fine and very erudite theologian, and one of the first to talk about a return to the Greek Fathers, whose teaching he championed so admirably, his departure from Church truth as revealed in "The Limits of the Church" eventually led him away from the Church and Orthodoxy. Thus he exposed the Sophianist heresy of Sergius Bulgakov - but refused to call him a heretic, and remained friendly and in communion with him until his death. He also remained in communion with the new calendarists and the sergianists. For, after all, if even "Catholic sacraments are not just 'rites'" and may be valid even though performed outside the canonical Church, the same must be true, *a fortiori*, of all the organizations calling themselves "Orthodox". And why should this extension of the mystical limits of the Church include only the Catholics? Why not also the Protestants? And so he was a founder-member of the World Council of Churches, whose Protestantism was inscribed in its very constitution. And even though he was a highly "conservative" member of that organization, and did not like many of its developments, he remained in it to the end.

For ecumenism is a progressive disease: you begin by conceding a little to those outside the Church, you go on by conceding more, and in the end you end up in communion with them - and outside the Church.

And so we can concede *nothing* to the heretics. For, as the Council of Carthage declared: "Baptism being one, and the Holy Spirit being one, there is also but one Church, founded upon oneness by Christ our Lord. And for this reason, whatever is performed by them [the heretics] is reprobate, being counterfeit and void. For nothing can be acceptable or desirable to God which is performed by them, whom the Lord in the Gospels calls His foes and enemies: 'Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters' (Matthew 12.30)."

*August 12/25, 2009.
St. Maximus the Confessor.*

12. "THERE IS NONE THAT WATCHETH OUT FOR MY SOUL"

The heart of the Orthodox Christian is gripped with great sorrow – and not a little anger – when he looks at the truly catastrophic state of the Orthodox Church today. Many, very many are the lost sheep looking around in desperation for a priest or bishop who will provide the minimum of pastoral care. Few, very few are the priests and bishops who provide even that minimum. If we narrow the meaning of “the Orthodox Church” to exclude the clearly heretical churches of World Orthodoxy, and restrict it those “True Orthodox” Churches that are not in communion with World Orthodoxy, then the spectacle is hardly more encouraging: scandals abound, heresies and schisms multiply, the love of many has grown cold. It appears that now “Thou hast cast us off and put us to shame, and wilt not go forth, O God, with our hosts. Thou hast made us to turn back before our enemies, and they that hate us took spoils for themselves. Thou hast given us up as sheep to be eaten, and among the nations hast Thou scattered us” (Psalm 43.10-12).

The worst thing of all is that so few seem to care; a kind of torpor has overcome us, a faintheartedness in the face of the catastrophe that threatens us all with – why should we be afraid to say it? – the eternal torments of hell...

There are two standard solutions offered to this problem in relation to True Orthodoxy: we shall call the one the clerical solution, and the other the lay solution. The clerical solution is that the jurisdiction that they rule is, if not perfect, at any rate the most canonical to be found, and that the solution for the clergy of other jurisdictions is to repent before them, or at any rate seek union with them. The more rigorist clergy insist that their own jurisdiction is the only True Church, at any rate on the territory of the given Local Church, so that “repent”, rather than “seek union”, is the operative word. The less rigorist do not insist on this (at least openly), but still insist that their jurisdiction and its ecclesiology must be the core around which “the gathering of the fragments” must take place...

The lay solution (which is also put forward by some clergy) arises out of frustration at the manifest failure of the proposed clerical solutions so far. It declares that the clergy of different jurisdictions must simply humble themselves, forget – or, at any rate, ignore – their differences, come together in a conference without preconditions and there attempt to combine into a single jurisdiction. The assumption behind this solution is that the great majority, if not all, of the True Orthodox jurisdictions have essentially the same faith and together already constitute the One True Church, even if that inner, mystical unity is not yet manifest in administrative unity.

I believe that both solutions to the problem are vain for essentially the same

reason: they underestimate the obstacles to unity that exist both within and between each jurisdiction. The essential problem with the clerical solution is that, even if we believe that there is one jurisdiction in each given territory that is more canonical than the others, and therefore the natural core around which the other jurisdictions on that territory must unite, - and my personal belief is that there *is* such a jurisdiction in both Greece and Russia - *there still exist major problems that give members of other jurisdictions just reason to pause before joining it*. Therefore the first priority must be to remove these internal problems first, before attempting to make disciples and converts of the other, less canonical jurisdictions. Otherwise, we are simply preparing the ground for further schisms in the future, leading to a still deeper, and still more dangerous degree of disillusionment... The essential problem with the lay solution is analogous: although some of the differences that divide the jurisdictions are clearly the result of personal pride or stubbornness on the part of individual hierarchs, and therefore should be remediable with a little more flexibility and humility on all sides, this is clearly not always the case. In some cases, the differences go deeper, and a simple-minded call to “forgive and forget” is inadequate. In fact, we have to admit that some of the breaks in communion are *justified, even necessary* from a canonical point of view - and if we do not attempt to keep the holy canons, we are lost before we even begin.

Let us now look briefly at some of these more intractable problems - but without naming names (even if the names will be known to many), because the purpose of this article is not to lambast individual hierarchs or jurisdictions, but to draw general conclusions applicable to all:-

- a. In one jurisdiction, the chief-hierarchy, though dogmatically Orthodox and with undoubted apostolic succession, is a homosexual who has only escaped a just prison sentence by the skin of his teeth. Moreover, he has succeeded in expelling dissidents by methods that no Orthodox Christian can recognize as just or canonical. The other hierarchs of his jurisdiction lack the strength to bring him to canonical trial, either because they have known, but done nothing about, his crimes for a long time, and are therefore partly guilty themselves, or because they know that they would be unjustly deprived of their sees if they attempted, however belatedly, to bring him to book. In this situation, it is hardly surprising or reprehensible that the leaders of other jurisdictions hesitate to seek union with him. The Augean stables need to be cleansed before other, fresh horses can be introduced into them...
- b. In other jurisdictions, schisms have taken place on the grounds of the sympathies of the chief hierarchy with anti-semitism, or Stalinism. Such sympathies are undoubtedly reprehensible, and it is difficult to criticize those who wish to distance themselves from them.
- c. In another jurisdiction that is Orthodox from a dogmatic point of

view and with undoubted apostolic succession, a senior hierarch with extreme nationalist views has been allowed for many years to control the “foreign policy” of the jurisdiction together with one of its major foreign dioceses. This has had catastrophic consequences both for the missionary work of the Church and for its relations with other Local Churches. The other hierarchs again seem incapable of acting in accordance with the canons in order to relieve this hierarch of the duties that he has manifestly failed to fulfil. And again, it is not surprising or reprehensible that other hierarchs and jurisdictions, for whom missionary work is not an “optional extra”, and who believe that the Catholicity of the Church should be proclaimed in deed as well as word, hesitate to seek union with this jurisdiction as long as it is dominated by this extremist hierarch.

d. Another jurisdiction, while impeccable in its rejection of ecumenism and sergianism, and very active in missionary work, has become a conduit for the heretical soteriology of the ecumenist John Romanides that threatens to undermine the central dogma of Christianity.

e. Another group of jurisdictions has still not made up its mind to declare World Orthodoxy outside the True Church, although the heresy of ecumenism is now almost a century old. If this were simply a tendency towards liberalism, a humble fear of making categorical statements of condemnation, or a desire not to make the conversion of people from World Orthodoxy more difficult than it need be, this would be a less serious matter – such liberals have been found within the Church in every epoch of her history. But when this liberal tendency is taken as a justification for schism from other, less liberal jurisdictions who believe – rightly – that World Orthodoxy is graceless; when this liberal tendency is given a quasi-dogmatic basis in a new, elitist teaching on the nature of the Church (as consisting of three layers: “healthy” Orthodox, “sick” Orthodox and “sick” heretics, none of which are in communion with each other); and when it is denied that *any* True Orthodox Church has the canonical right to anathematize heretics, then the matter becomes more serious and cannot be swept under the carpet.

These are only some of the more intractable problems that divide the True Orthodox. It would be naïve to think that they can be solved simply by all the jurisdictions getting round a table. Where bilateral talks have failed (we have more than one example in 2009 alone), multilateral talks are *bound* to fail.

Moreover, multilateral talks aiming at not less than the complete “melting down” and “reforging” of True Orthodoxy are irresponsible nonsense. For they imply the need for *revolution* rather than *evolution* in inter-jurisdictional relations that is reminiscent more of renovationism than of True Orthodoxy.

What is needed is *unilateral* talks – that is, talks *within* each jurisdiction rather than between them – to root out the serious problems we have pointed to. Not only would this be the fulfilment of the Lord’s command to remove the beam from one’s own eye before attempting to remove the mote from one’s neighbour’s: it would make each jurisdiction more attractive to the others and thereby create a real *desire for unity* rather than the present *fear of disunity*...

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Speaking about a “clerical” and a “lay” solution raises the question of the relationship between, and relative responsibility of, the clergy and the laity.

St. Cosmas of Aitolia said that in the last times the clergy and the laity would distrust each other; and it must be admitted that this prophecy has been fulfilled in our time. The clergy, especially those that advocate the rigorist version of the clerical solution, tend to blame the clergy of other jurisdictions for the present catastrophe. Sometimes, however, echoing the Pharisees of Christ’s time, they also blame the laity, declaring that “the people that knoweth not the law is cursed” (John 7.49); they are “unstable”, “jurisdiction-hoppers”, who should simply listen to their priests and obey.

But attacks by the clergy on the laity are rare – and with reason. For it is generally understood that simply to get a general, objective idea of the rapidly changing jurisdictional situation – who’s who, and who stands for what, and who has been condemned for what by whom – is a major intellectual task requiring personal contacts and theological and linguistic skills for which few of the laity are well equipped. And if they ask the clergy, they will get very different pictures from different clergy – and even from the same clergyman at different times if he, too, has been a “jurisdiction-hopper”.

So even if it remains true that a people usually gets the leaders it deserves (for “as with the people, so with the priest” (Hosea 4.9)), the primary responsibility must remain with the priesthood. It could not be otherwise in a hierarchical religion such as Orthodoxy in which no priest can be removed, or new one installed, except at the hands of priests. So if the responsibility borne by the priesthood is not just an empty phrase, and if the priests are truly the *leaders* of the people, who have it within their power, with God’s help, to initiate change and turn the situation around in a way that is not given to the people, it is necessary to exhort and rebuke the priests first of all. Thus the Prophet Hosea says: “It is you, priest, that I denounce. Day and night you stumble along, the prophet stumbling with you, and you are the ruin of your people. My people perish for want of knowledge. As you have rejected knowledge, so do I reject you from the priesthood; you have forgotten the teaching of your God” (Hosea 4.4-6). Again, the Prophet Malachi declares: “Now, priests, this is a warning for

you. If you do not listen, if you do not find it in your heart to glorify My name, says the Lord of Hosts, I will send the curse on you and curse your very blessing. Indeed, I have already cursed it, since there is not a single one of you who takes this to heart" (Malachi 2.1-2).

The role of the laity need not be as passive as it is often made out to be. The "royal priesthood of the laity" is not a myth, and should not be mocked – as one True Orthodox priest has recently mocked it in public. The 1848 Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs specifically emphasized that the truth of the Church is supported and maintained by the whole body of the Church. If the laity cannot remove bad priests or install new ones, they at any rate have the right – nay rather, the *duty* – to lobby for change. In the epoch of the Ecumenical Councils, it was the lay monks who were at the forefront of the struggle for the defence of Orthodoxy against heresy. In the 1920s in Greece and Romania the movement in defence of the Old Calendar was essentially a lay movement with only a handful of priests and no bishops. And St. Joseph of Petrograd foresaw the possibility of a time when only a few laity would remain faithful to Christ: "Do not forget that for a minute: 'The Son of God when He cometh shall He find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18.8). And perhaps the last 'rebels' against the betrayers of the Church and the accomplices of her ruin will be not only bishops and not archpriests, 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."

But even when all exhortations have failed, and the best efforts of the laity to get their priests to act in defence of Orthodoxy have failed, it is essential not to relapse into torpor, into a kind of despondency that deadens the heart and paralyzes the will. One of the most subtle temptations of our time is the idea that we should concern ourselves only with our own problems, and not worry about the problems of others, but "leave all that to God (or the priests)". And yet a certain measured indignation at the horror of the present situation must be considered an entirely appropriate response, and a lack of indignation – a sign of spiritual insensitivity. Indignation here is not a sign of pride, still less of sinful rebellion against lawful authority, but of that most cardinal of virtues – love for our neighbours as ourselves. After all, did not the Apostle Paul say: "Who is offended, and I burn not?" (II Corinthians 11.29)?

For a people that has not lost the capacity to feel sorrow and indignation at the absence of a clear witness to Orthodoxy in the world, and at the loss of so many sheep wandering around without a shepherd, for whom the words of David are so appropriate: "I looked upon my right hand [i.e. towards the Orthodox], and beheld, and there was none that did know me. Flight hath failed me, and there is none that watcheth out for my soul" (Psalms 141.60) – for such a people there is still hope of redemption. For only such a people have a living faith in the Lord's promise: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the

Church" (Matthew 16.18). Only such a people can *be* the Church.

We do not know from where redemption will come. It may come from a hierarch, so far unknown or little known to the world, who rises above the general level of mediocrity and finally succeeds in "gathering the fragments", or (more likely, if we are to believe the prophecies) from an Orthodox tsar who, as the first layman of the Church and "bishop of those outside the Church", *forces* the hierarchs to remove the scandals in their midst. This only do we know for certain: that "it is time for the Lord to act; for they have dispersed Thy law" (Psalm 118.126), that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in man" (Psalm 117.7), and that when earthly hierarchs fail above them stands "the Vladyka above all Vladykas, "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls" (I Peter 2.25), the Head and Bridegroom of the Church for Whom all things are possible, the Lord Jesus Christ...

December 15/28, 2009.

13. PATRISTIC TESTIMONIES ON THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

St. Ignatius of Antioch. “They abstain from the Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.” (*To the Smyrnaeans*, 8).

St. Justin the Martyr. “As Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh through the word of God, and took flesh and blood for our salvation; in the same way the food over which thanksgiving has been offered by the prayer of the word which came from Him – the food by which our blood and flesh are nourished through its transformation – is, we are taught, the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ Who was made flesh.” (*First Apology*, 65-66).

St. Irenaeus of Lyons. “As the bread, which comes from the earth, receives the invocation of God, and then it is no longer common bread but Eucharist, consisting of two things, an earthly and a heavenly; so our bodies, after partaking of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the eternal resurrection.” (*Against Heresies*, IV, 18).

St. Irenaeus of Lyons. “If this flesh is not saved, then the Lord has not redeemed us by His Blood, and the bread which we break is not a sharing in His Body. For there is no blood except from veins, and from flesh, and from the rest of the substance of human nature which the Word of God came to be, and redeemed by His Blood, as His Apostles also says: ‘In Him we have redemption through His Blood, and the forgiveness of sins’ (Col. 1.14). And since we are His members, and are nourished through creation – the creation He furnishes for us, causing the sun to rise and rain to fall as He pleases – He declared that the cup, which comes from His creation, is His own Blood, from which He strengthens our blood; and He affirmed that the bread, which is from creation, is His very own Body, from which He strengthens our bodies. Since, therefore, both the mixed cup and the prepared bread receive the Word of God, and become the eucharist of Christ’s Body and Blood, from which the substance of our flesh is strengthened and established, how, then, can they say that the flesh, which is fed on the Body and Blood of the Lord, and is one of His members, is incapable of receiving the gift of God which is everlasting life? As the blessed Paul also says in the Letter to the Ephesians: ‘We are members of His Body, from His Flesh and from His Bones’ (Eph. 5.30), saying this not about some kind of spiritual and invisible human nature, for a spirit has neither flesh nor bones, but about that arrangement which is authentic human nature, which consists of flesh and sinews and bones, and is fed from the cup, which is His Blood, and is strengthened by the bread, which is His Body” (*Against Heresies*, V, 2, 3).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem. “Once, in Cana of Galilee, He changed water into wine

(and wine is akin to blood); is it incredible that He should change wine into blood?... Therefore with complete assurance let us partake of those elements as being the Body and Blood of Christ... so that by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ you may be made of the same Body and Blood with Him. For in this way we become Christ-bearers, since His Body and Blood are distributed in the parts of our body. Thus, as blessed Peter says, we 'become partakers of the Divine nature'... Do not think, then, of the elements as mere bread and wine. They are, according to the Lord's declaration, body and blood. Though the perception suggests the contrary, let faith be your stay. Instead of judging the matter by taste, let faith give you an unwavering confidence that you have been privileged to receive the Body and Blood of Christ" (*Catechetical Discourses*, IV, 6).

St. Hilary of Poitiers. "Christ gives evidence of this natural unity in us: 'He who eats My Flesh, and drinks My Blood, dwells in Me, and I in him'. For no one will be in Christ, unless Christ is in him, unless he has taken into himself the Flesh of Christ, Who took man's flesh... He 'lives through the Father': and as He lives through the Father, so we live through His Flesh... This is the cause of our life, that we have Christ dwelling in our fleshly nature, in virtue of His Flesh, and we shall live through Him in the same way as He lives through the Father. We live through Him by nature, according to the flesh, that is, having acquired the nature of the flesh. Then surely He has the Father in Himself according to the Spirit, since He lives through the Father. The mystery of the real and natural unity is to be proclaimed in terms of the honour granted to us by the Son, and the Son's dwelling in us through His Flesh, while we are united to Him bodily and inseparably." (*On the Trinity*, 8.16, 17).

St. Gregory the Theologian. "Do not hesitate to pray for me, to be my ambassador, when by your word you draw down the Word, when with a stroke that draws no blood you sever the Body and Blood of the Lord, using your voice as a sword." (*Letter 171*).

St. Gregory of Nyssa. "The subsistence of every body depends on nourishment... and the Word of God coalesced with human nature and did not invent some different constitution for man's nature when He came in a Body like ours. It was by the usual and appropriate means that He ensured the Body's continuance, maintaining its subsistence by food and drink, the food being bread. Now in our case one may say that when anyone looks at bread he is looking at a human body, for when the bread gets into the body it *becomes* the body. Similarly in the case of the Word of God, the Body which received the Godhead, when it partook of nourishment in the form of bread, was in a manner of speaking identical with that bread, since the nourishment was transformed into the natural qualities of the body...the Body which by the indwelling of the God the Word was transmuted to the dignity of Godhead. If this is so, we are

right in believing that now also the bread which is consecrated by the Word of God is transmuted into the Body of God the Word... It is not a matter of the bread's becoming the Body of the Word through the natural process of eating; rather it is transmuted immediately into the Body through the Word, just as the Word Himself said, 'This is My Body'... The God Who was manifested mingled Himself with the nature that was doomed to death, in order that by communion with the Divinity human nature may be deified together with Him. It is for this purpose that by the Divine plan of His grace He plants Himself in the believers by means of that Flesh." (*The Great Catechism*, 37).

St. Ambrose of Milan. "Whenever we take the sacraments, which through the mystery of the sacred prayer are transfigured into His Flesh and Blood, we 'proclaim the Lord's death'." (*On the Faith*, 4.125).

St. Ambrose of Milan. "First of all, I told you about the saying of Christ, whose effect is to change and convert the established kinds of nature. Then came the saying of Christ, that He gave His Flesh to be eaten, and His Blood to be drunk. His disciples could not stand this, and they turned away from Him. Only Peter said: 'You have the words of eternal life; how I take myself away from you?' And so, to prevent others from saying that they are going away, because of a horror of actual blood, and so that the grace of redemption should continue, for that reason you receive the sacrament in a similitude, to be sure, but you obtain the grace and virtue of the reality. 'I am,' He says, 'the living Bread Who came down from heaven.' But the Flesh did not come down from heaven; that is to say, He took flesh from a virgin. How, then, did bread come down from heaven - and bread that is 'living bread'. Because our Lord Jesus Christ shares in both Divinity and body: and you, who receive the Flesh, partake of His Divine substance in that food." (*On the Sacraments* 6.3,4).

St. Ambrose of Milan. "It is clear, then, that the Virgin gave birth outside the order of nature. And this Body which we bring about by consecration is from the Virgin. Why do you look for the order of nature here, in the case of the Body of Christ, when the Lord Jesus Himself was born of a virgin outside the natural order? *It was certainly the genuine Flesh of Christ that was crucified, that was buried: then surely the sacrament is the sacrament of that Flesh.* The Lord Jesus Himself proclaims, 'This is My Body'. Before the blessing of the heavenly words something of another character [*alia species*] is spoken of; after consecration it is designated 'Body'. He Himself speaks of His Blood. Before consecration it is spoken of as something else; after consecration it is named 'Blood'." (*On the Mysteries*, 54).

St. Ephraim the Syrian. "He stretched forth His hand and gave them the bread which His right hand had sanctified: 'Take, eat, all of you of this bread which My word has sanctified. Do not regard as bread what I have given you now...

Eat it, and do not disdain its crumbs. For this bread which I have sanctified is My Body. Its least crumb sanctifies thousands of thousands, and it is capable of giving life to all that eat it. Take, eat in faith, doubting not at all that this is My Body. And he who eats it in faith eats in it fire and the Spirit. If anyone doubts and eats it, it is plain bread to him. He who believes and eats the bread sanctified in My name, if he is pure, it will keep him pure, if he is a sinner, he will be forgiven. He, however, who despises it, or spurns it, or insults it, he may be sure that he is insulting the Son Who has called the bread His Body, and truly made it so." (*Station of the Night of the Fifth of Passion Week*)

St. John Chrysostom. "Because the earlier nature of flesh, that which had been formed from the earth, had become dead through sin and was devoid of life, He brought in another sort of dough and leaven, so to speak, His own Flesh, *by nature the same*, but free from sin and full of life... What the Lord did not endure on the cross [the breaking of His legs] He now submits to in His Sacrifice for His love of you: He permits Himself to be broken in pieces that all may be filled... *What is in the chalice is the same as that which flowed from Christ's side.* What is the bread? Christ's Body." (*Homily 24 on I Corinthians*).

St. John Chrysostom. "Not only ought we to see the Lord: we ought to take him in our hands, put out teeth into His Flesh, and unite ourselves with Him in the closest union. 'I shared in flesh and blood for your sake. *I have given back again to you the very flesh and blood through which I became your kinsman.*" (*Homily 46 on John*).

St. John Chrysostom. "Moses in his account of the first man has Adam say: 'Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh', hinting to us of the Master's side. Just as at that time God took the rib of Adam and formed a woman, so Christ gave us blood and water from His side and formed the Church... Have you seen how Christ unites to Himself His Bride? Have you seen with what food He nurtures us all? It is by the same food that we have been formed and are fed. Just as a woman nurtures her offspring with her own blood and milk, so also Christ continuously nurtures with His own Blood those whom He has begotten" (*Baptismal Instructions, III, 18,19*).

St. Augustine of Hippo. "How was He 'carried in His own hands'? When He gave His own Body and Blood, He took in His own hands what the faithful recognize; and, in a manner, He carried Himself when He said, 'This is My Body'." (*On Psalm 32, 2.2*).

The Anaphora of St. Mark. "This is in truth the Body and Blood of Emmanuel our God, Amen. I believe, I believe, I believe and I confess unto the last breath that this is the vivifying Flesh which Thine Only-Begotten son our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ took of the Lady of us all, the holy Theotokos

Mary.”

St. Cyril of Alexandria. “We shall see that the flesh united with Him has life-giving power; it is not alien flesh, but flesh which belonged to Him Who can life to all things. Fire, in this world of the senses, can transmit the power of its natural energy to any materials with which it comes into contact; so that it can change even water, which is in its own nature a cold substance, to an unnatural condition of heat. This being so, is it strange or in any way incredible that the very Word from God the Father, Who is in His own nature life, should give to the Flesh united to Himself this life-giving property? For this Flesh belongs to the Word; it does not belong to some other being than Himself Who may be thought of separately as another member of the human race. If you remove the life-giving Word of God from this mystical and real union with the body, if you completely set Him apart, how are you to show that Body as still life-giving? Who was it Who said, ‘He who eats My Flesh, and drinks My Blood, remains in Me, and I remain in Him’? If it was a man who was born in his own separate nature; if the Word of God did not come to be in our condition; then indeed what is performed is an act of cannibalism, and participation in it is of no value at all. I hear Christ Himself saying, ‘The flesh is of no value; it is the Spirit that gives life.’” (*Against Nestorius*, 4.5).

St. Cyril of Alexandria. “We approach the consecrated Gifts of the sacrament, and are sanctified by partaking of the holy Flesh and the precious Blood of Christ, the Saviour of us all. We do not receive it as common flesh (God forbid!), nor as the flesh of a mere man...; we receive it as truly life-giving, as the Flesh that belongs to the Word Himself. For as being God He is in His own nature Life, and when He became one with the Flesh which is His own, He rendered it life-giving.” (*Epistle 17*).

St. Cyril of Alexandria. “He said quite plainly This is My Body, and This is My Blood, so that you may not suppose that the things you see are a type; rather, in some ineffable way they are changed by God, Who is able to do all things, into the Body and Blood of Christ truly offered. Partaking of them, we take into us the life-giving and sanctifying power of Christ. For it was necessary for Him to be present in us in a Divine manner through the Holy Spirit: to be mixed, as it were, with our bodies by means of His holy Flesh and precious Blood, for us to have Him in reality as a sacramental gift which gives life, in the form of bread and wine. And so that we should not be struck down with horror at seeing flesh and blood displayed on the holy tables of our churches, God adapts Himself to our weakness and infuses the power of life into the oblations and changes them into the effective power of His own Flesh, so that we may have them for life-giving reception, and that the Body of Life may prove to be in us a life-giving seed.” (*On Luke 22.19*).

St. Cyril of Alexandria. “It was necessary that not only the soul be recreated into the newness of life through the Holy Spirit, but that this gross and earthly body be sanctified and called to incorruptibility by a grosser and kindred participation” (*On John* 6.54).

St. Cyril of Alexandria. “We have Him in us sensibly and mentally and intellectually. He dwells in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, and we share in His holy Flesh, and are sanctified in a double manner” (*On I Corinthians* 6.15).

St. John of the Ladder. “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” (*The Ladder*, 23.20).

St. John of Damascus. “The bread and wine are not merely figures of the Body and Blood of Christ (God forbid!) but the deified Body of the Lord itself: for 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’. And on a previous occasion He had said to the Jews, ‘Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood ye have no life in you. For My Flesh is meat indeed and My Blood is drink indeed’.” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 4.13).

The Synodicon of Orthodoxy. To those who do not partake of His holy and immortal Mysteries with fear, since they consider them to be mere bread and common wine rather than the very flesh of the Master and His holy and precious blood shed for the life of the world; to such men be *Anathema*.

St. Nicetas Stethatos. Those who accept unleavened wafers remain under the shadow of the law and eat the Jewish meal, and not the rational and living God, [which is] superessential (*hyperousion*) and consubstantial with us, the faithful. We have received the superessential bread from the heaven, for what is that which is superessential if not that which is consubstantial with us? But there is no bread that is consubstantial with us besides the Body of Christ, which is consubstantial with us according to His human flesh.” (*Dialexis* (1054), to Cardinal Humbert).

St. Nicetas Stethatos. “Performing on Himself the sacred mystery of our recreation, the Word offered up Himself on our behalf on the Cross, and He continually offers Himself up, giving His immaculate Body to us daily as a soul-nourishing banquet, so that by eating it and by drinking His precious Blood we may through this participation consciously grow in spiritual stature. Communicating in His Body and Blood and refashioned in purer form, we are united to the twofold Divine-human Word in two ways, in our body and in our soul; for He is God incarnate Whose flesh is the same in essence as our own. Thus we do not belong to ourselves, but to Him Who has united us to Himself

through this immortal meal and has made us by adoption what He Himself is by nature.”

St. Theophylact of Bulgaria. “By saying, ‘This is My Body’, He shows that the bread which is sanctified on the altar is the Lord’s Body Itself, and not a symbolic type. For He did not say, ‘This is a type’, but ‘This is My Body’. By an ineffable action it is changed, although it may appear to us as bread. Since we are weak and could not endure raw meat, much less human flesh, it appears as bread to us although it is indeed flesh” (*On Matthew 26.26*).

St. Nicholas Cabasilas. “If we speak of re-creation, it is from Himself and from His own Flesh that He restored what is necessary, and He substituted Himself for that which had been destroyed.” (*The Life in Christ*, 17).

St. Nicholas Cabasilas. “So precisely does He conform to the things which He assumed, that, in giving these things to us which He has received from us, He gives Himself to us. Partaking of the body and blood of His humanity, we receive God Himself in our souls – the body and blood of God and the soul, mind and will of God – not less than His humanity.” (*The Life of Christ*, 4)

St. Gregory Palamas. “The Body of Christ is truly the Body of God and not a symbol.” (*Against Akindynos*, VII, 15).

St. Gregory Palamas. “In His incomparable love for men, the Son of God did not merely unite His Divine Hypostasis to our nature, clothing Himself with a living body and an intelligent soul, ‘to appear on earth and live with men’, but, O incomparable and magnificent miracle! He unites Himself also to human hypostases, joining Himself to each of the faithful by communion in His holy Body. For he becomes one Body with us, making us a temple of the whole Godhead – for in the very Body of Christ ‘the whole fulness of the Godhead dwells corporeally’. How then would He not illuminate those who share worthily in the Divine radiance of His Body within us, shining upon their souls as he once shone on the bodies of the apostles on Tabor? For as this Body, the source of the light of grace, was at that time not yet united to our body, it shone exteriorly on those who came near it worthily, transmitting light to the soul through the eyes of sense. But today, since it is united to us and dwells within us, it illumines the soul interiorly.” (*Triads I*, 3, 38).

Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs (1848). “We believe that in this sacred rite our Lord Jesus Christ is present not symbolically [*typikos*], not figuratively [*eikonikos*], not by an abundance of grace, as in the other Mysteries, not by a simple descent, as certain Fathers say about Baptism, and not through a ‘penetration’ of the bread, so that the Divinity of the Word should ‘enter’ into the bread offered for the Eucharist, as the followers of Luther explain it rather

awkwardly and unworthily – but truly and actually, so that after the sanctification of the bread and wine, the bread is changed, transubstantiated, converted, transformed, into the actual true Body of the Lord, Which was born in Bethlehem of the Ever-Virgin, was baptized in the Jordan, suffered, was buried, resurrected, ascended, sits at the right hand of God the Father, and is to appear in the clouds of heaven; and the wine is changed and transubstantiated into the actual true Blood of the Lord, which at the time of His suffering on the Cross was shed for the life of the world. Yet again, we believe that after the sanctification of the bread and wine there remains no longer the bread and wine themselves, but the very Body and Blood of the Lord, under the appearance and form of bread and wine.”

St. John of Kronstadt. "What a wonderful creation of God is man! God has wonderfully placed in the dust His image, the immortal spirit. But marvel, Christian, still more at the wisdom, omnipotence and mercy of the Creator: He changes and transforms the bread and wine into His most pure Body and into His most pure Blood, and takes up His abode in them Himself, by His most pure and Life-giving Spirit, so that His Body and Blood are together Spirit and Life. And wherefore is this? In order to cleanse you, a sinner, from your sins, to sanctify you and to unite you, thus sanctified, to Himself, and thus united to give you blessedness and immortality. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' (Rom. 11:33)." (*My Life in Christ: Part 1, Holy Trinity Monastery*, p. 100)

St. John Maximovich. “Bread and wine are made into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy... How is the Body 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 Mysteries? 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... For the full sanctification of man, the body of the servant of the Lord must be united with the Body of Christ, and this is accomplished in the mystery of Holy Communion. The true Body and the true Blood of Christ which we receive, becomes a part of the great Body 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.” (“The Church as the Body of Christ”, *Orthodox Life*, no. 5, 1981).

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville. “It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh

profiteth little. The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and life.' This means that the words of Christ must be understood spiritually, and not in a crudely sensual way, that is, as if He offered His Flesh for eating like the meat of animals, being consumed for the satisfaction of a carnal hunger. It is as if the Lord says, 'My teaching is not of meats, nor of meals that nourish the bodily life, but of the Divine Spirit, of grace and eternal life, which are established in people by grace-filled means.' 'The flesh profiteth little' - He by no means said this of His own Flesh, but about those who understand His words in a carnal manner. What does understanding carnally mean? 'To look on things in a simple manner without representing anything more - that is what understanding carnally means. We should not judge in this manner about the visible, but we must look into all its mysteries with internal eyes. That is what understanding spiritually means' (Chrysostom). The Flesh of Christ separated from His Spirit could not give life, but it is understood, of course, that in the words of Christ He is not talking about His soulless, lifeless Flesh, but about His Flesh, indivisibly united with His Divine Spirit... All three Synoptics describe this in approximately the same way. The Lord 'received' that is, 'took' bread and blessed and broke it, and distributed it to the disciples, saying: 'Take, eat; this is My Body'. 'Bread' here is 'artos' in Greek, which means 'risen bread', leavened with yeast, as opposed to 'aksimon', which is the name for the unleavened bread used by the Jews for Pascha. One must suppose that such bread was deliberately prepared at the command of the Lord for the institution of the new mystery. The significance of this bread lies in the fact that it is as it were alive, symbolizing life, as opposed to unleavened bread, which is dead bread. 'He blessed', 'He gave thanks', refer to the verbal expression of gratitude to God the Father, as it was, for example, at the moment of the resurrection of Lazarus: that which was asked was fulfilled at the very moment of asking, which is why at that same moment it became an object of thanksgiving. What the Lord said here is exceptionally important: 'This is My Body': He did not say 'this' [in the masculine gender], that is: 'this bread', but 'this [in the neuter gender], because at that moment the bread had already ceased to be bread, and had become the genuine Body of Christ, having only the appearance of bread. The Lord did not say: 'This is an image of My Body', but 'This is My Body' (St. Chrysostom, St. Theophylact). In consequence of the prayer of Christ, the bread acquired the substance of Body, preserving only the external appearance of bread. 'Since we are weak,' says Blessed Theophylact, 'and could not endure raw meat, much less human flesh, it appears as bread to us although it is indeed flesh'. 'Why,' asks St. Chrysostom, 'were the disciples not disturbed on hearing this? Because before that Christ had told them much that was important about this mystery (we recall His conversation about the bread that comes down from heaven) (John 6).' By the 'Body of Christ' is understood the whole physical substance of the God-man, inseparably united with His soul and Divinity." (*Guide to the Study of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament*, vol. I, 1954, pp. 156, 275).

14. SCRIPTURAL AND PATRISTIC TESTIMONIES ON THE NECESSITY OF HAVING NO COMMUNION WITH HERETICS AND SCHISMATICS

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: "This is the law of the Passover: no stranger shall eat of it. And every slave or servant bought with money – him thou shalt circumcise, and then shall he eat of it. A sojourner or hireling shall not eat of it. In one house shall it be eaten." (Exodus 12.43-46).

St. Aphrahat of Syria writes that the "one house" in which the Passover is to be eaten is "the Church of Christ", and that just as the slave could not eat the Passover unless he was circumcised, so the sinner "comes to Baptism, the true Circumcision, and is joined to the People of God, and communicates in the Body and Blood of Christ". (*Demonstrations* 12, 525.8, 525.12).

St. John Chrysostom writes: "Let no-one communicate who is not of the disciples. Let no Judas receive, lest he suffer the fate of Judas... I would give up my life rather than impart of the Lord's Blood to the unworthy; and I will shed my own blood rather than give such awful Blood contrary to what is right." (*Homilies on Matthew*, 83.6).

St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "Just as he who worships idols does not worship wood or stone, but demons, so he who prays with the Manichaeans prays with Satan, and he who prays with the Marcionites prays with Legion, and he who prays with the followers of Bardaisan prays with Beelzebub, and he who prays with the Jews prays with Barabbas the robber." (*Fifth Discourse against False Teachings*)

St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "I affirm that it is a lawful thing to hate God's enemies, and that this kind of hatred is pleasing to our Lord: and by God's enemies I mean those who deny the glory of our Lord, be they Jews, or downright idolaters, or those who through Arius' teaching idolize the creature, and so adopt the error of the Jews". (*Letter XVII to Eustathia, Ambrosia and Basilissa*).

St. John the Almsgiver said: "We shall not escape sharing in that punishment which, in the world to come, awaits heretics, if we defile Orthodoxy and the holy Faith by adulterous communion with heretics." (*The Life of St. John the Almsgiver*).

St. John of Damascus writes: "With all our strength let us beware lest we receive Communion from or give it to heretics. 'Give not what is holy to the dogs,' says the Lord. 'Neither cast ye your pearls before swine', lest we become partakers in their dishonour and condemnation." (*Exposition of the Orthodox*

Faith, IV, 13).

“Holy things to the holy!” (*The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*).

“And the Lord said to Joshua, Rise up: why hast thou fallen upon thy face? The people has sinned, and transgressed the covenant which I made with them; they have stolen from the accursed things (Greek: *anathema*), and put it into their store. And the children of Israel will not be able to stand before their enemies, for they have become an accursed thing (*anathema*); I will no longer be with you, unless ye remove the accursed thing (*anathema*) from yourselves.” Joshua 7.10-11.

“Let any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon that merely joins in prayer with heretics be suspended, but if he has permitted them to perform any service as clergymen, let him be deposed.” (*Apostolic Canon 45*).

“Let any clergyman or layman who enters a synagogue of Jews, or of heretics, to pray be both deposed and excommunicated.” (*Apostolic Canon 65*).

“Concerning the necessity of not permitting heretics to come into the house of God, so long as they persist in their heresy.” (*Canon 6 of the Council of Laodicea*).

“That one must not accept the blessings of heretics, which are rather misfortunes than blessings.” (*Canon 32 of the Council of Laodicea*).

“That one must not join in prayer with heretics or schismatics.” (*Canon 33 of the Council of Laodicea*).

St. Maximus the Confessor said: “Even if the whole universe holds communion with the [heretical] patriarch, I will not communicate with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul: the Holy Spirit declares that even the angels would be anathema if they should begin to preach another Gospel, introducing some new teaching.” (*The Life of St. Maximus the Confessor*).

St Theodore the Studite said: “Chrysostomos loudly declares not only heretics, but also those who have communion with them, to be enemies of God.” (*Epistle of Abbot Theophilus*)

St. Theodore the Studite said: “Guard yourselves from soul-destroying heresy, communion with which is alienation from Christ.” (*P.G.* 99.1216).

St. Theodore the Studite said: “Some have suffered final shipwreck with regard to the faith. Others, though they have not drowned in their thoughts, are

nevertheless perishing through communion with heresy.”

“The divine and sacred canons say: ‘He who has communion with an excommunicate, let him be excommunicated, as overthrowing the rule of the Church.’ And again: ‘He who receives a heretic is subject to the same indictment...’ The great apostle and evangelist John says: ‘If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching with him, do not greet him and do not receive him into your house; for he who greets him communicates with his evil deeds’ (II John 10-11). If we are forbidden merely to greet him on the way, and if inviting him into our house is prohibited, how can it be otherwise not in a house, but in the temple of God, in the sanctuary at the mystical and terrible Supper of the Son of God... Whoever belches out the commemoration of him who has been worthily cut off by the Holy Spirit for his arrogance towards God and the Divine things, becomes for that reason an enemy of God and the Divine things.” (*From an Epistle of the Martyred Fathers of the Holy Mountain to Emperor Michael Palaeologus against the heretical Patriarch John Beccus of Constantinople*).

St. Mark of Ephesus said: “All the teachers of the Church, and all the Councils, and all the Divine Scriptures advise us to flee from the heterodox and separate from their communion.”

St. Paul said: “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.” (II Corinthians 6.14-16).

The Lord said: “Come out of her, My people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues.” (Revelation 18.4).

15. KHOMIAKOV ON SOBORNOST'

"The Church," wrote the nineteenth-century Russian Slavophile Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov, "does not recognize any power over herself other than her own, no other's court than the court of faith".¹ The Church is One, declared Khomiakov, and that Church is *exclusively the Orthodox Church*. "Western Christianity has ceased to be Christianity," he wrote. "In Romanism [Roman Catholicism] there is not one word, not one action, upon which the seal of spiritual life might lie". "Both Protestantisms (Roman and German)... already bear death within themselves; it is left to unbelief only to take away the corpses and clean the arena. And all this is the righteous punishment for the crime committed by the 'West'".²

This sharp rejection of the right of Catholics and Protestants to call themselves members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church was in itself remarkable in view of the mild ecumenism so prevalent in his time. This anti-ecumenism was shared by some of his educated contemporaries, such as Elder Ambrose of Optina and Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, but not by many.

However, it was not only the Oneness of the Church that Khomiakov explicated with particular success, but also Her *Catholicity* (*sobornost'* in the Slavonic translation), which he defined as "unity-in-diversity". "The Church is called Catholic," writes Khomiakov, "because She belongs to the whole world, and not to some particular locality; because the whole of humanity and the whole of the earth is sanctified by Her, and not some particular people or country; because Her essence consists in the agreement and unity of spirit and life of all Her members who recognize Her throughout the earth.

"It follows from this that when a community is called a local Church, like the Greek, Russian or Syrian, this signifies only the gathering of the members of the Church living in such-and-such a country (Greece, Russia, Syria, etc.), and does not contain within itself the presupposition that one community of Christians could express the teaching of the Church, or give a dogmatic interpretation to the teaching of the Church, without the agreement of the other communities; still less does it presuppose that some community or community pastor could prescribe its or his interpretation to others. The grace of faith is not separate from holiness of life and not one community of Christians or pastor can be recognized as preservers of the whole faith, just as not one pastor or community can be considered

¹ Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij (Complete Works)*, Moscow, 1907, vol. II.

² Khomiakov, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 127, 139, 141; quoted in S. Khoruzhij, "Khomiakov i Printsip Sobornosti" (Khomiakov and the Principle of *Sobornost'*), *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia*, NN 162-163, II-III, 1991, p. 103.

representative of the whole holiness of the Church.”³ For “it is not people, or a multitude of people, that preserve tradition and write in the Church, but the Spirit of God, Who lives in the coming together of the Church.”⁴

The principle of *sobornost'*, writes N.O. Lossky, “implies that the absolute bearer of truth in the Church is not the patriarch who has supreme authority, not the clergy, and not even the ecumenical council, but only the Church as a whole. ‘There have been heretical councils,’ says Khomiakov; ‘for instance, those in which a half-Arian creed was drawn up; externally, they differed in no way from the ecumenical councils – but why were they rejected? Solely because their decisions were not recognized by the whole body of the faithful as the voice of the Church.’ Khomiakov is referring here to the epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs to Pope Pius IX (1848), which says: ‘The invincible truth and immutable certainty of the Christian dogma does not depend upon the hierarchs of the Church; it is preserved by the whole of the people composing the Church which is the body of Christ’ (A letter to Palmer, October 11, 1850, II, 363).”⁵

“Solely because their decisions were not recognized as the voice of the Church by the entire ecclesial people, but that people and within that world where, in questions of faith, there is no difference between the scholar and the unlearned, cleric and lay person, man and woman, and king and subject... and where... the heresy of a learned bishop is refuted by an illiterate shepherd, so that all might be joined in the free unity of living faith which is the manifestation of the Spirit of God.”⁶

Although councils are not infallible, it is nevertheless in the coming together of the people in councils to decide dogmatic and canonical questions that the Holy Spirit of truth reveals Himself, as in the Seven Ecumenical Councils. And so the Church is *Conciliar* by essence; Her truth is revealed to a multitude of Her members meeting in council, and not to just one of her members thinking in solitude, as the West supposes - whether that individual is the Roman Pope or a Protestant layman.

It is at this point that the Slavonic translation of the Greek word *καθολικη*, “Catholic”, by the Slavonic word *sobornaia* becomes illuminating. For the word

³ Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, 4. Quotations from Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), “Istinniaia Sobornost'” (True Conciliarity), 1930, in *Tserkov' i ea Uchenie v Zhizni (The Church and her Teaching in Life)*, Montreal: Brotherhood of St. Job of Pochaev, 1964, pp. 112-113.

⁴ Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, 5. In Grabbe, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

⁵ Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952, p. 35. The epistle continues: “With us neither Patriarchs nor Councils could ever introduce anything new, because the defender of religion is the very body of the Church, or the people itself, who wanted their religion to remain forever unchanged and in accord with the religion of their Fathers.”

⁶ Khomiakov, “Po povodu broshiury g-na Loransi” (On Mr. Lawrence’s article), *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, vol. II, 91; translated in Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of the Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 30.

sobornaia is derived from *sobor*, meaning a council or a large church with two or three altars. This implies a direct link between the Church's Catholicity and Her Conciliarity. And this in turn suggests that the vital distinguishing quality of Orthodox Catholicity, as opposed to Roman "Catholic" despotism and Protestant "Anti-Catholic" democratism, lies in its Conciliarity.

For it is in Her conciliar life that the Church preserves Her unity in the truth. This the Protestants cannot do, since they make the opinion of *every* man the supreme arbiter of truth. And the Romanist cannot do it, since they make the opinion of *one* man the supreme arbiter.

Now, as Fr. Michael Pomazansky points out, "in Greek there is no philological or linguistic connection between the concepts "catholic" and "council" (ecumenical). A council of the Church is called in Greek *Συνοδος*, and an ecumenical council, *οικουμενικη Συνοδος*".⁷

Nevertheless, there *is* a philological link between the Greek word "Catholic" and the Greek word for a parish church, "Catholicon".⁸ In any case, the lack of a philological connection does not mean that there is no deeper semantic and theological connection, a connection seen by the translators Saints Cyril and Methodius when they chose this translation.

Moreover, there is no serious difference between Khomiakov's definition of Catholicity and Pomazansky's: "Catholicity refers to the fact that the Church is not limited to space, by earthly boundaries, nor is it limited in time, that is, by the passing of generations into the life beyond the grave. In its catholic fullness, in its catholicity, the Church embraces both the Church of the called and the Church of the chosen, the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven."⁹

It also accorded with St. Maximus the Confessor's definition: "Men, women and children, profoundly divided as to race, nation, language, manner of life, work, knowledge, honour, fortune... are all recreated by the Church in the Spirit. To all equally she communicates a divine aspect. All receive from her a unique nature which cannot be broken asunder, a nature which no longer permits one henceforth to take into consideration the many and profound differences which are their lot. In that way all are raised up and united in a truly catholic manner."¹⁰

⁷ Pomazansky, "Catholicity and Cooperation in the Church", in *Selected Essays*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1996, p. 50.

⁸ Fr. Andrew Louth writes: "A parish church was called in Greek the *katholikon* (the church for all)" (*Greek East and Latin West*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007, p. 195).

⁹ Pomazansky, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹⁰ St. Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy*, I, P.G. 91, 665-668.

Khomiakov wrote: “‘Sobor’ expresses the idea of a gathering not only in the sense of an actual, visible union of many in a given place, but also in the more general sense of the continual possibility of such a union. In other words: it expresses the idea of unity in multiplicity. Therefore, it is obvious that the word καθολικός, as understood by the two great servants of the Word of God sent by Greece to the Slavs, was derived not from κατά and όλα, but from κατά and όλον; for κατά often has the same meaning as our preposition 'according to', for instance: κατά Ματθαιον, κατά Μαρκον, 'according to Matthew', 'according to Mark'. The Catholic Church is the Church according to all, or according to the unity of all, καθ' όλων των πιστευοντων, the Church according to complete unanimity, the Church in which all peoples have disappeared and in which there are no Greeks, no barbarians, no difference of status, no slave-owners, and no slaves; that Church about which the Old Testament prophesied and which was realized in the New Testament - in one word, the Church as it was defined by St. Paul.”¹¹

“The Apostolic Church of the ninth century (the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius) is neither the Church καθ' εκαστον (according to the understanding of each) as the Protestants have it, nor the Church κατά τον επισκοπον της Ρωμης (according to the understanding of the bishop of Rome) as is the case with the Latins; it is the Church καθ' όλον (according to the understanding of all in their unity), the Church as it existed prior to the Western split and as it still remains among those whom God preserved from the split: for, I repeat, this split is a heresy against the dogma of the unity of the Church.”¹²

The Catholicity of the Orthodox Church was shared, according to Khomiakov, neither by the Roman Church, which sacrificed diversity for the sake of unity, nor by Protestantism, which sacrificed unity for diversity. Instead of Orthodox Catholicity, which belonged only to the Orthodox Church, the Papists had *Romanism*, that is, mechanical obedience to the Bishop of Rome and his *ex cathedra* definitions of truth. This guaranteed external unity (for a time), but no inner consensus. And so it violated the truth of the Church Herself, Her Catholicity.

Moreover, Romanism contains the seeds of Protestantism insofar as the Pope was the first protester against the inner Catholicity of the Church. This Catholicity was expressed especially in the Seven Ecumenical Councils, which were accepted in both East and West but which the Romanists later replaced with the “infallibility” of the Pope. As Khomiakov put it: "Having appropriated the right of independently deciding a dogmatic question within the area of the Ecumenical Church, private opinion carried within itself the seed of the growth and legitimization of Protestantism, that is, of free investigation torn from the living

¹¹ Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, Moscow, 1907, vol. II, pp. 312-313.

¹² Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, vol. II, p. 313.

tradition of unity based on mutual love."¹³ The truth is given, not to individuals as such, but to the Church, - "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3.15), in St. Paul's words, - understood as a conciliar organism united in freedom and love. Thus "clarity of understanding is placed in dependence on the moral law. The communion of love is not only useful, but completely necessary for the attainment of the truth, and the attainment of the truth is based on it and is impossible without it. The truth, being unattainable for individualistic thought, is accessible only to the coming together of thoughts bound by love."¹⁴

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¹³ Khomiakov, "On the Western Confessions of Faith", translated by Schmemmann, A. (ed.), *Ultimate Questions*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, p. 49.

¹⁴ Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, vol. I, p. 283.

16. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

1. The Father of the Faithful

Chapters 12 to 22 of Genesis represent, in symbolic and prophetic form, a brief but fully adequate summary of the central message of the Christian life. It is the story of Abraham, the man of faith - whose faith, however, had to be purified and strengthened through a series of trials, in each of which he was called to obey God by performing a *work* of faith. For in him "faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect" (James 2.22). These works of faith included: *exile from his native land* (Chaldea), *separation from his relatives* (Lot), *struggle against the enemies of the faith* (the four kings headed by the king of Babylon), *struggle against his fallen desires* (Pharaoh, Hagar) and, finally, *the complete sacrifice of the heart to God* (Isaac). To strengthen him on this path, Abraham was given bread and wine, a figure of the Body and Blood of Christ, by the priest-king Melchizedek, who was a type of Christ. The strengthening of faith and the sharpening of hope that came from successfully passing these trials was crowned by the joy of love in the vision of God: "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: He saw it, and was glad" (John 8.56). And as a seal of the truth of this vision, which made the man of faith "an Israelite indeed", that is, one who sees God, he received circumcision, a foretype both of Baptism by water and the Spirit, whereby all previous sins are washed away, and of the circumcision of the heart, whereby the desire to sin again in the future is cut off.

All this was made possible by faith: faith in God's promise to Abraham that from his seed would come *the Seed*, the Messiah and Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3.16), in Whom all nations world would be blessed. This meant, as St. Theophan the Recluse explains, that "the blessing given to him for his faith would be spread to all peoples, but not because of Abraham himself or all of his descendants, but because of One of his descendants - *his Seed*, Who is Christ; through Him all the tribes of the earth would receive the blessing." The supreme demonstration of Abraham's faith was his belief that "God was able to raise [Isaac] from the dead" (Hebrews 11.19), which was a type of the Resurrection of Christ. Finally, Abraham is not only a model of the man of faith and the physical ancestor of Christ: he is spiritually the father of all the faithful, being a foretype of the Apostles, who are "in labour again until Christ is formed" in every Christian (Galatians 4.19).

2. The Peoples of the Covenant

God's promises to Abraham, which are known as *the Abrahamic Covenant*, were so important that they were proclaimed in at least eight different versions,

or “drafts” (Genesis 12.1-3, 12.7, 12.13,14-17, 14.18-20, 15.1-19, 16.10-12, 17.1-22, 22.17-18). Each successive draft makes the Covenant a little more precise and far-reaching, in response to Abraham’s gradual increase in spiritual stature. Of particular interest in the context of this article are the promises concerning the relationship between the two peoples who descend from the two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac is the true heir of Abraham, the freeborn son of Sarah, who inherits the promises and blessings given to Abraham in full measure, being also a man of faith of whom it is also said that in his Seed, Christ, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 26.3-4). Ishmael is the son of a slave, Hagar, and does not inherit those blessings, although he does receive the promise that his heirs will be strong and numerous.

Now according to the popular conception, Isaac is the ancestor of the Jews, and Ishmael – of the Arab peoples. Certainly, the description of Ishmael’s race as “wild” and given to warfare that is given by the Angel of the Lord to Hagar in the desert (Genesis 16.10-12) appears to correspond closely, as St. Philaret of Moscow points out, to the character and life-style of the Arabs until Mohammed and beyond, who were constantly fighting and lived “in the presence of their brethren” – that is, near, or to the east of, the descendants of Abraham from his other concubine, Hetturah – the Ammonites, Moabites and Idumeans. Moreover, a similar interpretation of the typology appears to stand true for the next generation, to Isaac’s sons Jacob and Esau, who are said to correspond to the Jews (Jacob), on the one hand, and the Idumeans (Esau), on the other. For this interpretation fits very well with the Lord’s words to Isaac’s wife Rebecca, that “two nations are in thy womb..., and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder [Esau] shall serve the younger [Jacob]” (Genesis 25.23), insofar as the Jews, from Jacob to David to the Hasmonean kings, almost always showed themselves to be stronger than the Idumeans and often held them in bondage. It was only towards the Coming of Christ that an Idumean, Herod the Great, reversed the relationship by killing the Hasmoneans and becoming the first non-Jewish king of Israel – the event which, according to the prophecy of Jacob, would usher in the reign of the Messiah (Genesis 49.10).

In fact, however, the racial interpretation of the two peoples of the Covenant has only limited validity before the Coming of Christ, and none at all after. For, according to the inspired interpretation of the Apostle Paul, the two peoples – or two covenants, as he calls them – represent, not racial, but *spiritual* categories: “Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar – for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” (Galatians 4.22-26). In other words, Isaac

stands for *the Christians*, both Jewish and Gentile, while Ishmael stands for *the Jews who reject Christ*. For the Christians, - and this includes the Jews before Christ who believed in His Coming, - become through faith in Christ the freeborn heirs of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, whereas the Jews, by remaining slaves to the Law of Moses and refusing to believe in Christ, show themselves to be the children of the bondwoman, and therefore cannot inherit the promises together with the Christians. Moreover, it can be said of the Jews, as of the men of Ishmael's race, that ever since they rejected Christ they have become "wild", with their hands against all, and the hands of all against them, always striving for "freedom" but remaining voluntarily in slavery to the Law (and to their own *kahal*). It may therefore be that the age-old phenomenon of mutual enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles, of anti-semitism and anti-Gentilism, is prophesied in these verses.

That Isaac is the ancestor of Christ and the Christians is indicated also by his choice of wife, Rebecca, who signifies the Bride of Christ, or the Church. Rebecca is freeborn, being of the family of Abraham, and is an even closer image of the Church than Sarah; for she is Isaac's only wife as the Church is Christ's only Bride. Moreover, the Holy Fathers see in the story of the wooing of Rebecca a parable of Christ's wooing of the Church, in which Eleazar, signifying the Holy Spirit, conveyed Isaac's proposal to her at the well, which signifies Baptism, and gave her gifts of precious jewels, signifying the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed at Chrismation. Ishmael, on the other hand, receives a wife from outside the holy family - from Egypt. And she is chosen for him, not by a trusted member of the family, but by his rejected mother, the slavewoman Hagar.

The relationship between Isaac and Ishmael is almost exactly mirrored in the relationship between Isaac's two sons, Jacob and Esau. Thus St. Philaret comments on the verse: "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, Israel for His own possession" (Psalm 134.4), as follows: "This election refers in the first place to the person of Jacob, and then to his descendants, and finally and most of all to his spirit of faith: for 'not all [coming from Israel] are of Israel' (Romans 9.6). The two latter elections, that is, the election of the race of Israel, and the election of the spiritual Israel, are included in the first, that is, in the personal election of Jacob: the one prophetically, and the other figuratively.

"The reality of this prefigurement in Holy Scripture is revealed from the fact that the Apostle Paul, while reasoning about the rejection of the carnal, and the election of the spiritual Israel, produces in explanation the example of Jacob and Esau (Romans 9), and also from the fact that the same Apostle, in warning the believing Jews against the works of the flesh, threatens them with the rejection of Esau (Hebrews 12.16, 17).

"And so Jacob is an image, in the first place, of the spiritual Israel, or the

Christian Church in general, and consequently Esau, on the contrary, is an image of the carnal Israel.

“Esau and Jacob are twins, of whom the smaller overcomes the larger: in the same day the spiritual Israel was born together with the carnal, but, growing up in secret, is finally revealed and acquires ascendancy over him.

“Isaac destines his blessing first of all to Esau, but then gives it to Jacob: in the same way the carnal Israel is given the promises from the Heavenly Father, but they are fulfilled in the spiritual [Israel].

“While Esau looks for a hunting catch in order to merit his father’s blessing, Jacob, on the instructions of his mother, to whom God has revealed his destinies, puts on the garments of the first-born and seizes it before him. While the carnal Israel supposes that by the external works of the law it will acquire the earthly blessing of God, the spiritual Israel, with Grace leading it, having put on the garments of the merits and righteousness of the First-Born of all creation, ‘is blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ’ (Ephesians 1.3).

“The sword of battle and continuing slavery is given to the rejected Esau as his inheritance. And for the carnal Israel, from the time of its rejection, there remained only the sword of rebellion, inner enslavement and external humiliation.

“The rejected Esau seeks the death of Jacob; but he withdraws and is saved. The rejected old Israel rises up to destroy the new; but God hides it in the secret of His habitation, and then exalts it in strength and glory...”

As for the wives of Jacob, they also, like Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau, signify the spiritual Israel of the Church and the carnal Israel of the non-believing Jews. Thus Leah, whom Jacob married first, signifies with her weak eyes and fertile womb the weak faith of the carnal Israel and its abundant offspring. (It is precisely *blindness* that “shall befall Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in” (Romans 11.25)). But Rachel, whom he married later but loved first and most strongly, signifies the New Testament Church, which the Lord loved first but married later; for the Church of the Gentiles, that of Enoch and Noah and Abraham before his circumcision, existed before that of Moses and David and the Old Testament Prophets. Moreover, Rachel brought forth her children in pain because the New Testament Church, brought forth her first children in the blood of martyrdom, and is destined to inherit spiritual blessedness only through suffering - “we must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14.22).

3. The Judaizing of Christianity

Since the two peoples of the covenant come from the same father, there is a family likeness between them, their destinies in history are intertwined, and the transition of individuals and groups from one people to the other is easier than to any third category or people outside the covenant (pagans or atheists). Thus the conversion of the Arabs, the original physical Ishmaelites, to Orthodox Christianity in the early Christian centuries (before Mohammed) is an example of transition from the spiritual category of unbelieving Ishmael to the spiritual category of believing Israel. Again, while the Jews have never converted *en masse* to Christianity, there have been individual conversions throughout the centuries.

More common, alas, has been the reverse movement, the falling away of Christians into various forms of Judaizing heresy. We see this already in the Early Church – St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians is essentially a tract against the Judaizing of Christianity – and explicitly or implicitly Judaizing movements in Christianity have appeared many times since then. Again, we see many Judaizing traits in Islam. In fact, when Christians fall away from the True Faith, if they do not become complete pagans or atheists, they usually acquire traits of Judaism; for, as an anonymous Russian Christian writes, “Christianity without Christ reverts to Judaism”.

We see this, for example, in Roman Catholicism: at the time of the falling away of the Roman Church in the eleventh century, the Romans adopted wafers – that is, unleavened bread (*azymes*) – in the liturgy instead of the leavened bread of the Orthodox – a relapse from the New Testament to the Old. Thus St. Nicetas Stethatos, a monk of the Studite monastery in Constantinople, wrote to the Latins: “Those who still participate in the feast of unleavened bread are under the shadow of the law and consume the feast of the Jews, not the spiritual and living food of God... How can you enter into communion with Christ, the living God, while eating the dead unleavened dough of the shadow of the law and not the yeast of the new covenant...?”

The same Judaizing process is still more evident in Protestantism. Thus the Protestants adopted as their Old Testament Bible, not the Septuagint until then in use throughout the whole of Christendom, but the Massoretic text of the Jewish rabbis. Again, the Protestants’ chapel worship is similar to the Jews’ synagogue worship: in both we find the exaltation of Scripture reading and study above liturgical worship (although this is more principled in Protestantism – in Judaism it is necessitated by the destruction of the Temple in which alone, according to the Law, liturgical worship can take place). Again, the relationship between Church and State in many Calvinist communities was modelled on the Old Testament Israel in the period of Moses and the Judges.

Thus A.P. Lopukhin writes: "On examining the structure of the Mosaic State, one is involuntarily struck by its similarity to the organisation of the state structure in the United States of Northern America." "The tribes in their administrative independence correspond exactly to the states, each of which is a democratic republic." The Senate and Congress "correspond exactly to the two higher groups of representatives in the Mosaic State - the 12 and 70 elders." "After settling in Palestine, the Israelites first (in the time of the Judges) established a union republic, in which the independence of the separate tribes was carried through to the extent of independent states." Indeed, for the Pilgrim Fathers, their colonisation of America was like Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land. Just as the Canaanites had to be driven out from the Promised Land, so did the Red Indians from America. And just as Church and State were organically one in Joshua's Israel, so it was in the Pilgrim Fathers' America.

Protestantism, especially in America, also acquired the distinctly Judaistic trait of the deification of materialism, the pursuit of material prosperity, not simply for its own sake, but as a proof that God is with you.

"This Jewish materialistic approach," writes the anonymous Russian Christian, "openly or more subtly, under the appearance of various social theories and philosophical systems, encroaches upon the consciousness of Christians, breaking down the Christian nations. In particular the penetration into the Christian consciousness of this Judaistic idea explains many heresies, the rise of Islam, the substitution of Christianity with humanism, altruism, Marxism and separatist nationalism. Nationalism, which at times takes on an anti-Semitic character, at other times ends up in union with Judaism; in any event it is the reverse side of Jewish philosophy. A nation is truly attractive only in that part of it which is Christian. On the other hand, separatist nationalism, that is the extolling of a nation because it is a particular nation, refers back to the incorrect and prideful Jewish understanding of their chosenness, when they boast, 'We are the children of Abraham'.

"This activity of Judaistic philosophy is responsible for the striving towards the worldly in Christian societies, the wasting of spiritual talents for the worldly, that is, the burying of them, which explains the direction of present-day civilization towards 'progress', the ruining of our planet, modern pagan art, and so on.

"Thus the Jews may obtain supremacy, resulting from the breakdown of the Christian peoples, that is, from an open or subtle falling away from Christianity, which can be viewed as a direct influence of Jewish philosophy. In the end they will bring forth from their midst the Antichrist, their messiah, upon whom they hope..."

In still more recent times, Western Christianity as a whole has adopted another, still more fundamental trait of Judaism: its *adogmatic* character, making it, like Judaism, *a religion, not so much of faith, as of works*. Thus L.A. Tikhomirov writes: "It is now already for nineteen centuries that we have been hearing from Jewish thinkers that the religious essence of Israel consists not in a concept about God, but in the fulfilment of the Law. Above were cited such witnesses from Judas Galevy. The very authoritative Ilya del Medigo (15th century) in his notable *Test of Faith* says that 'Judaism is founded not on religious dogma, but on religious acts'.

"But religious acts are, in essence, those that are prescribed by the Law. That means: if you want to be moral, carry out the Law. M. Mendelsohn formulates the idea of Jewry in the same way: 'Judaism is not a revealed religion, but a revealed Law. It does not say 'you must believe', but 'you must act'. In this constitution given by God the State and religion are one. The relationships of man to God and society are merged. It is not lack of faith or heresy that attracts punishment, but the violation of the civil order. Judaism gives not obligatory dogmas and recognizes the freedom of inner conviction.'

"Christianity says: you must believe in such-and-such a truth and on the basis of that you must do such-and-such. New [i.e. Talmudic] Judaism says: you can believe as you like, but you have to do such-and-such. But this is a point of view that annihilates man as a moral personality..."

Of course, the works prescribed by Talmudic Judaism are very different from those prescribed by Christ: the one kind enslaves and debases while the other liberates and exalts. However, in the last resort works without faith, according the Gospel, are useless; for works are only valuable as the expression of faith, faith in *the truth* – it is *the truth* that sets man free (John 8.32). So contemporary Christians' adoption of the Jewish ethic of works, and loss of zeal for dogmatic truth, is a kind of slow but steady spiritual suicide...

The logical conclusion of the apostasy of the Christian world and its reversion to Judaism will be, as St. Paul prophesies, the appearance of "the man of sin", the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2.3). He will become the king of the Jews, will rebuild the Temple and reintroduce the Mosaic Law and Temple worship in its fullness, with the worship of himself as Messiah and God as its centre and culminating point. And so Judaism will finally acquire a positive dogma, that the Antichrist is God, to supplement its negative dogma, that Jesus Christ is not God; and the Christian world, the spiritual Israel, will finally dissolve into the carnal Israel – with the exception, however, of a heroic "remnant of Israel", the core of whom, according to Church Tradition, will be of the Jewish race...

4. The Christianizing of Judaism

Although the spiritual Israel is blessed, while the carnal Israel is accursed, still an important promise is given to the carnal Israel: that it will *live* in accordance with Abraham's petition: "Let this Ishmael *live* before Thee" (Genesis 17.18). This life cannot be spiritual, because that is promised only to the spiritual Israel. So it must be carnal – physical survival and worldly power. At the same time, St. Ambrose admits the possibility that Abraham's powerful petition could win spiritual life for some of the Jews – but only, of course, if they cease to belong to the carnal Israel and join the spiritual Israel through faith in Christ. For "it is the attribute of the righteous man [Abraham] to intercede even for sinners; therefore, let the Jews believe this too, because Abraham stands surety even for them, provided they will believe..."

The promise of physical life and prosperity has certainly been fulfilled in the extraordinary tenacity of the Jewish race, its survival in the face of huge obstacles to the present day, and - since its gradual emancipation from the ghetto in the nineteenth century, - its domination of world politics and business in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, the successes of the Jews in worldly terms have been so great that many Evangelical Protestants have been tempted to ascribe it, not to God's promise to *Ishmael*, but to his promise to *Isaac*. Reversing the interpretation of the Apostle Paul, they have made of the carnal Israel "the chosen people", "the blessed seed" - and this in spite of the fact that this "chosen people" not only does not believe in Christ, but has been the foremost enemy of those who do believe in Christ for the last two thousand years!

In fact, "it may be," as the anonymous Russian writer has suggested, "that the very preservation up until now of the Jewish people is a result not of their being 'chosen', but as a result of their apostasy". For, having renounced their birthright, the Kingdom of God, they have received a "mess of pottage" instead - the promise of physical survival and worldly power. "If the Jews, having repented of the crime committed on Golgotha, would have become Christian, then they would have made up the foundation of a new spiritual nation, the nation of Christians. Would they have begun to strive in this case to preserve their nationality and government? Would they not have dispersed among other nations as the missionaries of Christianity just as the Apostles? Would they not have been strangers in a foreign land, not having a fatherland, like unto Abraham, but in this case with a higher spiritual meaning? All this happened with the Jews, that is, they became wanderers, not in a positive spiritual sense, but due to a curse, that is, not of their own will, but due to the will of chastising Providence since they did not fulfil that which God intended for them. Would they not have been exterminated *en masse* during persecutions as the main preachers of Christianity? Would they not have been assimilated among other

peoples, so that the very name 'Jew', 'Hebrew', as a national name, would have disappeared and would have only remained in the remembrance of grateful nations as the glorious name of their enlighteners? Yes, and the very Promised Land and Jerusalem were given to the Hebrews not as a worldly fatherland, for which they are now striving, but as a prefiguration of the Heavenly Kingdom and the Heavenly Jerusalem, as a token of which Abraham and through him all the Hebrew nation coming out of Haran, renounced their earthly fatherland. For this reason the very significance of Jerusalem and the idea as a prefigurement would have passed away for the Jews, as soon as the Kingdom of God and the Heavenly Jerusalem would have become obtainable for them and would have become for them, as they are now for us, Christian holy places."

By elevating the carnal Israel into the spiritual Israel, the Protestants fill up a major spiritual and emotional gap in their world-view; for, having rejected both the *concept* of the Church, and the *reality* of it in Orthodoxy, they have to find a substitute for it somewhere else. And so we have the paradoxical sight of the State of Israel, one of the main persecutors of Christianity in the contemporary world, which forbids conversions of Jews to Christianity and has driven out the majority of the Orthodox Christian population, being ardently supported by the Evangelical Protestants of the Anglo-Saxon countries. There have even been several attempts by Evangelicals to blow up the mosque of the Dome of the Rock, in order to make it possible for the Jews to build their Temple again - the Temple of the Antichrist!

However, before dismissing this delusion out of hand, we need to study the arguments that the Evangelicals produce in favour of it. And one of the most important of these is that Israel's success has been prophesied and blessed by God in the Abrahamic Covenant. In particular, they argue that God promised to the descendants of Abraham the whole land of Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates, which promise has been almost fulfilled since the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, and that this would be their heritage *forever* (Genesis 13.15, 15.18).

In reply to this argument, we may note the following:-

1. God's prophecies are never fulfilled *approximately*, but always *exactly*. The prophecy of the Jews' winning control of the whole area from the Nile to the Euphrates was fulfilled *exactly* in the time of Kings David and Solomon (II Kings 8.3, II Chronicles 9.26). But the modern-day Jews have not emulated this feat: they reached the Suez Canal, but not the Nile very briefly in 1967, and have never reached the Euphrates.
2. Even if the boundaries of the State of Israel were to extend this far at some point in the future, this would still be an achievement of the *carnal*

Israel (unless Israel would have been converted to Christ by that time), and therefore would not be something to rejoice in as if it were blessed by God, but rather to be bemoaned as an extension of the kingdom of the Antichrist.

3. According to St. Philaret of Moscow, the Hebrew word translated as *forever* (I will give it to thee and to thy seed *forever*" (13.15)) can mean no more than an indefinite period of time. Even if we accept St. John Chrysostom's interpretation, that it means *in perpetuity*, this can only mean until the end of the world. For it is only "the meek" - that is, the Christians - who "will inherit the earth" in the age to come...

However, this is not the only argument of the Evangelicals. They also point to the many Biblical prophecies that speak of the return of the Jews to the land of Israel and their conversion to Christ. Some Orthodox Christians reject the Evangelical interpretation of some of these passages on the grounds that all the as-yet-unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel in fact refer to the New Testament Israel, the Church. However, it is impossible to allegorize these prophecies to such an extent that *all* references to the race of the Jews and to the physical land of Israel are excluded. In any case, even if, as I shall argue, some of these prophecies *do* refer to the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and their conversion to Holy Orthodoxy, they do not justify the Evangelicals' positive attitude to the carnal Israel that remains unrepentant and unbelieving. So let us now examine these prophecies:-

1. Malachi 4.5, 6: "I will send you Elijah the Tishbite, who will restore the heart of the father to the son, lest I come and utterly smite the earth". That this passage indeed refers to the conversion of the Jews through the Prophet Elijah is confirmed by Christ Himself: "Elijah is indeed coming first and restores all things" (Mark 9.12) as one of the two witnesses against the Antichrist (Revelation 11). And St. John Chrysostom explains that the reason for Elijah's coming is that "he may persuade the Jews to believe in Christ, so they may not all utterly perish at His coming... Hence the extreme accuracy of the expression: He did not say 'He will restore the heart of the son to the father', but 'of the father to the son'. For the Jews being father to the apostles, His meaning is that He will restore to the doctrines of their sons, that is, of the apostles, the hearts of the fathers, that is, the Jewish people's mind."

2. Ezekiel 36-39. In chapter 36 the Prophet Ezekiel describes how the Jews will be gathered back into the land of Israel, and there converted and baptized: "For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you [baptism], and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness... And you shall be My people, and I will be your God" (36.24-25, 28). Then comes the famous vision of the dry bones (ch. 37), which is an allegorical description of the resurrection of

the Jews to true faith when they appeared to be completely devoid of it. Then comes the invasion of Israel by Gog and Magog (ch. 38), and the description of how the Jews will spend seven months clearing up after the destruction of the invaders (ch. 39). And then the Prophet says: "All the nations shall know that the house of Israel was led captive because of their sins, because they rebelled against Me, and I turned My face from them, and delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions did I deal with them, and I turned My face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Now will I turn back captivity in Jacob, and will have mercy on the house of Israel, and will be jealous for the sake of My holy name" (39.23-25).

3. Jeremiah 3.16-18: "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days, says the Lord, that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord'. It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. Nor more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers."

4. Zephaniah 3.10-13, 18-20: "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My suppliants, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring Me offering. On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord, those who are left in Israel... I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors, and I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gathered you together; yea, I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord."

5. Zechariah 12-14. In chapters 12 and 13 the Prophet Zechariah appears to describe how the Jews come to a profound repentance for their apostasy from Christ: "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and compassion; and they shall look on Me Whom they pierced" (i.e. the Crucified Christ), "and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns over a first-born" (12.10). "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness [baptism]" (13.1). In chapter 14 a great disaster overtakes the

people, and “half the city shall go into captivity” (14.2). But the Lord will fight for Israel, and finally, after a great war, “it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (14.16). Now the mention of the feast of Tabernacles may lead to the thought that this is a Judaic feast, and so the context is the whole world going up to Jerusalem to pray at the Judaic feast – perhaps even to worship the Antichrist! However, in the context it is much more natural to interpret this as being a true, Christian feast, probably the Christian fulfilment of the feast of Tabernacles.

6. Romans 11.15, 25-27: “For if their [the Jews’] being cast away is the reconciling of the world [the Gentiles’ conversion], what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?... For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.”

Origen explains this passage well: “Now indeed, until all the Gentiles come to salvation, the riches of God are concentrated in the multitude of [Gentile] believers, but as long as Israel remains in its unbelief it will not be possible to say that the fullness of the Lord’s portion has been attained. The people of Israel are still missing from the complete picture. But when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and Israel comes to salvation at the end of time, then it will be the people which, although it existed long ago, will come at the last and complete the fullness of the Lord’s portion and inheritance.” For, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, “Although it was rejected, Israel will also be saved eventually... Israel will be saved in its own time and will be called at the end, after the calling of the Gentiles.”

What does “all Israel” mean in this context? Blessed Theodoret of Cyr says: “‘All Israel’ means all those who believe, whether Jews... or Gentiles.” So when “the fullness of the Gentiles” has been gathered into the granary of the Church, and then “the fullness of the Jews”, we will be able to say that “all Israel” has been saved – that is, the whole of “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6.16), the Church of Christ.

7. Revelation 3.8: “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.”

Holy New Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov) comments on this: “[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.

"Gazing with the eye of faith at that which the Lord has done before our eyes, 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 [with God], what will be their acceptance if not life from the dead?' (Romans 11.15)."

The famous monarchist writer Lev 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 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)."

7. Revelation 7.4: "And I heard the number of those who were sealed; and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children

of Israel." "This sealing," writes Archbishop Averky of Syracuse and Jordanville, "will begin with the Israelites, who before the end of the world will be converted to Christ, as St. Paul predicts (Romans 9.27, 11.26). In each of the twelve tribes there will be twelve thousand sealed, and 144,000 in all. Of these tribes only the tribe of Dan is not mentioned, because from it, according to tradition, will come the Antichrist. In place of the tribe of Dan is mentioned the priestly tribe of Levi which previously had not entered into the twelve tribes. Such a limited number is mentioned, perhaps, in order to show how small is the number of the sons of Israel who are saved in comparison with the uncountable multitude of those who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ from among all the other formerly pagan people of the earth."

So the carnal Israel can and will be saved. But only, it must be emphasized again, by ceasing to be the carnal Israel and becoming part of the spiritual. For the carnal and the spiritual Israels, though related through their common father, and constantly intertwined in history, are mutually incompatible...

Conclusion

We are now in a better position to understand the relationship between the two "great nations" who come from Abraham and who are given promises in the Abrahamic Covenant. For clarity's sake we shall refer to *two* covenants, or promises, the one referring to the spiritual Israel and the other to the carnal Israel. The two covenants are both complementary and contrary to each other. The spiritual Israel is promised spiritual blessings: *salvation and the Kingdom of Heaven*, while the carnal Israel is promised carnal blessings: *survival and the kingdom of this world*; for this is what the Jews confessed that they belonged to when they declared to the ruler of this world: "We have no other king than Caesar" (John 19, 15). And so it has turned out in history: the children of the spiritual Israel, consisting of people from many nations, both Jews and Gentiles, have been given salvation in Christ, while the children of the carnal Israel, having lost salvation, have nevertheless survived many centuries of oppression and humiliation, and have achieved worldly power - and power over the spiritual Israel, too. The worldly power of the carnal Israel is destined to reach its peak at the end of the world, in the time of the Jewish Antichrist. At the same time, however, - or perhaps before - the spiritual Israel will achieve *her* greatest victory - the conversion of many, perhaps most of the children of the carnal Israel to Christ.

Since the carnal Israel is promised physical life and power, it is no wonder that since the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and especially since the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, it has regained power over the land of Israel, driving out most of the Christians in the process, and may well recapture all the land from the Nile to the Euphrates, as was promised in the Abrahamic

Covenant. But it is important to understand that such a reconquest, if it takes place, will not be by virtue of the Jews being the *chosen* people, as they and their Evangelical allies believe, but by virtue of the exact opposite: of their being the *accursed* people. For the people that is carnal is given physical gifts that are appropriate to its carnal desires, and to compensate for its alienation from the true, spiritual gifts.

But in the final analysis it is *the meek* – that is, the Christians, the spiritual Israel - who will inherit the earth. Only it will be given to them only after this present world has perished in its present form, and has been renewed and transformed into the conditions of the original Paradise. Moreover, since corruptible “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom” (I Corinthians 15.50), they will receive it, not in their present corruptible bodies, but in that “earth”, the glorious body of the resurrection, which they will inherit at the Coming of Christ...

St. Seraphim of Sarov prophesied that at the end of the world there would be only two important nations: the Russians and the Jews, and that the Antichrist would be a Jew born in Russia. However, the Russians and the Jews will not be strictly racial but spiritual categories, corresponding to the categories of the two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael. The Russians will be the leading Christian nation, and any other Christian nation that does not want to be destroyed spiritually by being merged into Judaism will have to follow the lead of Russia (Isaiah 60.12). And the Jews will be the leading antichristian nation, to which all those nations who have fallen away from Christianity will submit. How fitting, then, if the Russian nation which has suffered most from the antichristian Jews in the terrible Russian-Jewish revolution, should finally convert them to Christianity, so that the former bitter enemies, reconciled in the Body of Christ, should fight together against the Russian-Jewish Antichrist!

June 2/15, 2008.
Pentecost.

[17. 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 is 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).”

But what, then, 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 gives 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 MP in a strict manner, as *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.

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 Church, which Lourié rejects as "a tragicomic 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 (i) those that relate to injustices of one kind or another, and (ii) those involving 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 schismatical – 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 schismatical, 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 unia 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-hierarchy 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-hierarchy 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”.

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-hierarchy, 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 (Kiouisis) 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. In fact, all seven of the Holy Ecumenical Councils were convened by the will of the Emperor and could hardly have been convened without him.

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 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..."

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".

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. 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 fulfillment 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...”

October 4/17, 2006.

18. ON NOT ROCKING THE BOAT

“The protector of religion is the very body of the Church, even the people themselves.”

Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, 17 (1848).

“Hide the truth,” goes the popular Greek saying, “and you hide Christ.” “Publish – and be damned!” might be the nearest modern equivalent, in which “damnation” comes from the court of public opinion, not God. The difference is important. Publishing the truth often comes at a price. We have to choose the price: damnation by men – or by God...

But is it always necessary to publish the truth? True: the Apostle Paul says: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5.11). But are we not also supposed to hide our neighbour’s sins, leaving the judgement to God? After all, the Lord Himself says: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7.1). Not so, says St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the Apostle’s words. “Paul did not say ‘judge’, he said ‘reprove’, that is, correct. And the words, ‘Judge not that ye be not judged’ He spoke with reference to very small errors...”

So we should hide our neighbour’s sins when they are small, but reprove and expose when they are large and provide a bad example to others – “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”. Indeed, to hide them, and not to reprove them, is a serious sin, according to the same Apostle. “It is reported continuously 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 you. For I verily, as 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... For... do not ye judge them that are within [the Church]?... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (I Corinthians 5.1-5, 12-13).

If even the major sins of laypeople should be judged in public by the Church, what about the canonical sins of hierarchs? It seems obvious that they, too, should be judged – and in public. After all, that is what the canon law of the Holy Church prescribes. And if the major sins of laypeople, which are usually done in private and affect only a small group of people, should be judged in public, then *a fortiori* the canonical sins of hierarchs, which are usually done in public and affect many more people, directly and indirectly, should be judged

in public. It follows, of course, that public protests against public canonical transgressions - we are assuming that, as is usually the case nowadays, private exhortations achieve nothing and the hierarchs themselves do not correct themselves - are not only permissible but *obligatory*.

However, this conclusion is disputed by many - especially among the clergy. The practice among clergy of almost all Orthodox jurisdictions today is to cover up each other's sins, as if the clergy were (as in medieval Catholicism) a kind of closed corporation that exists only to serve the interests of its members, and not the salvation of all the rational sheep of Christ. When protests against the sins of the clergy arise from the lower ranks of the Church, these are usually sternly rejected as being "ill-conceived" (even when their truth is not disputed), "ill-timed" (there never seems to be a right time to protest), or "not the business of laypeople". If the protests gather pace, and the transgression can no longer be hidden from public view, then the protesters are accused of "rocking the boat", of shaming the Church before the world outside, even of preventing other people from joining the Church...

Let us look at these arguments a little more closely.

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But let us first concede this to those who wish to suppress the whistle-blowers: it would be better for all if the scandals of the Church could be healed by the bishops without the intervention or protests of the laity. That is, after all, the function, or one of the functions, of the hierarchy; we elect a man to the hierarchy precisely because we believe him to have the knowledge and the courage to heal the wounds of the Church through the grace that is given him in the sacrament of ordination. The problem is: by the Providence of God there has not been a time since the Apostolic age when the hierarchy has been able to rule the Church in accordance with the holy dogmas and canons without the help of the lower clergy and the laity...

If we look at the history of the Orthodox Church, we are struck by the *constant* struggle for the faith and canonical order - and the involvement of all ranks of the Church in that struggle. "Peace on earth", in the sense of freedom from internal dissension and quarrels, was never the destiny of the Church on earth. In the period of the Ecumenical Councils, not only were bishops and patriarchates constantly warring against each other: the laity, too, often rose up publicly against their hierarchs when they betrayed the faith.

Sometimes order was restored only through the intervention of the kings - as the holy Emperors Marcian and Pulcheria intervened at the Fourth Ecumenical Council. St. Isidore of Pelusium approved of this intervention,

writing: "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 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." It was acting justly, in 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".

Nor were these struggles only against manifest heretics, such as Arius or Nestorius. St. Theodore the Studite is noted as much for his struggles against the holy Patriarchs Tarasius and Nicephorus as against the iconoclast heretics...

In this period, Christians of all ranks appear to have been much less inhibited about criticizing their hierarchs than they are today. The argument so often employed today to suppress dissent - "This is the hierarchs' business, not yours" - was rejected by in the Early Church. Thus we read in *The Institutions of the Apostles*, "these sheep are not irrational but rational creatures - and we say this lest at any time a lay person should say, 'I am a sheep and not a shepherd, and I have no concern for myself: let the shepherd look to that, for he alone will be required to give account for me.' For even as the sheep that will not follow its good shepherd is exposed to the wolves, that is, to its destruction, to also the sheep that follows a bad shepherd is likewise exposed to unavoidable death, since the shepherd will devour him. Therefore, take care to flee from the ravening shepherd."

Again, St. Athanasius the Great said: "As we walk the unerring and life-bringing path, let us pluck out the eye that scandalizes us-not the physical eye, but the noetic one. For example, if a bishop or presbyter-who are the eyes of the Church-conduct themselves in an evil manner and scandalize the people, they must be plucked out. For it is more profitable to gather without them in a house of prayer, than to be cast together with them into the *gehenna* of fire together with Annas and Caiaphas."

The best hierarchs of the time bemoaned the anarchy of conflicting opinions in which the most vainglorious and ill-informed were often the most eagerly heard. But they did not take this as an excuse to suppress dissent, but rather bewailed a general lack of zeal for curing the ills of the Church in a thorough-going manner. Thus St. Basil the Great wrote: "[In the Church] one must get to the bottom of the problems, so as to eradicate the sickness from its very root." And St. John Chrysostom said: "A want of zeal in small matters is the cause of all our calamities; and because slight errors escape fitting correction, greater

ones creep in.” These holy hierarchs also bewailed the bad impression that the internal quarrels of the Church made on those outside. However, this did not inhibit them from convening synods to depose heretics and evil-doers in the full glare of public scrutiny. Evidently they believed that glasnost’ was the price that had to be paid for true *perestroika*...

From about the tenth century, the internal quarrels of the Churches appear to have died down, at any rate in the East. But this is a deceptive impression: in these periods of comparative peace, leading Christians took it upon themselves to sound the alarm still more urgently, as if this peace was the peace of impending spiritual death. Consider, for example, the *Letter on Confession* by St. Simeon the New Theologian (+1022):

“It is permissible for an unordained monk to confess us. You will find this to be the case everywhere. This is because of the vesture and likeness [*proschemata*] given by God as the monk’s inheritance and by which monks are named. So is it written in the God-inspired writings of the Fathers, and you will find this to be the case should you chance to examine them. To be sure, prior to the monks only the bishops had that authority to bind and loose which they received in succession to the Apostles. But, when time had passed and the bishops had become useless, this dread authority passed on to priests of blameless life and worthy of divine grace. Then also, when the latter had become polluted, both priests and bishops becoming like the rest of the people with many – just as today – tripped up by spirits of deceit and by vain and empty titles and all perishing together, it was transferred, as we said above, to God’s elect people. I mean to the monks. It was not that it had been taken away from the priests and bishops, but rather that they had made themselves strangers to it...

“... The Lord’s disciples preserved with all exactitude the rightness of this authority. But, as we said, when time had gone by, the worthy grew mixed and mingled with the unworthy, with one contending in order to have precedence over another and feigning virtue for the sake of preferment. Thus, because those who were holding the Apostles’ thrones were shown up as fleshly minded, as lovers of pleasure and seekers of glory, and as inclining towards heresies, the divine grace abandoned them and this authority was taken away from them. Therefore, having abandoned as well everything else which is required of those who celebrate the sacraments, this alone is demanded of them: that they be Orthodox. But I do not myself think that they are even this. Someone is not Orthodox just because he does not slip some new dogma into the Church of God, but because he possesses a life which keeps harmony with true teaching. Such a life and such a man contemporary patriarchs and metropolitans have at different times either looked for and not found, or, if they find him, they prefer [to ordain] the unworthy candidate instead. They ask only this of him, that he put the Symbol of the faith down in writing. They find this alone acceptable,

that the man be neither a zealot for the sake of what is good, nor that he do battle with anyone because of evil. In this way they pretend that they keep peace here in the Church. This is worse than active hostility, and it is a cause of great concern..."

St. Symeon's chastisement of the Byzantine Church at the apparent height of its glory is astonishingly harsh. The Orthodoxy of the hierarchs of his time, he says, is purely formal: they are neither "zealots for the sake of what is good" nor do they "do battle with anyone because of evil". While pretending to "keep peace here in Church", they are in fact waging war against God.

The hierarchs he is describing are what the Lord calls "hirelings". The hireling is not a wolf in sheep's clothing, that is, a heretic, but neither is he a true shepherd, for he "is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not" (John 10.12). Nevertheless, he may well belong to the external organization of the True Church and receive the honour of a true shepherd. But he flees when the wolf comes and allows the sheep to be scattered, because he "careth not for the sheep" (John 10.13).

Commenting on this passage, St. Gregory the Great writes in his *Homilies on the Gospel*: "He flees, not by giving ground, but by withholding his help. He flees, because he sees injustice and says nothing. He flees, because he takes refuge in silence..."

And "by silence," as another great Gregory, the Theologian, says, "God is betrayed..."

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Turning now to the present day, it would be a very bold (and foolish) man who would claim that the True Orthodox Church today is not in an even worse condition than the Church in tenth-century Byzantium. Formally speaking, our bishops are Orthodox: none of them confesses the heresies of ecumenism or newcalendarism or sergianism. They condemn (although sometimes not very loudly) the obviously heretical and apostate patriarchs of "World Orthodoxy". But "someone is not Orthodox just because he does not slip some new dogma into the Church of God", as St. Symeon says. If he does not confess a certain heresy, but allows it to infect the flock, then he is a hireling, and not a true shepherd. And this *is* happening in our Church - notably with regard to the soteriological and other heresies of Fr. John Romanides and his many followers and admirers in World Orthodoxy. Moreover, many other injustices and scandals are not being corrected, and the absolutely necessary sacramental unity that should exist between the True Orthodox Churches of different nationalities is being sabotaged...

The result is that many laypeople, especially (but not only) in the diasporas, are receiving tragically little pastoral care and instruction. Meanwhile, other people from other jurisdictions who are seeking the truth are being repelled by the uncorrected scandals they see in the Church. They look for the good works that will prove our faith – and do not see them.

The Apostle Paul calls on Timothy to “reprove, admonish and exhort” “in season and out of season” (II Timothy 4.2). But for today’s hierarchs every season seems to be out of season when it comes to rebuking and disciplining those who are destroying the Church. In such a situation, one would expect a multitude of whistle-blowers to come forward from the lower ranks in order to call the hierarchs to carry out their duty. But the strange and alarming thing is that as the Church becomes weaker and weaker, so the protests become fewer and fewer and fainter and fainter.

Nor - except in a very few cases - does the recent and terrifying example of the fall of the Russian Church Abroad appear to have inspired our leaders with a godly fear that the same could happen to them.

Let us linger a little longer on the example of the Russian Church Abroad. The present writer remembers how, as early as the mid-1970s, hierarchs such as Archbishops Averky and Nikodim and laymen such as Professor Ivan Andreyevsky were deeply worried by the lack of a truly confessing stand in the Church against the heretics of World Orthodoxy. But all three men died in 1976, and the torch of protest was handed on to lesser men who commanded less respect – and were in any case told to shut up.

Only the holy Metropolitan Philaret paid heed to their protests and sympathized with them – and to some extent succeeded in stopping the rot through the anathema against ecumenism in 1983. But when he died in 1985, and then Bishops Gregory Grabbe and Anthony of Los Angeles died in the mid-1990s, the way was open for the remaining hierarchs to “reinterpret” the 1983 anathema, join the Cyprianite schismatics, and then, in 2000, to vote for joining World Orthodoxy. From 2001 protests were punished by excommunications. And so it was a “purified” Church that finally joined the apostates in 2007...

In the True Orthodox Church of Greece today, the disease is different, but the situation is no less serious. Only very few seem to recognize this fact. Everything is covered by an eerie silence, as under snow in winter...

But this is not the silence of the prudent man who realizes that there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence. This is the silence of the hireling who is fleeing from the calls of his conscience and his pastoral duty... And the

exhaustion of laypeople who have come to believe that nothing can be changed in the Church, that it is not their business, and that they must simply accept the status quo without protest, say “axios!” (worthy) to him who is “anaxios” (unworthy), hibernate, and quietly lose all hope...

But there is always hope, because, as St. Ambrose of Optina once said when he was in conflict with the Russian Holy Synod, “there is a Vladyko above all Vladykos”, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” (I Peter 2.25). And He is the Helmsman Who will always guide the ship of the Church to the safe harbour of the Kingdom of heaven.

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Finally, let us look more closely at the metaphor of “not rocking the boat” and develop it a little.

The Church, as we know, is compared to a boat whose Captain is Christ and whose chief rowers are the hierarchs. When a storm arises from outside the boat, the hierarchs wake up the supposedly sleeping Christ (He gives the impression of sleeping only in order to give them the opportunity to act), and He calms the winds and the waves. That is the right order, the canonical order.

But what if the rowers themselves are asleep? Then the passengers have to act in order to wake up the rowers. And how can they do this without rocking the boat?

“But rocking the boat will let in water from outside,” goes the objection. Hardly. After all, the boat is already in a storm, and is already letting in water from all sides. A little rocking from within will hardly make the situation significantly worse. In any case, if the rowers are not woken, the whole boat will inevitably capsize sooner or later.

“But how can that be, when the boat is unsinkable?” continues the objection. However, *no* boat, in the sense of a Local Church, is unsinkable. In 1905 St. John of Kronstadt pointed out that many distinguished Local Churches, such as the Carthaginian, had been wiped off the face of the earth, and warned them that the same could happen to the Russian Church. If St. John could say this of a Church that was the largest in history, and was even at that time nourishing hundreds of thousands of future new martyrs in her bosom, then *no* Local Church, however ancient and venerable, is unsinkable. It is only the rightly confessing Church that is unsinkable; while the Church cannot be destroyed *everywhere*, she *can* be destroyed *anywhere* – that is, there is no Local Church in any part of the world which can be sure that she will not fall away from the truth. The Lord promised that the Church built on the Rock of the true faith

would prevail over the gates of hell, and we must always preserve a lively faith in this truth. Holding it, we know that even if our Local Church falls, there will be another somewhere else that remains in the truth, and that “help and deliverance will come from another quarter”, as Mordecai said to Esther (Esther 4.14).

It is an attribute of fallen human nature to seek the illusion of security, infallibility or indestructibility, in something concrete, material and locatable. Thus the Jews sought to anchor their feeling of eternal superiority in the fact that they were “the sons of Abraham” – in a genetic, not a spiritual sense. And the Roman Catholics sought a guarantee of their Church’s infallibility in its location – *Roma eterna et invicta*. But the Church, as St. Maximus the Confessor taught, does not consist in genes or spatial location or anything material, but in *the right confession of the faith*. And that faith can disappear like the wind if God withdraws it from a soul – “the Spirit blows where It wishes” (John 3.8)...

But there is an important corollary to this truth: since the faith can be lost by any Church in any place, whatever its nationality or reputation, it has to be fought for with every ounce of reason, strength and passion. Our respect for the clergy and the grace of the priesthood should allow them time to correct their mistakes themselves. But when we see that the clergy do not deserve respect, and that the grace they have received is being trampled on to the potential damnation of the whole Local Church, it is time for the lower ranks to act. For there is no salvation in following a “canonical” hierarch when he is not following the canons. Such “canonicity” is a lie and hypocrisy...

Let us conclude with some quotations from the Holy Fathers:

“Anarchy is altogether an evil, the occasion of many calamities, and the source of disorder and confusion... However, the disobedience of those who are ruled is no less an evil... But perhaps someone will say, there is also a third evil, when the ruler is bad. I myself, too, know it, and it is no small evil, but a far worse evil even than anarchy. For it is better to be led by no one than to be led by one who is evil. For the former indeed are often saved, and often in peril, but the latter will be altogether in peril, being led into the pit of perdition.

“How, then, does Paul say, ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves’? Having said above, ‘whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation,’ he then said, ‘Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves.’ ‘What then,’ you say, ‘when he is wicked, should we not obey?’ Wicked? In what sense? If in regard to faith, flee and avoid him, not only if he is a man, but even if he is an angel come down from heaven; but if in regard to life, do not be over-curious...’

“‘But so-and-so,’ you say, ‘is a decent man, is a Priest, lives in great self-control, and does this and that.’ Do not talk to me about this decent person, this self-controlled, pious man who is a Priest; but if you like, suppose that this man is Peter, or Paul, or even an Angel come down from heaven. For not even in such a case do I regard the dignity of their persons... For our reckoning is not with our fellow-servants, but with our Master, and to Him we shall give an account for all that we have done in our life.

“When there is no one to support the cause of true religion, we ought alone and all unaided to do our duty...”

*December 6/19, 2010.
St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.*

19. ORTHODOXY, UNIVERSALISM AND NATIONALISM

It is sometimes said that we are now living through a time similar to that of the first centuries in the history of the Church, before St. Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the civilized world. There are certainly many similarities between that time and ours. But in one respect at least there is a very sharp difference: whereas in the first centuries Christianity was seen as the most universal of all the existing religions, and the least tied to a specific people and place and national tradition, now Orthodox Christianity is perceived as among the most culture-specific of all religions, closely tied to the national traditions of certain specific peoples, such as the Greeks and the Russians...

Of course, in its origins Christianity *did* arise in a specific place and out of a specific national tradition: that of the Jews. And for some time the Church was seen as simply a Jewish sect. However, this perception began to change after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., when the Jews were expelled from their homeland, relations between the Church and the Synagogue became increasingly tenuous and hostile, and the flow of Jewish converts to Christianity began to dry up. Not that the Jewish roots of Christianity were ever forgotten. But the Church was now overwhelmingly a Gentile community composed of people of all nations and with a message aimed at the people of all nations. The Jews now looked on the Christians as completely alien to themselves, and on Jewish Christians as traitors to the national cause. At the same time, the Roman emperors were forced to reclassify the Christians, distinguish them from the Jews, and treat them in a different manner.

“The Roman government,” writes Alexander Dvorkin, “in practice was tolerant to any cult if only it did not incite to rebellion and did not undermine morality. Moreover, the Romans thought that one of the reasons for their military successes was the fact that while other peoples worshipped only their own local gods, the Romans showed marks of honour to all the gods without exception and for that were rewarded for their special piety. All cults not established by the state were allowed, but theoretically did not have the right to propagandize in Rome, although their gods also entered into the Roman pantheon. In the first century after Christ religions already known to the contemporary Roman were not, as a rule, persecuted for propagandizing. However, the law retained its prior force, and theoretically the possibility of applying it remained. The permitted religions had to satisfy two criteria: place and time. Religion was always a local matter – that is, it was linked to a definite people living in a definite locality, - and also an ancient matter, linked to the history of this people. It was more complicated to assimilate the God of the Jews, Who had no representation and did not accept sacrifices in any place except Jerusalem, into their pantheon. The Jews themselves did not allow His representation to be placed anywhere and stubbornly declined to worship the

Roman gods. The Jews were monotheists and theoretically understood that their faith in principle excluded all other forms of religion. Nevertheless, in spite of all the complications with the Jews and the strangeness of their religion, it was still tolerated: the religion of the Jews was a national one and, besides, ancient, and it was considered sacrilege to encroach on it. Moreover, the Jews occupied an important political niche that was for the Romans a stronghold of their eastern conquests. In view of all these considerations, the Romans gritted their teeth and recognized the Jewish religion as licit. Privileges were given to the Jewish people also because their rites seemed strange and dirty. The Romans thought that the Jews simply could not have proselytes among other peoples and would rather repel the haughty Roman aristocrat. Therefore the Jews were given the right to confess their belief in one God. Until the rebellion of 66-70 the Roman authorities treated them with studied tolerance. Augustus gave the Jews significant privileges, which, after the crisis under Caligula, who wanted to put his statue in the Jerusalem Temple (cf. Mark 13.14 and II Thessalonians 2.3-4), were again renewed by Claudius.

“The circumstances changed when Christianity appeared. Having examined it, the Romans classified the Christians as apostates from the Jewish faith. It was precisely the traits that distinguished the Christians from the Jews that made them still lower in the eyes of the Romans even than the Judaism they had little sympathy for. Christianity did not have the right belonging to historical antiquity – it was the ‘new religion’ so displeasing to the Roman conservative. It was not the religion of one people, but on the contrary, lived only through proselytes from other religions. If the propagandizing of other cults by their servers was seen rather as a chance violation, for Christians missionary work was their only *modus vivendi* – a necessity of their very position in history. Christians were always reproached for a lack of historical and national character in their religion. Celsius, for example, saw in Christians a party that had separated from Judaism and inherited from it its inclination for disputes.

“The Christians could demand tolerance either in the name of the truth or in the name of freedom of conscience. But since for the Romans one of the criteria of truth was antiquity, Christianity, a new religion, automatically became a false religion. The right of freedom of conscience that is so important for contemporary man was not even mentioned at that time. Only the state, and not individuals, had the right to establish and legalize religious cults. In rising up against state religion, the Christians became guilty of a state crime – they became in principle enemies of the state. And with such a view of Christianity it was possible to interpret a series of features of their life in a particular way: their nocturnal gatherings, their waiting for a certain king that was to come, the declining of some of them from military service and above all their refusal to offer sacrifices to the emperor.”

So Christians were suspect because of the supposed “lack of historical and national character in their religion”, i.e. because of its *universalism*. Rome could tolerate and respect any number of historical and national religions, so long as they did not make claims to exclusive truth and universality. Of course, the Jews did claim that their God was the only true God, and there are definite hints of the universality of the Jewish religion in the Law and the Prophets. However, the Jews were still “historical and national” – and, especially after 70 A.D., they became more closed in on themselves and did not try to make proselytes from other religions. So the Jews could be tolerated – just. But it was a different case with Christianity: it was completely and explicitly universalist. And this constituted a threat to the Roman view of things; for the only universal power that Rome recognized was *herself*, and the only universal religion – the cult of the Roman Emperor.

Roman universality meant that St. Paul, a “Hebrew of the Hebrews”, could also say, without sense of contradiction: “I am a Roman citizen”. Already from the beginning of the second century, we find non-Roman emperors of Rome; they came from as far afield as Spain and Arabia, Dacia and Africa. In 212 Rome offered citizenship to all free subjects of the empire, which meant that these subjects could both identify with the empire as their own country and rise to the highest positions within it. And so Rutilius Namatianus could say of Rome: “You have made out of diverse races one *patria*”. And the poet Claudian wrote: “we may drink of the Rhine or Orontes”, but “we are all one people”. For the nations had become one in Rome:

*She is the only one who has received
The conquered in her arms and cherished all
The human race under a common name,
Treating them as her children, not her slaves.
She called these subjects Roman citizens
And linked far worlds with ties of loyalty.*

The clash between pagan Rome and the Church was ultimately a clash between two universalist visions – a political and constitutional one, and a spiritual and ecclesiastical one. They could not co-exist in their existing forms. But St. Constantine the Great showed that, with some adaptation on both sides – radical in the case of Rome (the abolition of emperor-worship), minor in the case of the Church (its administrative reorganization) – they could come together in a “symphonic” union – the Roman Christian Empire. Then for the first time the State could feel at home in the Church, and the Christians (up to a point) – in the State. “The breadth of the East,” wrote the Spanish priest Orosius, “the vastness of the North, the extensiveness of the South, and the very large and secure seats of the islands are of my name and law because I, as a Roman and Christian, approach Christians and Romans...”

The critical change came with the Edict of Milan in 313, which was signed by Constantine and his fellow-emperor Licinius: "Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each man has desired; whereby whatsoever divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority". So Christians were no longer compelled to worship the emperor.

But the significance of the Edict goes beyond this. Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes: "The Edict of Milan decisively rejected many traditions of antiquity. St. Constantine clearly proclaimed that Christianity is not the property of any particular people, but is a universal religion, the religion of the whole of humanity. If formerly it was thought that a given religion belongs to a given people and for that reason it is sacred and untouchable, now the lawgiver affirmed a new principle: that the sacred and untouchable religion was that religion which belonged to all peoples - Christianity. It was obviously not an attempt to bring Christianity under the usual (pagan) juridical forms, but a principled change in those forms."

The modern world has a very similar approach to religion to that of the Roman pagan authorities. Any number of "historical and national" religions are permitted so long as none of them makes a claim to exclusive and universal truth. It is *politics* that is the only permissible universal religion, and the aims of politics - equality, prosperity, stability, "human rights" - the only truly legitimate aims of life... Only two religions defy this consensus: Islam and Christianity. Islam is treated now as Judaism was treated in the first century: with kid gloves. For now, as then, the powers that be would prefer not to use force against a religion having many adherents and wielding great political and economic power. Besides, any religion that encourages suicide bombers to establish its claims has to be treated with "respect".

It is a different matter with Christianity. The universalism of Christianity is no longer a threat quite simply because most Christians no longer confess it. Ecumenism has blunted the sharp sword of Christian truth, with the result that each of the Christian "denominations", and Christianity as a whole, is simply seen as a local tradition no better in principle than any other local tradition. Indeed, Christianity is now seen as so "historical and national" as to be completely *passé*. In the march of historical progress (a modern concept not shared by the ancient Romans) Christianity has simply been left behind...

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Of course, this is highly ironical, because the word "ecumenism" derives from the Greek word *oikoumene*, "the inhabited world", from which we get the

word *oikoumenikos*, “ecumenical”, which can also be translated as “universal”. So the ecumenical movement, although universal in its name and aims and emotional pathos, is in fact destroying the only truly universal religion - Christianity. Ecumenism, as the religious component of the globalization movement, is striving to localize Christianity, reduce it to a group of “national and historical” traditions that may have some cultural or aesthetic or psychological value for the nations that inherit them, but no relevance at all for the world as a whole, which can only be saved by what the globalists regard as the only truly universal religion - that of human rights.

But there is a still greater, and more tragic irony: that we the anti-ecumenists, the True Orthodox who maintain that Orthodoxy Christianity is the one and only true faith for all men, often inadvertently give the impression of supporting the ecumenists’ attitude to their faith. For we passionately defend our national religious traditions - whether they be Greek, Russian, Serbian, Romanian or whatever - while failing to unite in a single Church so as to proclaim the truth with one voice to the whole world. It is not that we do not believe that our faith is for all men. We do - or most of us, at any rate. The problem is our failure to present a universalist icon of our universal truth...

“Charity begins at home,” goes the English proverb. This can be understood in both a descriptive and a prescriptive sense. On the one hand, charity, or love, as a matter of psycho-social *fact* begins in the context of one’s family, friends and neighbours; we learn to love at home. And on the other hand, love *should* begin with those closest to you, genetically and geographically. For if you cannot love those who brought you into the world and gave you everything that you are, whom can you love? Similarly, at the level of the nation, we see that almost everyone involuntarily loves their own people. He who does not love his own people, we feel, is not fully a man.

This is the order of nature. But nature is fallen. And love of one’s country, like the love of women, is often blind. This fallen, blind love of one’s country we call chauvinism, nationalism or phyletism. But there is a true, spiritual love of one’s country, which we call *patriotism*.

The Russian religious philosopher I.A. Ilyin described the patriotism, the true love of one’s country, as follows: “To love one’s people and believe in her, to believe that she will overcome all historical trials and will arise from collapse purified and sobered - does not mean to close one’s eyes to her weaknesses and imperfections, perhaps even her vices. To accept one’s people as the incarnation of the fullest and highest perfection on earth would be pure vainglory, sick nationalist conceit. The real patriot sees not only the spiritual paths of his people, but also her temptations, weaknesses and imperfections. Spiritual love generally is not given to groundless idealization, but sees soberly and with

extreme acuteness. To love one's people does not mean to flatter her or hide from her her weak sides, but honourably and courageously criticize them and tirelessly struggle with them."

The Lord Jesus Christ gives us in this, as in everything else, the perfect example. He loved His earthly country more than any Israelite - but in an unfallen way. Like Paul, He was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews". But, again like Paul, He recognized that it is precisely earthly kinship and love that often makes one blind to the sins of one's own people - and the virtues of other nations. He both loved His country and exposed its sins, sometimes expressing both the profoundest love and the sharpest condemnation in the same breath: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23.37).

Again and again the Lord tried to quench the fallen national pride of His compatriots, foreseeing the spiritual and national catastrophe to which it would lead. In several parables He prophesied that the Kingdom of heaven would be taken away from the Jews and given to foreigners. The parable of the Good Samaritan could also be called the parable of the Good *Foreigner*. Of course, the Samaritan signified Christ Himself. But that is just the point: Christ is symbolized in the Samaritan because He might just as well have been a complete foreigner to His people, so little did they appreciate Him. Thus He was rejected and nearly killed by the people of his native Nazareth, to whom He said: "Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted by his own country" (Luke 4.24). And he went on to give two examples of prophets who had to flee Israel, but who were believed in by foreigners: Elijah by the widow of Sarepta in Sidon, and Elisha by Naaman the Syrian (vv. 26-27). It is a striking fact that, if we except the case of St. John the Forerunner ("among them that are born of women there hath not rise a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11.11)), Christ reserved His greatest praise for foreigners - even foreigners from among the occupying race. Thus of the Roman centurion whose servant He healed He said: "I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8.10). And then He went on to prophesy that there would be many more like him: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vv. 11-12).

The Jews fell away from God precisely because they placed the nation and its vain glory above God and His true glory. Their heresy consisted, not in the belief that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4.22), - for the Lord Himself believed that, - but in the belief that salvation was exclusively *for* the Jews, and that no other nation was worthy to partake of that salvation. However, the religion of

the Old Testament, though full of warnings against adopting the false religions of the Gentiles, nevertheless contained the seeds of true universalism. Thus God commanded Abraham to circumcise not only every member of his family, but also "him that is born in the house, or bought with the money of any stranger, which is *not* of thy seed" (Genesis 17.12). The Canaanite Rahab and the Moabite Ruth were admitted into the faith and nation of the Jews. King David believed that "all the ends of the earth shall remember and shall turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him" (Psalms 21.27). And King Solomon prayed that God would hear the prayer of non-Israelites who prayed in his temple, "that all people of the earth may know Thy name, and fear Thee, as doth Thy people Israel" (II Chronicles 6.33). And so by the time of Christ there was a large Greek-speaking diaspora which was spreading the faith of the Jews throughout the Mediterranean world.

However, the Pharisees, who came to dominate Jewry, were interested only in converts to the cause of Jewish nationalism (cf. Matthew 23.15). It was the Pharisees who incited Christ's death because He preached a different kind of spiritual and universalist Kingdom that was opposed to their nationalist dreams. And after His death, and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the scattering of the surviving Jews throughout the world, the Jews became possessed by an egoistical, chauvinist spirit that was expressed in such a way that, as Rabbi Solomon Goldman put it, "God is absorbed in the nationalism of Israel."

The path of Jewish chauvinism has been followed, alas, by some Gentile Christian nations. Perhaps the first was the Armenians, whose anti-Chalcedonian and anti-Byzantine nationalism made theirs to be the first national church in the negative sense of that phrase – that is, a church that is so identified with the nation as to lose its universalist claims. Again, the Welsh, the remnants of the ancient Romano-British Church, refused to join with the Roman St. Augustine of Canterbury in the conversion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons because of their continuing hatred of the race that had driven them out of Eastern Britain. And so, as prophesied by St. Augustine, they were both defeated in battle and found themselves outside the union of Celtic and Roman Christianity that was achieved at the Synod of Whitby (664). They went into schism, and were regarded as schismatics by the Anglo-Saxon and Irish Churches. As an Irish canon put it, "the Britons [of Wales] are... contrary to all men, separating themselves both from the Roman way of life and the unity of the Church". The English bishop, St. Aldhelm of Sherborne, described the behaviour of the schismatic Welsh thus: "Glorifying in the private purity of their own way of life, they detest our communion to such a great extent that they disdain equally to celebrate the Divine offices in church with us and to take course of food at table for the sake of charity. Rather,.. they order the vessels and flagons [i.e. those used in common with clergy of the Roman Church] to be

purified and purged with grains of sandy gravel, or with the dusky cinders of ash.. Should any of us, I mean Catholics, go to them for the purpose of habitation, they do not deign to admit us to the company of their brotherhood until we have been compelled to spend the space of forty days in penance... As Christ truly said: 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish'."

As we enter the second millennium of Christian history, we see nationalist passions becoming more widespread in the Orthodox world. Thus as the Armenians, Syrians and Copts separated from the empire, and came under the power of the Arabs, and then the Slavs and Romanians of the Balkan peninsula came under the power of the Turks, the Christian Roman Empire, while not giving up its universalist claims, came more and more to resemble a (rather small) Greek nation-state whose emperors had to struggle for occupancy of the imperial throne with the leaders of other nation-states - Tsar Kalojan of Bulgaria and Tsar Dušan of Serbia. However, the tearing apart of the empire along national lines was prevented, paradoxically, by the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. For the Turkish conquerors imposed their own rule over the whole of what had been the Eastern Roman Empire, including the warring Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs. Moreover, by treating all the Orthodox Christians of their empire as a single *millet*, or "nation", over whom they placed the Ecumenical Patriarchate as "ethnarch", or civil-cum-ecclesiastical head, they reversed the fissiparous tendencies of the Balkan Orthodox, forcing them into an administrative unity that they had failed to achieve while free.

But it did not last. In 1766 Patriarch Samuel abolished the autonomous status of the Bulgarian Ochrid diocese as well as the Serbian patriarchate of Peč, and sent Greek bishops into the "reconquered" territories who served the liturgy only in Greek for their non-Greek-speaking flocks. Old wounds were reopened, and resentment against the Greeks among the Slavs became so strong that, for example, when the Serbs rebelled against the Turks under Karadjordje, and the Greek *klephits* offered their support, it was rejected. Again, when the Bulgarians rebelled against the Ecumenical Patriarchate to form their own autocephalous Church with dioceses even in Turkey, they were anathematized by a Council of the patriarchate in 1872 for adhering to the heresy of "phyletism", i.e. nationalism. Finally, in the decades before the First World War, and especially in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans fought against each other with great savagery for control of Macedonia.

In relation to phyletism the Council of 1872 that anathematized the Bulgarians made the following decision: "...We have concluded that when the principle of racial division is juxtaposed with the teaching of the Gospel and the constant practice of the Church, it is not only foreign to it, but also completely opposed, to it.' 'We decree the following in the Holy Spirit: 1. We reject and

condemn racial division, that is, racial differences, national quarrels and disagreements in the Church of Christ, as being contrary to the teaching of the Gospel and the holy canons of our blessed fathers, on which the holy Church is established and which adorn human society and lead it to Divine piety. 2. In accordance with the holy canons, we proclaim that those who accept such division according to races and who dare to base on it hitherto unheard-of racial assemblies are foreign to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are real schismatics.”

Fine words! The problem was that the authors of these words were as guilty of phyletism as those whom they condemned! So who, in truth, was the schismatic?

However, this is not the important question for us now. The important question is: to what extent is the present disunity among the True Orthodox the result of phyletism? And the answer is: not much, because divisions *within* the Churches are as numerous as those *between* them. Moreover, the blame for the lack of communion between different national Churches for most of the last century should with more justice be laid at the door of external factors – wars, revolutions, linguistic problems, persecutions – than of phyletism. Nor should we forget that there have been noble, if not very successful attempts to unite the national Churches – notably the Russian Church Abroad and the Greek Old Calendarists in 1969-71. Nevertheless, it would be rash to deny the strong influence of phyletism in some, if not all, True Orthodox jurisdictions. The *most* important question, therefore, is: how can the True Orthodox overcome the temptation of phyletism and translate words into deeds, their confession of Universal Orthodoxy into its practical manifestation?

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One fact should be recognized immediately: that it is neither possible nor desirable to turn the clock back to the time when the Church, after the falling away of the Judeo-Christians in the second century, was a community without national and historical traditions in the ordinary sense. It is not possible, because the Local Churches of Greece, Russia, Romania, Serbia, etc. are not going to disappear. And it is not desirable because it would be a catastrophe if they did disappear; for the national and historical traditions of these Local Churches are a priceless treasure which should be preserved at all cost, both for the sake of new generations born on the territories of these Local Churches who would most naturally become Christians by absorbing the local national tradition of Orthodoxy, and for the sake of converts from non-Orthodox lands. Moreover, experience has shown that those converts and their supporters among the “cradle Orthodox” who believe in escaping the phyletism of the old national Churches by creating new ones, such as the Orthodox Church of

America, have in general been found prone to fall into heresy, especially ecumenism. And this is not surprising; for the Orthodox Church grows and develops in time, not through *revolution*, but through *evolution*, not through casting aside the experience and structures of earlier generations, but through accepting and renewing them.

At the same time, it is precisely on the mission-field, in such places as North America or Western Europe or Central Africa, that the dividedness of True Orthodoxy (as of World Orthodoxy) into a number of jurisdictions produces the most bitter fruits. "Cradle Orthodox", who in general are not tempted to join any other faith than Orthodoxy, simply put up with the divisions in their homeland (although their children might not): potential converts in the mission-field are more likely to abandon Orthodoxy altogether. Somehow a way must be found of preserving *both* rootedness in the old national traditions *and* an unhindered entry for converts into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church...

In this connection it will be worth briefly examining the experience of the Russian Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). Not planned by men, but brought into being through the Providence of God as a result of the Russian revolution and the huge emigration it created, ROCOR represented a new phenomenon in Church history: a truly global jurisdiction having its headquarters in the mission-field, and yet rooted firmly in the traditions of one national Church. Wherever the Russian émigrés went, - and they went to almost every corner of the globe, - they built churches that reflected with great faithfulness the traditions of their Russian homeland. And yet, since their homeland had fallen into the hands of the God-hating atheists, who had in turn enslaved the officially hierarchy of the Russian Church, the émigrés were forced to become administratively independent.

In this they probably reflected the situation of the Apostles more closely than any ecclesiastical group since the Apostolic era. For the Apostles, too, were rooted in the traditions of a national Church, that of the Jews. And they, too, were both expelled from the homeland by persecution and found themselves compelled, both by their own lofty (i.e. super-territorial) status as Apostles and by the apostasy of their fellow-countrymen, to separate themselves completely from them and devote themselves exclusively to the Gentile mission-field. Moreover, in such a figure as the ROCOR Archbishop John (Maximovich) of Shanghai, Western Europe and San Francisco we see a truly apostolic - as well as thoroughly Russian - man who preached to people of all nations and faiths, and saw in his apostolic work, not an accidental by-product of his forced exile from Russia, but *the very purpose* of that exile. For, as he wrote: "God allowed the Russian revolution to take place in order that the Russian Church might become purged and purified, *and that the Orthodox Faith might be*

disseminated across the whole world."

No less instructive is the fall of ROCOR. It would be correct, but superficial, to call this a fall into the heresy of ecumenism - ROCOR is now part of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is part of the World Council of Churches. A deeper analysis, however, would conclude that ROCOR fell into *ecumenism* because of its almost simultaneous fall into *phyletism*.

What is the meaning of this paradox?

Commentators have noted that, after the death of St. John Maximovich in 1966, and especially after the Third All-Diaspora Council in Jordanville in 1974, the ROCOR hierarchs began to be concerned more with the preservation of "Russianness (*russkost'*)" than with the confession of the True Faith against the heresies of sergianism and ecumenism. Missionary work among non-Russians was not a priority for most of them, although St. Philaret of New York, who became first-hierarch in 1964, managed to keep the door open both for converts and for "cradle Orthodox" of other races who were fleeing ecumenism until his death in 1985. True, ecumenism was anathematized in 1983; but the true consequences of the anathema were denied, because these included a continuation and deepening of the break with the apostate "Mother Church" of the Moscow Patriarchate in the homeland - and union with the Russians in the homeland, whether they were truly Orthodox or not, was more important for many in ROCOR than union with the True Orthodox of other races... With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989-91, and the return of ROCOR to Russia, the crisis deepened. It was not that so much that a return was wrong in principle - the Apostles would undoubtedly have returned to their homeland if they had been able to - but to *convert* them, not *submit* to them. However, weakened by sentimental phyletism, the Russian "apostles" did not have the heart consistently to tell their countrymen the harsh truth they needed to hear, and ended up by joining them in their apostasy in 2007.

This tragedy is a clear historical illustration of the truth first propounded by Konstantin Leontiev in the nineteenth century, that *liberalism or cosmopolitanism (ecumenism) and nationalism (phyletism) are two sides of the same coin*. Nationalism, he argued, is closely related to liberalism, which is simply the political version of ecumenism. Both nationalism and liberalism are rooted in the French revolution - liberalism in its early, Masonic phase (1789-91), and nationalism in its later, Napoleonic phase, when the idea enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights that the nation is the source of all authority was translated into the idea of France as the nation *par excellence*. Both liberalism and nationalism insist on the essential equality of men (in the case of liberalism) or nations (in the case of nationalism); both erase individual differences, undermining *individuality* in the name of *individualism*, *hierarchy* in the name of *egalitarianism*.

But this levelling down is only the flip side of a creeping up, as each nation strives to keep up with the others, fearing that while all nations are theoretically equal some are in fact more equal than others... According to Leontiev, the nations' striving to be independent of each other was based precisely on their desire to be *like* every other nation: "Having become politically liberated, they are very glad, whether in everyday life or in ideas, to be like everyone else... So much for the national development, which makes them all similar to contemporary Europeans, which spreads... petty rationalism, egalitarianism, religious indifference, European bourgeois uniformity in tastes and manners: machines, pantaloons, frock-coats, top hats and demagogy!"

As Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), second first-hierarchy of ROCOR, said: "The nation, this collective organism, is just as inclined to deify itself as the individual man. The madness of pride grows in this case in the same progression, as every passion becomes inflamed in society, being refracted in thousands and millions of souls." Thus there is a similarity in motivation in all three of the great evils: individualism, nationalism and ecumenism. The origin of all of them is prideful self-assertion: "I am as good as you", or "my nation is as good as your nation", or "my religion is as good as your religion". When self-assertion fails to achieve its aim, it is followed by a (temporary) compromise which preserves everyone's pride intact: "We are equally good", "our nations are equally good", and "our religions are equally good"...

So everyone is happy, and the only thing lost is - the truth. We believe, however, that there is a real difference between individuals and nations - not by nature, but because each individual or nation uses or abuses his or its freewill in relation to the truth. As for the truth itself, that is one and immutable, and the religion that expresses it is intrinsically and forever superior to all others...

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So ROCOR, the first experiment in truly global True Orthodoxy, failed. But did it have to fail? And does not its at any rate temporary success in preserving True Orthodoxy as a global missionary religion free from the extremes both of ecumenism and of phyletism indicate the need for another experiment on similar lines?

In order to answer this question we need to look briefly at other historical experiments in ecclesiastical globalism. One, the most famous, is that of the Roman papacy. A second is that of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. A third is the American Church before the revolution.

We have to admit that for many centuries, - essentially until the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, when traditional Roman Catholicism, as

many Roman Catholics ruefully admitted, surrendered to the New World Order, - the papacy was able to maintain its status as a truly global religion without falling into either of the twin evils of ecumenism and phyletism. But it was able to do that, while retaining its administrative unity, only by falling into a still deeper heresy that is truly satanic in its pride: the heresy of papal infallibility.

There are two aspects, or stages, to this heresy. The first is the idea that Rome is the ultimate court of appeal in ecclesiastical disputes, so that the Pope is in fact the single head of the Church on earth, having jurisdiction over all the Local Churches. We find this idea as early as the fifth century, in the writings of Pope St. Leo the Great, for whom the universality and one-man-rule of the Roman Empire naturally required a parallel universality and one-man-rule in the Orthodox Church - that is, the Church of the Roman Empire - that is, the Church of Rome. Although in error in this, St. Leo was too tactful, too Orthodox in other ways, and too genuinely concerned for the welfare of the Church to put his ideas into practice, or to lead them to their logical conclusion - infallibility. It was a later Pope, Gregory the Great, who pointed out that if there is in essence only one jurisdiction in the Orthodox Church headed by an Ecumenical Pope or Patriarch, then if that Pope or Patriarch falls, the whole of the Church falls with him. So either the Church can fall away, which is contrary to the Saviour's promise that it will prevail over the gates of hell until the end of time, or the head of the Church must be endowed with infallibility. But this was denied by St. Gregory.

However, later Popes - notably Nicholas I and Gregory VII - embraced this second aspect or stage of the heresy, and thereby fell away from the unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Moreover, Gregory VII adopted what we may call the third and final stage of the papist heresy by proclaiming himself head both of the Church *and of the State*. And this, too, is a logical consequence of the original error. For "symphony" between Church and State, Roman Pope and Roman Emperor, is fine as long as it lasts, but what is to be done if the empire falls or the emperor ceases to be Orthodox? The only answer, according to the heretical popes, if their global mission was to be assured, was for the Pope to assume authority over the State as well as the Church, proclaiming himself, in effect, the absolute ruler of all things on earth...

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople is unlikely to fall into the papist heresy in this extreme form, if only because, for the last 45 years, she has acknowledged the heretical papacy as her elder sister and the first of the Churches of Christ throughout the world. So the most that the Ecumenical Patriarch can hope for is to be a highly honoured deputy to the supreme ruler. However, the Ecumenical Patriarchate's globalism is significant in two ways.

First, he is quite clearly attempting to subdue all the *Orthodox* Churches to his sole rule. This trend became clear in July, 1993, when Patriarch Bartholomew convened a “great and super-perfect Synod” to judge Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem and certain of his collaborators for their supposed interference in the Australian Archdiocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and certain other questions. It was assumed, completely contrary to the canons, that Jerusalem was “interfering” in Australia on the grounds that the Ecumenical Patriarchate had sole jurisdiction in all lands not directly within the boundaries of any other patriarchate, and therefore in Australia also, in spite of the fact that the Jerusalem Patriarchate had had a mission in Australia since 1892, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate – only since 1924.

The clear implication of this action is that *only* the Ecumenical Patriarchate has jurisdiction in Australia, Western Europe, North and South America, Asia and Antarctica. This is not quite the whole *oikoumene* – but not far off it! Moreover, if we remember that Bartholomew is also contesting the Russian Church’s jurisdiction in the Ukraine and Estonia, and that he has divided the Russian diocese in London, it will become clear that even the territories of the other established patriarchates are not safe from his rapacity!

Since Jerusalem’s capitulation to Bartholomew at the “super-perfect” Synod, the Eastern patriarchates are effectively in his pocket. As A.D. Delimbasis writes, Bartholomew is “trying to put Jerusalem [under] Antioch, Antioch under Alexandria, Alexandria under Constantinople and Constantinople under the heresiarch Pope...” As for the territories of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia, they were they all under the jurisdiction of Constantinople at one time or another in the past, so why, he could argue (but does not feel powerful enough to say yet), should they not be so now?

But the most original aspect of Bartholomew’s globalist ecclesiology is his concept of the supposedly “symphonic” relationship between the Church that is built on the Rock, which is Christ, and the world that is built on sand, which “lieth in evil”. The Emperor Justinian understood “symphony” as existing between the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Empire, and the Popes followed him in this: they did not pretend that there could be any “symphony” between the Church and the world in any other form. But in a lecture given at the London School of Economics in 2005 Patriarch Bartholomew introduced a new, unheard-of understanding of Justinian’s famous concept in the context of a comparison between two models of Church-State relations in contemporary Europe.

According to Marcus Plested, the patriarch argued that “either model... is perfectly acceptable from a religious perspective. What is more important is that governments and faith communities should work together in the common

cause of toleration, respect and mutual understanding. We need, in other words, to find a model of positive co-operation and not mere separation or indeed exclusive patronage of a particular religious tradition.

“He called this new model one of ‘symphonia’ – working together in unison. Symphonia is an old notion deriving from the Byzantine model of harmony between Church and empire – both instituted by God to provide, respectively, for the spiritual and temporal needs of the people.

“The Patriarch has given this ancient notion a new interpretation, turning it into a startlingly prophetic call for a re-imagining of the relation between religion and politics free from the tired dichotomies of the 19th and 20th centuries.

“Recent world events, from September 11, 2001, and July 7 this year, to the riots on the streets of Paris, have reminded us that religion is not simply going to disappear as a major social and political issue. It remains a deep-seated force. The great virtue of the Patriarch’s lecture was to provide a vision for the channelling of all this religious energy to the service of the greater social good, for the welfare of those of all faiths and those of none.”

So what is the State with which Bartholomew, as Ecumenical Patriarch of the East in subjection to the Ecumenical Pope of the West, wishes to be in symphony? There is no State in the ordinary sense of the word that could be the partner to such a Global Patriarch. It could only be a *Global State*, or World Government – the government of that “international community” of western nations that likes to speak as if it were the whole world. However, this World Government or “New World Order” is not wedded to any particular faith, unless that faith is the purely secular one of democracy and human rights. Hence the need for the patriarch to emphasise in his lecture (according to the newspaper report) that his symphonic model does not involve the “exclusive patronage of a particular religious tradition”, but is aimed at “the welfare of those of all faiths and those of none”.

But what concord or symphony can there be between Orthodoxy and heresy, between faith and unbelief, between the Church and the world?

In his *Novella 131* the Emperor Justinian decreed: “The Church canons have the same force in the State as the State laws: what is permitted or forbidden by the former is permitted or forbidden by the latter. Therefore crimes against the former cannot be tolerated in the State according to State legislation.” This is true symphony: the State recognises that it is pursuing the same aim as the Church, and therefore legislates in all things in accordance with the legislation of the Church. For, as Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes, “in their single service to the

work of God both the Church and the State constitute as it were one whole, one organism - 'unconfused', but also 'undivided'. In this lay the fundamental difference between Orthodox 'symphony' and Latin 'papocaesarism' and Protestant 'caesaropapism'..." Bartholomew, however, is both a Latin papocaesarist through his submission to the Pope and a Protestant caesaropapist through his submission to the Protestant-dominated New World Order.

Perhaps he is something even worse... In Russia, the main accusation against the founder of the present-day Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Sergius, was that he proclaimed the joys and sorrows of the God-fighting Communist State to be the joys and sorrows of the Church. In other words, he identified the interests of the Orthodox Church with those of the Communists. His successors even called Stalin "the new Constantine"... This heresy has been called "Sergianism", and has been anathematised by the True Orthodox Church of Russia. Has not Patriarch Bartholomew become a sergianist in that, under the guise of the Orthodox doctrine of the symphony of powers, he has in fact identified the interests of the Church with the interests of the antichristian world, thereby bringing closer the rule of the Antichrist himself, for whom "symphony" will undoubtedly mean "identity" under his sole rule?

Let us now turn to our third historical example, that of the American Church just before the revolution of 1917... The Orthodox Church in North America was composed of a number of dioceses each with a bishop representing a single national Orthodox tradition - Russian, Greek, Syrian, etc. However, these dioceses were not only in full communion with each other (unlike the different dioceses of True Orthodoxy in North America today), but also recognized the head of one of the dioceses - Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin), the future Russian patriarch and hieromartyr - to be their head (which is not the case in the American dioceses of World Orthodoxy today). In this way the whole group of dioceses across the whole vast expanse of North America presented the image of a single metropolitan area, in which the spirit, if not the exact letter of the holy canons on church administration was preserved, and in which neither the possibility of vigorous missionary activity to the "native Americans", nor the links of the émigrés to their native lands and traditions, was lost. Unfortunately, this very promising experiment was destroyed as a result of the Russian revolution, and the conflicting political and national demands this produced. It was replaced, on the one hand by a break-down in the unity of the American Church into independent national jurisdictions, and on the other by half-baked and premature attempts at an American Autocephalous Church having no dependence on any "old" national Church in Europe, in the form of the OCA and HOCNA.

Of course, the American example was not truly global. However, it could be

the pattern for a truly global solution if replicated elsewhere. Thus we could see a whole series of inter-locking metropolias on the American model, each with a first hierarch belonging to one or another national Church (for example: Russian in North America, Serbian in Western Europe, Greek in Central Africa). Eventually some of these might become new, truly autocephalous patriarchates. And globalism might be turned to the advantage of the Orthodox: in a world united as never before by a single culture and great ease of communication, the structure of the Church might come to resemble again the collegial net of metropolias (or patriarchates) that St. Cyprian of Carthage spoke about in *The Unity of the Church*.

What are the prospects of some such solution ever being realized in practice?

Everything depends on two factors, one internal and the other external. The internal factor is the *real*, and not merely formal freedom of the True Orthodox from the equal and opposite heresies of ecumenism and phyletism, their *real*, and not merely formal faith that there is only "one Lord, one Faith, on Baptism" (Ephesians 4.4), and that all men, of all races, can enter this unity. If they are free from these heresies, both of which in their different ways destroy the possibility of real missionary work, then they will have a true thirst for the conversion of the heterodox, and will work together for the creation of structures that support and facilitate the missionary drive.

The external factor is the political situation. History shows that the best conditions, both for the unity of existing Orthodox Christians of different races, and for the spread of Orthodox Christianity to other races, are provided by the Orthodox multi-national empires, such as Byzantium and Russia. Although the increasing power of the antichristian New World Order does not bode well for the resurrection of the Orthodox Empire in the short term, we must not write off the possibility of such a resurrection in the longer term, especially when several prophecies assert that it will happen. With God all things are possible, and God can make even the remotest possibility reality if He sees that there are men willing to work together with Him to make it reality. And so here, as always, the external depends on the internal... After all, while the terrible Diocletian persecution of the years 305 to 308 was reaching its climax, in a remote province of the Roman Empire the Roman legions were raising St. Constantine onto their shields. And who is to say that the Church today, having survived a persecution far longer and still more cruel than that of Diocletian, may not be on the verge of a new Constantinian era, when the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the Church, will be fulfilled: "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all the world, *and then* the end will come..." (Matthew 24.14).

*December 26 / January 8, 2009/2010.
The Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos.*

20. IN DEFENCE OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF GREECE

Writing under the name of Protopriest Konstantin Fyodorov but without his approval, Fr. Roman Pavlov has posted a slanderous attack on the True Orthodox Church of Greece led by Archbishop Chrysostom (Kiouisis) of Athens, the so-called "Florinites". Wishing to portray the True Orthodox Church as ecumenist or semi-ecumenist heretics and schismatics, Fr. Roman lumps together this rightly-confessing Church with the group known as "the Synod in Resistance" or the Cyprianites, failing completely to make clear that the Cyprianites created a schism from the True Orthodox Church in 1984 on the basis of a confession of faith that the True Orthodox Church officially and formally *rejected*. Moreover, Fr. Roman slanders the reposed first hierarch of the True Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina (+1955), in a lamentable manner, distorting some important facts and completely omitting others. Through a carefully doctored version of history, he seeks to prove that the Matthewites have been the only canonical True Orthodox Christians in Greece since 1937, and that the Florinites are heretics and schismatics. From this he seeks to draw the conclusion that his own Russian Synod, avoiding the mistakes of ROCOR in its relations with the new calendarists and Florinites, should enter into communion with the Matthewite Churches of Greece and Cyprus.

But let us see what the facts actually are...

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In 1924 the State Church of Greece adopted the new calendar. The resistance to this innovation was led at first by a few priests, mainly from Mount Athos, and some hundreds of thousands of laypeople. In 1935, however, three bishops returned to the Old, Julian Calendar from the State Church: Metropolitan Germanos of Dimitriades, Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina and Metropolitan Chrysostom of Zakynthos. Having officially declared the new calendarist State Church to be schismatic and deprived of the grace of sacraments, the three bishops proceeded to ordain four new vicar-bishops.

The impulse that these events gave to the Old Calendar movement alarmed the Greek authorities, who immediately began to persecute the bishops, and soon Metropolitan Chrysostom of Zakynthos and two of the vicar-bishops returned to the State Church, leaving two metropolitans and two vicar-bishops in True Orthodoxy.

In 1936 Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina travelled to the Middle East, where he tried to persuade the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem to convene

an Ecumenical or Pan-Orthodox Council that would condemn the new calendar. On his return to Greece, Metropolitan Chrysostom, together with Metropolitan Germanos, the head of the Synod, began to declare that the new calendarists were only *potentially*, and not yet *actually* schismatics, and that they could be deposed and considered definitely out of the Church only as the result of a decision of an Ecumenical, Pan-Orthodox or, at any rate, *large* Local Council. This alarmed the two vicar-bishops, Matthew of Bresthena and Germanos of the Cyclades, who almost immediately (within a few weeks) denounced the two metropolitans as apostates, declared them excommunicated and deposed and started referring to them as, for example, “the *former* Metropolitan of Demetriades” or “Monk Chrysostom”.

Astounded by this extreme zealotry, which went, as they considered, far beyond the bounds of acceptable *akriveia* or strictness, the two metropolitans denounced the Matthew and Germanos, and so a schism was created in the ranks of the True Orthodox. In the early 1940s Metropolitan Germanos died in exile, while the two vicar-bishops separated from each other. In 1948 Bishop Germanos made overtures towards Metropolitan Chrysostom, and the two bishops eventually returned into communion with each other. Meanwhile, Bishop Matthew ordained on his own four new bishops and was promoted by them to the rank of “archbishop”. In 1950 Bishop Matthew died. Metropolitan Chrysostom then issued an encyclical in which he repented in very humble terms of his calling the new calendarists merely “potential” schismatics, and appealed to the “Matthewites” to return into communion with him. They rejected this overture, and continued to denounce him as an apostate until his death in 1955 (Bishop Germanos died as a confessor in prison in 1951).

Finding themselves without bishops, the so-called “Florinites” or “Chrysostomites” appealed to Archbishop John Maximovich to help them. He was sympathetic to their plight, and referred them to Metropolitan Anastasy. However, the metropolitan did not want to help for fear of angering the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with which ROCOR wanted to remain on good terms... In 1960, the Florinites sent their first candidate for the episcopate, Archimandrite Acacius (Pappas), together with his nephew, the present Metropolitan Acacius of Diauleia, to America, where Fr. Acacius the elder was ordained to the episcopate by Archbishop Seraphim (Ivanov) of Chicago and Bishop Theophilus (Ionescu), a Romanian new calendarist bishop who was part of the ROCOR Synod. Since Metropolitan Anastasy had not blessed this ordination, it was clearly uncanonical – apart from the fact that Bishop Theophilus denied that he had participated in it. Later, in 1962, Archbishop Leonty of Chile travelled to Athens, where, together with Bishop Acacius, he ordained Archimandrite Auxentius and some others to the episcopate. This, too, was uncanonical, since it was done again without the metropolitan’s blessing. However, Archbishops John Maximovich and Averky argued that the

ordinations should be recognized nevertheless, and eventually, in 1969, the whole ROCOR Synod led by Metropolitan Philaret officially recognized the newly created "Florinite" Synod.

Alarmed by the formation of this "rival" Synod, the Matthewites sent a delegation to New York in 1971, asking the ROCOR Synod to rule on the canonicity or otherwise of their single-handed ordinations by Bishop Matthew. In a carefully balanced judgement, the ROCOR Synod refrained both from condemning Bishop Matthew's ordinations and from fully accepting them. The two bishops in the Matthewite delegation, Metropolitans Callistus of Corinth and Epiphanius of Kition, received the laying on of hands (*cheirothesia* in Greek, *rukopolozhenie ruk* in Russian) while wearing their episcopal vestments, and were required to perform the same sacrament on their fellow bishops on their return to Greece, who would then perform it on their priests. They were also required to enter into communion with the "Florinite" Synod under Archbishop Auxentius. Bishop Laurus, secretary of the ROCOR Synod, interpreted the *cheirothesia* as a full *cheirotomia*, implying rejection of the validity of Matthew's ordinations. However, Metropolitan Philaret and Protopresbyter George Grabbe called it, at different times, only "a prayer of absolution" (for the sin of Matthew's one-handed ordinations) and "a blessing".

On the return of the Matthewite bishops to Greece, the other bishops accepted *cheirothesia* from them, but most of the priests refused, being incited by the lay theologians Eleutherius Goutzides and Menas Kontogiannis (the future "Metropolitan" Kyrikos of Mesogaia) to reject the whole act as a Masonic plot designed to deny the validity of their apostolic succession and so destroy the True Orthodox Church of Greece.

Eventually, in 1984, the Matthewite Synod officially declared the 1971 union and *cheirothesia* to be "a robber act, which had been previously constructed by the enemies of the Church." Not content with this, in 2005 "Metropolitan" Kyrikos of Mesogaia went into schism from the main Matthewite Synod under Archbishop Nicholas, denouncing them as heretics who had betrayed the True Church of Greece by their acceptance of the *cheirothesia* in 1971...

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So did Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina fall away from the True Church in 1937? Of course not! There is no precedent in Church history for a senior metropolitan falling away from the Church simply on the basis of his hesitating over the exact canonical status of an erring Local Church. How many Orthodox hierarchs in the centuries since 1054 have expressed themselves ambivalently in relation to the Roman Catholic heretics! And yet not one of them was brought to trial, let alone condemned, for such ambivalence! Only in the ecumenist

twentieth century did the True Church take a stricter attitude in relation to such ambivalence - because by then ambivalence had been replaced by *full recognition* of the heretics (no talk of "potential schism" here!), praying together with them, removal of anathemas from them, and trampling on the dogma of the One Church for the sake of them. Metropolitan Chrysostom, it must be emphasized, did none of these things: he never concelebrated with the new calendarists (unlike some ROCOR hierarchs) and never removed the anathemas against the new calendar, but only wondered whether the Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece was competent to declare the new calendarists *already* anathematized.

The most that Metropolitan Chrysostom can be accused of is inconsistency: in 1937 he softened the very strict position he had taken in 1935. And yet his wavering was understandable: he was in negotiations with the Antiochian and Jerusalem patriarchates for the convening of an Ecumenical Council that would condemn the new calendarists, and he knew that these patriarchates, being still in communion with the new calendarists, would never accept that they were already condemned. Of course, from a Matthewite perspective, the attempt to win the cooperation of these patriarchates was in itself a kind of betrayal; for, in accordance with the words of St. John Chrysostom that they loved to quote, "he who communes with an excommunicate is himself excommunicated"; so the Antiochian and Jerusalem patriarchates - indeed, *all* the Local Churches - were, according to their reasoning, outside the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

If the two metropolitans had shown a certain inconsistency compared with their previous statement, this inconsistency pales into insignificance by comparison with the blatant contradictions of the strict Matthewite position.

Let us consider some of these:

1. On October 11, 1934 the Administrative Council of the Old Calendarists appealed to ROCOR to consecrate bishops for them. Nothing came of their appeal, but by this appeal the Old Calendarists (including the future Bishops Matthew and Germanos) showed that they still recognized the canonicity of bishops who remained in communion with the new calendarists - as ROCOR remained at that time. Again, in May, 1935 the three hierarchs in official communications did not reject the Old Calendarist Local Churches that were in communion with the new calendarists (Antioch, Jerusalem, Serbia, etc.), but sought to "collaborate" with them. So if these Churches still remained inside the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in spite of being in communion with the new calendarists, how was it possible to condemn Metropolitan Chrysostom, who was *not* in communion with the new calendarists?

2. If the new calendarists lost grace immediately they accepted the new calendar in 1924, then even the three hierarchs who later returned to the Old Calendar lost the grace of the episcopate at that time. But in that case, when they returned to the Old Calendar in 1935, they returned as simple laymen. And yet they were received in their existing rank by the community of priests and laity. They did not make a public confession of repentance, saying that they had been trying to work for the restoration of the Julian calendar from within the State Church. They were re-established in their sees through their public confession of the true faith. In any case, a group of priests and laity, however large and distinguished, cannot confer the grace of the episcopate, nor restore it to one who has lost it. This shows that the three hierarchs were accepted by the Old Calendarists (including the future Bishops Matthew and Germanos) as being bishops in good standing in the period 1924-35.

3. The two bishops justified their separation from, and condemnation of, the two metropolitans on the grounds of the 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople (861), which allows one to separate from a bishop even before a conciliar decision has been made about him if he pronounces heresy publicly. But what heresy did Metropolitan Chrysostom confess? Hesitating about whether the new calendarists are inside or outside the Church is not a heresy. In any case, for complete consistency, the cut-off point should not be considered to be the introduction of the new calendar in 1924, but the first official proclamation of the heresy of ecumenism in 1920. But in that case the Ecumenical Patriarchate must have lost grace as early as 1920... And in that case the whole Orthodox Church lost grace, because no Local Church broke communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate...

Such are the absurdities and contradictions to which the ultra-strict Matthewite position leads...

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But there is a further, still more serious contradiction in the position of Fr. Roman Pavlov. By accepting the ultra-strict Matthewite ecclesiology, and the Matthewites' condemnation of Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina, he is logically obliged to condemn also the whole course of ROCOR under its first two first-hierarchs, and to cast ROCOR into the same abyss of condemnation and gracelessness as he casts Metropolitan Chrysostom. For, as he himself documents, ROCOR did not make a radical break with World Orthodoxy until the time of Metropolitan Philaret and his anathema against ecumenism in 1983. Even then, hierarchs such as Archbishop Anthony of Geneva ignored and/or distorted the anathema, and continued both to recognize World Orthodoxy and to remain in communion with part of it. As late as 1994 ROCOR under Metropolitan Vitaly officially accepted the Cyprianite ecclesiology, which

recognizes World Orthodoxy as being inside the True Church, at the same time that the True Orthodox Church of Greece had not only condemned Cyprianism, but had officially condemned the new calendarists as graceless on no less than four occasions (in 1935, 1950, 1974 and 1991).

The new calendar innovation did indeed create a schism, and the new calendarists have truly fallen under the Pan-Orthodox anathemas of 1583, 1587 and 1593. This is the Orthodox confession, and all those who wish to remain within the True Church must join themselves to this confession. However, differences of opinion as to precisely when this or that group has fallen into schism and gracelessness are permissible, as they have always been permissible in Church history. The important thing is not chronological exactness, but a correct attitude to innovation and heresy. The “zeal without knowledge” of Fr. Roman Pavlov does not help the zealot cause, but hinders it by falling into manifest contradictions and absurdities, and by slandering those hierarchs who, while erring at times like all men, confessed the true faith to the end of their lives and have earned eternal memory in the heavens...

July 16/29, 2010.

21. THE POWER OF ANATHEMA

In recent decades, the development of ecumenism and other heresies has been accompanied by several sustained attacks on the Church's power of anathema in general, and in particular, on the Pan-Orthodox anathemas against the new calendar in 1583, 1587 and 1593, the anathemas of the Russian Church against all who cooperate with the communists in 1918 and 1928, and the anathema of ROCOR against ecumenism in 1983. This is not surprising: if, as the True Orthodox Church believes, the ecumenists and other heretics have been cast out of the Church by the power to bind and loose possessed by the priesthood of the Church, then it is logical for them to seek to undermine this power.

Let us examine some of the heretics' arguments.

I. On Anathemas in General

St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "An anathema is precisely separation from the Church, or the exclusion from her midst of those who do not fulfill the conditions of unity with her and begin to think differently from the way she does, differently from the way that they themselves promised to think upon joining her."

Again, St. John Maximovich writes: "In the acts of the Councils and the further course of the New Testament Church, the word 'anathema' came to mean complete separation from the Church. 'The Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes', 'let him be anathema', 'let it be anathema', means a complete tearing away from the Church. While in cases of 'separation from the communion of the Church' and other *epitimias* or penances laid on a person, the person remained a member of the Church, even though his participation in her grace-filled life was limited, those given over to anathema were thus completely torn away from her until their repentance. Realizing that she is unable to do anything for their salvation, in view of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, the earthly Church lifts them up to the judgement of God. That judgement is merciful unto repentant sinners, but fearsome for the stubborn enemies of God. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God... for our God is a consuming fire' (Hebrews 10.31; 12.29)."

In reply to this, the heretic may say: "Alright, anathemas expel people from the Church. But this is only a *provisional* judgement, insofar as the judgement of the Church is not yet the judgement of God. God may reverse the Church's judgement. And we know that the Church is often wrong in her judgements. After all, the Church is composed of men, all of whom are fallible."

Of course, it is true that hierarchs can make mistakes, and God is not compelled to follow the mistakes of hierarchs. However, before we can be in a position to know how or where a mistake has been made, it is necessary first to define what a true anathema is. So let us establish first that a true anathema expels a man from the Church, and this judgement is *not* provisional. Why? Because the Lord Himself said, when giving the keys of the Kingdom to Peter: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in the heavens" (Matthew 16.19). So the Lord allows no distance between the judgements of the True Church on earth and His judgements in heaven. So long as the Church acts in accordance with God's law, her judgements are *the same as* God's judgements. And this is so because "the keys of the Kingdom" given to Peter and the other apostles and their successors do not constitute a *separate, independent* judicial power, but rather *the power of discerning* the judgements of *the only true and competent Judge*, God Almighty. They are "the key of *knowledge*" possessed by the true hierarchs but lost by the Pharisees and heretics (Luke 11.52).

Thus St. John of Karpathos interprets the keys given to Peter to mean the keys of *spiritual knowledge*: "Peter was first given the keys, but then he was allowed to fall into sin by denying Christ, and so his pride was humbled by his fall. Do not be surprised, then, if after receiving the keys of *spiritual knowledge* you fall into various evil thoughts."

St. Symeon the New Theologian speaks of *the key of knowledge*: "What shall I say to those who want to enjoy a reputation, and be made priests and prelates and abbots, who want to receive the confidence of others' thoughts, and who say that they are worthy of the task of binding and loosing? When I see that they know nothing of the necessary and divine things, nor teach those things to others nor lead them to the light of knowledge, what else is it but what Christ says to the Pharisees and lawyers: 'Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you do not enter yourselves, and you have hindered those who are entering' (Luke 11.52)."

Again, according to the Venerable Bede (+735), the power to bind and to loose consists in the power of *discerning* who is worthy to enter the Kingdom: "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 unworthy."

So holy hierarchs bind heretics and expel them from the Church through the grace of *spiritual knowledge*, which inspires them to know who is worthy and who is not. It is not a power of judging independent of God's power, but the power to *see* how God has *already* judged. They then *confirm* God's judgement by their own judgement and anathematization.

As St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: "Insofar as the [hierarchy] makes known the judgements of God, he has also the power of excommunication. Not indeed that the all-wise Divinity gives in to his every unthinking impulse, if I may so speak with all reverence. But the hierarchy obeys the Spirit Who is the source of every rite and Who speaks by way of his words. He excommunicates those unworthy people whom God has already judged. It says: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' And to the one enlightened by the sacred revelation of the All-Holy Father it is said in Scripture: 'Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Thus [Peter] himself and all the hierarchs like him have had the judgement of the Father revealed to them, and, being themselves men who provide revelation and explanation, they have the task of admitting the friends of God and of keeping away the ungodly. That sacred acknowledgement of God came to him, as Scripture shows, not on his own, not from a flesh-and-blood revelation, but as something from the understanding and under the influence of the God Who initiated him into what he knew. Similarly, God's hierarchs must use their powers of excommunication, as well as all their other hieratic powers, to the extent that they are moved by the Divinity which is the source of every rite. And everyone else must obey the hierarchs when they act as such, for they are inspired by God Himself. 'He who rejects you,' it says, 'rejects Me'."

We can see the truth of this in the story of Arius' expulsion from the Church. First, Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria, expelled him from communion in his diocese. Then, some years later, when St. Peter was in prison, Arius feigned repentance, and several priests, including the future bishops Achilles and Alexander, came to St. Peter to entreat him to accept him into communion. However, St. Peter refused, saying: "Arius I refuse to accept, for he has been cast out of the Holy Church by God Himself and excommunicated *not so much in accordance with my judgement as with God's...*" And then to Achilles and Alexander alone he said: "I call him accursed, *not by my own judgement but by that of Christ my God, Who appeared to me last night. As I was praying, according to my custom, a brilliant light suddenly shone in my prison cell, and I beheld the Lord Jesus Christ in the guise of a youth twelve years of age. His face was more radiant than the sun, so that I could not bear to look upon the ineffable glory of His countenance. He was clad in a white robe torn from top to bottom, which He held to His breast with both hands to cover His nakedness. Seeing this, terror fell upon me, and I asked Him, 'Who is it, O Saviour, that hath rent Thy garment?' The Lord answered, 'The mindless Arius rent it by dividing the people Whom I redeemed by My blood. Take care not to receive him into communion with the Church.'*"

Now the Church of God, the tunic of Christ, is always one, and cannot be

divided within itself. Nevertheless, Arius divided it by his heresy, which can only mean that he tore people *away from* the Church through his heresy. This in turn means that heresy divides heretics from the Church, not through any act of the Church's hierarchy, but through the judgement of Christ Himself *before* the actions of any earthly hierarchs. The hierarchs of the earthly Church *discern* and *obey* and *confirm* the judgement of the Heavenly Church and of her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. For He alone "killeth and maketh alive, bringeth down into hades and raiseth up again" (I Kings (I Samuel) 2.6); he alone "has the keys of hades and death" (Revelation 1.18).

It is in this context that we can understand the Lord's words to Nicodemus: "He that believeth not is *condemned already*" (John 3.18). Again, the Apostle Paul says: "A man that is a heretic... is *self-condemned*" (Titus 3.10, 11). 'For the heretic damns himself when he casts himself out of the Catholic Church and under no compulsion leaves the gathering of the saints. He who separates himself from everyone by his own judgment shows what is merited from everyone. The heretic himself, I say, damns himself because, although all the wicked are cast out from the Christian assembly by the sentence of the bishop, the heretic departs himself, by the judgment of his own will, before anyone's subsequent wishes are expressed.'¹⁵ So there can be no "not-as-yet condemned heretics", as the Cyprianites affirm: *all* heretics are condemned immediately they preach heresy publicly, and are "false bishops" even "*before conciliar condemnation*", as is explicitly affirmed by the 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Council of 861.

Again, it will be useful to note the distinction made by New Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov), Bishop of Sergievo and the leader of the Catacomb Church in Moscow, between the mystical *organism* of the Church and her visible, external *organization*. Until a heretic has been condemned by a canonical Council of Bishops, he remains a member of the visible, external organization of the Church even though he has been cut off from the mystical organism of the Church by Christ Himself. In accordance with this distinction, we can say that Arius was cut off from the mystical *organism* of the Church by Christ immediately he began to proclaim his heresy publicly, but was cut off from the external *organization* of the Church, first by Local Councils of the Church of Alexandria under Saints Peter and Alexander, and then by the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

"But if heretics are already condemned immediately they proclaim heresy," it may be objected, "why is it necessary for hierarchs to come together in Councils and anathematize them?" Because an already-condemned heretic who is not recognized as such, but is allowed to continue to proclaim his heresy to

¹⁵ St. Maximus of Turin, *Homily* 58.

all while participating in the sacraments of the Church, will lead many others to perdition. It is therefore necessary to expel already-self-condemned heretics from the external organization of the Church, so that the right-believing Christians may not be infected with their heresy, but may turn away from them in disgust, as the Lord commanded when he said: "If he refuses to listen to the Church, let him be unto you as a heathen and a publican" (Matthew 18.17).

II. On Some Anathemas in Particular

Let us now turn to particular cases of valid anathemas, and the arguments used to attempt to undermine their validity... The heretics of contemporary "World Orthodoxy" fall under several sets of anathemas from several historical epochs. Among these are:-

a. The Anathemas of the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils against the Monophysite heresy. In 1990, in Chambesy, Switzerland, at a meeting between the representatives of World Orthodoxy and the Monophysite heretics, the Monophysites agreed to take "a positive attitude" to, although without officially accepting, the last Four Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers who took part in them, and to lift their anathemas against them; while the Orthodox agreed to lift their anathemas against all the Monophysite councils and fathers, including the notorious heresiarchs Dioscurus, Timothy and Severus. Thus both "families of Churches" (a new phrase unknown to Orthodox ecclesiology) agreed that "all the anathemas and condemnations of the past which divide us should be lifted by the Churches in order that the last obstacle to the full unity and communion of our two families can be removed by the grace and power of God."

But this meant that all the six hundred and thirty holy Fathers who uttered these anathemas and condemnations were wrong!

Of course, the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches 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 Assemblies in Vancouver in 1983 and in Canberra in 1991 being perhaps the most extreme examples. 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 here placed themselves under the anathemas against Monophysitism from the Fourth Ecumenical Council onwards, and must be considered to be "semi-Monophysites".

b. The Anathemas of the Constantinopolitan Councils against Roman Catholicism (1054, 1340s). In 1965, the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras “lifted” the 1054 anathema against the Roman Catholics. Then, in 1994, the Orthodox signed an agreement with the Catholicism in Balamand, 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 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).

Most recently, at a service in Constantinople attended by both the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch, the name of the Pope was commemorated before that of the Patriarch. No official reaction or criticism followed from any of the Local Churches. The Ecumenical Patriarch must now be considered to be officially a *uniate*, and to fall under the anathemas of the 11th – 14th centuries against Roman Catholicism.

c. The Anathemas against the New, Papal Calendar (1583, 1587, 1593).

The Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone denies that these anathemas fall on the contemporary new calendarists, saying: “The 16th Century Synods anathematized the introduction of the new Papal Paschalion based on the New, Gregorian Calendar. They did not however specifically anathematise the peculiar hybrid used by the ‘Orthodox’ New-Calendarists who use the Julian Calendar for celebrating Pascha (in order to avoid the clear condemnations of those who change the Paschal calendar), but the New Calendar for the fixed feasts.”

This is sophistry. The seventh point of the 1583 Pan-Orthodox Council declares: “That whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church as the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils decreed, and the Menologion which they well decreed that we should follow, but in opposition to all this wishes to follow the new Paschalion and Menologion of the atheist astronomers of the Pope, and wishes to overturn and destroy the dogmas and customs of the Church which

have been handed down by the Fathers, let him be anathema and outside the Church of Christ and the assembly of the faithful..." It is obvious that not only the Papal Paschalion, but also the Papal Menologion – that is, "the new calendar for the fixed feasts" – is under anathema.

If Bishop Ambrose wishes to argue that only the combination of both the Papal Paschalion and the Papal Menologion is under anathema, and that of these two innovations only the Papal Paschalion is really serious, he has to answer the question: Why did they not say that? Why, on the contrary, do the Eastern Patriarchs give the clear impression that both innovations are equally anathematized? If only the Paschal Paschalion was a really serious innovation, why was it necessary for the Greek Old Calendarists to break away from the new calendarists, since the new calendarists still retained the Orthodox Paschalion? And why have so many Orthodox hierarchs understood the Patriarchs to have anathematized the new Menologion if in fact they meant something different?

Thus Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, Rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, Tutor of the Royal Family and Deputy First-Hierarch of ROCOR wrote: "Through the labours of this [1583] Council there appeared: a Conciliar tome, which denounced the wrongness and unacceptability for the Orthodox Church of the Roman calendar, and a canonical conciliar Decree – the Sigillion of November 20, 1583. In this Sigillion all three of the above-mentioned Patriarchs with their Synods called on the Orthodox firmly and unbendingly, even to the shedding of their blood, to hold the Orthodox Menaion and Julian Paschalion, threatening the transgressors of this with anathema, cutting them off from the Church of Christ and the gathering of the faithful..."

"In the course of the following three centuries: the 17th, 18th and 19th, a whole series of Ecumenical Patriarchs decisively expressed themselves against the Gregorian calendar and, evaluating it in the spirit of the conciliar decree of Patriarch Jeremiah II, counselled the Orthodox to avoid it..."

Question. Is the introduction of the new calendar important or of little importance?

Answer. Very important, especially in connection with the Paschalion, and it is an extreme disorder and ecclesiastical schism, which draws people away from communion and unity with the whole Church of Christ, deprives them of the grace of the Holy Spirit, shakes the dogma of the unity of the Church, and, like Arius, tears the seamless robe of Christ, that is, everywhere divides the Orthodox, depriving them of oneness of mind; breaks the bond with Ecclesiastical Holy Tradition and makes them fall under conciliar condemnation for despising Tradition..."

“Question. How must the Orthodox relate to the new calendarist schismatics, according to the canons?

“Answer. They must have no communion in prayer with them, even before their conciliar condemnation...

“Question. What punishment is fitting, according to the Church canons, for those who pray with the new calendarist schismatics?

“Answer. The same condemnation with them...”

Again, in a letter to Metropolitan Epiphanius of Cyprus dated September 20, 1975, Metropolitan Philaret of New York wrote: “It is obvious to all that the calendar innovation caused a schism in the Greek Church in 1924, and the responsibility for the schism weighs exclusively on the innovators. This is the conclusion that will be reached by anyone studying the Patriarchal Tomoi (as that of 1583)...” Since the calendar schism of 1924 affected only the Menologion, and not the Paschalion, it is evident that Metropolitan Philaret, following the supposedly “extremist” Greek Old Calendarists and not the Cyprianites, regarded the 1583 Council as having expelled the new calendarists from the Church...

Bishop Ambrose continues his attack on the Pan-Orthodox anathemas as follows: “There is one last aspect to this matter that should be mentioned: all three Synods appear to be saying exactly the same thing. If one Synod had made a definitive and binding pronouncement, then why, after just a few years did another synod need to be called to make the same pronouncement? And why, a few years after that, yet a third? Also, the texts that have been preserved are in demotic Greek - very demotic Greek - and it is a very peculiar thing for an Ecumenical Patriarch to put out such an important encyclical in demotic Greek. Conceivably there was a text in church Greek which has been lost.”

Why are anathemas repeated? For the same reason that we repeat the same Gospel cycle every year, and the Beatitudes every Sunday: ***Because they are important!*** As for the fact that the encyclical is written in demotic Greek, what possible bearing can this have on the validity of the thought contained in it? If, as Bishop Ambrose hints, the text of the anathemas is a forgery by someone who wrote only demotic Greek, why was this not pointed out by anyone for over three hundred years? Why, even as late as 1919 (that is, five years before he changed the calendar), did Chrysostomos Papadopoulos himself declare that if he adopted the new calendar he would become a schismatic? The vital fact is that the Orthodox Church has accepted the thought expressed in the anathemas as corresponding to her own thought - and the Church has the mind of Christ.

If new calendarist schismatics, or their old calendar fellow-travellers, choose to cast doubt on an event or fact that the Church has accepted for hundreds of years, this should not affect those who trust the Church more than their own or others' fallen reasoning.

Bishop Ambrose continues, answering the question whether only the 1848 Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs should be taken seriously with regard to the new calendar: "Yes certainly, but the others can also be taken seriously but with some reservations. They are not a decision of an ecumenical council where we have the original text and we know when it was done and why." So according to Bishop Ambrose only anathemas issued by Ecumenical Councils, and of which we have the original text, can be accepted wholeheartedly. That rules out all Church Councils without exception since 787, the date of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, including: the 1054 Local Council that anathematized the Roman Catholics, the fourteenth-century Councils that anathematized the Barlaamites, the sixteenth-century Pan-Orthodox Councils, the Russian Local Councils of 1918 and 1923 that anathematized the Bolsheviks and the renovationists, the Catacomb Church Councils that anathematized sergianism, the decisions of the True Orthodox Church of Greece in 1935, 1950, 1974 and 1991 that declared the new calendarists to be graceless, the 1983 Local Council that anathematized ecumenism, and its reiteration in 1998... It looks as if the all the most important decisions of the higher levels of the Orthodox Church for the last 1200 years must be placed under doubt if we are to accept the Cyprianite thesis!

d. The Anathema of the Russian Church Abroad against Ecumenism (1983)

This anathema, the most important of recent times, has been criticized on several grounds. First, it was argued that the anathema was only a *warning* to the leaders of World Orthodoxy; it did not cut them off from the Church. However, as we have seen, anathemas in general are precisely acts of separation from the Church: they are not warnings about future separation, but proclaim that the separation has already taken place.

Secondly, it was argued that the anathema of 1983 did not fall on anyone in particular because no individual name is mentioned. However, if that were so, then we would have to accuse the Apostle Paul of empty words when he wrote: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (I Corinthians 16.22). However, although nobody in particular is named here, these words are anything but vain, but express a fearful judgement on the world that does not love God. Again, the Apostle says: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1.8). There can be no question that this anathema falls on all those who depart from the apostolic teaching, even though nobody

in particular is named.

Again, several of the anathemas of the Ecumenical and Local Councils are directed against false teachings without naming the particular false teachers – or only the most important of them. But this in no way undermines their validity or power in relation to *all* those who preach the heresy in question in accordance with the formula: “*To all those who teach.... Anathema*”. God knows to whom the anathema applies, even if men do not, and the word of anathema is precisely the word of God, of which the apostles says that it is “*sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...*” (Hebrews 6.12).

Thirdly, it is asserted that anathemas only fall on those heretics who were contemporaries of the hierarchs who anathematized them: for later generations of heretics, the anathemas have to be re-applied by “*living synods of bishops*”. Taken to its logical and absurd conclusion, this argument implies that every new Pope of Rome has to be anathematized personally immediately he occupies his see, otherwise he reverts to Orthodoxy, and that if the 1983 anathema against ecumenism had not been repeated by the ROCOR Synod in 1998, it would already have lost its power, like food that has passed its sell-by date! But away with such sophistry! Those who argue like this forget that Jesus Christ is “*the same, yesterday, today and forever*” (Hebrews 13.8), and that the truths expressed in the Church’s anathemas are *eternal, unaging* truths. They also forget that “*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*” (Matthew 22.32), and that His true bishops, together with the words of truth and power that they pronounce, live for ever.

In any case, are not the anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils “*re-applied*” by “*living Synods of bishops*” every year on the Sunday of Orthodoxy? And not because these anathemas have somehow “*withered away*” in the course of the previous year (what a blasphemous thought!), but precisely so that the people should not forget their eternal significance and should, by pronouncing them themselves, take care that they should not “*fall under their own anathema*” by participating in heresy and the communion of heretics.

Thus the *Synodicon of Orthodoxy* makes God’s eternal judgements once again manifest in time to those who might forget that “*unto generation and generation is Thy truth*” (Psalms 118.90).

A fourth argument against the 1983 anathema seeks to limit the validity of the anathema, not so much in time as in space. This was first voiced, alas, by the ROCOR first-hierarch Metropolitan Vitaly in 1986 (although he corrected himself later), and repeated by Protopriest Alexander Lebedev in 2000. The argument was that the anathema against ecumenism was only of “*local*

significance"; it could fall only on members of ROCOR, and not on the members of other local Churches; in fact, the idea that the anathema could have universal application was "the heresy of universal jurisdiction".

Now insofar as an anathema is hurled by hierarchs of one district against a heretic or heresy operating in that district only, it can be said to be "of local significance" only. However, insofar as it expresses eternal and universal truths that potentially will have application in other districts, its significance is by no means local. As an example, let us look again at the Arian heresy.

Arius was originally anathematized by the Bishop of Alexandria, which meant that he was excluded from receiving the sacraments throughout the Church of Alexandria. According to the holy canons, he should then have been excluded from communion in all the churches of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. However, some bishops in neighbouring Churches agreed with Arius' teaching, so he was able to receive communion in their Churches. But this contradicted not only the holy canons, but also the Church's understanding of herself as the one repository of the One Truth. So the First Ecumenical Council was convened to expel Arius and anathematize his heresy "throughout the inhabited world".

This explains why, when the Local Churches anathematized a heresy, they never qualified the anathema 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 - and expected the other Churches to agree with them. Thus Nestorius, the Patriarch 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 in 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?"

Clearly St. Maximus believed that the anathema of the local Church of Rome was not "of local significance only", but 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.

It has always seemed a strange coincidence that the "Ecclesiological Antitheses" of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili should have appeared in 1984, only one year after ROCOR anathematized ecumenism and the ecumenists. Although they never admitted it publicly, this first formulation of the Cyprianites' distinctively new ecclesiology appeared to be an attempted "antithesis" to the "thesis" of ROCOR's anathema of the year before. These oblique, non-explicit attempts to discredit the anathema have continued unremittingly to the present day. The most recent example comes from the pen of Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, who writes: "One can see, quite easily, why our austere stand against the religious syncretism of ecumenism does not render us religious bigots, or sympathetic with those who, usurping the place of God, believe that they have the right to condemn ecumenists and ailing Orthodox (and us, in our witness of love) as heretics outside the Church. We are acting in perfect balance within the dual truths of confessional exactitude and pastoral love, as we should."

So there must be no sympathy for "those who, usurping the place of God, believe that they have the right to condemn ecumenists and ailing Orthodox". It follows that Archbishop Chrysostomos has no sympathy for Metropolitan Philaret and the ROCOR Synod that condemned the ecumenists - they were undoubtedly "usurping the place of God"!

Of course, Chrysostomos would deny that his words apply to Metropolitan Philaret, whom the Cyprianites continue to praise fulsomely while undermining and denigrating the main achievement of his life. But there can be no doubt about it: even before the anathema of 1983, Metropolitan Philaret condemned the Moscow Patriarchate as graceless, and after it he was perfectly consistent in his application of the anathema to all the ecumenists, so he "usurped the place of God" according to Cyprianite teaching...

Let us now turn to the criticisms that Bishop Ambrose of Methone makes of the detailed text of the 1983 anathema. "Firstly, if you read the text of the anathema, its definition of the teaching of ecumenism is so extreme that almost no orthodox ecumenist, apart from Patriarch Athenagoras, could ever be put into the category of those who were preaching this new doctrine".

Now the anathema is divided into several parts. The first is directed against "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". In other words, the branch theory of the Church is anathematized. What is wrong or extreme about that? All the ecumenists confess the branch theory. So they are

all under anathema.

The anathema continues: “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.” Here a more extreme form of ecumenism is anathematized. Not all “Orthodox” ecumenists would fall under this part of the anathema, although many would – and not only Patriarch Athenagoras. So in the first part of the anathema a “moderate” form of ecumenism, the inter-Christian branch theory, is condemned, and in the second part a more extreme, inter-religious form is condemned.

The anathema continues: “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”. This is simply a re-statement of Apostolic Canon 46, so it is not “extremism”, but straightforward church doctrine. Of course, there is a question whether the Cyprianites themselves fall under this part of the anathema, because they do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics; for, while saying that the ecumenists are heretics, they still recognize that they have true sacraments...

The anathema continues: “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.**” Here not only the ecumenists themselves, but also those who remain in conscious communion with them, are condemned. This applies perhaps most closely to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which, while often expressing reservations about ecumenism, nevertheless remains in communion with the ecumenists. So we see that the range of application of the anathema against ecumenism is very broad, and applies to far more than the most extreme ecumenists.

When ROCOR entered into communion with the Cyprianites in 1994 and officially accepted their ecclesiology, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) pointed out that the Cyprianites “confess their own and by no means Orthodox teaching on the possibility of the grace-filled action of the Holy Spirit in churches that have clearly become heretical”. Moreover he declared: “In passing this Resolution on communion with the group of Metropolitan Cyprian, our Council has unfortunately also forgotten about the text of the Resolution accepted earlier under the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret, which anathematized the ecumenical heresy... In fact, by not looking into the matter seriously and forgetting about the anathematizing of the new calendarist ecumenists that was confirmed earlier (and perhaps not having decided to rescind this resolution), our Council, however terrible it may be to admit it, has fallen under its own

anathema... Do we have to think that our Hierarchical Council has entered on the path of betraying the patristic traditions, or only that out of a misunderstanding it has allowed a mistake which it is not yet too late to correct at the November session in France?"

That mistake was thankfully corrected some years later, and now, of those parts of the old ROCOR that have not entered into communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, only the followers of Metropolitan Agathangelus remain in the clutches of the Cyprianite ecclesiology. But Bishop Gregory's main point remains: the Cyprianite ecclesiology is *incompatible* with Metropolitan Philaret's anathema against ecumenism. So all Orthodox have to choose the one or the other, and cannot claim to be loyal to both.

Bishop Ambrose continues his criticisms of the anathema against ecumenism as follows: "Secondly, the way that this anathema was approved, or rather not approved by the Russian Synod is altogether very peculiar. Having spoken to many bishops of the ROCOR, most of them claimed to have been unaware of the existence of this anathema until it was published, including the late Metropolitan Lavr, and this makes, at least, a curious impression."

Metropolitan Lavr is, of course, not the most reliable witness that Bishop Ambrose could have cited! It has been reported that he died on the eve of the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, just after ordering that this anathema should *not* be read in the service the next day. Surely a more reliable witness is Metropolitan Philaret himself, who sent a copy of the anathema to Fr. Anthony Gavalas of New York City, confirming that this was now official ROCOR doctrine.

If the anathema against ecumenism was a forgery, why did the ROCOR Synod never say so? Why, instead of condemning it as a forgery, did fourteen bishops *confirm* it in its original wording under the leadership of Metropolitan Vitaly in 1998? The conclusion can only be: it was *not* a forgery, but some of the bishops did not like its clear implications...

"Thirdly," continues Bishop Ambrose, "this anathema was actually written in Greek, and translated into English, then into Russian: this is evident from the syntax. Was it the work of the Russian bishops? No, we know where it originated... The monastery of Boston - namely *Holy Transfiguration Monastery*. This led to all the qualifications that were made by Metropolitan Vitaly and other ROCOR bishops when they said that the anathema refers only to the members of their own flock - 'we are not anathematising anybody outside... It would thus be absurd to claim that the anathema was proclaimed with the aim of cutting all ecumenists off from the Church even if they did profess the extreme doctrines described in the text of the anathema.'"

But why does it matter if the anathema was written by Holy Transfiguration Monastery? The important fact is that the Synod accepted the text and it became part of ROCOR's official confession of faith.

And why does it matter if the anathema were originally written in Greek? This would be relevant only if the official Russian or English versions are inaccurate in some way – which Bishop Ambrose does not claim.

Bishop Ambrose's claim that "it would be absurd to claim that the anathema was proclaimed with the aim of cutting all ecumenists off from the Church" cannot in any way be justified from the text, which is a perfectly general anathematization – i.e. exclusion from the Church – of all those who confess the branch theory. As we have seen, the attempt to interpret the anathema as applying only to members of ROCOR not only has no basis in the text but leads to absurd consequences. Thus if this interpretation were correct, an ecumenically-minded old woman in ROCOR would find herself under anathema, while the Pope of Rome, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Patriarch Alexis of Moscow and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople would all remain within the Church!

Immediately after this Bishop Ambrose moves to absolve Metropolitan Philaret of all criticism, saying that we should not confuse the "unclearities" in the anathema (which, as we have seen, do not exist) "with Metropolitan Philaret's uncompromising, confessional, and absolutely clear condemnation of the ecumenist heresy which he saw advancing around him, and which he expressed in his 'open letters'". In other words, the early Philaret – the Philaret of the Open Letters – was good, while the late Philaret – the Philaret of the Anathema against ecumenism – was, well, not exactly bad, but "unclear" – and we can blame this lack of clarity on bad advisors...

However, if we look at Metropolitan Philaret's confessional stand from the Open Letters of the 1960s to the Anathema of 1983, we see a very clear and consistent path. The Open Letters warned the heads of the Local Churches that ecumenism was a heresy, that they were betraying the truth of Orthodoxy. Nobody was anathematized, nor were all relations with these Churches broken at this time. However, when it became obvious that the Local Churches were not going to respond to his warning, the metropolitan moved his Synod to strengthen sanctions against them and in other ways to adopt a stricter position.

The liberals in ROCOR, under the leadership of Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, fought back against this pressure. However, the apostasy of World Orthodoxy could not be denied, and after the 1983 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver reached new heights of anti-

Christianity, the ROCOR Council, also meeting in Canada, anathematized ecumenism. This was the culmination and completely consistent climax of Metropolitan Philaret's struggle to draw a firm line between Truth and falsehood, between the True Church and the false – a line which the Cyprianites have tried to muddy ever since...

III. Who has the Power to Anathematize?

In the recent dialogue between the True Orthodox Church of Greece and the "Synod in Resistance", the Cyprianites refused to accept the demand of the True Orthodox that they accept "the validity of the condemnation of Ecumenism by the Russian Church Abroad and by the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece"; they feared to anathematize the heretics because they continue to believe that they are still inside the True Church.

Moreover, in this document they produce a further justification of this elitist, "sitting on the fence" strategy, a justification first produced in their "Informatory Epistle" of 1998: they reject the authority of *any* contemporary Synod to anathematize heretics. Thus they write that "so great a right and 'dignity' is 'granted' only to the choir of the Apostles 'and those who have truly become their successors in the strictest sense, full of Grace and power' (St. John Chrysostomos)". And they go on: "We are unable to understand this hasty tendency in our day to anathematize and condemn, since until such successors come into existence, 'everyone who is Orthodox in every respect anathematizes every heretic potentially, even if not verbally' (St. Theodore the Studite)" (6.10).

However, if there is no Synod in the world today which has the Grace and power to anathematize heretics, then the One, Holy, Catholic Church – God forbid! – has lost her power to bind and to loose! Then even if the Antichrist were to appear and pronounce himself to be God today, the Church on earth would have no power to anathematize him! Away with such blasphemy, such manifest lack of faith in the power and dignity of the Church!

If, as St. Theodore says, "everyone who is Orthodox anathematizes every heretic potentially, even if not verbally", then a fortiori the hierarchs of the Church, even if they are only "two or three gathered together in the name" of Christ (Matthew 18.20), have the power to anathematize every heretic, not only potentially, but actually, and not only under their breath, but verbally and from the housetops! For, as St. John Chrysostom said, "in worldly matters we are meek as lambs, but in matters of the faith we roar like lions!" We thank God that, as his Grace Bishop Photius indicated in his recent interview with *Ekklesiastikos*, there still exist such hierarchs who are prepared to use the power that God has given them, and who do not, like Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, consider that they are thereby "usurping the place of God"!

For there can be no doubt about it: in the age of the Antichrist no Church will survive that does not use all the grace-filled weapons that God has given her. Nor will it survive if, out of false humility, it expresses doubts that true successors of the Apostles exist any more, which is in effect the belief that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church has fallen from grace... When the Antichrist appears as a wolf in sheep's clothing in the midst of a "canonical" Orthodox Church, only those hierarchs who have the courage to call the wolf a wolf, and cast him out of the Church through the power of anathema, will both save themselves and protect their flocks from his snares...

Conclusion

The power of anathema, or the power to bind and loose, is the power, first, to discern that a man has been cast out of the mystical organism of the Church by her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and secondly, the power, in accordance with, and in obedience to, this heavenly, Divine verdict, to expel the already-condemned heretic from the earthly, visible organization of the Church. It is possessed by canonical, rightly believing hierarchs assembling in Ecumenical, Pan-Orthodox or Local Councils. Insofar as the Church of Christ, according to the promise of her Founder, will prevail against the gates of hell to the very end of time, the power of anathema exists also today, in the Synods of the True Orthodox Churches.

September 16/29, 2010; revised November 6/19, 2021.

22. THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION OF THE ROMANIAN OLD CALENDARIST CHURCHES

There are two Romanian Old Calendarist Synods. The first, popularly known as "Slatioara" after its main men's monastery, has in recent decades spread all over the country from its original homeland in Moldavia, and represents the largest True Orthodox Church in the world. The second, popularly known as "Tekuči" after the village in which its main monastery is situated, is smaller and concentrated mainly in Eastern Romania. The Apostolic succession of the Slatioara Synod has recently come under scrutiny since the claim by the Old Calendarist Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens that in about 1980 the "Kallistite" Synod to which he then belonged administered the rite of *cheirothesia* (laying on of hands) to the Slatioara bishops – a claim that the Slatioara Synod vehemently denies. In this article the present writer proposes to examine this claim, before going on to discuss the apostolic succession of the other, "Tekuči" Synod.

In 1924 the Romanian state church under its former uniate Patriarch Miron adopted the new, papal or Grigorian calendar. Immediately a resistance movement grew up in Moldavia under the leadership of Hieromonk Glycherie of Neamts monastery. For the next thirty or so years, several hundred thousand Old Calendarists maintained their faith in spite of severe persecution, first from the new calendarist Church and State, and then, after the war, from the communists. Twice their churches were destroyed, and twice they rebuilt them. In the whole of this period, they had no native bishop and were not in official communion with any other Church, although some support came from the Old Calendarist zealots of Mount Athos.

However, the need for a hierarch became pressing; and so the distinguished traditionalist theologian Bishop Galaction (Cordun) of Silistrie (in Bulgaria), who was living in virtual retirement in Bucharest, was approached by leaders of the Old Calendarists and was asked to join them. He agreed to do so when the time was ripe. And so on April 5/18, 1955 he publicly declared in a letter to the newcalendarist synod that he had accepted to be the head of the Old Calendarist Church, and on May 8/21 he arrived in Slătioara Monastery, where the people greeted him with the cry: "Axios!", "He is worthy!"

Thus was fulfilled a prophetic vision that Hieromonk Glycherie had had during the war, while in a forest being pursued by enemies: "It was night. Before him, he saw a beautiful Church. Metropolitan Galaction (Cordun)... appeared. Vladyka was holding Icons and a Cross in his hands, and he was giving each believer in the Church an Icon. When he reached the pious Father Glycherie, he gave him the Cross."

In November Metropolitan Galaction and Fr. Glycherie were summoned to

the police to register and legalise the Church. The faithful were against them going, sensing a trap, but the metropolitan insisted. The result: he was placed under house arrest in the monastery of St. Callinicus at Cernica, while Fr. Glycherie was exiled. However, under the pretext of visiting his doctor, the metropolitan went several times to Moarea Domneasca, which belonged to the Old Calendarists, and consecrated two bishops (Evloghie and Meftodie) and several priests. When this was discovered, about a year later, he was placed under stronger observation in Căldărușani Monastery.

But on Good Friday, 1959, Metropolitan Galaction was abducted by Pavel Mogârzan, Georghe Hincu and the advocate Albu, disguised as Securitate agents. He went the next day to Slătioara... "When, two or three hours [later], the patriarch phoned to find out what the metropolitan was doing, they told him that two officers of the security police had taken him. The patriarch shouted: 'I didn't send any officers!' But the metropolitan was already far away."

This was not the first dramatic abduction carried out by the Romanian Old Calendarists in this period... Metropolitan Blaise, the present leader of the Church, writes: "During the night of November 17, 1956, Archimandrite Glycherie, who had been abducted from his forced labour, was secretly consecrated a bishop [in Moara Domneasca]. Then they hid in our monastery [of Slătioara], where every day ordinations took place. A year later they were again arrested."

Metropolitan Galaction died in 1959; but the Slătioara Church was now firmly established with a Synod of bishops under the inspired leadership of Metropolitan Glycherie. However, they were still completely isolated from other Orthodox Churches, and there was a canonical question mark over the hierarchy. For its founder, Metropolitan Galaction, had been consecrated by new calendarist bishops in 1935, and his consecration of Bishop Evloghie had been single-handed...

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Let us put the problem in historical and canonical perspective.

Without entering in detail here into the reasons why the new calendar was rejected, we need note only that it was anathematized by three Pan-Orthodox Councils of the Eastern Patriarchs (attended by a plenipotentiary of the Russian Church) in 1583, 1587 and 1593. Then, in 1924, it was introduced almost simultaneously into the State Churches of Romania and Greece. In 1935 three bishops of the State Church of Greece joined the Greek Old Calendarists, and promptly declared the Greek new calendarists to be schismatics and without the Grace of sacraments. No such decision was made in relation to the

Romanian new calendarists at that time for the simple reason that the Romanian Old Calendarists did not yet have any bishops who had the canonical right to bind the new calendar church. So the question was: was the consecration of Metropolitan Galaction by new calendarist bishops valid or not?

The rigorist position, which is maintained by the a minority of the Greek Old Calendarists called the “Matthewites” and the Romanian “Tecuci” Synod, is that all the new calendarists, both in Greece and Romania, immediately and automatically lost Grace in 1924, and so were unable to consecrate true, Grace-filled bishops. It follows that Metropolitan Galaction’s consecration in 1935 was invalid, as were his consecrations of the Slatioara bishops from 1955 onwards. So from 1924 Romania was completely deprived of true bishops and churches, with the single exception of the founder of the “Tekuci” hierarchy, Bishop Victor-Vasile (Leu), of whom we will speak in more detail later.

However, the rigorist position has several serious flaws that make it untenable. First, while the adoption of the new calendar was undoubtedly a most serious sin which led subsequently to the falling away of the new calendarists from the Church, it cannot be considered to be more serious than the pan-heresy of ecumenism, which was officially proclaimed in an Encyclical by all the bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1920. And yet, to the writer’s knowledge, while the fateful significance of the 1920 encyclical has been widely recognized, no Orthodox bishop of any jurisdiction, even the most rigorist, has ever declared that the Ecumenical Patriarchate lost Grace immediately and automatically when it proclaimed heresy in 1920.

Secondly, if the adoption of the new calendar immediately and automatically leads to the loss of the Grace of sacraments, then we should have to conclude that Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow lost Grace in 1923, when he adopted the new calendar. True, this lasted for only three months, after which the patriarch, impressed by the almost unanimous refusal of the people to obey his decree, realized his mistake and returned to the Old Calendar. However, the rigorist position, if followed through consistently, must lead us to conclude that Patriarch Tikhon fell away from the Church in 1923. Moreover, to the present writer’s knowledge, since no Synod of bishops ever received his repentance or received him back from “schism” into Orthodoxy, the rigorists must also declare that he died in schism in 1925. And yet no Orthodox zealot, even the most fanatical, has ever made such a shocking declaration, knowing that it runs completely counter to the conscience of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Thirdly, if the Greek new calendarists lost Grace immediately and automatically in 1924, then the three bishops who returned to the Old Calendar in 1935 were not in fact bishops, and all their acts as “bishops”, not only between

1924 and 1935, but also thereafter, were invalid...

The rigorists may retort that two out of the three bishops who returned to the Old Calendar had been consecrated before 1924, and so had at least had true consecrations. All they needed to do was repent of their newcalendarism before the Old Calendar clergy and laity, after which they could exercise the functions of true, canonical hierarchs in the Old Calendar Church... But if, as the rigorists insist, the acceptance of the new calendar was not simply a serious mistake, but a falling into schism from the Church and deprivation of their episcopal rank, then in order for the bishops to be restored to their episcopal rank, they needed not simply absolution from their sin, which could be given them by a simple priest: they needed the Grace of the episcopate to be restored to them. But only a Synod of bishops can bestow the Grace of the episcopate. No group of clergy or laity, however large or Orthodox, can take the place of a Synod here.

If this reasoning is correct, then the three Greek bishops who returned to the Old Calendar in 1935 were still bishops at that time, and did not need to have their episcopate restored by re-ordination, *cheirothesia* or any other means. They only needed, before beginning to act as bishops in the Old Calendar Church, to receive forgiveness for the blot on their conscience caused by their (unwilling and temporary) acceptance of the new calendar. This they received...

Having been received back into the Old Calendar Church, the three bishops proceeded to condemn the new calendarists as true schismatics, invoking the anathemas of 1583, 1587 and 1593. This already changed the status of the Greek new calendarists, making it less excusable and more serious; for now, for the first time, a living synod of canonical, Old Calendar bishops declared that the new calendarists from now on fell under the anathemas against the new calendar. However, it should be emphasized that this decision of the Greek Old Calendar Synod, declaring the new calendarists to be outside the Church, applied only within the bounds of the Church of Greece...

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Returning now to Romania, we may apply the same logic to the question of Metropolitan Galacteon's consecration. When he returned to the Old Calendar in 1955 he did not need to receive re-ordination, *cheirothesia* or any such thing. For when he was ordained to the episcopate in 1935, no living Synod of Romanian bishops had yet condemned the Romanian new calendarists in the way that the Greeks condemned the Greek new calendarists in 1935. Some years later, this was confirmed by the Greek Old Calendarist Synod under the presidency of Metropolitan Kallistos of Corinth. On October 30, 1979, they decided "to recognise the episcopal consecrations performed by Metropolitan Galaction Cordon through concelebration of the Romanian and Greek

hierarchs, in agreement with the divine and holy canons and the order of the Orthodox Church...

“Our Holy Synod, having full knowledge of the circumstances, and of its historical responsibilities before God and men, decides to recognise the ordinations of the Romanian Church of T.O.C., which are dogmatically and sacramentally (*mystiriakos*) valid, but uncanonical, as having been performed single-handedly (Bishop Galaction Cordun alone ordained Bishop Evloghie). This recognition and the consequential settling (*taktopoiisis*) of the existent anticanonicity will be realised through a simple concelebration of our bishops of the Greek Church of T.O.C. with their Romanian brothers in Christ; this will signify the establishment of spiritual-ecclesiastical intercommunion of the two sister Churches.”

The decision is signed by ten bishops: Kallistos of Corinth, Anthony of Attica and Megara, Kyprianos of Oropos, Maximos of Magnesia, Kallinikos of Achaia, Matthew of Oinoe, Germanos of Aiolia, Kalliopios of Pentapolis, Merkourios of Knossos and Kallinikos of the Dodecanese. It is in Greek and Romanian, and also contains the signature of the emissary of the Romanian Synod, Bishop Silvestru. A photocopy of this document was supplied to the present writer by Bishop Ambrose of Methone, who was at that time interpreter for the Greek and Romanian bishops.

In April, 1980 the Kallistite Synod entered into official communion with the True Orthodox Church of Romania under the presidency of Metropolitan Glycherie.

A few years later, the Kallistite Synod collapsed and most of its bishops (with the major exception of Metropolitan Kyprianos) joined a new union of the Greek Old Calendarists under Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiouisis) of Athens.

However, in recent years a completely new version of this story has been put forward by one of the bishops who signed this document – Metropolitan Kallinikos of Achaia, who is now Archbishop of Athens in succession to Archbishop Chrysostomos. According to his version, as recounted by the Secretary of the Synod, Bishop Photius of Marathon, in 1981 Metropolitan Kallistos, together with Metropolitans Kallinikos of Achaia and Kyprianos of Oropos, went to Romania and performed the act of *cheirothesia* on the Romanian bishops in order to regularize their position. Later, when the Kallistites united with the other Old Calendarist “Florinites”, this act was recognized by the united Church.

Since Archbishop Kallinikos’ version of history is flatly contradicted by the document just cited, by the whole of the Slatioara Synod and by eye-witnesses

such as Bishop Ambrose, it can be safely rejected. We shall not speculate here why Archbishop Kallinikos has been “economical with the truth” in this instance... The important point is that no *cheirothesia* took place because, as Kallinikos’ own signature under the 1979 document witnesses, none was necessary...

*

There is another Old Calendar hierarchy in Romania; its origins go back to the immediate post-war period. In 1948, at the request – more precisely, order - of the Soviets, the new calendarist Romanian Church was obliged to surrender its parishes in the diaspora and let them come under the jurisdiction of the Moscow patriarchate. Worried by the danger this posed for their flock, several bishops, foremost among them Grigorie Leu of Husi and Chesarie of Tomis, decided to send the priests Florian Galdau and Vasile Leu, the son of Bishop Grigorie, to help the aged and sick Metropolitan Visarion Puiu. Since Fr. Vasile’s wife had died, he was tonsured on August 21, 1948 in preparation for consecration to the episcopate with the name Victor.

On August 21, 1948 the two priests left Romania, and after jumping from the train at Isanova railway station, entered Yugoslavia, where they were arrested and interrogated by Yugoslav security. They succeeded in escaping and reached Austria. There, after staying for a time in a camp, they were set free by the Allied Forces and began to serve in a church in Salzburg.

Eventually, after a meeting of Romanian exiles from all over the diaspora, the Autonomous Romanian Orthodox Archiepiscopate of Western Europe was set up. Since Metropolitan Visarion was ill and paralysed in a sanatorium in Switzerland, Fr. Vasile was sent, with Visarion’s blessing, to the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR) in Munich to be consecrated to the episcopate.

ROCOR had already had some dealings with Orthodox in Romania. Thus in the early 1930s ROCOR appealed to the Serbian Church on behalf of Russian Orthodox Christians persecuted in Romania. Moreover, Bishop Seraphim (Lyade) of Vienna was sent to Bessarabia to minister to Russian Old Calendarists led by Hieromonk Gamaliel of Niamets monastery, and ordain priests there.

Now, at the request of representatives of the Romanian Archiepiscopate, Seraphim (now Metropolitan of Berlin) joined Bishop Stephen (Sevbo) of Vienna and (according to one version) Bishop Philip (Gardner) of Potsdam in consecrating Fr. Vasile in Munich in December, 1949, giving him the new name Vasile-Victor. However, the files of the German diocese of ROCOR reveal no record of this consecration, and Philip Gardner had ceased from being a bishop

at that time...

Even before his consecration Bishop Vasile-Victor had been founding Romanian Orthodox parishes on the basis of a strong anti-communist position. He met King Michael in Switzerland, broadcast in Romanian from the BBC in London and several radio stations in Austria, as well as Paris Radio. He issued thousands of certificates to Romanian refugees to enable them to obtain visas in western countries.

In Romania, meanwhile, Bishop Victor-Vasile's father, Bishop Grigorie, had suffered the abolition of his diocese of Husi, and on February 25, 1949 was summoned to Bucharest for discussions. Being a strong anti-communist who had warned about the transformation of the Romanian Church into a "Sovrom patriarchy", he was not allowed to return a healthy man. Three days later he died, probably from poisoning.

On August 16, 1952 Bishop Victor-Vasile was arrested in Vienna, injected with some substance, and kidnapped. Three days later he woke up in a Soviet prison. He was transported to the Lubyanka in Moscow, where he was interrogated for seven months and charged with working for the English and American secret services. Beria himself sometimes took part in the interrogations. Bishop Victor-Vasile refused to ask for a pardon, and also refused to delegate anyone to make such a request on his behalf. "I consider communism to be the main enemy of the Christians," he said, "and that is why this is the goal of my life." At the Bucharest District Law Court on November 16, 1954 he declared: "I realize that you want to find out whether I collaborated with the English information service. I said and I repeat that I haven't spied for anybody. I am an enemy of this Romanian regime, which has turned the country into a kind of prison. I carried out this activity because the communist regime is a straitjacket for the soul and essence of the Romanian people. The only decision that would honour me and the law court would be my condemnation to death."

On November 20, 1954 he was condemned to death for treason (resolution № 2417). However, he was not executed, but passed through all the prisons of Romania. In 1964 he was released. His file in the security archives is 300 pages long and reveals that he made no compromise with the authorities.

After his release, Bishop Victor-Vasile refused to join the Romanian patriarchate, but instead set off for the monastery of the Old Calendarists at Slatioara in Moldavia, where he was accepted as a bishop at first (he served with them for seven years, according to one account). However, canonical differences with the other Old Calendarists forced him to return to Bucharest. It appears that Bishop Victor-Vasile took a stricter attitude towards the

Romanian new calendarists, rebaptising and remarrying them, and also could not recognize the validity of the consecration of Metropolitan Galaction, since it had been carried out in 1935, after the calendar change. On the other hand, the Old Calendarists did not accept Victor-Vasile's consecration because he did not have ordination papers, and because ROCOR had no records of his consecration.

On leaving Slatioara, Bishop Victor-Vasile joined the followers of Fr. Gamaliel, who, like St. Glicherie, was a hieromonk of Neamt and rejected the calendar change, but who differed from Glicherie from the beginning over the baptism issue as also over beards (he regarded men who shaved as automatically excommunicated). Nifon Dobrogeanul and Mina were his followers, and Bishop Victor now ordained Niphon to the episcopate single-handedly. Later Niphon, also single-handedly, but with the agreement of Bishop Victor, consecrated Clement and Cassian. Victor's activity was confined to his flat in Bucharest because the communists placed him under virtual house arrest in order to restrict his contact with the faithful. That is why, when he died in 1978, he was taken to Cernica monastery and buried by the new calendarists there. Only a few laymen from his flock, and no priests, were present.

The "Tecuci" Church is now led by Bishops Gherontie of Vrancea and Cassian of Moldavia, and has between 8000 and 12,000 believers, according to one account, about 4000 according to another. It has ten priests, three deacons and three monasteries. On April 19 / May 2, 2008 it officially entered into communion with Metropolitan Kyrikos of Mesogaia and Lavriotiki, the most rigorist of all the Greek Old Calendarist bishop who is recognized by no Greek Synod.

The union took place through simple concelebration of the Greek and Romanian bishops, which would seem to suggest that Kyrikos recognized the apostolic succession of the "Tecuci" church. In a joint statement, all the other Greek Old Calendarists were condemned, and the union between ROCOR and the Greek Old Calendarists in 1971 declared to be a Masonic plot.

However, in an apologia reproduced in English on the "Kyrikite" website the "Kyrikites" declared: "According to the writings of St. Theodore the Studite, whose canon is quoted in the Synodal Decision, the bishops of the Romanian Catacomb Church were accepted based on their Confession of Faith, and their Apostolic Succession *was sealed by the Act itself*, which Metropolitan Kirykos read out aloud during the Divine Liturgy, just prior to entering into communion with them. The Decision states "By this act we RECOGNIZE, SEAL AND APPROVE your Apostolic Succession, *asking the Holy Spirit to fill anything that may be lacking, and known only to God.*" The last phrase in bold is an exact quotation from the prayer for ordination of bishops. So Metropolitan Kyrikos

appears to have tried to *re-ordain* the Romanian bishops – evidently without their knowledge.

In the present writer's opinion, while Bishop Victor-Vasile may have been validly ordained by ROCOR bishops, the "Tekuci" church he founded cannot be considered to have apostolic succession for the following reasons: (i) there is no documentary evidence of his ordination, which according to Apostolic Canon 33 means that it should be rejected; (ii) the Tecuci Synod rejects all other True Orthodox jurisdictions, which makes it schismatic; and (iii) its official communion with the schismatic Metropolitan Kyrikos deepens its schismatic status.

May 2/15, 2012.

[23. IS THE SERBIAN TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH SCHISMATIC?](#)

An Analysis of the Greek TOC's Encyclical of August 9/22, 2011

The events surrounding the consecration of Bishop Akakije of Serbia by bishops of the Russian True Orthodox Church in August, 2011 are complex, and their canonical evaluation – difficult. The reason for this is simple: the body of Orthodox canon law as contained in *The Rudder* was completed over twelve centuries ago, and did not envisage the creation of new autocephalous Churches, still less the *re-creation* or *resurrection* of autocephalous Churches after their fall into heresy. At the same time, I believe that there is sufficient evidence to be found in the holy canons, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the history of the Church to come to the firm conclusion that the consecration of Bishop Akakije was valid, and his condemnation as a “schismatic” by the True Orthodox Church of Greece – unjust. However, there are still many who believe that Bishop Akakije is a schismatic; so the purpose of this article is to revisit this controversy now that, as we may hope, the dust has settled after the battle of 2011. As a framework for the discussion, I propose to analyse the encyclical of August 9/22, 2011 signed by all the hierarchs of the True Orthodox Church of Greece headed by Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens.

The encyclical is addressed to “*the Sacred Clergy and Faithful of the Church of the GOC of Serbia*”... This in itself is a fact of the greatest importance. For the whole argument in the recent years between Fr. Akakije and his supporters, on the one hand, and Archbishop Kallinikos and his supporters, on the other, has revolved around the question: does a Genuine Orthodox Church of Serbia truly exist, parallel with and independent of the other True Orthodox Churches, such as those of Russia and Greece? Or are there only Serbian Orthodox Christians belonging to the True Orthodox Church of Greece but living on Serbian territory? The fact that the encyclical was addressed to “the Sacred Clergy and Faithful of the Church of the GOC of Serbia” can only mean that the signatories accept that the True Orthodox Church of Serbia does truly exist independently of the Greek Church. Of course, the signatories were not addressing Bishop Akakije and his supporters (several hundred people), but the small group (about 50 people) of his opponents and enemies in Serbia. But the basic principle has been conceded to the supporters of Bishop Akakije: there *is* such an independent, autocephalous Church of Serbia in True Orthodoxy. The only argument is over which body of believers constitutes it...

Do all the signatories of the encyclical sincerely believe this? Almost certainly not. For both before and after the consecration Archbishop Kallinikos and his supporters were asserting precisely the opposite. Only recently one leading Greek said that before 1995, when Fr. Akakije came to Serbia from Mount Athos, there were precisely *zero* truly Orthodox Christians in Serbia; so the Autocephaly of the Serbian Church *no longer exists*. Serbia is now “missionary

territory”, he asserted, like the missionary territories of Western Europe or North America...

To the claim that Serbia is now “missionary territory” which has to be re-evangelized by the Greeks, Bishop Akakije replied: “We wonder, with what right do they claim this, even if we accept the absurdity that once again the Greeks are enlightening the Serbian people? What Greek missionary came and labored in the vineyard of the Serbian Church over the past fifteen years? What Greek took even one step among the Serbs and for the Serbs? Who suffered the humiliations from the Belgrade Patriarchate? We know that for eleven years no one from the Greek GOC synod visited the suffering believers in Serbia!

“Financial help from Greece - which is loudly spoken about and put forward as one argument why we Serbs are dependent on the Greeks and have no right to leave their administrative rule - has been truly inconsequential considering in what conditions the Serbian TOC actually exists. This financial help has arrived in the same quantities from other jurisdictions and even from individuals in World Orthodoxy. Involuntarily the question arises: did the Greeks help the Serbian Church only in order for her to be under their rule? The New Calendar Greek Church constantly gives financial help to the Belgrade Patriarchate without demanding its submission to her rule. Is this submission a criterion for one church to help another or not?”

The concept of “missionary territory” applies to pagan territories that have not been evangelized by the Christian Gospel. In no way can this be said of Serbia, which under the name of “Illyrium” was evangelized by the Apostle Paul, which had Local Saints and Local Church Councils held on its territory in the first millennium, and which from 1219 was recognized as an independent autocephalous Church with its own native hierarchy. In the twentieth century the notorious Patriarch Meletius Metaxakis of Constantinople took large chunks out of the Russian and Serbian patriarchates and made them into “autonomous” Churches - of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Baltic States, etc. - dependent on Constantinople. These illegal acts were never recognized by the true Churches of Russia and Serbia. It would be sad indeed if the present-day Church of Greece centred in Athens (which in any case is not, of course, Constantinople) were to imitate the ecclesiastical imperialism of the notorious heretic Metaxakis... As for the fact that the Serbian Church has been in heresy since the 1960s, this is no excuse for denying it its ancient status as an autocephalous Church. Old Rome fell away from the faith in 1054, and there were no True Christians on its territory after about 1100. And yet the Eastern Patriarchates did not deny it the status of a (fallen) patriarchate right up to the Council of Florence in 1438-39. If Rome had officially repented of its heresy in that period, there is every reason to believe that the status of Orthodox patriarchate would have been restored to it automatically. Or shall we say that

Constantinople is no longer an autocephalous patriarchate because there are no true Christians left in the City?...

The encyclical continues: *“What they [the supporters of Bishop Akakije] desired is good. Yet the way that they chose to achieve this was wrong. In Orthodoxy the end does not justify the means. This was the motto of the Jesuits. In Orthodoxy the words of Saint John Chrysostom apply: “The good thing is not good if it is not done rightly.” The intention to restore the self-governance of the Serbian Church is good, while the manner of its achievement is evil, when it is accomplished through an unilateral decision of an elite group of clergy and laity that represent none but themselves. In past eras, unilateral and arbitrary decisions led to schisms and anathemas and other ills in the body of the Church of Christ. Let us call to mind two examples from among the many: the arbitrary pronouncement of the Archbishop of Serbia as Patriarch in 1346 and the arbitrary pronouncement of the Autocephalous Church of Greece in 1833. In the first case, the result was that the Church of Serbia was placed under anathema for 20 years; in the second case, the Church of Greece was pronounced schismatic for 17 years. Both of these cases were, however, the result of pressures from political leaders who took advantage of the Church in order to obtain their objectives. Today, we Genuine Orthodox Christians are disengaged from local political powers. Political leaders [today] do not drag along ecclesiastical leaders who create similar situations – which would be a mitigating factor...”*

Let us separate the wheat from the chaff in this paragraph. First, the signatories assert that Bishop Akakije and his supporters tried to achieve their good aim “through a unilateral decision of an elite group of clergy and laity that represent none but themselves”. Now an elite is by definition a minority group constituting the best or in some sense higher part of a larger group. Thus we talk about an “aristocratic elite” as opposed to the plebeian people, where the Greek word “aristocratic” means “rule by the better”. But Fr. Akakije and his supporters, while they might indeed have been “better” than their opponents in general, were not a minority nor an elite. Certainly, they represented only themselves – that is, the majority of the True Orthodox Christians of Serbia. Who else were they meant to represent? Who else could they represent?

Turning to the historical examples, it is certainly true that the Archbishop of Serbia’s giving himself the title of “patriarch” in 1346 was arbitrary – the bestowal of this title should have been agreed with the other patriarchs. Nevertheless, since the Serbian Church was already autocephalous (since 1219), it made no essential difference to its status. From a dogmatic or ecclesiological point of view it was much less significant than, for example, the Patriarch of Constantinople’s according himself the title of “Ecumenical” in the sixth century. That step was opposed in the strongest possible terms by St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, because it implied that he had jurisdiction over the whole “inhabited world” (*oikoumene*)... Again, the Church of Greece’s

pronouncement of its autocephaly from the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1833 was indeed arbitrary and wrong. But it is quite wrong to compare this to the situation in Serbia in 2011. For there is no question that Greece was part of the canonical territory of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1833, whereas Serbia has *never* been the canonical territory of the Church of Greece!

The encyclical continues: *"There were good examples to follow, such as the declaration in a canonical way of the autocephaly of the Church of Serbia by Saint Sabbas, the First Archbishop of Serbia."*

The declaration of the Serbian Church's autocephaly in 1219 by St. Savva is indeed interesting and instructive – but it by no means proves what the Greeks want it to prove. For what did St. Savva actually do? Knowing that his bishop and canonical superior, Archbishop Demetrios Chomatianos of the Autonomous Church of Ochrid, would never grant the Serbian Church autocephaly, St. Savva "changed jurisdictions", as we would say today (the Greek Church was divided into four main "jurisdictions" at that time), and received autocephaly from another "jurisdiction" – that of the Nicaean patriarch and emperor. If we follow the iron logic of the encyclical's ecclesiology, then St. Savva's action was not only *not* a "good example to follow", but blatantly schismatic! For after all, he disobeyed his bishop and even broke communion with him – a bishop, moreover, who even now is considered by the Greeks to be (with Balsamon and Aristides) one of the three great experts on canon law of the medieval period!

Fr. Akakije's action was in fact very similar to that of St. Savva – but *less* bold. For while St. Savva was forced to "change jurisdictions" in order that the autocephaly of the Serbian Church should be *created*, Fr. Akakije only acted to *reactivate* that autocephaly – a very different, and far less ambitious project.

As for the Serbian True Orthodox people, their "sin" was to believe that the best candidate for the bishop of the resurrected Church of Serbia was not a Greek bishop living a thousand kilometres away, who neither lived in Serbia nor spoke Serbian nor showed any knowledge of Serbian problems, but rather the man who had already built up the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Serbia from scratch with his own sweat, blood and tears, who was the spiritual father to most of the clergy and monastics (including those who led the opposition against him).

Did they have the right to express such an opinion? *Undoubtedly*. In fact, according to the Holy Fathers, they had the right to decide this question themselves without the "veto" of any foreign authorities; for, as St. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, said: "You know, even if very few remain in Orthodoxy and piety, then it is precisely these that are the Church, and the

authority and leadership of the ecclesiastical institutions remains with them.” This being the case, the most that a foreign bishop of Synod could have done in Serbia was agree to help, or refuse to help (if they found the candidate unworthy), the Serbians in their choice: what they could not do was act “as lords over those entrusted to them” (I Peter 5.3) and impose their own will and their own candidates (i.e. themselves) upon them.

In fact, this very important principle is enshrined in the eighth canon of the Third Ecumenical Council: “The same rule shall be observed in the other dioceses and provinces everywhere, so that none of the God-beloved Bishops shall assume control of any province which has not heretofore, from the very beginning, been under his own hand or that of his predecessors. But if anyone has violently taken and subjected [a province], he shall give it up; lest the canons of the Fathers be transgressed; or the vanities of worldly honor be brought in under pretext of sacred office; or we lose, without knowing it, little by little, the liberty which Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Deliverer of all men, hath given us by His own Blood.”

“From this,” writes Bishop Akakije, “it is already clear the Greek GOC does not have the canonical right to take over the territory of the Serbian Church, much less such moral rights before the Serbian Church and people. On the basis of our petition for help, the Greek Church had the right *only* to set up a temporary governance over our widowed Serbian Church and to ensure the establishment of a Serbian bishop for the Serbian people as soon as possible. Unfortunately, this did not happen...”

Against this, the opponents of Bishop Akakije say that the situation in Serbia is different, because the True Orthodox Christians had voluntarily accepted to be under the omophorion of Archbishop Kallinikos. This is true, and acknowledged by the Serbs. But they argue that they sought the *temporary* episcopal supervision of a bishop of the Greek Church only until their own hierarchy could be re-established: they remained the True Orthodox Church of Serbia, and never became part of any other Local Church. There was not, and could not be, any *permanent engulfment* of the Serbian Church within the Greek Church. For, as the canon says, “none of the God-beloved Bishops shall assume control of any province which has not heretofore, from the very beginning, been under his own hand or that of his predecessors” – and there is no question about it: at no time has Serbia been under the hand of any Archbishop of Athens. The boundaries of the archdiocese of Athens could be redrawn to include the whole of Serbia only with the consent of the other Local Churches – and, first and foremost, with the consent of the Serbian people.

In fact, the “temporary governance” of the Greeks over the Serbs continued for *fifteen years*, directly violating another of the Holy Canons, the 74th of the

Council of Carthage: "It is hereby declared that it will not be permitted to any temporarily governing bishop to keep for himself the altar that was entrusted to him for his temporary governance, because of differences and quarrels among the people: but he must strive to elect a bishop for it in the course of a year. But if he is lazy about this, then at the end of the year let another temporary bishop be elected."

After citing this canon, Bishop Akakije quotes from the commentary on it by the famous Serbian canonist, Bishop Nikodim Milash of Istria, who died a martyr's death in an Austrian prison: "It has happened that those bishops who should have maintained love among the people and cooperated in the election of a new bishop have themselves, for the sake of their own personal interests, encouraged disorders and stirred up disagreements with the aim of leaving the Church longer without a permanent bishop and of having the opportunity of carrying out the duties of governing bishop in it for a more prolonged period. So as to hinder such an abuse, the Carthaginian Fathers forbid a bishop to remain governing a widowed Church for longer than one year, and, if in the course of this time he has not succeeded in doing everything necessary in order that a new bishop should be installed, then, as the canon decrees, such a bishop should be deprived of the governance, and it should be transferred to a newly elected governor." Bishop Akakije points out that the fears of the Carthaginian Fathers have actually been fulfilled in the case of contemporary Serbia, since the Greek leadership "very subtly but steadily reduced the authority of the first struggler for the renewal of True Orthodoxy in Serbia, Fr. Akakije, along with his co-strugglers on the battlefield for the rebirth of the Serbian Church and her interests".

The encyclical continues: *"Furthermore, when the independence of the Church of Serbia was abolished because of political reasons, it was recovered gradually and harmoniously initially with autonomy in 1831 and then with full autocephaly in 1879 through a consensus among the Mother and Daughter Churches."*

The encyclical is here referring to the Greek Church's "abolition" of the Serbian and Bulgarian Patriarchates in 1766-67. With the single word "political" it covers up, and attempts to mitigate, a most serious historical sin which is directly relevant to the present situation. "The Bulgarians and the Serbs," writes Sir Steven Runciman, an historian highly respected by the Greeks, "had no intention of becoming Graecized. They protested to some effect against the appointment of Greek metropolitans. For a while the Serbian Patriarchate of Peč was reconstituted, from 1557 to 1755. The Phanariots demanded tighter control. In 1766 the autonomous Metropolitanate of Peč was suppressed and in 1767 the Metropolitanate of Ochrid. The Serbian and Bulgarian Churches were each put under an exarch appointed by the Patriarch. This was the work of the Patriarch Samuel Hantcherli, a member of an upstart Phanariot family, whose brother

Constantine was for a while Prince of Wallachia until his financial extortions alarmed not only the tax-payers but also his ministers, and he was deposed and executed by the Sultan's orders. The exarchs did their best to impose Greek bishops on the Balkan Churches, to the growing anger of both Serbs and Bulgarians. The Serbs recovered their religious autonomy early in the nineteenth century when they won political autonomy from the Turks. The Bulgarian Church had to wait till 1870 before it could throw off the Greek yoke. The policy defeated its own ends. It caused so much resentment that when the time came neither the Serbs nor the Bulgarians would cooperate in any Greek-directed move towards independence; and even the Roumanians held back. None of them had any wish to substitute Greek for Turkish political rule, having experienced Greek religious rule...."

So this is what "Greek religious rule" meant for the Serbs in the past: financial extortion, the removal of their own hierarchy, and the attempt to Hellenize their people. In spite of that, the Serbs in the twenty-first century, hoping that times had changed, asked for help from the Greeks and were sincerely grateful for what they received. It was only when this help turned into a variety of obstacles and hindrances, and the attempt to deny them their own native bishop, that they realized: tout ça change, tout c'est la même chose...

The encyclical continues: *"Why do our separated brethren prefer to imitate those examples that are to be avoided instead of those that should be imitated? By using as their excuse various irregularities of the past they wish to justify their illicit acts. Their unfortunate attempt elicits a simple question: Does one irregularity from the past justify its repetition?"*

This is a perverse way of looking at the present situation! The truth is quite the opposite: the "irregularity" of past Greek behavior - the abolition of the Serbian patriarchate in 1766 - is being repeated, albeit on a smaller scale, today.

This became obvious when, in June, 2011, the Serbs received a letter from a senior bishop of the Greek Church in which it was proclaimed with all seriousness that Archbishop Kallinikos was "the acting locum tenens of the Serbian patriarchal throne"!

Let us conduct a thought experiment and imagine that Patriarch Irenaeus of Serbia and all his bishops, priests and laity - or, at any rate, a significant part of them - repented of their heresy and proclaimed that they wished to be united to the True Orthodox Church. What would the Greeks do then? Would they say: "You are no longer an Autocephalous Church, but must submit to the authority of Archbishop of Kallinikos of Athens, who is now the first hierarch or Archbishop (or even patriarchal locum tenens!) of all Greece and Serbia"? Of course not - and yet that is the logic of the Greek position! For this canonical

nonsense – or should we call it megalomania? - implies that the Church of Serbia has now been annexed to the Church of Greece without any conciliar decision and without the knowledge or agreement of any Serbs except their 50-strong “Greek Serb” group!

“As we said above,” continues the encyclical, “for political reasons many times autocephalous Churches lost this status, while other autocephalous Churches were created. We must remember that the Church is one; the Dioceses, Metropolises, Patriarchates, Autocephalous, Autonomous and Semi-autonomous Churches are administrative divisions, which do not affect the essence of the Church and which change according the political circumstances of each era and the shifting of borders according to the maxim, “it is customary for the ecclesiastical to change together with the political.” An example of this is the Russian Empire’s absorption of the Georgian Kingdom in 1801 and the subsequent abolition of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church, whose autocephaly was restored again in 1917.”

For accuracy’s sake, it should be pointed out that the Georgian State headed by the king *asked* to be subsumed into the Russian empire to avoid being swallowed up by the Muslim Persians. That was indeed a good political reason for temporarily abolishing state independence, if not Church autocephaly. Moreover, it was done *voluntarily* – which can said of *none* of the instances in which the Byzantines or Greeks deprived Slavs or Arabs of their ecclesiastical independence.

In any case, the maxim “it is customary for the ecclesiastical to change together with the political” was never enshrined in canon law, was not recognized outside Constantinople, and became the cause of innumerable very damaging quarrels between Constantinople and the other Orthodox Churches. For autocephaly is, or should be, granted for purely *pastoral, ecclesiastical* reasons, because in order that a newly evangelized people should be strengthened in the faith they should have their own native hierarchy serving in their own native language. Why should that pastoral need change because of purely *political* reasons, because the people in question has involuntarily come under the yoke of another Christian nation?

Take the case of Bulgaria. After Constantinople very reluctantly gave the newly Christianized nation autocephaly, the faith spread strongly in Bulgaria, and she was soon producing native saints of her own – kings (St. Boris-Michael), hermits (St. John of Rila) and hierarchs and evangelists (SS. Naum and Clement of Ohrid). However, after the death of King Peter, in about 971, the Bulgarian kingdom was conquered by the Byzantines, as a consequence of which the local Bulgarian Church was again subjected to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. There was a resurgence of Bulgarian power under Tsar Samuel, who established his capital and patriarchate in Ohrid. But this did not last long. In 1014 the

Bulgarian armies were decisively defeated by Emperor Basil I, “the Bulgar-slayer”. This led to the temporary dissolution of the Bulgarian kingdom and its absorption into the Roman Empire.

The Byzantines continued to recognize the autocephaly of the Bulgarian Church centred in Ohrid, but it was demoted from a patriarchate to an archbishopric. And further encroachments on Bulgarian ecclesiastical independence continued. This elicited a firm rebuke from St. Theophlact, Archbishop of Ohrid in the late eleventh century. Although a refined Greek, he defended the rights of his adopted Church. Thus he stopped a monk from founding a stavropegial monastery subject directly to Constantinople, since it was “in accordance with neither the sacred canons nor the laws of the kingdom. I forbid him, for what relations are there between the Church of Bulgaria and the Patriarch of Constantinople? *None at all*. Constantinople possesses neither the right of ordination, nor any other rights, in Bulgaria. Bulgaria recognizes only its own archbishop as its head.”

Constantinople made two further attempts to abolish Bulgarian autocephaly, the first in the period of the Byzantine empire and the second in the period of the Turkish yoke. And yet who can doubt that the Bulgarian Church remained essentially unchanged in the whole of that time? And even now, when Bulgaria has succumbed to the ecumenist heresy, she remains an independent Church in law...

The encyclical continues: *“The group of estranged brethren declared that in coming into communion with the Russian Synod of Bishops under Archbishop Tikhon (with whom we are not in communion) they desired to maintain communion simultaneously with us as well. This is incongruous and they wrote it rhetorically: in order to claim that they did not break communion with us but that we cut them off. Furthermore, they claim that they do not desire that their rebellion result in the disruption of the rapprochement between the Church of the GOC of Greece and the Russian Synod of Bishops under Archbishop Tikhon. This is incongruous too, because they knew from the beginning that Archbishop Tikhon’s support of their rebellion would result in the breakdown of this rapprochement, which indeed happened. The saboteurs that blew up the bridge claim that they did not desire the break in traffic between the two banks! The Holy Synod now finds itself in the unpleasant position of discovering that the group of separated brethren in this way rendered itself schismatic, transgressing Canon 31 of the Holy Apostles.”*

Once again we see here muddled logic and a mixture of truth and falsehood. It is true that Bishop Akakije, before his consecration, asked for administrative independence for the Serbian Church from the Greeks without any Eucharistic break in communion. Was that a crime?! Was that undesirable?! Does not the encyclical itself say that “the Dioceses, Metropolises, Patriarchates,

Autocephalous, Autonomous and Semi-autonomous Churches are administrative divisions, which do not affect the essence of the Church"? If the administrative division between the Greek and the Serbian Churches, which was established eight centuries ago, did not affect the essence of the Church, and created no real schism within it, why did the Greeks not consent to its continuation? Because that would have slightly diminished the size of Archbishop Kallinikos' ecclesiastical empire (which already encompasses Greece, Europe, Australia and scattered parishes in Russia and Georgia!)? Yes, almost certainly that was one reason. Because he would have done anything to stop the promotion of Fr. Akakije, whom he suspected – rightly – of not wishing to put the interests of the Greek Church above those of Serbia? Yes, that was another reason. Because he feared the creeping influence of the Russians in the "lost territories of the Byzantine empire" in the Balkans – the so-called "Panslavist" bogey which the nineteenth-century Phanariots so feared? Yes, that was yet another reason.

Is it true that "the saboteurs that blew up the bridge claim that they did not desire the break in traffic between the two banks"? Yes, it is. But who are the real saboteurs? In order to answer that question, we must look more closely at the historical context. To do that, we shall elaborate the metaphor a little...

The Russian and the Greek Churches are like opposite banks of a river in the middle of which there is a large island – the Serbian Church. (The Serbs are indeed mediators between the Russians and the Greeks in a certain sense, having cultural, linguistic, racial and historical links to both nations.) Both sides wanted to build a bridge from one bank to the other. But the Greeks wanted to build a long bridge direct from bank to bank, bypassing the Serbian island in the middle, which they considered part of their territory and to which they had already built a smaller bridge. The Serbs, languishing under Greek rule, were all in favour of the Greco-Russian union, believing that they would benefit from closer relations with the Russians; for if the larger, bank-to-bank bridge were built, they thought another short bridge from them to the Russian bank would surely be built at some time. The Russians also went along with the Greek plan at first; while sympathizing with the Serbs, they did not want to build a small bridge to the Serbian island which the Greeks would interpret as invasion of their territory; they were prepared to treat the island as Greek territory for the sake of the general increase in trade that would result from the building of the big bridge.

However, then the Russians ran into trouble with the Greeks. In 2009 the Greeks refused to sign the contract for the big bridge because they thought – falsely – that the Russians were deceiving them. The real problem was the Greek governor of the Serbian island, who was determined, not only that no bridge should be built between the island and the Russian bank, but also that the big

bridge linking the Greek and Russian banks should be built entirely to his specification and by his contractors. (This was the attempt of the Greeks led by Kallinikos to impose on the Russians their view of how akriveia and oikonomia should be applied in the reception of converts from the Moscow Patriarchate.)

Although disappointed, the Russians persevered, and eventually, in 2011, an agreement on the building of the bridge – that is, on the correct use of oikonomia in receiving people from the Moscow Patriarchate in Russia - was reached. Meanwhile, however, two important events had taken place. First, the leader of the Greek trade and construction corporation (Archbishop Chrysostomos) died in 2010, and was replaced by the governor of the Serbian island (Archbishop Kallinikos). And secondly, the conflict between the Serbs and the Greeks for possession of Serb island intensified. Gradually, the Russians became convinced that the Serbs' case was just, and their pastoral needs great, and that they had a moral obligation to help them by building a small bridge from the Russian bank to the island and installing the Serb leader as governor of the island. They realized that this would jeopardize the big bridge project, but so be it. They offered to the Greeks that both bridges, big and small, should be built together, and that they should cooperate with them in installing a new governor of the island. But the Greeks refused and retreated from the island, blowing up the bridge from their bank and leaving behind a small group of saboteurs (all former officials of the new governor) who continue to snipe at the lawful governor of the island...

Did the Serbs violate Apostolic Canon 31, as the encyclical asserts?... Apostolic Canon 31 declares that a priest cannot break from his bishop except for reasons of "piety" (blagochestie) or "justice" (pravda). "Piety" is usually taken to mean "dogmatic truth". The definition of "justice" is less clear.

What is clear is that it does not include the moral behavior of the bishop, as St. John Chrysostom explains: "Anarchy is altogether an evil, the occasion of many calamities, and the source of disorder and confusion... However, the disobedience of those who are ruled is no less an evil... But perhaps someone will say, there is also a third evil, when the ruler is bad. I myself, too, know it, and it is no small evil, but a far worse evil even than anarchy. For it is better to be led by no one than to be led by one who is evil. For the former indeed are often saved, and often in peril, but the latter will be altogether in peril, being led into the pit of perdition. How, then, does Paul say, 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves'? Having said above, 'whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation,' he then said, 'Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves.' 'What then,' you say, 'when he is wicked, should we not obey?' Wicked? In what sense? If in regard to faith, flee and avoid him, not only if he is a man, but even if he is an angel come down from heaven; but if in regard to life, do not be over-curious..."

This is not to say that a bishop cannot or should not be brought to trial and defrocked for immoral behavior, but only that a priest cannot break with him by reason of his immoral behavior before he has been canonically defrocked.

If we look at the practice of the saints, then “justice” must include serious canonical transgressions, for there are many cases of Orthodox breaking communion with their superiors, not for reasons of heresy, but because of serious canonical transgressions. The writings and actions of St. Theodore the Studite in relation to SS. Tarasius and Nicephorus of Constantinople are obvious examples. But there are many more.

A particularly interesting example can be found in the *Life* of St. Meletius of Antioch. St. Dmitri of Rostov writes that the Christians of Antioch were angry with their bishop, Eudoxius, because he “paid little attention to his duties. This infuriated the Antiochians, who expelled him from their city... Then the Antiocheans assembled to decide who would succeed Eudoxius... Saint Meletius was chosen by general acclamation.”

Now Eudoxius was an Arian. But it is significant that he was not expelled “for reasons of piety”, or heresy, but “for reasons of justice”, that is, his failure to carry out his canonical duties... Of course, it is always preferable that a bishop who does not carry out his duties should be removed by his fellow bishops in a canonical trial. However, very often in antiquity, and even more often in modern times, either because of persecutions or because bishops do not have the courage or will to investigate each other, appeals to the Synod are ignored and even despised. In such cases, we recall the words of the Eastern Patriarchs in their famous *Epistle* of 1848: “The protector of religion is the very body of the Church, even the people themselves” (17). Orthodoxy does not believe in the infallibility of any one man or Synod; and in cases when bishops and Synods do not do their duty, it is the duty of the people, the last earthly resort of truth and justice, to act for the good of the Church. This is not anarchy, or rebellion, or Protestantism. It is *Orthodoxy*.

Two modern examples will clarify what breaking communion “for reasons of justice” means. In 1928 St. Joseph of Petrograd refused to obey his canonical superior, Metropolitan Sergius, not for reason of heresy, or even for a clearly defined canonical transgression, but simply because he felt that his translation from the diocese of Petrograd was caused by an intrigue against the Church initiated by the Bolsheviks and supported by Sergius. And he said: “The defenders of Sergius say that the canons allow one to separate oneself from a bishop only for heresy which has been condemned by a council. Against this one may reply that the deeds of Metropolitan Sergius may be sufficiently placed in this category as well, if one has in view such an open violation by him of the

freedom and dignity of the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. But beyond this, the canons themselves could not foresee many things, and can one dispute that it is even worse and more harmful than any heresy when one plunges a knife into the Church's very heart - Her freedom and dignity?"

In another place, St. Joseph points out that there were no priests or bishops at the foot of the Cross, but only laymen and women...

The second example concerns Archbishop Kallinikos himself. In 1979, he, as an archimandrite, broke with his canonical superior, Archbishop Auxentios, and was ordained to the episcopate by Metropolitan Kallistos of Corinth and another bishop. This new group, called the "Kallistites", said that their actions were "a temporary and curable deviation from the canonical order" whose aim was the cleansing of the Church from moral vices, especially sodomy, since "men have been raised to the priesthood who are both unworthy and incapable." Of course, it is possible to sympathize with the "Kallistites", whose aim of cleansing the Church of homosexuals was certainly laudable. Nevertheless, as they themselves admit, it was uncanonical. For one cannot break with one's canonical superior for reason of immoral acts, but only for reasons of heresy or major canonical transgressions. At most, they could have withdrawn from the Synod in order "not to take part in other men's sins" (I Timothy 5.22). That is what, for example, Metropolitan Chrysostomos (Kiouisis), the future archbishop, did. But the Kallistites created a new Synod, with new bishops, thereby creating serious long-term difficulties for the Greek Church.

However, let us suppose for one moment that Kallinikos' consecration to the episcopate in 1979 without the blessing of his archbishop could be justified on the grounds of "justice" or "the cleansing of the Church". And let us compare his motives with those of the future Bishop Akakije. Was Bishop Akakije proposed for consecration by his flock "in order to cleanse the Church of unworthy and incapable priests"? No, he was not. Their motivation in proposing him, and his motivation in accepting, was much simpler, much closer to home: the salvation of the maximum number of Serbs; for they knew that very few Serbs would agree to come under a non-Serb bishop who belonged to another, non-Serb Local Church. They knew that they were in desperate need, not of a bishop living many hundreds of miles away, knowing next to nothing about Serbia and visiting it just once in over ten years, but of a native Serb who spoke their language, lived their life, knew their enemies and fought their battles. It is of such men that the Apostle says: "If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work" (I Timothy 3.1)...

"What is more," continues the encyclical, "in the document of their rebellion the severed brethren express their gratitude in words for everything that the Church of the GOC of Greece has provided them. But because we did not ordain for them as bishop the

one whom a small group desired at the time that that group demanded, they decided to appeal to the Russians. What a concept of gratitude and obedience. They pay no heed to the bishops that ordained them because they will not promote a specific person among them. They set fire to their mother's house and harm their brethren who remain faithful to her and then they utter into their mother's ear, "thank you"."

This is really rather spiteful. So an expression of gratitude is considered sinful! Would they have preferred ingratitude?! Bishop Akakije announces administrative separation from the Greek Church – that is, the return to the canonical order of the last 800 years, – while expressing the desire to remain in communion – that is, rejecting any thought of essential schism – and expressing gratitude for services rendered. What a sin! What profound evil!

Bishop Akakije himself is described as “the one whom a small group desired at the time”. But they were not a small group in the context of the Serbian TOC: they were *the majority*, headed by *the senior priest and rebuilder of the Serbian Church*, and consisting of *the majority of the monastics and laity*. Nor did they desire his consecration only “at the time”: they had desired it for at least five years and sent numerous appeals for his consecration in the name of the Administrative Council of the Serbian True Orthodox Church to the Greek Holy Synod. They included believers from the north, south, east, west and centre of Serbia.

The Greeks are obsessed with the smallness of the Serbian flock in absolute terms. But let us remind ourselves of the words of St. Nicephorus quoted above: “You know, *even if very few remain in Orthodoxy and piety*, then it is precisely these that are the Church, and the authority and leadership of the ecclesiastical institutions remains with them.” After all, mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow...

Besides, there is no minimum number of people required for the formation of a diocese.

When St. Gregory of Neocaesarea came to his diocese for the first time there were only 17 Christians in the city (when he died there were only 17 people who were *not* Christians). In North Africa in the early centuries, almost every village had its own bishop. In the Irish Church most abbots of monasteries were also bishops. The criterion is not the size of the existing community, but its spiritual needs. And if the community grows with the blessing of God, then its needs will increase proportionately. So it is not only the present, but also the future needs of the flock that must be measured. In order to satisfy these needs, God is willing to multiply the bishops of the Church indefinitely, for He wishes that *all* men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. There is no need for the Church hierarchy to be parsimonious in the provision of bishops – provided, of course, that the candidates are worthy men. Thus the Prophet Moses once

exclaimed: "Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11.29). Again, the holy Patriarch Tikhon once cried out to Archbishop Andrew of Ufa from his captivity: "Vladyko, consecrate more bishops, as many as possible!" And he did (about forty in all)... And yet the demand still outstripped the supply. And today who can say that the True Russian Church has too many bishops?

As for Serbia, who can claim that the several hundreds of True Orthodox Christians, and the many millions of potential converts from the patriarchate, do not need even one true Serbian bishop?! In view of this manifest need, what can be the motivation of a bishop who, living in Athens but already utterly unable to supply the needs of his already vast territories (Greece, Europe, Australia and scattered parishes in other lands), refuses to consecrate the man who has already worked for many years in Serbia, building up the flock from zero to several hundreds in spite of huge obstacles created from both within and outside the Church? If this man had canonical obstacles to his consecration, the delay would be understandable. But the Greeks have not been able to cite any such obstacles...

Later in their encyclical, the Greek bishops appear to accept that size of the flock is not an important factor, but instead attack the "democracy" of Fr. Akakije's administration: *"We too desire the rebirth of Orthodoxy in Serbia and the restoration of the autocephalous local Church of Serbia, understood in the genuine Orthodox sense. As we have declared in the past in writing, we have no plan to absorb the local Genuine Orthodox Church of Serbia. Moreover, in the memorandum our currently separated brethren submitted to us this past January, we did not set the small size of population as an impediment for the ordination of a bishop, but merely specified [as a condition] the better organization of the community of GOC of Serbia through the implementation of a Governing Council in which would be heard all views and which would truly express your voices. The separated brethren did not agree. They did not desire to have dissenters with them in this body. Why not, if they represented the majority? How would it have mattered, if there were a minority view? Did they fear that they really represented a minority view rather than the view of the majority? This is what in the end proved to be true. The system of sending away dissenters and of establishing deliberative bodies that prove to be merely cheerleaders of a leader suggests the totalitarian regimes of the past."*

Coming from the pen of Archbishop Kallinikos, this is not only false, but deeply hypocritical. Kallinikos' own treatment of the Serbian Church has been dictatorial and divisive. While repeatedly refusing the petition of the majority, - whose fulfilment, as we have seen, was actually *demand*ed by the Holy Canons, - he has encouraged the minority to rebel against their spiritual father, spread foul slanders with impunity and generally make his already very difficult task even more difficult.

This is confirmed if we look at a short account of events in the STOC in the years 2006-2011. The divisions began towards the end of 2006, when the majority of believers began to murmur at the fact that no Greek hierarch had visited them in the last ten years. They concluded that they had been patient enough with this spiritual negligence and it was time for them to have a bishop of their own, or at least they should write to the GOC Synod and ask for Metropolitan Kallinikos' replacement as Exarch for Serbia. Another problem was his tendency to give "double blessings" – that is, one person would come to Corinth, give his view of the situation, and receive one blessing; then another person would come, give his view of the situation and receive a different blessing contradictory to the first. Long distance from Serbia, and the metropolitan's long absence from the country, created the mess.

At the end of 2006, the Administrative Council of STOC gathered together for the last time in its fullness. All the clergy were present, and all signed a document passed by a majority of votes in which the GOC Synod was requested to consecrate a bishop from the Serbian clergy. However, knowing that the GOC were constantly repeating that the STOC was too small and immature to have its own bishop, the signatories offered an alternative solution: the replacement of Metropolitan Kallinikos by another Greek bishop. The STOC Administrative Council also decided to deliver this request personally to Archbishop Chrysostomos during the next GOC Synod meeting, and organized preparations for a trip to Corinth and Athens.

Then Fr. Athanasius, who was the only one among the Administrative Council clergy who had opposed this request (although he signed the conciliar decision), together with a few of his followers, organized a shameful and disgusting propaganda campaign among the faithful. They made copies of an audio cassette on which the Athonite monk Fr. Danilo, who was a member neither of the GOC of Greece nor of the STOC at this time, used his authority and respect among some of the faithful to slander Fr. Akakije, attacking him in a vulgar and insulting manner. Of course, they used and manipulated Fr. Danilo's words, because, at the same time Fr. Danilo used even more vulgar and rude words about Metropolitan Kallinikos and the Greek Florinites, but they didn't spread those because it would have harmed their goal of slandering the supporters of the Metropolitan's dismissal from the post of Serbian Exarch.

Then Fr. Athanasius organized some of the faithful, gathered their signatures, and without informing the STOC Administrative Council, secretly sent a counter-document to Metropolitan Kallinikos. In time, this secret counter-document became the main counter-argument in the fight between the fraction of Fr. Athanasius and those clergy and laymen who were loyal to the STOC Administrative Council.

Now let us return to the journey of the delegation of the STOC Administrative Council to Greece. The delegation first went to Corinth to inform Metropolitan Kallinikos about the STOC's request for his replacement. He listened to it and kindly accepted it, without saying that he had a secret counter-petition in his pocket, which had arrived earlier. The delegation agreed with Metropolitan Kallinikos that they would go together to the GOC Synod meeting. The evening before the departure for Athens, the metropolitan said that the delegation should go first while he would come soon after them.

In Athens, the delegation was received by Archbishop Chrysostomos and all the bishops. The request was formally handed in, and after receiving a short explanation of its content, Archbishop Chrysostomos asked: "Where is bishop Kallinikos? Without him, this topic cannot be discussed. We will solve that when he shows up."

But he did not show up... Sadly, the STOC delegation had been cunningly out-manoeuvred by the Metropolitan. They realized too late that their delegation has been deceived, and that their time, effort and money had been wasted because of the Metropolitan's deliberate refusal to show up at the Synodal meeting.

The delegation went back to Serbia, completely demoralized. But there was more to come. After several requests to be informed by the Synod about what had been decided, the answer finally came back from Greece. The Administrative Council of STOC discovered for the first time that the Metropolitan had brought the counter-petition to the Synod. And because of it and "Serbian discord", the request for the Metropolitan's replacement was rejected.

After this sad development, the reputation of the Administrative Council of STOC was ruined, its members were demoralized and the divisions deepened, especially because Fr. Athanasius' group started to rejoice, openly glorifying their "victory", and continuing their campaign of slander and gossip. For this reason, although there was still some communion between the two groups, the Akakians and anti-Akakians, it was very one-sided: some Akakians would commune in Fr. Athanasius' parish for the sake of restoring good relations within the STOC, but the 'triumphant' minority of anti-Akakians did not reciprocate...

At the same time, Metropolitan Kallinikos began shamelessly and publicly to accuse his senior priest in Serbia, Hieromonk Akakije, of being power-hungry, full of pride, spiritually deluded, etc. He sadly abused his Metropolitan authority, because some people began to change their attitude towards Fr.

Akakije, trusting that a Metropolitan would have to be telling the truth. In Serbia, meanwhile, the relentless propaganda coming from sources close to Fr. Athanasius reached its highest peak, with new kinds of defamation and lies against Fr. Akakije. This joint venture between Metropolitan Kallinikos and his supporters in Serbia caused some believers to waver in their belief that Fr. Akakije was worthy of becoming their first Serbian bishop, forgetting how much he had done for the sake of the development of the STOC. It was from this time that some became so deeply influenced by the lies preached by Kallinikos and his followers that they came to believe that the Serbian Church *did not exist*, that the National Serbian Church was an historical mistake, that it was just a small part of the Greek Church, that it is was not only unnecessary to fight for an independent Serbian Church but wrong, being a manifestation of ambition and ingratitude on the Serbian side...

“Our separated brethren and children attempt to make a parallel between their case and the case of the Greek GOC, when they found themselves without bishops in 1955. This parallel is incongruous. In 1955, the Church of the GOC of Greece was fully organized and formed as an organization and the 66 priests (with all of those able present) elected a twelve-member Council (Governing Ecclesiastical Council) through a transparent democratic process for their administration until they found Bishops. The term of office of the members of the Council was renewed every year by election. They chose their Episcopal candidates through an absolutely transparent process and secret ballot.”

“Our separated brethren” sounds like the condescending language of the Second Vatican Council when talking about the Orthodox Church... As for the exemplary democracy of the Greek TOC in the 1950s, that is all very well and is not in dispute. But the encyclical fails to say what happened next... For just as Archbishop Kallinikos likes to overlook his own unconventional path to the episcopate, so the writer of the encyclical here overlooks the uncanonical way in which the Greeks originally acquired their episcopate from the Russian Church Abroad in the 1960s. Did the Greeks present a petition to the Russian Synod and then wait for the whole Synod to come to a “democratic” decision? By no means! They hid the matter from Metropolitan Anastasy, and secretly - “through the back door” and in violation of Apostolic Canon 34 - obtained the consecrations they desired from other bishops of his Synod. At the same time, the democratically elected future Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiouisis) was rejected in favour of the unelected, and disastrous, Archbishop Auxentius. However, the next metropolitan, St. Philaret, decided, for the sake of the unity of the Church and the good of the Greek nation, to regularize the uncanonical consecrations in 1969.

And how did the Greeks repay the Russians for their literally priceless gift – the gift of a hierarchy? By gross interference in the canonical rights of the

Russian Church! First, in 1978 their new archbishop, Auxentius, took a clergyman of the Russian Church, John Rocha, baptized him (on the grounds that he had not had a canonical baptism) and reordained him, before raising him to the episcopate of “the Autonomous Church of Portugal”, where he distinguished himself by becoming an extreme ecumenist heretic! Naturally, this stopped Eucharistic communion with the Russian Church Abroad. However, the Russians carefully refrained from calling the Greeks “schismatics”, but simply decreed that they would not unite with any single Greek jurisdiction until the Greeks had all united amongst themselves.

Then, in September, 2009, after the fall of the major part of the Russian Church Abroad, when the remnant of the faithful Russians under Archbishop Tikhon came to Athens seeking to renew Eucharistic communion, the Greeks at first agreed, and even appointed a date for the first concelebration, but then, in October reversed their original decision on the grounds that they “did not trust” the Russians. This was because Metropolitan Kallinikos, arriving, as so often, late on the scene, threatened to leave the Synod or at least retire... The Greeks’ official explanation, however, was that at their first meeting, on September 13 in Megara, the Russians had promised that they now had no priests with a defective baptism. However, the Russians have strongly denied this, saying that they *never* asserted that all their clergy had been baptized through triple immersion. On the contrary, assert the Russians, they readily admitted that many of their clergy and laity had been baptized in an irregular manner, and that these people had been serving and/or receiving Holy Communion for decades. Furthermore, based upon the most recent past practice of the Russian Church, and the oikonomia that had had to be used during the Soviet persecutions, they said that they would not be able to rebaptize everyone in the Russian Church who had had an irregular baptism. And as an independent Local Church, they asserted their right to apply oikonomia in this matter as their Synod deemed it necessary. The Greeks said that their confidence had been undermined when the Russian Bishop Germogen – boldly and honestly, as the Greeks admitted – confessed to having “baptized himself” to correct his irregular baptism shortly before coming to Athens. However, the Russians replied that they had deceived nobody; Bishop Germogen’s confession had been as much a surprise and a shock to themselves as it had been to the Greeks. And their sincerity in this is proved by the fact that they have recently, in their Synodal meeting of December, 2012, removed Bishop Germogen from the Holy Synod precisely because of his “self-baptism” – a decision that Bishop Germogen humbly accepted...

Even if we were to suppose (which I do not) that the Russians deceived the Greeks in this matter, the fact remains that for the second time in just over thirty years communion between the Russian and Greek True Orthodox Churches had been broken because the Greeks insisted on imposing their conception of

permissible oikonomia on the Russians. The first time, in 1978, they went further by “stealing” a Russian clergyman and rebaptizing and reordaining him. The second time, in 2009, this did not happen. But the end result was the same: a break in communion or reversal of a decision to enter into communion. The Greeks seem unable to understand that Athens is not the centre of the Orthodox world, and that they do not have the right to impose their conception of oikonomia on other Local Churches.

In September, 2010, Archbishop Chrysostomos, a sincere proponent of union between the Greek and the Russian Churches, died. To the surprise and shock of many, his elected successor was – Metropolitan Kallinikos! (Junior bishops were not allowed to vote, and Kallinikos won a majority only on the second round, when Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Attica withdrew his candidature and his supporters transferred their votes to Kallinikos). Some (on both sides) saw this, correctly, as the end of any real hope of union. However, the Russians decided to persevere, and they agreed to the Greek offer, made in 2009, that the two Churches send delegations to Odessa to attempt to come to an agreement on the issue of oikonomia and akriveia.

However, by this time the Serbian problem was reaching a climax. At the beginning of 2011 a Serbian delegation went to Athens and handed in another, final petition, which they hoped would be answered by Pentecost. So when the Greek delegation, containing some non-Greek opponents of Fr. Akakije, arrived in Odessa in February, and began raising the Serbian question, the Russians responded cautiously. On the one hand, they defended the Akakian position, insisting that the autocephaly of the Serbian Church could not be denied, and that the Serbian TOC would benefit from the consecration of native bishops. On the other hand, not knowing what the Greek answer to the final Serbian petition would be, and not wishing to endanger the outcome of their own union talks with the Greeks, they did not deny the Greeks’ claim that this was their own internal problem.

In spite of some ups and downs, the two delegations reached agreement on oikonomia; and when the Greek delegation reported back to their Synod in Athens, the Synod welcomed the agreement. At the same time, however, they said that, in order to give their own people time to digest the prospect, and in accordance with the Russians’ own request, the union would not be put into effect for another two years. The Russians were surprised by this – they had not asked for any two-year postponement! This may have been a genuine misunderstanding. But after the “misunderstandings” of 2009, some began to suspect that the Greek leadership was reluctant about union and were playing for time...

But time was running out. For although the Serbian petition had been

rejected orally by the Greeks in Athens, no formal written reply had been received by Pentecost. So the Serbs decided to make a formal petition to the Russians to consecrate Fr. Akakije for them. The leaders of the Serbs and the Russians met in Odessa late in June, 2011, in order to discuss the petition. After a long and thorough discussion, the Russian Synod decided that the Serbs' petition was justified (especially in view of the schismatic Bishop Artemije's inroads into the flock), and that they, the Russians, had the canonical right and moral obligation to help them. A date for Fr. Akakije's consecration was appointed for August 12 (new style) in the Russian monastery of Lesna in France...

A last-ditch attempt to salvage the Greco-Russian union was made. On the Russian side, Protopresbyter Victor Melehov suggested that *both Greek and Russian hierarchs* take part in the consecration of Fr. Akakije. This idea was enthusiastically accepted by Bishop Photius, secretary of the Greek Synod. And he suggested that the union of the Greeks and Russians - a necessary condition of a joint consecration - could be brought forward to November, 2011. However, the idea must have received a cold reception from Archbishop Kallinikos. For when the Russians, postponing the consecration for three days, sent a delegation to Athens on August 11, and again put forward the idea, the Greeks rejected it outright...

At that meeting the gist of the Russian argument, which was expounded by Bishop Germogen, was as follows: "We consider Serbia to be a Local Church regardless of its numbers. A Local Church may not be subject to another Local Church. Serbia first appealed to Greece for help, and then later to us. We, of course, recognize the GOC's ability and right to help the Serbian Church, but this in no way stops the Russian Church from helping also." He gave the analogy of a ship in distress. Just because one country begins to help, this does not preclude another from helping also. "The Serbs asked us to ordain them a bishop. As brothers in Christ, we have to let you know that we intend to do so. We do not wish to do so secretly in the night, but with your knowledge, and hopefully your participation."

The response of Archbishop Kallinikos was violent. He shouted, pounded his fist on the table, stood up and leaned over the table to Bishop Germogen. At one point he asked him: "How well do you know these people? Have you ever even visited them? We know them for a decade." Bishop Germogen responded calmly, saying that they knew those who had come to them rather well.

At that point Protopresbyter Victor Melehov could not resist, and interjected: "Despota, you know the Serbs have been with the GOC for so many years, and you were assigned as their ruling bishop. How many times have you visited them over the past decade? Do you know them at all?" Of course, everybody

knew the answer to that. Archbishop Kallinikos was momentarily speechless, and Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Attica hastily changed the subject...

"This action of our estranged brethren is even more condemnable in that they knew that on the agenda of the Synodal Meeting of August 3rd was a proposal for the Synod to adopt a time-table for the ordination of a bishop of your choosing and the reorganization of the Serbian Church of the GOC immediately after the union with the Russian Synod under Archbishop Tikhon, with, moreover, the cooperation of Greek and Russian bishops. They did not await at all the result of the Synod, but the eve of August 3rd they ran to make their plan a fait accompli through their coup. The Holy Synod will not abandon the faithful children of the Church that remain in canonical order and will move forward with the reorganization of the Serbian Church of the GOC."

"The ordination of a bishop of *your* choosing" – that is, a bishop elected by the small minority of anti-Akakians? How could that possibly solve the problem?! And of course the Russians would never have cooperated in that, since they backed Fr. Akakije and the STOC majority.

In any case, what was there for the Russians to wait for? They had already postponed the consecration once in order to travel to Athens and seek a last-minute resolution, but had been greeted by rudeness, violence and the words: "Serbia belongs to the Greek Church, and only the Greek Church has jurisdiction over the Serbian Church's future." They were told that the Greeks were not interested in any joint consecration of a bishop for Serbia, and if the Russian Church did ordain a bishop for Serbia, there would be no possibility for any union between the GTOC and the RTOC. After such a reply, there was no reason for the Russians to believe that any future meeting of the Greek Synod would deliver any other verdict. So they returned to France, and the consecration took place on August 2/15.

"Toward this end the Holy Synod decided to call a Clergy-Laity Conference in Belgrade on Saturday, August 21/September 3, 2011, in the present of His Beatitude Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens and All Greece. All Genuine Orthodox Christians of Serbia that remain in canonical order and recognize the Holy Synod, which from the beginning was responsible for the reorganization of the Serbian Church, will have a right to participate. In this conference, the current situation will be evaluated, you will elect a Governing Council which will truly express your desires, and you will freely address your legitimate hierarchy with your proposals and petitions."

And what has this "reorganization" done for the anti-Akakian Serbs? Very little so far. Their first demand was that Archbishop Kallinikos defrock Bishop Akakije and his fellow clergy. He hasn't done that.

Also, they have not received any bishop of their own. Indeed, it would be

naive to expect that the Greeks would keep their promise and “adopt a time table for the ordination of a bishop of your choosing” when they refused precisely that same request so stubbornly for so many years. Only if there appears a candidate who is willing to submit the interests of Serbia to Greece in a way that Fr. Akakije refused will the Greeks considering ordaining him... But that, of course, would be a terrible betrayal of the interests of the Serbian Church and of Orthodoxy in general...

It seems that what this “reorganization” really means is the continued domination of Metropolitan Kallinikos over a very small and decreasing flock which is already riven by divisions over whether their liturgical language should be Serbian or Church Slavonic. Perhaps, to be consistent, it should be neither Serbian nor Church Slavonic, but Greek... After all, since they had rebelled against their former spiritual father, Fr. Akakije, on the grounds that they wanted to belong to the Greek and not the Serbian Church, then they should learn Greek and serve in Greek, abandoning all claim to being the GOC of Serbia...

Let the last word be with Bishop Akakije: “We have been told that our exit from under Greek administrative rule means the end of friendship and help: ‘You will lose your friends and no one will help you anymore...’ Where is their genuine brotherly love for us, which we True Orthodox Serbs still cherish for them? Does this mean that we Serbs are only their good friends as long as we are submitted to the Greek GOC? Is the progress of the Serbian TOC not also their joy as well as ours? We hope that the irrational resentment exhibited from the side of the Greek GOC is temporary and that their sharp words spoken and shot at our hearts are only an involuntary and short-lived reaction. Although such positions and statements of our Greek brothers, like those of their Serbian followers, have caused much harm and hurt us, we will not harbour hard feelings, but will wait with patience for them to become more sober, praying to the Lord of all to sow brotherhood, mutual love, and understanding between us...”

February 2/15, 2013.

24. TOWARDS THE EIGHTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

For at least four decades now, the Local Churches of World Orthodoxy have been preparing for a “Great and Pan-Orthodox Council” that would legitimize and complete the great and pan-heretical doctrine of ecumenism and introduce various innovations – the new calendar, reduced fasts, relaxed rules for marriage, etc. – that have been the goal of renovationists since at least the early 1920s. At first, these preparations aroused great interest and some anxiety in the Orthodox world, as we see, for example, in the writings of Fr. Justin Popovich. But as time passed, and no “Great and Pan-Orthodox Council” was convened in spite of numerous preparatory meetings, the suspicion arose that this Council would never be convened, so we didn’t need to worry about it (as if the apostatic agreements made by the World Orthodox with various kinds of heretics in this period were not enough to worry about!). However, as a very informative article by Nikolai Kaverin has shown, it looks as if a more determined push towards the convening of the Council is being undertaken by Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. He has called on the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches to prepare for the convening of the Council in 2015, and has invited them to come together in Constantinople on March 9, the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, in order to speed up the arrangements.

The patriarch proposes the following agenda:-

1. The Orthodox diaspora. The definition of the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Churches beyond the bounds of their national frontiers.
2. The procedure for recognizing the status of Church autocephaly.
3. The procedure for recognizing the status of Church autonomy.
4. The diptychs. The rules for mutual canonical recognition among the Orthodox Churches.
5. The establishment of a common festal calendar.
6. The rules and obstacles for the celebration of the sacrament of marriage..
7. The question of fasting in the contemporary world.
8. Links with other Christian confessions.
9. The ecumenical movement.
10. The contribution of Orthodoxy to the establishment of the Christian ideals of peace, liberty and fraternity.

No great surprises here – and no mention of the great unspoken obstacle to unity among the World Orthodox: Constantinople’s claims to a strong form of primacy that many, especially in the Russian Church, consider to be a kind of “eastern papism” ...

Constantinople is pulling out all the stops in order to consolidate support for his “strong” understanding of primacy, including nationalist sentiments. Thus

Kaverin writes: "At the beginning of September, 2011 Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople convened a Council (Synod) of the heads of the ancient Pentarchy – the five leaders of the ancient Patriarchates, to which only the eastern Patriarchs (Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem) and the Archbishop of Cyprus. Naturally this undertaking was seen by the Russian Orthodox Church – the largest of the local Orthodox Churches – as insulting and humiliating.

"In his speech before the beginning of the Council Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople said that, as Ecumenical Patriarch, according to the canonical order, he was the coordinator of all the Churches of World Orthodoxy and therefore was making special efforts to speed up the convening of the Great Pan-Orthodox Council. He confirmed his intention to review at the Council the questions pertaining to *all* the Orthodox Churches, and also declared his understanding of that special position which the ancient patriarchates and the Church of Cyprus occupy in the general structure of World Orthodoxy. After this Patriarch Bartholomew accurately noted that the convening of the Pan-Orthodox Council was encountering various obstacles, and that individual autocephalous Churches had to sacrifice their narrow national interests for the general good of the whole of Orthodoxy – reports portal-fanarion.blogspot.com.

"The information agency "Romfeia" noted that the primates taking part in the meeting of the heads of the ancient Patriarchates represented not even one tenth of the Orthodox believers of the world. Nevertheless, Patriarch Bartholomew for some reason thinks that the creation of an organ such as the 'pentarchy', consisting of the heads of the five most ancient Orthodox Churches, will not encroach on the rights of the other Local Churches, but will, on the contrary, supposedly ease the taking of decisions on inter-Orthodox questions."

The question of primacy is directly related to the first four issues on the agenda, so we would expect that agreement between Constantinople and Moscow would be hard to attain on these issues. This supposition is confirmed by a remark of Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), head of the Department of External Relations of the MP, in September, 2011, in which he said that «we have already agreed on eight Church subjects. We could conduct a Council on these subjects. These, for example, are the questions of the calendar, the unification of church regulations on fasting, the hindrances to marriage, and the relationship of Orthodoxy to the rest of the Christian world". These topics correspond to the last six issues on the patriarch's agenda; so by implication there is no agreement on the first four issues.

In view of this disagreement, Metropolitan Hilarion's suggestion makes some sense: to have a Council only on issues 5 to 10, on which the World

Orthodox already have broad agreement. The problem is: points 8 and 9 concern ecumenism, which is not only a doctrine but also a movement and a *process* of ever-deepening integration, whose most critical next stage is union with the Pope. But while Constantinople and Moscow agree that the Pope in the reunited Christian world must have the primacy, they are not agreed on who should be his number two, nor on whether the Orthodox Church, before entering into communion with the vertical, strictly hierarchical structure of the papacy should itself have such a structure.

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On the face of it, the Russians have a strong argument, which we shall now examine. At the session of the Moscow Synod that took place on December 26, 2013, a document was accepted entitled “The position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the question of primacy in the Universal Church”, in which it says that the Russian Orthodox Church cannot agree to the existence of a primacy of *power* – as opposed to the primacy of *honour* – in the Universal Church.

“At the level of the Universal Church as a community of autocephalous Local Churches, united into one family by a common confession of faith and remaining in sacramental communion with each other, primacy is defined in accordance with the tradition of sacred diptychs and is a primacy of honour... There is no definition filling in the content of primacy of honour at the universal level by the canons of the Ecumenical or Local Councils. The canonical rules on which the sacred diptychs rely do not bestow on the primate (who during the period of the Ecumenical Councils was the Bishop of Rome) any privileges of power over the whole Church...

“The extension of this primacy, which belongs to the president of an autocephalous Local Church (according to the 34th Apostolic canon) to the universal level would bestow upon the primate in the Universal Church special privileges that would not depend on the agreement of the Local Orthodox Churches. Such a transfer of the concept of the nature of primacy from the local to the universal level would require a corresponding transfer of the procedure for electing the primatial bishop at the universal level, which would already lead to a violation of the right of the primatial autocephalous Church to elect her president independently...

“In the whole of the second millennium until our days the same administrative structure that belonged to the Eastern Church in the first millennium has been preserved in the Orthodox Church. Within the bounds of this structure each autocephalous Local Church, being in dogmatic, canonical and Eucharistic unity with the other Local Churches, is independent in its

administration. In the Orthodox Church there is not and never was a single administrative centre at the universal level. On the contrary, in the West the development of the teaching of the special power of the Roman bishop, in accordance with which supreme power in the Universal Church belongs to the Bishop of Rome as the successor of the Apostle Peter and the deputy of Christ on earth, led to the formation of another administrative model of Church construction with a single universal centre in Rome.”

This is irreproachable from a theological and canonical point of view, and Bartholomew’s criticism of the Russian position as “sophistical” is untenable. The problem is: the Russian position is also *hypocritical*, corresponding neither to the Russians’ own administrative practice within the bounds of the Russian Church, nor to their intentions with regard to the future of Orthodoxy. Let us take each point in turn.

In the 1970s Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh, administrator of the Moscow Patriarchate’s parishes in Western Europe, told a member of his flock in England: “The Orthodox Church is a totalitarian organization”. If by the Orthodox Church he meant the Local Russian Church to which he belonged, we can say that he was absolutely right. Founded in 1943 through a concordat between Stalin and Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) was from the very beginning of its existence a strictly hierarchical structure, totally subordinated in all its major decisions, including the election of its patriarch, to the will of Stalin and the KGB. Stalin was to the Moscow Patriarchate what the Pope was to the Church of Rome. The situation became worse over time as the episcopate became staffed completely by KGB agents in cassocks and the last vestiges of *sobornost’* disappeared...This situation has not changed in essence since the fall of communism in 1991. After a period of hesitation in the 1990s when the MP did not know what master (communist mammon or democratic mammon) to follow, it gratefully returned to the arms of the KGB under Putin in the 2000s.

Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) is the leading ecumenist in the Russian Church and a close associate of Patriarch Cyril (Gundyaev). His career illustrates clearly the way in which that Church is administered along the lines of “eastern papism”. At the beginning of the 2000s, having been made a bishop at a startlingly young age, he was sent to London by Cyril, then in the rank of metropolitan and head of the all-powerful Department for External Relations, to help the ailing Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom). In a very short time he by his dictatorial methods divided the clergy and laity of the Sourozh diocese and succeeded in driving Bishop Basil (Osborne) and most of the English-speaking flock into the arms of Constantinople. He then confided to Bloom, his spiritual father, that Cyril had promised to make him metropolitan of Sourozh after Bloom’s death. Bloom wrote to Cyril about this, who denied it. But in his open

letter on the subject, Bloom made little attempt to hide his disgust at the behaviour of his patriarchate, which thirty years before he had rightly called "totalitarian". Since then, in spite of his complete failure in London, Hilarion has continued to rise up the hierarchical ladder at a rapid rate, and is now a metropolitan and head of the Department of External Relations in succession to his patron, Cyril. In that period his subservience not only to the patriarch but also to the neo-Soviet state has never been in doubt. Thus in 2010 Wikileaks revealed that he had said to the American ambassador in Russia: "A (or the) main role of the Russian Orthodox Church is in providing propaganda for the official politics of the government".

Nevertheless, many people are prepared to forgive the MP's hypocrisy with regard to "eastern papism" in view of its supposed conservatism in relation to Orthodox dogmatics. However, this "conservatism" is a myth. Let us cite Metropolitan Hilarion again: "In our times some Orthodox say that Roman Catholics, being 'heretics', are outside the Church, and should be rebaptised when received into Orthodoxy. Yet neither Catholics nor Protestants would deny the divinity of the Son of God, as did the Arians, nor would they deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit, as did most fourth-century theologians and bishops. And surely the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit is less significant than the question of his divinity."

Metropolitan Hilarion, who has lived in the West, must surely know that the vast majority of churchmen here do *not* believe in the divinity of Christ. This is particularly obvious in the case of the Anglicans, the main movers and shakers of the ecumenical movement. As for the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit being "less significant than that of his divinity", Saints Photius the Great, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus would certainly not have agreed! Hilarion, an intelligent and learned man, must know that the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit, far from being minor or insignificant, was *the major* cause of the schism between Rome and the Eastern Patriarchates. But he chooses to ignore this, thereby showing that Moscow is as eager to enter into communion with Rome as is Constantinople, and is prepared to surrender the Orthodox position on major dogmatic issues.

In this connection, Metropolitan Hilarion's admittance that the Local Churches have agreed on the calendar issue represents another cause for alarm. What precisely has been agreed? It is highly unlikely that the Ecumenical Patriarchate will have agreed to return to the old calendar used by the Russians and the Serbs. More likely is that a common use of the new calendar has been agreed on. Now there have always been supporters of the new calendar in the Russian episcopate. The most high-ranking that we know of is Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg. But until now, there has been no move to introduce the new calendar because of the danger of creating a schism. There is evidence

that the leadership of the MP, goaded by the KGB, thought seriously about making such a move in the 1960s, when the famous philo-Catholic (and secret Catholic bishop) Metropolitan Nikodem of Leningrad was alive. Could it be that the leadership of the MP has decided that the time is ripe to try again – for the sake of being able to concelebrate major feasts with the Catholics? After all, Patriarch Cyril was a disciple of Metropolitan Nikodem...

This brings us to the question: what is the main aim of the MP in relation to forthcoming “Great and Pan-Orthodox Council”? If we assume that the MP is, as always, doing the will of its KGB masters (who include, of course, the patriarch and leading bishops), then this aim must be secular and geopolitical: to preserve the prestige and power of Moscow in relation to its main opponent, Constantinople, which is presumed to be controlled by America and the CIA. To that end, while the MP would be happy to enter into communion with the Vatican (for the purpose of spying and infiltration, the main motivation of Moscow’s ecumenical activity since the 1960s), it wants to do so *above* Constantinople and not as a lowly number 3 in the world ecclesiastical rankings. From this point of view, the struggle over the agenda for the Great Council is part of the same struggle for supremacy that Moscow and Constantinople have waged in recent years in London, in Estonia and, most recently, in the Ukraine. Therefore theological considerations are means rather than ends for both sides in this conflict, which is ultimately the struggle between Putin and the West for the control of Europe.

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But if theological considerations are not foremost in the minds of the major protagonists here, this does not mean that there will not be important ecclesiastical consequences of the essentially geopolitical conflict. There is great unrest in the MP at the moment, partly caused by revelations concerning the homosexuality of so many of its bishops (about 50 out of 300, according to MP Deacon Andrei Kurayev, more like 250 out of 300, according to Fr. Gleb Yakunin), and partly by the ever more obvious corruption and politicization of the Church. Further shocks – such as the introduction of the new calendar into the Church, or a union with Roman Catholicism – might well cause a major schism. Patriarch Bartholomew’s position seems, by comparison, more secure – but only superficially so. If the Vatican is happy to see him as the leader of Orthodoxy in a relatively strong sense, they expect him to bring all the Orthodox Churches with him. But if he by his overbearing politics “loses” Moscow, then the Vatican will feel deprived of their greatest prize. For it is no secret that since the Fatima appearance of the supposed Mother of God in 1917, the major goal of Vatican geopolitics has been the conquest of mighty Russia: Bartholomew’s tiny “pentarchy” of Greek-speaking Churches is a paltry catch by comparison.

In spite of these stresses and strains, it looks likely that the “Great and Pan-Orthodox Council” will be convened, and that its decisions will pave the way for the convening of a false Eighth Ecumenical Council at which the *original* pentarchy of Eastern Patriarchates *plus Rome* will be restored. But that will be a robber council, which will finally reveal to all doubters that World Orthodoxy has apostasized from the True Faith. And that will be the moment for the True Orthodox Church to step back onto the stage of world history, holding up the banner of True Orthodoxy.

January 18/31, 2014.

P.S. In their meeting in March, 2014, according to Patriarch Bartholomew, the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches came to substantial agreement on eight out of the ten points on the agenda, excepting only the question of the creation of new autocephalous Churches (point 2) and the order in the diptychs (point 4). It was agreed, therefore, that these two points should not be discussed at the forthcoming Pan-Orthodox Council.

25. THE KALLINIKITE UNIA

*He who joins hands with the unrighteous will not go unpunished...
He who judges the unrighteous as righteous, and the righteous as unrighteous,
he is unclean and abominable before God.*
Proverbs 11.20, 17.6.

The devil, they say, is in the details. This must surely be true even more of ecclesiastical unions than of business agreements; for the devil is much more interested in the Church, which he does not control, than in business, which is largely his domain. But could God be in the overall conception, or could He be bringing a large good out of, or in spite of, many smaller evils? After all, “all things work together for those who love God” (Romans 8.28)... Let us explore these possibilities in relation to the ecclesiastical union sealed through liturgical concelebration on the Sunday of the Holy Cross this year between the True Orthodox Church of Greece led by Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens (GTOC) and the Ecclesiastical Community of the Synod in Resistance (otherwise known as “the Cyprianites”) together with the Romanian, Bulgarian and Russian Churches that are in communion with the latter.

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All those who sincerely believe in True Orthodoxy know that one of the greatest obstacles to the salvation of men, to their joining the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, is our disunity. The multitude of jurisdictions calling themselves True Orthodox but not in communion with each other is a scandal – and it is small comfort to know that this is far from being the first period of such chaos and disunity in Orthodox Church history. As a rule, where there is no Orthodox emperor acting as a focus of unity, heresy becomes dominant and the True Orthodox are divided among themselves...

Unias between True Orthodox Synods in our time have usually been short-lived and highly controversial. In 1969-71 the Russian Church Abroad under St. Philaret united with the Greek Old Calendarist Synods of the Florinites under Archbishop Auxentius (first) and the Matthewites under Archbishop Andreas (a little later). But this unia broke up in mutual recrimination between all three groups less than a decade later. In 1994 another attempt was made: the Russian Church Abroad under Metropolitan Vitaly, the Greek Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Cyprian, the Romanian Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Vlasie and the Bulgarian Old Calendarists under Bishop Photius united on the basis of a “Cyprianite” confession of faith, which contradicted the confession of faith both of the Florinites and of the Matthewites (which is why they were not part of it) and of the Russian Church Abroad (as expressed in the anathema against ecumenism of 1983).

In 2001 the Russian Church Abroad divided. One part under Metropolitan Vitaly rejected the Cyprianite confession and unia, but then split up into three or four warring synods. The other part under Metropolitan Laurus eventually united with the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007.

The Greek Cyprianites, and Romanian and Bulgarian Old Calendarists remained together, but united with one of the Russian bishops, Agathangel, who had joined Lavr in 2001 but then broke with him in 2007 when Lavr joined the MP. Although Agathangel had been the last bishop to leave the sinking ship of the Russian Church Abroad, he refused to join the other Russian bishops who had jumped ship earlier. In fact, he considered himself to be the only completely canonical Russian bishop. All the Russian True Orthodox bishops, in his opinion, were and are graceless. As for the Moscow Patriarchate, while condemning it, he refused to say that *it* was graceless. Since he did not want to remain on his own, however, and wanted to create his own hierarchy, he was looking for a partner. The Cyprianites obliged, and so the Agathangelite hierarchy came into being. (Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiouisis) of Athens wrote to Agathangel warning him not to join the Cyprianites, but was rejected.)

In 2009 the Cyprianites entered into negotiations for union with the True Orthodox Greeks under Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiouisis). The union talks failed, but the Cyprianites made some significant concessions. In particular, they agreed that their break with the Florinites in 1984 had been “hasty” – in other words, *wrong*, that the new calendarist church of Greece was not their “mother church”, and that they would no longer talk about heretics being “ailing members” of the True Church. However, they did not repent of their heresy and schism, so the talks broke down.

In 2010 Archbishop Chrysostomos died, being replaced by Archbishop Kallinikos, and then, in 2013, Metropolitan Cyprian also died. His followers decided to make a second attempt at union with the Greek TOC. (Or did the Greeks take the initiative? We don’t know). In March, 2014 agreement was reached between the Greek TOC and the Cyprianites with their allies from Romania (Metropolitan Vlasie), Bulgaria (Bishop Photius) and Russia (Metropolitan Agathangel); and on the Sunday of the Holy Cross the uniates concelebrated the Divine Liturgy in Athens.

The Orthodox were hoping that, for the sake of Orthodoxy throughout the world, the Cyprianites would repent of their schism and heresy. They were to be disappointed. Already in February, when it looked as if the unia would go ahead, the Cyprianite Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna declared, on the one hand, that there would be no winners or losers in it (“foolish and evil prattle” was his name for this “inappropriate triumphalism”), and on the other hand

that they (the Cyprianites) were not required to abandon any of their principles as a result of it. *"Be assured,"* he writes, *"that none of our principles, none of our moderation, and none of the spirit bequeathed to us by our late and venerable Metropolitan Cyprian have been set aside, as some naysayers have suggested."* But since the principles of the Cyprianite ecclesiology are false, this means that no repentance for their errors was required from the Cyprianites!

Chrysostomos himself gains much from this unia. Not having been required to renounce his errors, he can repeat them. Nor is it likely that he will be brought to order: according to the administrative arrangement agreed upon, he is a metropolitan not subject to the senior hierarch in America, Metropolitan Demetrius of America!

On March 7/20, just after the unia had been signed, the senior Cyprianite hierarch, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropo (the younger), confirmed the victory of the Cyprianites. *"The Official Dialogue (December 2012-February 2014) led us to the realization that our Act of walling ourselves off in 1984 from our True Orthodox brethren should be abrogated, since the reasons of faith and righteousness that then provoked it no longer exist."* In other words: *"In 1984, we broke communion with the TOC for perfectly valid 'reasons of faith and righteousness'. But now those reasons no longer exist, the TOC have corrected themselves, so we can go back into communion with them."*

This is, in effect, a retraction by the Cyprianites of their admission in 2009 that they had been "hasty" in breaking with the GTOC in 1984: in fact, it implicitly accuses the GTOC of causing the schism. Moreover, none of the other concessions they made in 2009 are confirmed now, in 2014. In reality, as we shall see later, it is the True Orthodox Church of Greece that has made the concessions.

How is it that the two Cyprianite hierarchs can reaffirm their loyalty to the heresy of Cyprianism, even after the union with the GTOC has been signed? The answer is that *they were not asked to renounce their heresy* – in public, at any rate. Of course, we do not know what went on behind closed doors, or what was contained in the secret clauses of the agreement, if such existed. But even if they were asked to renounce certain positions in private, it is obvious that they have now clearly renounced any such renunciation in public. Nor – most significantly – have the TOC hierarchs rebuked them in any way...

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But what about the official joint confession of faith, the Common Ecclesiological Statement, which all parties signed? Does that not contain the renunciation of any Cyprianite position? As we shall see, it does not... Nor is

this surprising since it was in fact written by a Cyprianite, Bishop Photius of Triaditsa (Bulgaria)!... What it does contain is a highly rhetorical condemnation of Ecumenism; a more sober and useful condemnation of Sergianism; and a significant weakening of the True Orthodox position with regard to the validity of the sacraments of the "World Orthodox".

Before examining this Statement, let us remind ourselves what Cyprianism is in essence. Cyprianism is a hidden form of Ecumenism, an attempt, unheard of in the writings of the Holy Fathers, to separate grace (*blagodatnost'*) from Orthodoxy (*pravoslavnost'*), as if the one could exist without the other. It supposes that it is possible to be a "heretic of heretics", and a "pan-heretic of pan-heretics", and yet remain an "uncondemned" member of the True Church having the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Cyprianism has already been condemned by several Greek and Russian Synods. This Statement could and should have given it the final death-blow...

The Statement's section on Ecumenism begins thus: "**Ecumenism**, as a theological concept, as an organized social movement, and as a religious enterprise, is and constitutes the greatest heresy of all time and a **most wide-ranging panheresy**; the **heresy of heresies** and the pan-heresy of pan-heresies; an amnesty for all heresies, **truly and veritably a pan-heresy**". Point taken! With such *sturm und drang*, we cannot accuse the signatories of this confession of being ambiguous or tepid about ecumenism!

Nor about sergianism - the section on that subject is good and especially welcome in view of the fact that Greek Synods very rarely mention the subject. In fact it corrects one of the lesser-known errors of the Cyprianite ecclesiology, its affirmation that Sergianism "no longer exists". For on May 10/23, 2007 the Cyprianite Synod declared that "the historical basis and occasion for the rift among the Russians (1917-) has been removed and no longer exists. It is quite different from the dispute which divided, and continues to divide - since it still exists and is, indeed, reinforced daily, - the Orthodox into *ecumenists and resisters* (1920, 1924-)." (point 9) Perhaps the correction of the Cyprianite position here is owing to the fact that the confession was written by a Bulgarian bishop who knows from experience what communism and its evil effects on church life are. In any case, this section of the confession is to be welcomed as constituting probably its most useful part.

But then we come to the section on the "Return to True Orthodoxy". The first four points are fine:

"1. Nevertheless, œconomy assuredly can **never** and **in no circumstance whatever** permit the pardoning of any sin or any compromise concerning the "**correct and saving confession of the Faith**," since œconomy aims clearly and

solely, in a spirit of loving kindness, at facilitating the salvation of souls, *for whom Christ died.*

“2. The application of œconomy **in the reception** of heretics and schismatics into communion with the Church **in no way** betokens that the Church **acknowledges the validity and the reality of their mysteries**, which are celebrated **outside Her canonical and charismatic boundaries.**

“3. The Holy Orthodox Church has **never recognized, either by exactitude or by œconomy**, mysteries performed completely outside Her and in apostasy, since those who celebrate or who partake of these mysteries remain within the bosom of their heretical or schismatic community.

“4. Through the application of œconomy **in the reception** of persons or groups outside Her in repentance, the Orthodox Church **accepts merely the form of the mystery** of heretics or schismatics—provided, of course, that this has been preserved unadulterated—**but endows this form with life** through the Grace of the Holy Spirit that exists in Her by means of the bearers of this fullness, namely, Orthodox Bishops.”

This is good. But now we come to point 6: “More specifically, with regard to the Mysteries celebrated in the so-called official Orthodox Churches, **the True Orthodox Church, within the boundaries of Her pastoral solicitude, does not provide assurance concerning their validity or concerning their salvific efficacy**, in particular for those who commune “**knowingly**” [wittingly] with syncretistic ecumenism and *Sergianism*, even though She does not in any instance repeat their form for those entering into communion with Her in repentance, having in mind the convocation of a Major Synod of True Orthodoxy, in order to place a seal on what has already occurred at a local level.”

This is pure Cyprianism! The signatories are saying in effect: “Although the World Orthodox are heretics, we don’t know whether their sacraments are valid or not.” But this “agnosticism” contradicts Apostolic Canon 46, which insists that the sacraments of all heretics and schismatics are *definitely invalid*. It also contradicts the confession of faith of the True Orthodox Church of Greece in 1935, 1950, 1974 and 1991! Moreover, the anathema of the Russian Church Abroad specifically *anathematizes* those who affirm that the sacraments of heretics and schismatics may be valid. In 1994, at the time of the Russian Church Abroad’s acceptance of the Cyprianite ecclesiology, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) affirmed that she had fallen under her own anathema. This present point, although more veiled, and camouflaged, as it were, by the much stronger points that precede it, comes perilously close to the same position.

So the devil is definitely in this detail. Moreover, there are other dubious

details. Point six appears to be asserting (although not very clearly) that whether or not the sacraments of a World Orthodox church are valid depends on whether the person who approaches them *knows* about the heresy that church confesses. However, this is to confuse the objective *validity* of the sacrament in a heretical church with the subjective *degree of guilt* of the communicant in that church. Apostolic canon 46 quite categorically declares that the sacraments of heretics are invalid, and makes no qualifications with regard to the worthiness or knowledge of the communicant. Of course, the guilt of the communicant in a heretical church will be greater or lesser depending on many things, including his knowledge of the hereticalness of that church. But this in no way affects our judgement as to whether the sacrament itself is valid or not. If, as the Cyprianites admit, the World Orthodox are heretics, then *ipso facto* their sacraments are invalid, and he who denies this comes under the penalty prescribed by the canon.

Another dubious detail is the phrase: "bearing in mind the convocation of a Major Synod of True Orthodoxy, in order to place a seal on what has already occurred at a local level." What the Cyprianites - with the acquiescence of the TOC - are here trying to assert is their old error, the idea that the Councils that have so far condemned Ecumenism and Sergianism were only Local Councils that did not have the authority to expel heretics from the Church. Only a Pan-Orthodox or Ecumenical Council, according to the Cyprianites, can do that. And until the convening of such a "Major" Council in order to "seal" the decision of a Local Council, the heretics remain "uncondemned"...

This idea was first developed by Metropolitan Cyprian (the elder) in 1984, in his notorious *Ecclesiological Theses*. The unspoken aim of these *Theses* was clearly to undermine the authority of the Russian Church Abroad's anathema against ecumenism the previous year. By hook or by crook, Cyprian was determined to demonstrate that the anathema did not say what it clearly *did* say: that all the ecumenists of World Orthodox were outside the True Church and deprived of the grace of sacraments.

To this end he and others mobilized a whole variety of arguments. Some said that the anathema did not expel anyone from the Church, but was only a "warning" to the World Orthodox. In other words, it was just "a rap on the knuckles", no more. Again, it was said that the anathema expelled only ecumenists *inside* ROCOR. In other words, a Russian old woman inside ROCOR might be under anathema, but the patriarchs of Constantinople and Moscow were not! Again, others said that since the wording of the anathema was not composed by the Russian bishops themselves, but by some American monks inside ROCOR, it could not be valid. Again, others said that since no heretic was specifically named in the anathema, it fell on nobody...

But the least implausible of the arguments was this one, that ROCOR was a Local Church, so its decisions could not have universal power or significance. In fact, in their later writings the Cyprianites went further and declared that *no present-day Synod has the authority to launch an anathema expelling heretics from the Church*. Thus they wrote in 2009 that “so great a right and ‘dignity’ [of anathematizing] is ‘granted’ only to the choir of the Apostles ‘and those who have truly become their successors in the strictest sense, full of Grace and power’ (St. John Chrysostomos)”. And they go on: “We are unable to understand this hasty tendency in our day to anathematize and condemn, since until such successors come into existence, ‘everyone who is Orthodox in every respect anathematizes every heretic potentially, even if not verbally’ (St. Theodore the Studite).”

The present writer has criticized this position in detail elsewhere. If there is no Synod in the world today which has the Grace and power to anathematize heretics, then the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church – God forbid! – has lost her power to bind and to loose! Then even if the Antichrist were to appear and pronounce himself to be God today, the Church on earth would have no power to anathematize him – he would be an “ailing” and “uncondemned” member of the True Church! Away with such blasphemy, such manifest lack of faith in the power and dignity of the Church, which, by virtue of its Catholicity, exists in every right-believing Synod, whatever its size! If “everyone who is Orthodox anathematizes every heretic potentially, even if not verbally”, then fortiori the hierarchs of the Church have the power to anathematize every heretic, not only potentially, but actually, and not only under their breath, but verbally and from the housetops! For, as St. John Chrysostom said, “in worldly matters we are meek as lambs, but in matters of the faith we roar like lions!”

Returning to the Ecclesiological Statement we read:

“10. As a general rule, **monastics and laity** from these Churches, who have definitely been baptized according to the Orthodox rite, are received into communion through anointing (Χρῖσμα) by means of a special order, in conjunction, to be sure, with the Mystery of sacred Confession, **while clergy** submit a written petition and, as long as this is approved, are received into communion through a special brief Order of the Imposition of Hands (Χειροθεσία), specifically compiled for such cases.”

This is strong. To chrismate a layman is to recognize that the church he is coming from is false and graceless. *However:*

“11. It is understood that, on the basis of idiosyncrasies in different places and in different cases concerning the application of a more lenient or a stricter order, **a decision is to be made by the local Bishop or by a competent Synod,**

according to St. Cyprian of Carthage: *“In this matter we do not coerce or impose a law on anyone, since every Prelate has freedom of will in the administration of the Church and will have to account for his actions before the Lord”* (“Letter to Pope Stephen,” in *Concilia ad regiam exacta*, Vol. I [Lutetiæ Parisiorum: Impensis Societatis Typographicae Librorum Ecclesiasticorum iussu Regis constitutæ, 1671], col. 741).”

This is much weaker. It is not wrong for being weaker, because it is true that a hierarch can relax the rule of reception if he wants. As St. Cyprian says, it is his right as having “freedom of will in the administration of the Church”. However, the irony is that, in the failed negotiations for union between GTOC and RTOC under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia that took place in 2009-11, the major stumbling-block was precisely the Russians’ insistence on this right, which the Greeks denied them (at least, perhaps, until the final agreement statement on *oekonomia*, which the writer has not seen published anywhere). So why are the True Orthodox Greeks being so much more flexible on this point now?

There are probably two main reasons. The first is that to “reform” the practice of all the hierarchs of the newly-formed bloc so that all, or at any rate the majority of the heretics who come to the Church are chrismated, is an unattainable goal. Probably only the Romanians consistently chrismate the new calendarists. Both the Cyprianites and the Greek True Orthodox are far from consistent in this practice. As for the Russians under Metropolitan Agathangel, as we shall see later, their practice goes beyond the bounds of the laxest permissible *oekonomia*...

The second reason lies in the personality and empire-building ambitions of Archbishop Kallinikos, who clearly thought that union with the Cyprianites and their allies was a far larger and more “juicy morsel” than the comparatively small and poverty-stricken RTOC. This hierarch has the reputation of being extremely strict on matters of the faith. But the truth is that he is “strict” to the point of manifest injustice when some person or community is not useful to his plans, but the strictness disappears when he wants to draw the person or community into his net. No doubt some would justify this on the grounds that a hierarch has to manoeuvre between strictness and laxity in order to serve the good of the Church as a whole. But “the good of the Church” is a slogan that can justify any lawlessness in the mouth of an unscrupulous man: in matters of faith, as St. Mark of Ephesus said, the true good of the Church can only reside in consistent strictness and exactness...

And so we may agree with Fr. Roman Yuzhakov, who has written on Facebook concerning the Ecclesiological Statement: “It is already clear that the basic principles of Cyprianism are not being placed in doubt. The sharp anti-ecumenist rhetoric of the document should not mislead us: the grace-filled nature of the sacraments of ‘World Orthodoxy’ is, as before, not being denied; it is just that it ‘is not recognized with certainty... especially in relation to those people who are consciously in communion with syncretistic ecumenism and

sergianism'. It is evident that this formulation is that invisible difference – invisible, that is, to the naked eye – between 'Cyprianism' and 'the Bulgarian Old Calendarist confession' which must now become the official doctrine of this union..."

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Let us now turn to an aspect of the agreement of March, 2014 that has especially scandalized Russian Orthodox Christians: the inclusion of "Metropolitan" Agathangel in the new bloc. It is in relation to Agathangel that the opportunism of Kallinikos manifests itself most clearly. Having rejected communion in 2009-11 with the most canonical of the Russian chief-hierarchs, Archbishop Tikhon, Kallinikos now enters into communion with the worst of them, whose canonical violations and false ecclesiology are notorious!

This is not the place for a detailed biography of Agathangel, but some account of his more glaring and dangerous errors is necessary.

1. In 1996, shortly after becoming a ROCOR bishop, he wrote in the official journal of his Odessan diocese that the Catholics, the Monophysites and the Old Ritualists all have grace of sacraments (*Vestnik IPTs*, 1996, N 2). So at that time at any rate he was not simply a Cyprianite in his confession, but definitely an ecumenist heretic. And to the present writer's knowledge, he has not repented of that statement.
2. In 2001 he went as the representative of the Russian True Orthodox Church under Archbishop Lazarus (the predecessor of Archbishop Tikhon) to New York in order to present the point of view of the True Orthodox inside Russia to the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus. However, instead of representing the True Orthodox Church, Agathangel promptly changed sides and joined the Laurite Synod. During the next six years, Agathangel loyally signed all the decisions of the Laurite Synod, including those relating to joining the Moscow Patriarchate.
3. On May 17, 2007, when Metropolitan Laurus signed the unia between ROCOR and the Moscow Patriarchate, Agathangel changed sides again – he refused to join the unia. Only this time, he did not rejoin the True Orthodox inside Russia, who were prepared to receive him back without conditions, in spite of his previous betrayal of them. Instead, he formed his own jurisdiction, claiming that he was the only remaining truly Orthodox Russian bishop! His reasoning was original: although Laurus and his Synod had been wrong in joining the MP, all his decisions up to the very point of joining the MP (including bans on many right-believing Russian clergy and, presumably, the very decision to join the MP!), had been correct, and so he, Agathangel, as the

only Russian bishop who had been loyal to Laurus to the last possible moment, was the only true Russian bishop. It is as if one said: all those who leave a sinking ship before the water is up to their eyebrows have left it illegitimately, and should be considered to have drowned!

4. While condemning all the True Orthodox bishops as graceless, Agathangel refused to condemn the Moscow Patriarchate as graceless. In this he followed, as always, the Cyprianite ecclesiology. Only in his choice of whom to receive into his Church, he showed himself to be more extreme and more indiscriminate than the Cyprianites – to whom he was now indebted because they had helped him in founding an uncanonical hierarchy.

5. For example, in 2007 he received under his omophorion in Kiev the “well-known Ukrainian politician” D. Korchinsky and his ultra-nationalist neo-Nazi occult-totalitarian sect or brotherhood. Korchinsky had fought in the Chechen wars on the side of the Chechens, and taught his adherents martial arts, which he then encouraged them to practice on people who disagreed with him. The Ukrainian media called this brotherhood “the Ukrainian Klu-Klux-Klan”, and many of its members were imprisoned for acts of violence. Korchinsky also has close links with the so-called “Great Prior of the Order of the Templars of the Ukraine”, Alexander Yablonsky. Korchinsky’s sect has come close to being banned by the authorities; but Agathangel’s recognition of him, giving his sect the status of a church organization, with a church building and a priest, has protected him from prosecution...

6. Another example. In 2011 Agathangel received three parishes in Izhevsk, Eastern Russia together with their priests. However, they received a very original dispensation: they were allowed to remain in the Moscow Patriarchate while being under Agathangel’s omophorion. And now they call themselves “MP in ROCOR”!

7. A third example. Agathangel and the former Patriarch Irenaeus of Jerusalem (who was removed from his see for financial wrongdoing) have agreed to commemorate each other at the Divine Liturgy. Recently, Agathangel received Fr. Roman from Nazareth into his jurisdiction with the blessing of “Patriarch” Irenaeus. This priest appears to belong to both jurisdictions. What does this mean if not that Agathangel is in official communion with World Orthodoxy?

And now this Agathangel, this scourge and bane of the Russian True Orthodox Church, has been accepted into communion by the True Orthodox Church of Greece without, as far as we know, being required to correct any of the above glaring dogmatic and canonical violations. This is truly a betrayal of the Russian Church!

One consequence of this unia, therefore, will undoubtedly be a widening of the gap between the majority of the Russian and Serbian True Orthodox, on the hand, and Agathangel and the majority of the Balkan and Western True Orthodox, on the other.

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As the unsound foundations of the Kallinikite unia become clearer to more and more people, we can hope for another, longer-term benefit: the removal and replacement of its driver and leader. Archbishop Kallinikos has always been a controversial hierarch, with many fierce critics both inside and outside Greece. He came to the episcopate (ironically, together with Cyprian of Oropo) in a flagrantly dishonest and uncanonical ecclesiastical *praxikopima*, or coup, in 1979. Controversy also surrounds the way in which he acquired the monastery of the Archangels in Corinth, which resulted in the exile of its founder and his elder, Metropolitan Kallistos. Often quarrelling with his first-hierarch, Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiouisis), he was an exceptionally lazy and divisive exarch of Western Europe and Serbia, a Greek nationalist who famously once wrote that “the Slavs have never been good Orthodox”. In contempt of all canon law, he was called by one of his senior hierarchs “*locum tenens* of the Serbian patriarchal throne”, and trampled on the pastoral needs and canonical rights of his Serbian flock to such a degree that most of them have sought refuge elsewhere. When negotiations were begun for the union with RTOC (they lasted from 2008 to 2011), - a union which Archbishop Chrysostomos believed in but Kallinikos did not, - he did his best to ruin it - and eventually succeeded...

All this will no doubt be forgiven and forgotten by many in the euphoria of the present uniate celebrations, as Kallinikos’ dream of recovering “the lost lands of the Byzantine empire”, as he once put it in a sermon, by restoring Greek ecclesiastical suzerainty over the Balkans, looks to be approaching fulfilment. However, “pride precedes a fall”, and empires acquired by illegitimate means can unravel very quickly... One day - who knows? - he may look back on the day of his greatest triumph, the Sunday of the Holy Cross, 2014, and remember with compunction the words of the Lord in the Gospel of that day: “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?...” (Mark 8.36)

March 12/25, 2014; revised August 10/23, 2014 and November 16/29, 2021.

26. TOWARDS THE “MAJOR SYNOD” OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH

This month (June, 2014) has seen the appearance of a revised version of the document “The True Orthodox Church and the Heresy of Ecumenism” issued by the True Orthodox Churches of Greece and Romania and Metropolitan Agathangel’s “Russian Church Abroad”.¹⁶ Although the present writer can detect no significant changes from its predecessor issued in March (apart from the unexplained fact that the True Orthodox Church of Bulgaria appears to have withdrawn its approval), it may be worth looking again at the two points that have caused controversy. The first is the lack of an explicit statement that the Churches of World Orthodoxy do not have the Grace of sacraments; and the second is the continued ambiguity surrounding the role to be played by the future “Major Synod” of the True Orthodox Church and its relationship to previous Local Synods of the True Orthodox Church.

1. The Question of Grace

The dogmatic document in question (we shall call it from now on “the document”) is, on the face of it, very strong against the heresies of ecumenism and sergianism; and if its purpose were not simply to enunciate certain ecclesiological truths, but also to reunite the so-called “Cyprianites” or “Synod in Resistance” with the True Orthodox Church, then it would probably elicit little or no criticism. However, since Cyprianism has arisen, and needs to be repented of by its leading proponents, it needs to be specifically refuted and rejected in each of its main points – and this the document does not do. One of these points is that heretics, before their official condemnation at a Pan-Orthodox or Ecumenical “Unifying” Council, are still inside the True Church and have the Grace of sacraments, and that the present-day World Orthodox in particular still have the Grace of sacraments.

Now section VI, points 1-5 of the document effectively refutes this error *in its general form*. Thus footnote 36 to point VI.4 reads: “the Orthodox Church has never recognized the ontologically non-existent mysteries of heretics”. This is sufficient to absolve those who have signed this document (although we have never seen any signatures!) of holding the heresy of the Grace-filled nature of the sacraments of heretics *in its general form*.

But what about the specific case of the heretics of contemporary World Orthodoxy? Here the document is more ambiguous, stating in point VI.6: “More specifically, with regard to the Mysteries celebrated in the so-called official Orthodox Churches, **the True Orthodox Church, within the boundaries of Her pastoral**

¹⁶ <http://hotca.org/orthodoxy/theological-texts/532-the-true-orthodox-church-and-the-heresy-of-ecumenism-dogmatic-and-canonical-issues>.

solicitude, does not provide assurance concerning their validity or concerning their salvific efficacy”.

As several people have pointed out, this statement stops short of saying that the World Orthodox do not have the Grace of sacraments. Thus Fr. Roman Yuzhakov writes: “The sharp anti-ecumenist rhetoric of the document should not mislead us: the grace-filled nature of the sacraments of ‘World Orthodoxy’ is, as before, not being denied; it is just that it ‘is not recognized with certainty... especially in relation to those people who are consciously in communion with syncretistic ecumenism and sergianism’. It is evident that this formulation is that invisible difference – invisible, that is, to the naked eye – between ‘Cyprianism’ and ‘the Bulgarian Old Calendarist confession’ which must now become the official doctrine of this union...”¹⁷ Thus the former Cyprianites (if they are now only “former”) have conceded the *principle* that heretics have no Grace of sacraments, but appear to be continuing to fudge the issue with regard to the specific case of contemporary World Orthodoxy.

Now footnote 39 to point VI.6 declares: **“Provide assurance’**: that is, assert as sure and indisputable, assert emphatically and absolutely, certify, guarantee. The meaning of this paragraph should be sought in conjunction with that of the preceding five paragraphs, and not in isolation.” Is this footnote asserting that the general principle asserted in the preceding five paragraphs should be seen as applying also to the specific case of the World Orthodox, so that the World Orthodox, too, must be considered to be deprived of the Grace of sacraments? Perhaps... And yet it is still not quite clear. For the refusal to provide assurance that the World Orthodox have Grace is *not* equivalent logically to the assurance that the World Orthodox do not have Grace. Clarity here could be provided very simply by stating: “The World Orthodox do not have the Grace of sacraments”. And yet nowhere is this stated, clearly and unambiguously, in any part of the document...

Some will argue that this is carping about minor details. And again, if the purpose of this document were simply to enunciate certain ecclesiological truths and not to reconcile the Cyprianites with the Church, it would be carping. But since its purpose is precisely to reconcile the Cyprianites, while refuting Cyprianism, clarity on this point is absolutely necessary...

2. The Question of the Authority of Local Councils.

Point VI.6 in its fullness declares: “More specifically, with regard to the Mysteries celebrated in the so-called official Orthodox Churches, **the True Orthodox Church, within the boundaries of Her pastoral solicitude, does not provide assurance concerning their validity or concerning their soteriological efficacy**, in particular for

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/288380224648257/>

those who commune ‘**knowingly**’ [wittingly] with syncretistic ecumenism and *Sergianism*, even though She does not in any instance repeat their form for those entering into communion with Her in repentance, in anticipation of the convocation of a Major Synod of True Orthodoxy, in order to place a seal on what has already occurred at a local level.”

This introduces the theme of the future “Major Synod” of the True Orthodox Church, which is the subject of the whole of the last, seventh section of the document. Evidently this idea of a future “Major Synod” is very important to the composers of this document. And this immediately puts us on our guard; for it is precisely the idea that Local, “Minor” Synods cannot expel heretics from the Church, but only Ecumenical, Pan-Orthodox or “Major” Synods (and, moreover, “unifying” ones that unite the Orthodox with the heretics), that constitutes the critical, central idea of Cyprianism, and the justification of its refusal to condemn the World Orthodox as outside the Church and deprived of Grace.

The seventh section of the document declares: “1. In the preceding twentieth century, True Orthodox Hierarchs, whenever this could be brought to fruition, issued **Synodal condemnations, at a local level**, both of ecumenism and of *Sergianism*, and also of Freemasonry.

“2. By way of example, we cite the **condemnations of ecumenism** by the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in 1983, and also by the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece in 1998; as well, the **condemnation of *Sergianism*** by the Catacomb Church in Russia, and also by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad at different times; and finally, the **condemnation of Freemasonry** by the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece in 1988.

“3. These Synodal censures, especially of the heresy of ecumenism, are assuredly **important steps in the right direction** towards the convocation of a General Synod of **True Orthodox**, which, with expanded authority, will arrive at decisions concerning the **calendar innovation** and syncretistic **ecumenism**, which contradicts the Gospel.

“4. What is necessary today, **on the basis of a common and correct confession of the Faith**, is the union in a common Body of all the local Churches of the True Orthodox, for the purpose of creating the antecedent conditions for assembling and convoking a **Major General Synod of these Churches**, Pan-Orthodox in scope and authority, in order to deal effectively with the heresy of **ecumenism**, as well as **syncretism** in its divers forms, and also for the resolution of various problems and issues of a **practical and pastoral nature**.”

Now while there is nothing wrong with the idea of a “Major General Synod” on these lines - on the contrary: it is eminently desirable, - nevertheless the

document's condescending characterization of the earlier local Councils as "important steps in the right direction" is unacceptable. These Local Councils were much more than just "steps in the right direction". *They themselves expelled the ecumenist heretics from the external organization of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church through the power of anathema granted to the bishops constituting those Councils as a result of their episcopal consecration.*

We say "external organization" of the Church, because a heretic is cut off from the inner, mystical organism of the Church already before any Council is convened, immediately he utters his heresy "publicly and with uncovered head" (15th canon of the First-Second Council). But the fact that he has already been cut off from the Church inwardly, by the hand of the Lord, the Heavenly Bishop, needs to be proclaimed publicly by the earthly hierarchy of the Church, so that the people can break communion with him and take all necessary steps to protect themselves from his destructive influence. That is one of the major purposes of episcopal Councils, both big and small, Minor and Major, Local and Pan-Orthodox.

What the document appears to be insinuating is that these earlier Local Councils (such as the ROCOR anathema against ecumenism in 1983), which expelled heretics from the external organization of the Church, were in fact only "steps in the right direction" towards their expulsion, which will be accomplished only by the future Major Synod. Perhaps the composers of the document will protest that this is not so. But if it is not so, why this extreme emphasis on the future Major Synod and the condescending degrading of past Local Councils as mere "steps in the right direction"?

Let us take the vitally important ROCOR anathema against ecumenism of 1983. This was not a "step in the right direction" to the eventual, *later* expulsion of heretics from the Church. It proclaimed with quite sufficient authority (we must remember that it was led by Holy Hieroconfessor Philaret, Metropolitan of New York, whose relics are incorrupt) that the ecumenists were *already* outside the Church. A future "Major Synod" that affirmed that the ecumenists were outside the Church would not be adding anything essential to the earlier decision. It would be confirming it, "putting its seal" on the earlier decision, as the document puts it in VI.6, just as the First Ecumenical Council confirmed the decision of the Local Church of Alexandria expelling Arius from the Church. At most, we could say that the future Major Synod would be adding an extra authority to the 1983 decision (and to earlier anti-ecumenist decisions of Local Councils) insofar as it would be adding the voices of more bishops. As such this future decision would be highly desirable; but it would not add anything *in essence* to the prior decision.

It will be remembered that, in the years preceding ROCOR's surrender to the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007, voices were often heard saying that no decision on the validity of the sacraments of the Moscow Patriarchate could be made until a

“Major Synod” of all the bishops of the Russian Church in a liberated Russia were convened. This was not true; but it was a powerful tool in the hands of those who wanted to justify the Moscow Patriarchate and prepare the way for union with it. And the ecclesiology of the Cyprianites, with its well-developed theory of the effective impotence of smaller Councils, chimed in well with the idea that only a future Free Sobor of the whole of the Russian Church could finally decide the question of the status of the Moscow Patriarchate.

In any case, would this future Major Synod have the authority to deal with the problems raised by the existence of the Moscow Patriarchate? No it would not! For the composers of this document speak only in the name of the True Orthodox Churches of Greece and Romania and the “Russian Church Abroad” under Metropolitan Agathangel. But Agathangel is not a member of the True Russian Church! Having first rejected all the bishops of the True Russian Church (of all jurisdictions) and then been rejected by them in turn, he is, strictly speaking, a schismatic *from* the Russian Church and cannot speak in her name. Indeed, he should rather be called a bishop of the *Greek* Church insofar as his hierarchy was created with the help of Cyprianite bishops with whom he remains in communion... So this future Major Synod would have to reorganize itself, divest itself of schismatics such as Agathangel, and enter into communion with the faithful bishops of the Russian Church, before its decisions could be seen as having authority for the Russian Church...

3. The Question of Repentance

A striking aspect of the March, 2014 union is the absence of any public repentance on the part of the erring Cyprianite bishops. Moreover, two senior Cyprianite bishops – Chrysostomos of Etna and Cyprian of Orope – have issued statements that appear to say that they have nothing to repent of... And yet a group of bishops that has very publicly and ostentatiously broken communion with the True Orthodox Church of Greece, accusing it of having a false ecclesiology over a period of thirty years, and created false hierarchies of bishops both for Greece and for Russia, should surely need to repent publicly.

In order to try and answer this question to his own satisfaction, the present writer recently approached the Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone, and put to him the following questions:

“1. Do you repent of your participation in the schism created by Metropolitan Cyprian in 1984?

“2. Is it true, as has been reported, that a prayer of absolution for the sin of schism was read over you and your fellow hierarchs?

"3. Do you now renounce the view you once held that heretics remain sick members of the True Church until they have been cast out of the external organization of the Church by an Ecumenical or Pan-Orthodox Unifying Council in which the heretics themselves take part?

"4. Do you now accept that Local Councils of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church can expel heretics from the external organization of the Church? In particular, do you accept the validity of the anathema against ecumenism of the Russian Church Abroad under St. Philaret of New York in 1983?

"5. Do you now accept that the Greek and Romanian and Bulgarian new calendarists are now, before the convening of any future Large Council, outside the True Church and deprived of the Grace of sacraments?

"6. Do you now accept that the other Local Churches of World Orthodoxy that take part in the ecumenist heresy are also now, before the convening of any future Large Council, outside the Church and deprived of the Grace of sacraments?

"7. What is your attitude to the other True Orthodox Churches that are not in communion with you? (I mean the main ones, including especially RTOC and STOC.)"

To which he received the following reply:-

"To 1 and 2, being of a personal nature, I will reply further down. 3-6 are covered by the latest ecclesiological statement, about which I do not feel that it for me to add or subtract anything; it replaces any statements made on the subject by our former Synod, and more particularly the "Ecclesiological position paper", which was anyway presented as a thesis for discussion, not a dogmatic statement. I would only add that there are four small adjustments which were requested by our Romanian brothers at our meeting last week, and will be included as notes to the text; in a few days these will be ready for publication.

"As to 1, please forgive me, but I do not feel that it should be required of me to offer my repentance to Dr. Moss, but rather to my confessor!

"As to 2, though I do not know of any specific "prayer of absolution for the sin of schism", it is true that following our reception at the joint Synod which finalized the union, a prayer of absolution was read by the Archbishop over those bishops of our former synod there present, that is Metropolitan Cyprian, Bishop Klimis and myself. I do not think there is anything secret about that.

"About 7, I cannot really offer any definitive statement. Perhaps Bishop Photios (to whom I send a copy of this letter) could be more helpful, as he was an observer

on a personal level both of the contacts with the RTOC and of the separation of the now bishop Akakije.”

This reply tells us much about the real nature of the Kallinikite unia. On the positive side, some repentance appears to have been offered by three of the Cyprianite bishops, and a prayer of absolution read over them. But that leaves several more bishops who have not received absolution, not to mention Agathangel and his Synod. This suggests, first, that repentance for their schism was not presented to the Cyprianites as a *condition* of their union with the True Orthodox Church, but only as an option which a minority took up. Secondly, this repentance was never meant to be made public...

So is repentance for public schism really just a personal matter, as Bishop Ambrose claims? Of course, the present writer never thought that the bishop was required to offer repentance to *himself*, or to any other *individual* in the Church, but *to the Church as a whole*. For if the Church as a whole has been injured, then the Church as a whole needs to hear the repentance of the injurious person. And this for eminently practical and spiritual reasons. For if we – that is, all the Christians – do not know that a bishop has repented of his false opinions, it is prudent to continue to keep away from him...

But the most revealing part of Bishop Ambrose’s reply is his evasive refusal to give straight answers to the straight questions about whether he still confessed his Cyprianite errors. For what was to prevent him from giving a straight “yes” or “no” to questions 3-6? But instead he writes: “3-6 are covered by the latest ecclesiological statement, about which I do not feel that it for me to add or subtract anything; it replaces any statements made on the subject by our former Synod, and more particularly the ‘Ecclesiological position paper’, which was anyway presented as a thesis for discussion, not a dogmatic statement.”

However, as we have seen “the latest ecclesiological statement” does not answer any questions about the Cyprianite ecclesiology. Neither is any question raised specifically about any part of the Cyprianite ecclesiology, nor is Cyprian himself even mentioned! To one who did not know the recent history of the Church, the document gives no clue as to its purpose; he would not realize that any ecclesiological position, apart from the broader ecumenism of the World Orthodox, is being refuted, nor would he know in what that ecclesiological position consisted. True, it follows from the stricter parts of the document that the Cyprianite ecclesiology must be false. But that conclusion is not drawn explicitly; and, as Fr. Roman Yuzhakov has rightly pointed out, a loophole is provided enabling an unrepentant Cyprianite to sign the statement and yet justify himself in secretly – or, in the case of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Etna, not so secretly – retaining his old opinions (or “theologoumena”, as the Cyprianites like to call them).

So the present writer suspects that Bishop Ambrose remains a Cyprianite at heart. Of course, Bishop Ambrose could very quickly prove him wrong by saying “yes” to questions 3-6; but he has declined to do that. Moreover, he claims that the original ecclesiological statement, which is more or less the same as the present, revised one, was simply “a thesis for discussion, not a dogmatic statement”! But if this is not a dogmatic statement, what is?! Everything about the statement, and the way it was presented as the basis of a union of Churches, gives it the appearance of an important dogmatic statement - but Bishop Ambrose wants us not to take it *that* seriously...

Well, if it’s just a thesis for discussion, then indeed we are not obliged to take it seriously as a statement of Bishop Ambrose’s position - which means that we are still in the dark about that position...

Conclusion

“No compromise is permitted in matters of the faith”, said St. Mark of Ephesus. “For this reason one must flee those who preach compromises since they touch nothing which is certain, definite and fixed, but like the hypocrites, they vacillate between both beliefs and, giving way to one, they cling to another.” Clarity is more essential in dogmatic matters than in any other sphere of life, which is why the devil tries to oppose it by all means. The history of the Ecumenical Councils shows that literally hundreds of years of argument were required before clarity was achieved in Christology; and already many decades have passed in arguments among the True Orthodox about Ecclesiology. It was to be hoped that the document would provide the required clarity to bring to an end this long period of controversy; but it has not done that.

The reason for this is that a political element crept into the motivation behind its composition. It was designed, not simply to “hold fast the pattern of sound words” (II Timothy 1.13), expressing “sound doctrine, in order both to exhort and convict those who contradict” (Titus 1.9), but as a stratagem for enabling the Cyprianites to be united with the True Orthodox Church without having to repent of their errors. This is not to say that no good can come of the present union. Nevertheless, the remark of Bishop Stefan of the RTOChurch remains the most accurate summing up of the situation: “This reminds me of two corporations who have been going through litigation for many months, or even years. Then, through arbitration, they come to a settlement for an undisclosed dollar amount - with neither party admitting any wrongdoing” ...¹⁸

To repent or not to repent - that is the question. Considerations relating to the good of the Church as a whole may sanction various compromises or condescensions to human weakness. But just as in our personal lives, the sin that

¹⁸ <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=108052>.

is not forgiven is the sin that is not repented of, so in the public life of the Church, there is no substitute for the public repentance of a bishop who has sinned publicly in matters of the faith. Otherwise, the problem will continue to fester and erupt again later in a still more dangerous form. For, as St. Basil the Great said, “[*In the Church*] one must get to the bottom of the problems, so as to eradicate the sickness from its very root.”¹⁹

*June 29 / July 12, 2014.
Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.*

¹⁹ St. Basil the Great, *Letter 156*.

27. THE KALLINIKITE UNIA - CONTINUED

It is six months since the “Pascha before Pascha” – the union of the GOC of Greece with the Cyprianites and three Romanian, Bulgarian and Russian Synods. Enough time has passed in which to draw, if not final conclusions about its viability, at least preliminary ones.

First, with regard to the “Ecclesiological Statement”. Unfortunately, this document appears to be constantly changing. The first, March, 2014 variant was Orthodox in itself, but inadequate because it did not contain explicit condemnation of the Cyprianite heresy, without which the union of the Cyprianite heretics to the True Orthodox Church remains problematical. That this is indeed a problem was confirmed by the behavior of one of the Cyprianites, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Etna, who, both before and after the signing of the unia, openly rejected the thesis that the new calendarists have no grace. He has now, it is reported, resigned; but this does not remove the problem. For his place has been taken by his disciple, Bishop Auxentios, who has always expressed the same, impenitently Cyprianite views. What is needed, at the very least, is that the two bishops should be forced to *keep silent*. If they do not, they should be *defrocked*. But all the indications are that the GOC Synod will never undertake such a step.

In June, in response to pressure from the Romanian TOC, several additions were made to the text of the Ecclesiological Statement in order to “beef it up”. These were welcome – but they should have been included in the main text of the Statement, not added as footnotes. For footnotes can always be dismissed as “optional”.

The June version of the Statement was also notable for the fact that the Bulgarian Church was not a signatory to it. The present writer does not know what exactly is happening in the Bulgarian Church. But evidently there is deep dissatisfaction with the unia...

It appears that the June version will not be the last version of the Ecclesiological Statement. The Romanian Church is demanding further changes... Also, one of the Cyprianite bishops, Ambrose of Methone, has said that the Statement was merely a “discussion document”... But if the Statement is merely a “discussion document”, then it is not a Confession of Faith. For Confessions of Faith are set in stone; they cannot be altered, they are not movable feasts that can be added to or subtracted from at will, nor are they simply trial balloons, “discussion papers”.

So our first conclusion is that the Ecclesiological Statement, the foundation of the whole union, is a highly controversial document, even among its original signatories, and that its status is unclear and problematical.

A second major problem that has emerged in relation to the unia is the highly controversial position of Metropolitan Agathangel and his Synod. Agathangel is a schismatic from the Russian Church. He was the last bishop to leave the sinking ROCOR (L) Synod in 2007, and signed all its traitorous decisions in favour of union with the Moscow Patriarchate and against the confessing Russian bishops and clergy. He was saved from drowning completely only by his refusal to join that union in May, 2007. But then, instead of joining those Russian bishops who had abandoned the sinking ship before him, and in spite of a generous offer to unite with his former Synod of RTOC under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk (who had every reason to distrust him), he declared all the other Russian bishops (not only of RTOC, but also of ROAC and ROCOR (V)) to be schismatics! To add injury to insult, he then proceeded to create an illegal Synod under his leadership with the aid of the heretical Greek Cyprianite bishops.

But this was not all. It is well known that Agathangel has no idea about ecclesiology. Hence his notorious 1996 statement, shortly after he became a bishop, that not only World Orthodoxy, but also the Catholics and the Monophysites have the grace of sacraments! In accordance with this “flexible” ecclesiology, Agathangel decided to commemorate the former Patriarch Irenaeus of Jerusalem.

Now Irenaeus was probably unjustly defrocked by the World Orthodox in 2004. However, he was and is a product of World Orthodoxy, and as far as we know was in full communion with World Orthodoxy during his tenure as patriarch. Therefore for Agathangel to enter into communion without any preliminaries whatsoever, and to receive priests in the Holy Land “with the blessing of Patriarch Irenaeus” is unacceptable.

Knowing that they could not unite with the Cyprianites without also uniting with Agathangel, the GOC Synod decided to close their eyes to his serious canonical deficiencies and enter into communion with him and his Synod virtually without examination. Moreover, they accepted the validity of the Cyprianites’ ordination of bishops for Agathangel... But they insisted on his fulfilling three conditions: (i) that he refrain from giving communion to people outside True Orthodoxy, (ii) that he gradually move to a stricter method of receiving people from World Orthodoxy (chrismation or baptism), and (iii) that he refrain from communion with Patriarch Irenaeus.

According to the witness of a Russian priest of the GOC in Russia, Agathangel has more or less fulfilled the first condition, but not the two others. Nevertheless, without waiting for the fulfillment of these conditions, the GOC Synod in June decided to transfer the nine Russian priests formerly in their jurisdiction inside Russia into the jurisdiction of Agathangel. But some of the priests protested that

Agathangel had not abandoned his Cyprianite practices, and was still in communion with Irenaeus. They wrote to the GOC Synod, but to this date (September, 2014) have not received a reply...

*

So after six months it is hard to deny that the unia is not in the best of health. Problems have arisen with it in the United States, in Bulgaria, in Romania and in Russia. Of course, supporters of the union would say that these are only "teething troubles", which will soon be sorted out, if they have not been sorted out already. Perhaps... Nevertheless, the overall impression is one of haste, mismanagement and confusion.

Moreover, the conclusion that the present writer came to towards the end of his earlier article, "The Kallinikite Unia" has been confirmed: that True Russian Orthodoxy has been dealt a treacherous blow, and that while the union of large parts of True Orthodoxy in Greece, the Balkans and the United States may look attractive and constructive, a very high price has been paid for it – a deepening of the rift with the Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors, the sole real foundation for a resurrection of the Orthodox Church in our time...

September 12/25, 2014.

28. THE CYPRIANITES GO MARCHING ON

When the union between the GOC and the Cyprianites was proclaimed last year, many were scandalized by the behavior of the Cyprianite Metropolitan Chrysostomos (Gonzales) of Etna, rumoured to be one of the authors of the union's official confession of faith. For in February, 2014, only a month before the union was signed, he declared his unwavering loyalty to the false teachings of his teacher, Metropolitan Cyprian: *"Be assured that none of our principles, none of our moderation, and none of the spirit bequeathed to us by our late and venerable Metropolitan Cyprian have been set aside, as some naysayers have suggested."* Later, after the union had been signed, he indignantly rejected the suggestion that he now accepted the True Orthodox teaching that the new calendarists are without grace...

The former Cyprianite hierarchs appear to be divided into three categories. On the right are those who, like Bishop Clement of Gardikion, appear to have sincerely repented of their previous uncanonical position. In the centre are those who, like Bishop Ambrose of Methone, refuse to make any public repentance for the 30-year Cyprianite schism in which they participated, but at any rate no longer proclaim Cyprianite teachings in public. And on the left are those like Metropolitan Chrysostomos, who openly and brazenly continue to proclaim Cyprianism.

Now Metropolitan Chrysostomos has retired, and the leaders of the GOC appear to think that with his retirement the problem he posed has simply disappeared. Dream again! This is no way to deal with troublemakers who have caused schism and false teaching in the Church for over a generation! The way of the Orthodox Church with heretics has never been to indulge their refusal to repent, overlook their continued false teaching and then "retire" them without any kind of restriction on their teaching activity (at least as far as we know)! Still less is the problem of heresy solved by replacing one heretic with his disciple who thinks exactly as he does and is similarly unrepentant in his heresy! But that is what has happened...

For after the retirement of Metropolitan Chrysostomos, the GOC Synod has appointed his close disciple and vicar-bishop Bishop Auxentios of Photiki in his place. Moreover, they have enlarged his diocese to include that of the True Orthodox Bishop Sergios of Portland, who has also retired. But that is not all. In an astonishing development, the GOC Synod has enlarged his diocese still more to include almost the whole of the Western United States and Canada together with other parishes as far afield as Toronto and New York!

Let us read about what has happened in Bishop Auxentios' own words as published on his newly-opened website of the Diocese of Etna and Portland:- "I

can tell you that our new Diocese will consist of the parishes and monastic communities within the following Western American states and Western Canadian provinces: in the U.S.A., California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, and Hawaii; and in Canada, British Columbia and Alberta. May we one day have parishes in all of those states and provinces.

“Some of the parishes belonging to the former American Exarchate of the Holy Synod in Resistance, before our union with the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, and the Metropolis of Etna, after the union and before the retirement of His Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, though outside of the geographical territory of the new Diocese of Etna and Portland, have for personal reasons asked to maintain their spiritual ties, for the time-being, to their former Exarchate and Metropolis. The Holy Synod and the President of the Eparchial Synod in America, Metropolitan Demetrios, have graciously allowed for economy in this exceptional circumstance, and these communities will commemorate me in the Liturgy after the name of Metropolitan Demetrios (a practice that will be followed throughout the diocese for the sake of consistency). They will be listed in our statistics as communities with special status in our new Diocese (informal dependencies), though I will encourage them to coöperate with and honor the local Bishop under whose jurisdiction they find themselves geographically.”²⁰

One American GOC priest has already labelled this arrangement “strange”. It is certainly strange. It is also uncanonical. The Orthodox Church is organized on a territorial basis. When the Ecumenical Patriarchate anathematized the Bulgarian Church in 1872 for “phyletism”, its main argument was that the Bulgarian Church was organizing parishes on the canonical territory of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, thereby violating the territorial principle of Orthodox Church organization (the fact that they did it for phyletistic reasons was actually secondary from a canonical point of view). Several canons of the Ecumenical and Local Councils discuss this principle, and punish bishops who trespass in one way or another on the canonical territories of other bishops or Local Churches. A given territory can have only one canonical bishop; there is no such thing as “overlapping jurisdictions”; even a patriarch cannot trespass on the territory of a ruling bishop within his patriarchate unless the bishop gives permission or is overruled by a canonically convened and conducted decision of the whole Synod.

There was a famous case in the history of the seventh-century Anglo-Saxon Orthodox Church that illustrates this principle. St. Wilfrid was metropolitan of the diocese of York. Since this was a large area that was rapidly increasing in numbers of believers through the successful missionary activity of Wilfrid and other saints, St. Theodore “the Greek”, archbishop of Canterbury, decided to break up the diocese up into four smaller dioceses, each ruled by a separate ruling bishop. St.

²⁰ <http://www.dep.church/downloads/LetterfromBishopAuxentios.pdf>.

Wilfrid protested this decision, not because he was ambitious, nor because he suspected anyone else of ambition, but simply because the decision itself was uncanonical, and he, as the ruling bishop, had not consented to it. Three times he travelled to Rome to appeal to the Orthodox Patriarch of the West to reverse the decision, and three times his appeal was upheld, the last time by St. Agatho and his Synod. However, St. Theodore stubbornly refused to reverse his decision, and St. Wilfrid remained formally in schism from the English Church, although not from Rome and the Orthodox East. Eventually Saints Wilfrid and Theodore were reconciled through the good offices of St. Erkenwald, Bishop of London – but St. Wilfrid was never given back the whole of his metropolitan diocese of York and died as Bishop of Hexham, one of the four dioceses carved out of the metropolitan diocese.

This episode in the history of the diocese of Old York is relevant to what is now happening in the diocese of New York. Metropolitan Demetrius has consented to Bishop Auxentius continuing to rule over parishes in the New York diocese because of their “spiritual ties” with him. But why should the “spiritual ties” of one bishop with parishes in another diocese be a reason for his assuming *episcopal control* over these parishes? “Spiritual ties” can be maintained without violating the holy canons! So we now have the absurd situation in which the GOC’s senior bishop in America, Metropolitan Demetrius of New York, is not only not the metropolitan of the whole of the United States, but is not even in control of the whole of his New York diocese, while a Cyprianite vicar-bishop is suddenly promoted to lead a kind of “pan-North American, Hawaian and Alaskan” diocese including the whole of the Western United States and Canada, but also parishes as far east as Toronto and New York!

Strange indeed... But since this is all done by mutual consent, why should we worry about it?

First, because any violation of the canons for no good reason such as would justify “economy” constitutes a weakening of the Church, as St. Wilfrid of York and St. Agatho of Rome understood.

Secondly, and still more importantly, because this arrangement constitutes a *de facto* broadening of the influence of the Cyprianite ecclesiology (as represented by Bishop Auxentius) at the expense of the influence of the True Orthodox ecclesiology (as represented by Metropolitan Demetrius). For if Bishop Auxentius is a true follower of his “abba” Metropolitan Chrysostomos – and there is no reason to think otherwise – then we can expect not only that Cyprianism will be consolidated in the hearts and minds of the Cyprianites themselves, but also that it will begin to infect areas formerly under truly Orthodox bishops but now under the Cyprianite “pan-North American, Hawaian and Alaskan” diocese. The cancer has metastasised...

*January 30 / February 12, 2015.
Holy Hierarchs Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom.*

29. THE 1983 ANATHEMA AGAINST ECUMENISM

Looking back over the last one hundred years of Church history, we see no acts of primary importance that have been undertaken by the Orthodox Church as a whole, no Ecumenical or Pan-Orthodox Councils expressing the Mind of Christ on the huge upheavals that have taken place in Church life in this period. However, we have seen at least two acts by Local Councils that are of extreme importance and significance, but which remain highly controversial. The first of these is the anathema against Soviet power hurled by Patriarch Tikhon and the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow in 1918. And the second is the anathema against Ecumenism hurled by the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in Mansonville, Canada in 1983. It could be argued – although I shall not argue this in this article – that if the whole Orthodox world were to agree to sign up to these two conciliar acts, and follow through their logical consequences in a bold and consistent manner, then the main problems of Orthodox Church unity could be resolved fairly quickly...

The subject of this article is the 1983 anathema against ecumenism: its historical context, its exact content, and the main arguments, some crude and some subtle, that have prevented its being given the critical importance it should have in the ordering of contemporary Church life.

The problem of ecumenism had been on the agenda of the Orthodox Church for a very long time before the convening of the 1983 Council. The first overture by a western Protestant confession to the Orthodox Church had been made already in the late sixteenth century. In the early eighteenth century the English Non-Jurors started talks with a view to possible ecclesiastical union with the Russian Church. In the 1850s an American Episcopalian mission under Pastor Jung had discussions with Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow. A little later, the ordination of an Englishman, Stephen Hatherley, to the priesthood for his English parish by the Patriarchate of Constantinople inevitably raised questions about the relationship between Orthodoxy and Anglicanism.²¹ It was the Anglicans who took the lead in creating institutional forms for ecumenical dialogue in the pre-war and inter-war years, culminating in the foundation of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. The WCC united many Protestant and Orthodox Churches (mainly the Greek ones) in a permanent forum which implicitly – and only a little later, explicitly – recognized each member-church of the organization to be a part of the True Church of Christ. The Moscow Patriarchate abstained from membership at this time for political reasons (Stalin thought that ecumenism was a plot engineered by the Anglo-Saxons and the Vatican), but at the end of the 1950s – again for political reasons, at the insistence of the KGB – it decided to join the organization, sending two senior metropolitans, Nikodim of Leningrad and Anthony of Sourozh, to the New Delhi General Assembly in 1961.

²¹ See Protodeacon Christopher Birchall, *Embassy, Emigrants, and Englishmen. The Three-Hundred Year History of a Russian Orthodox Church in London*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Publications, 2014.

From an Orthodox point of view, the WCC entered into a critical phase of its existence during the 1960s when a series of heretical statements were officially endorsed by all the member-churches. At the same time, the Vatican entered the ecumenical process as a result of the liberal decrees of the Second Vatican Council – but without becoming a member of the WCC. In response to these developments, an anti-ecumenical movement arose within the Local Orthodox Churches. However, this movement proved ineffective – and has proved ineffective to this day – in persuading the leaders of World Orthodoxy to renounce ecumenism. It was therefore left to the True Orthodox Church, which had broken communion with “World Orthodoxy” for reasons of the faith in the 1920s, to pass sentence on what had now clearly become an anti-Orthodox, openly heretical movement. In 1964 Metropolitan Philaret of New York, first-hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, issued a “Sorrowful Epistle” to the hierarchs of World Orthodoxy on the occasion of the “lifting of the anathemas” between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople in Jerusalem. Further well-argued “Sorrowful Epistles” followed; but the general reaction of World Orthodoxy was simply to ignore them.

Two ecumenical events combined to elicit a more powerful response from the True Orthodox Church. The first took place in 1982, when 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.²² The second came in 1983, at the Vancouver General Assembly of the WCC, which began with a pagan rite performed by local Indians and contained prayer services in which Orthodox hierarchs as well as representatives of many non-Christian religions took part.

The Vancouver Assembly unanimously approved a statement entitled “My Neighbor's Faith and Mine, Theological Discoveries Through Interfaith Dialogue: A Study Guide” (Geneva: WCC, 1986). After claiming the need for “a more adequate theology of religions,” the statement declared “that in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, the entire human family has been united to God in an irrevocable bond and covenant. The saving presence of God's activity in all creation and human history comes to its focal point in the event of Christ. . . because we have seen and experienced goodness, truth, and holiness among followers of other paths and ways than that of Jesus Christ..., we find ourselves recognizing a need to move beyond a theology which confines salvation to the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ.”

When the Greek Old Calendarist Metropolitan Gabriel of the Cyclades attempted to address the Vancouver Assembly, he was not allowed to speak by the ecumenists. The *New York Times*, however, published his report, which included the following

²² Archbishop Vitaly, “The 1983 Sobor of Bishops”, *Orthodox Christian Witness*, August 20 / September 2, 1984, p. 4.

words: “Modern ecumenism is the reflection of the latest radical, atheistic and anti-Christian anthropomorphism which has as its principle that God is as necessary to man as man is to God. This radical anthropomorphism continues to struggle through the WCC to make the salvific message of Christ simply a servile element of the socio-political and earthly needs of man. Thus it struggles for the actualisation of the unity of the Christian world without Christ, who is ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life’ of the Church and the faithful. Dogmatic and ethical minimalism, spiritual nihilism, humanistic pacifism and horizontal social activism lead to a union of the Christian world without Christ. So these attempts of the WCC constitute the modern blasphemy of the Holy Spirit *par excellence* and declare a deep crisis of faith in the Western Christian world...”²³

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR), led by Metropolitan Philaret of New York, also happened to be meeting in Canada at this time, and condemned this latest and most extreme manifestation of ecumenism as follows: “In its decision of 28 July / 10 August, our Council explained that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia does not participate in the World Council of Churches insofar as the latter attempts to represent those assembled in it, representatives of religions differing in their opinions, as though they had some sort of unity in faith. In reality, though, this very position is a lie, inasmuch as they, members of various confessions and sects, have not given up their points of disagreement with each other, much less with the Orthodox Church, in dogmas and in fundamental attitudes. In the name of unifying formulas, these differences of opinion are not destroyed, but are just set aside. Instead of the unshakable truths of the faith, they try to see only opinions, not obligatory for anyone. In reply to the confession of the one Orthodox Faith, they say together with Pilate: ‘What is truth?’ And the nominally Orthodox members of the Ecumenical Movement more and more deserve the reproach of the Angel of the Church of Laodicea: ‘I know your works: you are neither hot nor cold: O if only you were hot or cold’ (Revelation 3.15). A clear manifestation of such false union was the serving of the so-called Lima Liturgy...”

Then the Synod anathematised ecumenism and the ecumenists, 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

²³ Metropolitan Gabriel, “Orthodox Reactions to the Aims of the World Council of Churches”, *The New York Times*, August 16, 1983. Minor changes have been made in the wording of the article, which was obviously translated from the Greek by a non-native English speaker.

brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, **Anathema.**"²⁴

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As was to be expected, the anathema was ignored by World Orthodoxy. But it was welcomed with joy by the True Orthodox not only in ROCOR, but also in Greece and on Mount Athos. Of course, there were criticisms, even from within the True Orthodox camp. Thus some criticized the anathema for not spelling out precisely which bodies fell under it and were therefore outside the True Church.²⁵ Perhaps it would have been better to name some names. However, many valid anathemas have not named names, as quick look at the Order for the Triumph of Orthodoxy will make clear. And in any case, the implication of this anathema was clear: all Orthodox Churches that were fully participating members of the WCC fell under it. As I.M., a Russian layman, wrote: "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..."²⁶

Another, more substantial criticism came from the ROCOR priest Alexander Lebedev (who later joined the Moscow Patriarchate). He attacked the validity of the anathema, calling the idea that the anathema strikes down all ecumenists "the heresy of universal jurisdiction". His view was that the anathema could have power only over members of ROCOR, not over World Orthodoxy as a whole. In other words, an old woman in ROCOR who confessed ecumenism might come under the anathema, but not the Patriarch of Moscow or Constantinople...

The present writer replied to Fr. Alexander:- "... 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.

²⁴ See "A Contemporary Patristic Document", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, November 14/27, 1983, p. 3; "Encyclical Letter of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 33, № 6, November-December, 1983, p. 13; Bishop Hilarion of Manhattan, "Answers to Questions Posed by the Faithful of the Orthodox Parish in Somerville, South Carolina", Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, 1992.

²⁵ See "Epi Enos Anathematos" (On An Anathema), *Kirix Gnision Orthodoxon* (Herald of the True Orthodox Christians), February, 1984, pp. 47-56.

²⁶ "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 Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad) (MS).

“An anathema excludes the person anathematized 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 them on earth, in space and time. As 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: 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 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 ROCOR'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 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 single bishopric 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..."

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Another influential attack on the anathema came from the Old Calendarist Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and File. Writing his "Ecclesiological Theses" in 1984, the year after the 1983 anathema, he did not mention that anathema by name. But there can be no doubt that that was the work's intended target.

Cyprian agreed that ecumenism was a heresy, and that the World Orthodox were ecumenist heretics. However, he argued that they were not outside the True Church, but were "sick" or "ailing" members of it, and that their sacraments remained valid. In other words, while agreeing with the first part of the 1983 anathema, he rejected the second part, which condemned those "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". In fact, strictly speaking, Cyprian himself fell under the sword of this second part of the anathema. For while accepting that the World Orthodox were heretics, he did not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the True Church from those of the World Orthodox, but rather accepted their baptism and eucharist as effectual for salvation.

Cyprian's main argument in defence of this position was that only "Unifying" Councils - that is, Ecumenical or Pan-Orthodox Councils at which the heretics are present - have the power to expel heretics from the Church. But since ecumenism has not been condemned by any such "Unifying" Council, the ecumenists remain uncondemned and therefore inside the True Church. It is right and proper to "wall oneself off" from these heretics in accordance with the 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople (861), but not to condemn them as outside the Church and graceless.

We have already seen that this thesis in relation to Local Councils is false: there have been many Local Councils of the Orthodox Church from the earliest centuries that have expelled heretics from the Church. If it were true, then we should have to conclude not only that very many Local Councils of the Orthodox Church had exceeded their competence in attempting to expel heretics from their midst, but also that at the present time, when there has been no "Unifying" Council for hundreds of

years and no such Council seems capable of being convened in the foreseeable future, the Church is deprived of the power to bind heretics! An even more startling consequence is that if the Antichrist were to arise in our midst at this time, we would not be able to expel him from the Church!

Cyprianism was officially accepted as the ecclesiology of the Russian Church Abroad in 1994, causing Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) to opine that ROCOR had fallen under her own anathema (of 1983). And there can be no doubt that Cyprianism was one of the major causes (although by no means the only cause) facilitating the fall of most of ROCOR into World Orthodoxy in 2007... Since then, the Russian True Orthodox Church under Archbishop Tikhon has again reaffirmed the rejection of Cyprianism and loyalty to the 1983 anathema in her Council in Odessa in 2008...

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We may end this article by examining a third kind of argument against the 1983 anathema which is not so much dogmatic or canonical in character, as "pastoral". As such, it cannot be considered to represent a serious objection to the dogmatic truth and validity of the 1983 anathema; nor do its proponents present them as such. Nevertheless, it is influential and may even be considered to be widespread, and so needs to be considered...

The argument goes something like this: "We do not deny that the World Orthodox are heretics and that they deserve to be anathematized. Nor do we deny the validity of the 1983 anathema. Nevertheless, we consider the anathema to be pastorally ineffective and even divisive. You cannot simply tell the Russian people that they have no grace and expect to be taken seriously. We have to apply 'economy' and avoid the question of grace altogether for the sake of the salvation of the greater number of people..."

Something like this argument was employed back in the 1970s and 80s by Bishop Gregory Grabbe, as we see in these reminiscences of his daughter, Matushka Anastasia Shatilova: "[Metropolitan Philaret] had especially many quarrels with Archbishop Anthony of Geneva... mainly on ecumenist questions... with the Serbs, the Antiochians and all kinds... Unfortunately, Archbishop Anthony was distinguished for his very sharp character and wrote several very boorish letters, to which the Metropolitan replied a little sharply... Vladyka Gregory was distinguished by somewhat greater diplomacy and was afraid that to speak in this way could create too great problems... [and] restrained the declarations of the Holy Hierarch Philaret concerning the lack of grace in the MP. For example, he used to say: '... tell 60 million Russian people that they are not chrismated, and have been baptized only according to the laymen's rite...' The Metropolitan was prepared to say this, but Vladyka Gregory thought that for the sake of Church construction it would be more correct not

to put it so sharply..."²⁷

Now, as we have seen, by 1994 Bishop Gregory had changed his tune to the extent of expressing the fear that ROCOR, by accepting Cyprianism and ignoring the 1983 anathema, had actually fallen under that anathema. Evidently he realized late in life that the price of ignoring – or rather: *disobeying* – the conciliar decisions of the Church could be the destruction of the whole Local Church organization. Nor did he live to see the real collapse that took place in 2007...

It may well be the case that from a pastoral point of view it is not necessary, and would even be harmful, to proclaim the 1983 anathema in certain situations. Our interlocutor may for one or another reason be unable or unready to discuss or absorb or believe in this teaching. In such a situation, to proclaim the whole truth would be at best tactless, at worst casting pearls before swine, at best.

But the fact that we cannot or should not proclaim the whole truth the whole of the time does not remove from us the responsibility to speak the truth and nothing but the truth – the whole of the time. Thus if asked directly, we should confess the truth without shame or qualification: the World Orthodox are outside the Church and their sacraments are graceless. To give any other impression, either by our words or our deeds (for example, by accepting a blessing from a World Orthodoxy priest), would be to betray the truth, to disobey the Church and to mislead our interlocutor in a matter that may be vital to his salvation.

The Lord said: "Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay" (Matthew 5.37). And St. Paul said: "If the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?" (I Corinthians 14.8). The witness of the True Orthodox has been severely divided and compromised in recent years by attempts to speak with forked tongues on the question of the 1983 anathema. Are the World Orthodox really Orthodox? No. Do they have valid sacraments? No. We can assert this with full confidence on the basis of many teachings and decisions of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, but especially on her most authoritative pronouncement in recent times, the anathema against ecumenism of the Council of Bishop of the Russian Church Abroad in 1983. That Council contained two bishops whose relics have been shown to be incorrupt many years after their death – St. Philaret of New York, and Bishop Constantine of Great Britain. In this way the Holy Spirit has witnessed to the truth of their confession and the holiness of their life. We must obey the voice of holy men speaking through the Holy Spirit. The trumpet of their words make no uncertain sounds, but prepare us for battle with the enemies of the Holy Church. Only by heeding their call can we be assured of victory and of not falling into the abyss with the rest of this world that lies in iniquity. For "thus it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15.28).

²⁷ Quoted by Fr. Roman Pavlov.

*May 12/25, 2015.
Week of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.
Saints Epiphanius of Cyprus and Germanus of Constantinople.*

30. BISHOP AUXENTIOS OF PORTLAND - GTOC'S TROJAN HORSE

“Beware of Greeks bearing gifts,” said Virgil, thinking of the famous story from Homer’s *Iliad* of how the city of Troy was betrayed by the gift of a giant wooden horse. Once the horse was received inside the gates of Troy, soldiers jumped out of it during the night and captured the city... The True Orthodox Church of Greece (GTOC) could be compared to the city of Troy, and its union with the Greek Old Calendarist Cyprianites – to the Trojan horse, a gift that GTOC has hailed as a gift from God, but which may well turn out to be a very damaging trap.

The trap is revealed by the Cyprianite Bishop Auxentios of Etna and Portland, who, helped by his spiritual father, the retired Metropolitan Chrysostomos (*emeritus professor*, as we are yet again reminded), has published a statement that proclaims something that very many have known for a long time but which GTOC has assiduously tried to conceal: that these two bishops, at any rate, have neither repented of their Cyprianism nor have any intention of hiding the fact.²⁸

The statement is written in the very distinctive Cyprianite style – over-long, flowery and self-indulgent. But we shall cut to the quick, ignoring the rights and wrongs of Bishop Auxentios’ quarrel with an anonymous Greek critic, and highlighting the following sentences:

1. “Little more than a year ago, the two major canonical groups of Old Calendarists in Greece and in this country united...” This is *false*. One of the canonical groups in question – GTOC – was canonical; the other – the Cyprianites – was not. In 1984 the Cyprianites separated from GTOC accusing GTOC of having a false ecclesiology. In 1986 GTOC defrocked Metropolitan Cyprian, accusing him of schism and other things. In this situation, there is no way in which both these groups could be called canonical – and they certainly did not consider each other to be so.

2. “As for the Consecration of Metropolitan Cyprian the Elder of Oropos and Phyle, there has never been any question about its validity. One point alone rather clearly underscores this fact: He was one of the co-Consecrators of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos, now the First Hierarchy of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece.” *Not true*. From February 20 to 23, 1979, Metropolitan Callistus of Corinth, together with Metropolitan Anthony of Megara, ordained eight archimandrites to the episcopate, who were, in order of ordination: Cyprian (Koutsoubas) of Fili and Oropo, Maximus (Tsitsibakos) of Magnesia, Callinicus (Sarantopoulos) of Achaia, Matthew (Langis) of Oinoe, Germanus (Athanasiou) of Aiolia, Calliopius (Giannakoulopoulos) of Pentapolis, Mercurius

²⁸ <http://www.dep.church/downloads/Statement.pdf>

(Kaloskamis) of Knossos and Callinicus (Karaphyllakis) of the Twelve Islands. During the services, Archbishop Auxentius was commemorated; but they had not informed him! It was only on February 27 that they called Auxentius and asked for his approval. The "Callistites" claimed that this was only a "temporary and curable deviation from the canonical order" whose aim was the cleansing of the Church from moral vices, especially sodomy, since "men have been raised to the priesthood who are both unworthy and incapable."²⁹ On February 27 Archbishop Auxentius, Metropolitan Gerontius and those with them met "in order to formulate a position on the sedition brought about by its members, Callistus of Corinth and Anthony of Megara, who illegally severed themselves from the body [of the Holy Synod] and high-handedly undertook to consecrate bishops. Upon discussing this matter at length, on the basis of the holy canons of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ, [the Holy Synod] unanimously decreed and imposed upon the two seditious Metropolitans the punishment of deposition, as the holy canons themselves enjoin." Some days later, the Auxentiite Synod, augmented by no less than ten new bishops, met in order to confirm the invalidity of the Callistite ordinations and the deposition of the Callistites as "conspirators, factionalists, establishers of unlawful assemblies and schismatics".³⁰ ROCOR refused to confirm the canonicity of either faction, while the independent Metropolitans Chrysostomos (Kiouisis) of Thessalonica and Acacius of Diauleia condemned both sides. So to affirm that "there has never been any question about the validity" of Metropolitan Cyprian's consecration is manifestly untrue.

3. "The matter was not that of one side submitting to the other." But we know for a fact that three bishops - Cyprian the Younger, Ambrose and Klimis - received some kind of absolution from GTOC. So they submitted... The details have not been published, unfortunately. However, the stubborn refusal of Bishop Auxentios and his elder to act likewise does them no credit.

4. "Regarding the 'heresy of Cyprianitism,' the ecclesiology of the Synod in Resistance was not an invention of Metropolitan Cyprian, but was based on the Synod's interpretation of the Conciliar, Patristic, and historical precepts of the Orthodox Church - an interpretation, in fact, expressed in many of the writings of the 'Father' of the Old Calendar movement, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina." Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina made some mistakes. Cyprian seized on the mistakes and built them up into a full-grown ecclesiology. Chrysostomos repented of his mistakes. Cyprian never repented. Metropolitan

²⁹ For two antithetical accounts of this Synod, see *Phylakes Orthodoxias* (Guardians of Orthodoxy), vol. 1, March, 1979, pp. 1-2 and *Agios Kyprianos* (St. Cyprian), № 122, February, 1979, p. 240, on the one hand, and "Latest developments in the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece", special supplement to *Orthodox Christian Witness*, November, 1984, vol. XVIII, № 12 (St. Nectarios Educational Series № 93), Priest-Monk Haralampus (Book Review in *The True Vine*, № 21, vol. 6, № 1, 1994, pp. 56-63), and Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, pp. 102-112, on the other.

³⁰ *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias* (The Voice of Orthodoxy), № 759, March 2, 1979.

Chrysostomos never created a schism on the basis of his mistakes. Cyprian did. Metropolitan Chrysostomos was never condemned in a formal canonical trial. Cyprian was. The difference is great...

5. "No prayer of any kind was ever read over either of us, nor did we submit any sort of confession for our supposed past heresy. Nor would we ever have accepted such provisions. I think that this fact speaks for itself." *It does indeed.* It demonstrates that whether we call Cyprianism "heresy", "crypto-ecumenism" or "justification for schism", the false teaching that it undoubtedly embodies – as witnessed by many statements of the canonical GTOC before the union of 2014 – has not been repented of by Bishop Auxentios. Moreover, he appears even to be glorying in his stubborn lack of repentance.

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All this represents a very serious challenge to the Synod of GTOC. In a previous article³¹, I pointed out that Bishop Auxentios, in spite of his defiant refusal to repent, had been given an enormous amount of power – virtually a "Pan-North American" diocese – in flagrant defiance of the territorial principle of Church administration. And I concluded that "this arrangement constitutes a *de facto* broadening of the influence of the Cyprianite ecclesiology (as represented by Bishop Auxentios) at the expense of the influence of the True Orthodox ecclesiology (as represented by Metropolitan Demetrius). For if Bishop Auxentios is a true follower of his "abba" Metropolitan Chrysostomos – and there is no reason to think otherwise – then we can expect not only that Cyprianism will be consolidated in the hearts and minds of the Cyprianites themselves, but also that it will begin to infect areas formerly under truly Orthodox bishops but now under the Cyprianite "pan-North American, Hawaian and Alaskan" diocese. The cancer has metastasised..."

If the Synod of GTOC is to retain its credibility as an upholder of the True Faith, it must act against Bishop Auxentios. If it does not, then the cancer will spread, and if there are any True Orthodox left in the union they will separate from the compromisers so as to save their souls. After all, we have the terrifying example of the fall of the Russian Church Abroad to warn us. In 1983 ROCOR under St. Philaret anathematized ecumenism and Cyprianism. And yet, only eleven years later, after the death of St. Philaret, Cyprianism was proclaimed the official ecclesiology of ROCOR. And that in spite of many protesters and doubters... Today, the protesters have melted away; there is an ominous silence from the former zealots of GTOC. ROCOR had a Hector under St. Philaret. GTOC today appears to have no Hector to stand out against Achilles – and Cyprianism remains, as before, its Achilles heel... We conclude that their glorying in this deeply flawed

³¹ <http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/articles/630/-cyprianites-go-marching>.

union “is not good. Do they not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”
(I Corinthians 5.6).

July 10/23, 2015.

31. FORGIVENESS AND THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY

Forgiveness Sunday and the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy follow each other in quick succession in the Church's liturgical calendar. A coincidence? No – there are no coincidences in life, and still less in Church life. So let us search for the reason for this “coincidence”, beginning with the story behind the institution of the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy...

The last iconoclast emperor, Theophilus, died in February, 842. His widow, St. Theodora, wanted to restore the icons, but she used her imperial authority to impose a bargain on the Church: if her reposed husband could be restored to the diptychs as an Orthodox emperor, she would give *carte blanche* to the patriarch to restore the true faith as he saw fit. The confessors of Orthodoxy were understandably reluctant to enter into such a bargain, since there was no reliable evidence that Theophilus had repented before his death. However, God inspired the new patriarch, St. Methodius, to resolve the dilemma in the following way. As Nun Cassia tells the story, “On March 4, 843 Methodius was consecrated to the see of Constantinople and immediately proclaimed that the whole Church should pray for the Emperor Theophilus, which continued for the whole of the first week of the Great Fast and ended with the miraculous blotting out of the name of Theophilus from the list of heretics that the patriarch had sealed before the beginning of the prayer and placed on the altar of Hagia Sophia. The reposed emperor was recognized as forgiven by the Church and as Orthodox, and on Sunday, March 11, 843 the icons were brought in a triumphal procession into the main church of the Empire, and icon-veneration has remained forever as an unshakeable dogma of the Orthodox Church...”³²

So the Triumph of Orthodoxy, of the true faith over heresy, was at the same time a Triumph of Forgiveness – of God's forgiveness of a heretic and persecutor of the Church even after his death. Truly with God all things are possible. He “has the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1.18), and is able to bring even the impenitent sinner to repentance and draw him out of hades and death into paradise and eternal life.

However, it is important to note how this was done. Forgiveness was not given to the dead heretic just like that. The whole Church fasted and prayed with great intensity for a whole week, and only when God's forgiveness had been revealed to all by an obvious miracle was his name restored to the ranks of the saved and the Orthodox. And at the same time the heresy that he had championed throughout his life - the heresy of iconoclasm that had ravaged the Byzantine empire for over a hundred years - was officially overturned.

³² Nun Cassia (Senina) (editor), *Zhitia Vizantijskikh Sviatykh Epokhi Ikonoborchestva* (Lives of the Byzantine Saints of the Iconoclast Period), vol. I, St. Petersburg: Kvadrivium, 2015, pp. 129-130.

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Many hundreds of years later, in March, 2014, something superficially similar took place. Let us examine this more closely.

In 1980 Archimandrite Cyprian of the Monastery of SS. Cyprian and Justina, Fili, Greece was secretly ordained, together with seven other archimandrites, to the episcopate by the Greek True Orthodox Metropolitans Callistus and Anthony. This ecclesiastical coup failed; all those ordained – with the exception of Cyprian – repented of their uncanonical ordination and were eventually received back into the canonical True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiouisis) of Athens. Cyprian, however, together with another bishop, Giovanni of Sardinia, remained aloof from all Greek Synods; and Cyprian now began to lean towards ecumenism, giving communion *en masse* to new calendarists and even concelebrating with the new-calendarist Patriarch Nicholas of Alexandria – although the Cyprianites denied this, saying that the patriarch just happened to enter the sanctuary and sat down. In order to justify these uncanonical practices, in 1984 Cyprian published his *Ecclesiological Theses*, which proclaimed a new and heretical understanding of the Church's relationship to heresy and heretics. In this work heretics were said to be “sick” members of the True Church until they had been expelled from the Church by a “Unifying Synod” of Ecumenical or at least Pan-Orthodox status; local Councils, according to Cyprian, did not have the authority to expel heretics from the Church. In accordance with this theory, Cyprian declared that the new calendarist church of Greece was the “Mother Church” of the True Orthodox Church, and that while ecumenism was a heresy, the ecumenists themselves were still inside the Church and had the grace of sacraments - in spite of the fact that the Russian Church Abroad under St. Philaret, which Cyprian greatly respected and was trying to enter into communion with, had just anathematized ecumenism and the ecumenists only the year before.

In September, 1984 the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostomos summoned Cyprian to a synodal court to give an account of his actions, but he did not appear at the summons. On September 19 the Synod banned him from serving for 40 days, but he continued to serve. Finally, on April 5, 1985 Cyprian and Giovanni, while still under canonical bans, left the Greek Church and formed their own Synod. (They claimed that they had no obligation to answer any summons from a Synod they had never belonged to. But since they recognized the authority of no other Synod over them, this was to all intents and purposes a declaration of autocephaly – in other words, a schism.)

In February, 1986, the Synod of Archbishop Chrysostomos defrocked Cyprian and the other members of his Synod for their practice of giving communion to new-calendarists (“for without investigation he gives the Holy Mysteries of our Church

to new calendarist modernists, schismatics and ecumenists”), and for preaching a false teaching on the presence of the Grace-filled Mysteries among the new calendarists (“because he has fallen away from the Orthodox Faith... and accepted the false and dishonourable faith of the ecumenists – that is, that new calendarist schismatics belong to the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which is the only guardian and bestower of Grace”).³³

For many years the Cyprianites spread their influence far and wide. In 1994 they entered into communion with the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR), which accepted their confession of faith. As a result, the movement for union with the Moscow Patriarchate inside ROCOR gained strength, and in 2007 ROCOR entered into full communion with the MP. Not content with having helped to destroy this local Church, the Cyprianites now sought to “sweep up” the splinters (*oskolki*) of ROCOR that had refused to surrender to the MP. Their lot fell on Bishop Agathangel of Odessa, a lone bishop and renegade from the Russian True Orthodox Church (RTOC) who in 1994 had declared that even the Catholics and the Monophysites had grace. He was the last to “jump ship” at the shipwreck of ROCOR in 2007, but then had the effrontery to declare himself the sole True Orthodox Russian bishop in the world! Clearly well suited to each other, Agathangel and the Cyprianites together ordained a new, uncanonical Synod with Agathangel as its head.

Shortly after this, Cyprian fell into a coma. For several years he was unconscious, in a kind of limbo from which he never emerged until his death in 2013. Meanwhile, two attempts were made to reunite the True Orthodox Church and the Cyprianites. The first, in 2009, when Archbishop Chrysostomos was still alive, failed; the second, in 2014, under the new Archbishop Kallinicos, succeeded. The Cyprianites were not asked to repent, and Cyprian himself was declared “blessed” ...

The canonical question that arises is: can the Greek Synod under its new leader in 2014 reverse the decision made in relation to Cyprian by the same Synod under its previous leader in 1986 without giving any reason for such a reversal – or even proclaiming that any such reversal has taken place?...

Any attempt to compare the events of 2014 with those of 843 would clearly be in vain. The restoration of Theophilus the iconoclast cannot be compared to that of Cyprian the crypto-ecumenist. In the former case, there was no denying that Theophilus had died in heresy and without repentance. Nor was any damage done to the Orthodox confession of faith – iconoclasm was not restored together with Theophilus. In the latter case, the situation is far less clear. The Church did not publicly pray for the forgiveness of Cyprian. Nor was there any undisputed sign

³³ *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias*, № 811, January-February, 1987. Cf. *Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, № 8, February, 1987, p. 7.

from God that he had been forgiven. Although the confession of faith on the basis of which the Cyprianites were restored to the Church was formally Orthodox, it did not condemn Cyprianism. Moreover, more than one Cyprianite bishop continues to assert that he was neither asked to repent, nor has in fact repented, of his Cyprianite beliefs...

The Lord, as is well known, gave His apostles and their successors the power to bind and to loose the sins of men. But this power can be exercised only *in accordance with*, and not *in spite of*, the will of God. The Church teaches that as a general rule God does not loose the sins of the man who dies in mortal sin, and that in hades there is no repentance. But there are exceptions, and the case of Theophilus the iconoclast is one of those exceptions. In response to the fervent prayer of the Church (for if “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5.16), so how much more the prayer of the whole Church!), the Lord counted him worthy to be released from the mortal sin of heresy. But the Church *besought*: it did not *command*, it did not assume that the Head would necessarily submit to the will of His Body. For there are cases when the Lord rejects the prayer even of the greatest saints: as He once revealed to the Prophet Ezekiel, even if the righteous Noah, Daniel and Job had been in the sinful land of Israel at that time, they would only have delivered themselves by their prayers, not the whole land (Ezekiel 14,14, 20). Indeed, the Apostle John *forbids* prayers for certain sinners: “there is a sin unto death – I do not say that he should pray about that” (I John 5.16). But again there are exceptions. And the Church’s prayer for the mortal sin of Theophilus was one such exception.

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On Forgiveness Sunday we forgive each other our personal sins against each other. Purified in this way from personal sin, we fast and pray in the first week of Great Lent with strong confidence that our prayers will be heard by God. And the most fervent prayer of the Church must be that we may be united “with one heart and one mouth” in the One True Faith with the unbelievers and heretics and schismatics who have fallen away from the Church – or never belonged to it in the first place. This prayer reaches its climax on the following Sunday, the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, when all the heresies are solemnly anathematized and the confessors of the faith glorified. And so in this one single week we experience the whole gamut of the Church’s repentance, faith, hope and love; we see the power of God, Who casts sinners into hades and raises them up again; and we understand what the apostle means when he says: “This is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith” (I John 5.4).

March 5/18, 2016.
Holy Martyr Conon.

32. TRUE ORTHODOXY AND THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

From a purely ecclesiastical point of view, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict can be evaluated in a very simple way by the True Orthodox: none of the main actors in the conflict are truly Orthodox, all are in heresy or schism, so we can regard the actions of none of the Churches involved as canonical or inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, from a political, and especially from a personal or practical point of view the matter is by no means so simple – and not only for people of Russian or Ukrainian origin. Moreover, the consequences of the conflict for the further development of World Orthodoxy are of concern for all.

Let us begin with the ecclesiastical problem of Ukrainian autocephaly. In 1686 Patriarch Dionysius IV of Constantinople handed over jurisdiction of the Kievan Metropolia to the Moscow Patriarchate. This made good sense at the time because the Muscovite tsardom, whose influence and power had been extending south and west into the Ukraine and Belorussia for several decades, was in a much better position to protect the Orthodox Christians of the region from heterodox and Muslim influences and persecution than Constantinople, which was itself under the power of the Ottoman Sultans. Nor did Constantinople contest the canonicity of Moscow's rule over the Kiev metropolia at any time before the revolution of 1917.

After 1917 three major new factors began to complicate the situation: Constantinopolitan imperialism, Ukrainian nationalism and, of course, Soviet communism. All three tendencies were anti-Orthodox, and all three were resisted by the Moscow Patriarchate under Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow and Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev, both of whom received the crown of holy martyrdom. Thus the MP resisted and condemned Constantinople's creation of illegal autocephalies in Poland, the Baltic States, Finland and Hungary and Czechoslovakia, as well as its support for the Russian renovationists and the self-consecrating Ukrainian autocephalists. There is therefore a solid canonical and truly Orthodox foundation to the Russian Orthodox opposition to Ukrainian autocephaly. Of course, the MP today is not the MP of the 1920s – the organization going by that name was built by Stalin and the traitor Metropolitan Sergius (later "patriarch of Moscow") on the bones of the faithful hierarchs of the canonical, truly Orthodox MP that existed before Sergius' surrender to the Bolsheviki in 1927. But the valid arguments of the true, pre-1927 Russian Church against Ukrainian autocephaly are not undermined by the fact that they are also supported by today's false, Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate. It follows that we must agree with the assertion of Archbishop

Tikhon, head of the Russian True Orthodox Church, that Constantinople's granting of Ukrainian autocephaly is "at a minimum an unwise step".³⁴

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Archbishop Tikhon also said that the whole process initiated by Constantinople was "highly politicized". In this we must also agree; but it is not clear what conclusion follows from this fact because there is strong political pressure on both sides in this conflict. Political pressure was brought to bear on the original declaration of a Ukrainian autocephalous church just after the revolution by Ukrainian nationalists and Soviet communists, leading to the martyrdom of Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev in 1918. However, today's declaration of autocephaly has been brought about by a different combination of pressures: Ukrainian nationalists and American liberals. In fact, today's ecclesiastical war between Moscow and Constantinople is really a proxy war between their respective backers, the KGB and the CIA.

The former assertion, that the MP is backed by the KGB, is beyond dispute and there are few attempts to hide it now that the KGB has been rehabilitated in the eyes of the Russian people. The idea that this leopard has really changed its spots is highly dubious; but, sadly, it is generally accepted... The latter assertion, that the EP is backed by the CIA, is more difficult to prove, but still likely. In general, the CIA has interfered less in religious affairs than the KGB, perhaps because it is influenced, as ex-KGB agent Konstantin Preobrazhensky has speculated, by the American belief in the complete separation of Church and State. But since the Second World War the influence of the American state on the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been obvious, albeit exerted in a less violent way than the KGB's influence on the MP. Thus in 1949 President Truman lent Archbishop Athenagoras his private plane to fly to Constantinople and seize control of the patriarchate. And an EP blog has recently declared: "American presidents understood that Washington's active support and defense of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was not only consistent with the principle of religious freedom but was also an important, global resource for highlighting and communicating American values in the twin arenas of international relations and Great Power diplomacy."³⁵

The historian Kirill Alexandrov has also justly pointed to the influence that America has on the EP's moral teaching, since "the social morals that reign in the "progressive" American society affect the self-consciousness of members of the

³⁴ <https://riafan.ru/1100736-glava-ripc-predostavlenie-ukraine-avtokefalii-kak-minimum-nerazumnyi-shag>, September 18, 2018.

³⁵ Alexandros Kyrou, in <https://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/truman-athenagoras-and-world-orthodoxy-an-historical-alternative-to-current-us-relations-with-constantinople-part-two>, *blogs.goarch.org*, April 21, 2014.

American Archdiocese. I want to believe that simple Orthodox Greeks in the US really live according to Christ's commandments, and try to '*depart from evil and do good*'. But here follows a strong example, characterizing the morals of the top leadership of the American Archdiocese, and it should be noted that conventionally, a very important role in its management is played by lay people, usually businessmen or politicians.

"One such influential politician in the Greek community is Michael Huffington, a prominent member of the Republican Party, a member of the US House of Representatives from California in 1993-95, and the founder of the influential media resource: *The Huffington Post*, which in 2012, was named the most popular political site in the US.

"Michael Huffington was first a member of the Presbyterian Church, and then moved to the Evangelical, and in 1996, after traveling to Istanbul and having talks with the Phanarites, he became Orthodox. This, however, did not prevent him from openly declaring his homosexuality two years later, and even releasing in 2007 a film that promotes same-sex 'love' with a very frilly title: 'We're all Angels'.

"In addition, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and M. Huffington sponsor various projects for the promotion of LGBT communities, and ecumenical projects. In order to bring the Orthodox and Catholics closer, he created at Loyola Marymount University, an ecumenical institution in his own name, the Huffington Ecumenical Institute, and stated that his dream is to see Catholics and Orthodox commune together. Considering that he is already 71 years old, he hopes that this will happen soon.

"And this man in June 2018 openly called for the resignation of Archbishop Demetrios, the Primate of the American Archdiocese.

'The reason for such appeals was a scandal involving the disappearance of the huge amounts from the treasury of the American archdiocese allocated for the construction of Saint Nicholas Cathedral in New York, and some other moments. The influential American edition *The National Herald* published an article dedicated to the analysis of the scandal in the American Archdiocese at the recent Synaxis.

"The publication contains the words of Archbishop Demetrios, with whom he reacted in reproach for the misuse of funds, and the assertion that after this, the sponsors of the Archdiocese no longer trust him. He said that sponsors don't have the right to ask what happened to the money, just as he does not ask them how they made their money.

"Of course, it is very unusual to hear such maxims from an Orthodox Hierarch. But there is reason to believe that the US authorities know perfectly well who spent

these funds and how, and Archbishop Demetrios with such rhetoric nobly tries to escape the threat of some of his high-ranking colleagues.

“Thus, the US seems to have many levers of pressure on the Ecumenical Church—the very one which aggressively claims to be the undisputed head of the entire Orthodox world.”³⁶

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But, granted that Bartholomew’s action in granting the Ukrainian Church (or rather, just one of the three Ukrainian Orthodox churches) autocephaly is almost certainly both uncanonical and politically motivated (by American interests and the LGBT lobby), and therefore “unwise”, is it likely to succeed?

The answer to this question depends on the further question: “What is he trying to achieve?”

The first hypothesis is that he is trying to unite the three main branches of Ukrainian Orthodoxy (KP-UOC, UOAC and UOC-MP) under his own favoured candidate, KP-UOC. However, this is bound to have the opposite effect, driving KP-UOC and UOC-MP further away from each other (the position of UOAC is less clear). We are reminded of the fate of Moscow’s creation of autocephaly for the Orthodox Church of America in 1970: to this day no other Local Orthodox Church recognizes the OCA, while the other Orthodox jurisdictions have not united under it.

The second hypothesis is that he is trying to strengthen his own image as the Pope of Eastern Orthodoxy. But this project, too, is likely to fail. After all, most of the Local Orthodox Churches have already come out against his Tomos of Ukrainian Autocephaly, including the Church of Greece, which, being Greek, one might have expected to support him. The bitter fact for Bartholomew is: while he appears to be winning his race with Kirill of Moscow to be the Pope’s most favoured Orthodox patriarch, he is not all popular in the Orthodox Church as a whole. There is a profound psychological reason for this: the World Orthodox have betrayed Orthodoxy by voluntarily following Bartholomew and other false hierarchs into the World Council of Churches and the rainbow-coloured embrace of the apostate West; but many of them have a bad conscience because of this, and, instead of repenting correctly by breaking communion with both apostate Catholics and Protestants and the false Orthodox hierarchs, choose to put the blame on their leaders rather than themselves. The laity hope against hope that their clerical leaders will repent of their ecumenical course, so that they themselves will not have to take a stand against them. But in their heart of hearts they know

³⁶ Alexandrov, “What Moved Patriarch Bartholomew to Lay Ruin to Ukrainian Orthodoxy?” *Orthodox Christianity*, September 23, 2018, <http://orthochristian.com/115911.html>.

that this is not going to happen, and so they direct their own feelings of guilt against their leaders. However, while they are right in thinking that “the leaders of this people cause them to err”, the fact remains that “those who are led by them are destroyed” (Isaiah 9.16).

There remains only a third, political hypothesis: that Bartholomew is acting at the behest of his western political masters in trying to stir up nationalist passion in Ukraine. Let us look more closely at this hypothesis.

Until 1991, Russia and Ukraine were part of a single state, the Soviet Union, which found itself under the anathema of the Russian Church’s 1918 anathema against the Bolsheviks and all those who cooperated with them. Ukraine voted for becoming an independent state (even in the Donbass), and since then it has moved – with some ups and downs – in a steadily anti-Soviet direction, until, at the present time, almost all Soviet symbolica and statues of Lenin have been cast down and all Soviet (and Nazi) propaganda has been outlawed. Only in the Russian-occupied Donbass and Crimea have symbols of Sovietism, such as the hammer and sickle, remained and even multiplied (often in blasphemous union with Orthodox Christian symbolica).

By contrast, Russia since the fall of Yeltsin and the rise to power of Vladimir Putin in 2000, and especially since its invasion of Georgia in 2008, and of Crimea and Donbass in 2014, has steadily moved in a pro-Soviet and even pro-Stalinist direction. There are of course differences between Stalinist Sovietism and Putinist Sovietism – in particular, Putin’s much greater involvement in the structures of Western capitalism, which he and his billionaire Mafiosi comrades both exploit and depend on – but the similarities, and above all the similarity of *spirit*, are much more striking. Far from distancing himself from Stalinism, Putin justifies it by the nationalist myth of Stalin’s “Great Patriotic War”, which remains the cornerstone of Putin’s ideology, denial of which can now earn a prison sentence.

However, since the Valdai conference of 2014, Putin has added an important new argument to his ideological armoury: the supposed greater spirituality of his Russia, as opposed not only to the heretical West, but also to Orthodox Ukraine, which is seen now as being simply an offshoot of Western heretical Christianity and pseudo-spirituality. To a True Orthodox Christian, brought up on fierce rejection both of Sergianism (the subjection of the Church to the Soviet and neo-Soviet state) and of the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches (of which the MP has been an enthusiastic and influential participant since 1961), the idea that modern Russia, ruled as it is by the KGB and the MP, could have any claim to real spirituality, and therefore have a right to criticize the spirituality of others, will seem absurd – and ahypocritical. Nevertheless, Putin’s argument needs to be addressed, if only because so many people believe it.

There is no doubt that the pro-LGBT agenda of the West represents an enormous threat to any Orthodox Christian that is exposed to it: those who approve of the antichristian LGBT agenda, and still more those who practice it, will not enter the Kingdom of heaven, as the Apostle Paul quite clearly says (Romans 1.32; I Corinthians 6.9). The threat is especially great in relation to the younger generation brought up in the West, where LGBT propaganda is already compulsory, with almost all escape routes now blocked...

Almost the only redeeming feature of Putin's otherwise repulsive regime is its support for Orthodox Christianity (at any rate in the heretical form preached by the MP) and rejection of the abominable sexual morality of the West. The fact that both this support and this rejection are hypocritical (the MP's hierarchy, for example, is riddled with homosexuality) is not the point here. The fact is: at least the younger generation are being given some protection in Russia against LGBT propaganda. Without such protection it is doubtful that even the semblance of Orthodox Christianity will survive on earth for another generation.

Some draw the conclusion from this that we must support Putin's regime. The present writer does not draw this conclusion. Almost the last words of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas were that evil is not overcome by evil, but by good. The evil of the Western Antichrist will not be overcome by support for the Eastern Antichrist, nor by unequivocal support of one Orthodox nation against another. We must oppose *both* the sodomites' blasphemous union of the Cross with the rainbow-coloured flag *and* the Putinists' equally blasphemous union of the Cross with the hammer-and-sickle.

Returning, finally, to Bartholomew and his divisive project of Ukrainian autocephaly: it will not succeed, for the reasons outline above. And Orthodox Christians, whether Russian or Ukrainian, Greek or American, must unite against everything he stands for: that is, the Trojan horse of nationalist autocephalism, ecumenism, the new calendar, western heresy and western anti-morality. "The walls of Jerusalem will be builded" - but only when all Orthodox Christians on all sides of the present conflict have united in offering a pure sacrifice to God.

*September 11/24, 2018.
Saints Sergius and Herman of Valaam.*

33. THE MYSTERIOUS ECCLESIOLOGY OF BISHOP ANDREI ERASTOV

From the year 2000, as the Synod of ROCOR began officially to accept the canonicity of the MP and initiated union talks with it, the Church both inside and outside of Russia that remained faithful to the truth began to separate into so-called “splinters” (*oskolki*), small Synods not in communion with each other. Most of them claimed that their canonical existence, like that of ROCOR, was based on Patriarch Tikhon’s ukaz no. 362. However, as Igumen (now Bishop) Andrei (Erastov) argued earlier this year, strictly speaking, neither ROCOR in the 1920s nor, still less, the “splinters” of the early 2000s, ever corresponded to the conditions for the existence of the autonomous groups of bishops envisaged by the Patriarch’s ukaz, so that a canonical basis for the present-day True Orthodox Church of Russia must be sought elsewhere.

Let us examine Igumen Andrei’s argument, and his proposed solution to the problem of the “splinters”.

“It is completely obvious,” he writes, “that it is impossible now even to imagine a single administrative centre of the Russian Church. On the other hand, it is possible that its existence would not be useful. Church life, both in Russia and abroad, must be built on the basis of ukaz №362 as the basic guiding canonical document. In correspondence with this ukaz, church districts must be formed on voluntary principles; they must consist of several dioceses (no less than three or four). (A Church can be autocephalous only if can itself and install and judge its own bishops. For the election of a new bishop three diocesan bishops must participate and confirm a fourth as the metropolitan. (Fourth Canon of the First Ecumenical Council.)) These districts will be temporarily autonomous until the restoration of a lawful, canonical Higher Church Authority in the Russian Church.

“The hierarchs will have to elect from their midst a first-hierarchy, in relation to whom they will carry out the obligations imposed by the 34th Apostolic canon. Such districts will maintain Eucharistic communion between themselves, together with close links expressed in fraternal communion and mutual support. At times they will gather together in common councils to resolve general church questions. However, from an administrative point of view each district will be independent. It is not difficult to see that such an organization of the Church will be a return to the canonical forms of the early Christians such an organization of the Church will be a return to the canonical forms of the early Christians.”

This extract already displays considerable confusion of thought. First, the author questions whether an administrative centre of the Russian Church is imaginable or even desirable. But then he suggests returning to the application of ukaz №362 as the basic guiding canonical document. Fine; but this ukaz was issued by the

administrative centre of the Russian Church and presupposes that such a centre is both imaginable and desirable... Then the author appears to concede that such a centre is indeed desirable; for he writes that the church districts “will be temporarily autonomous until the restoration of a lawful, canonical Higher Church Authority in the Russian Church”. But then he contradicts himself by declaring that “such an organization of the Church will be a return to the canonical forms of the early Christians” – when there were no Higher Church Administrations above the metropolitan level, no ukaz №362 and no national Churches such as the Russian. So which is it? Is Igumen Andrei proposing a reconstruction of the unity of the national Church of Russia, or the radical decentralization of the Church on the model of the Early Church? The latter is by no means an impossibility, but it runs up against the insuperable obstacle that it requires that all the Local True Orthodox Churches – the Russian, the Greek, the Serbian, etc. – should announce their dissolution as national Churches and their reformation as independent metropolitan districts having no national mark or obedience to any national Church. However, it seems that nobody – except, perhaps, the name-worshipping “Bishop” Gregory (Lurye) – is even contemplating such a thing...

He continues: “Church formations on the model of church districts – the so-called ‘splinters’ – have already been formed among us historically. Of course, these church formations have great faults, for example, the fact that they overlap each other territorially. But they have one important merit – they already exist. Church construction has in mind already existing building material. In fact, the problem of the ‘splinters’ does not lie in their splintering – this splintering has its positive sides, and is completely canonical. That is how the Church looked in antiquity, and such a splintering is envisaged by ukaz №362. The main problem of the ‘splinters’ lies in the fact that there is no liturgical communion between them, and many of them have no conciliarity.

“At the basis of liturgical communion between the ‘splinters’, as in the early Church, there have to be: an Orthodox confession [of faith] and the lawfulness of the hierarchy. Eucharistic communion is impossible only with non-Orthodox, with those who do not have a correct ordination or with banned clergy. If these obstacles do not exist, then there is no reason to reject serving together. We must all reject the abnormality of the situation when Orthodox hierarchs have no Eucharistic communion with each other and do not care about that fact.”

Here at last we come to the nub of the situation. Igumen Andrei correctly observes that ukaz №362 cannot be applied at the present time because conditions have changed radically since the 1920s: communications are better, but there is no central authority for the splinters to communicate with; the splinters overlap each other territorially; and, still more important, there is no agreement in faith and therefore Eucharistic communion between them. However, he still seems to think that, for lack of anything better, we must make do with ukaz №362 as a basis for church unity. But how can an ukaz that cannot be applied to the present situation because of the factors mentioned above form the basis for church unity?! Although

the ukaz was undoubtedly inspired by the Holy Spirit and was important for preserving church unity in the Soviet period, it *presupposed* an already-existing unity in faith which no longer exists; so it cannot be used as a basis for *recreating* that unity which is the essential condition for any serious work in church building.

“The principle expressed in ROCOR’s *Statute*: ‘The Russian Church Abroad is an unbreakable part of the Local Russian Orthodox Church temporarily self-governing on conciliar principles’ remains in force. However, it must be applied not to any single part of the Church, but to all of them together.”

All of them together? Even when they are not in communion with each other, and when they believe different things? This is “Catacomb Church ecumenism” and quite unacceptable!

“The ‘splinters’ dispute with each other over who has the right of succession from the pre-schism Church Abroad. However, it no longer exists. As was said before, the ROCOR Synod existed, not on the basis of any canonical acts, but in spite of them. The meaning of the existence of the Synod lay in the fact that it was the bearer of Church truth. But when the Synod later fell into the deception of Sergianism, it lost all significance. The canonical basis of the Synod lay in its lofty spiritual-moral authority and in considerations of what is profitable for the Church. (‘What is useful for the Church is canonical’ (V.V. Bolotov).)

This again makes no sense. However great the authority of V.V. Bolotov, the expression “What is useful for the Church is canonical” is not sanctioned by Church tradition. For who is to say what is useful for the Church? Many ecumenists have considered following the canons about, for example, concelebration with heretics, to be *not* useful for the Church. Are they to be allowed to redefine what is not canonical as canonical simply because it is “useful” to them?! The MP is doing something similar now, issuing “canonical” rebukes to those who question the canonicity of the ecumenical movement...

He continues: “Therefore, before the restoration of a Higher Church Administration, the Russian Local Church must be composed of church districts in liturgical communion with each other. The process of the ‘splinters’ unification must not be seen in their merging together, into one structure or in the submission of all of them to one centre, but in the establishment of Eucharistic and fraternal communion, instead of the present rivalry, claims and mutual excommunications.

“The principle expressed in ROCOR’s *Statute*: ‘The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is an unbreakable part of the Russian Orthodox Church temporarily self-governing on conciliar principles’ remains in force. However, it must be referred, not to any one part of the Church Abroad, but to all the parts together.”

Again, we see a confusion between means and ends in Igumen Andrei’s argument. He says that “before the restoration of a Higher Church Administration, the Russian Local Church must be composed of church districts in liturgical communion with each other.” But they are not in communion with each other, so what are they, canonically speaking, and where is the Local Russian Church?

Again, he scorns “the present rivalry, claims and mutual excommunications”, but offers no solution as to how to overcome that. He rejects the solution of “the submission of all of them to one centre” – probably because he himself has fled from “Metropolitan” Agathangel’s attempt to make himself such a centre, “not a part, but the remnant” (ne chast’, a ostatok) of the Church – but also scorns a “merging” of the splinters on any other basis.

“A strange picture emerges: the ‘splinters’ are competing for possession of a non-existent heritage. The heritage of the Church Abroad does not consist in any special canonical right – that does not exist, but in the spirit of true churchliness, in the wisdom of the royal path, which unites a firm stand in the truth and the preservation of the tradition of the Church, but without deviating into the extremes of fanaticism and sectarian thinking. Unfortunately, our ‘splinters’ are not worrying at all about acquiring this spiritual heritage of the Church Abroad.

“It is to highest degree strange when some small ‘splinter’, not having the slightest moral authority behind it, lays claim to the highest authority over the whole of the Russian Church on the basis of some incomprehensible right of succession from the former ROCOR, as, for example, was said in the ‘Declaration of the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR’”.

“The ‘splinters’ have nothing to share and no reason to compete with each other. All of them are temporarily self-administering parts of the Russian Church Abroad independently of where they are, in Russia or abroad, and no matter with what abbreviations they label themselves. However, they have to organize themselves on the principle of conciliarity in accordance with ukaz №362 so as to be transformed from ‘splinters’ into canonical Church Districts.”

A strange picture indeed! The ‘splinters’, according to Igumen Andrei, are uncanonical, and yet they have “a moral-spiritual authority”. Their existence is based on ukaz №362, and yet the basic preconditions of that ukaz are nowhere fulfilled. Individually they are nothing, and yet taken together they constitute the whole of the Russian Church – so long as they can organize themselves and “be transformed from ‘splinters’ into canonical Church Districts.” But how? That question is not answered...

“Let us examine separately the question of clergy bans to which several ‘splinters’ have been subjected. The hierarchy of the majority of the ‘splinters’ has undoubted apostolic succession, but their canonicity remains under question because these ‘splinters’ at their foundation were evaluated as schism and their episcopate was placed under ban.

“Clergy bans can be imposed with various aims and have different meanings. For example, a ban can be imposed for a time, as a punishment for some act. Also, a ban can be imposed on a clergyman under accusation before an ecclesiastical court has judged him. In our case, a ban without time limit was imposed on bishops who had removed themselves from obedience to a church authority and had created their own separate jurisdiction. Such a ban is laid the disobedient so as to

return them to obedience. In the history of the Church this has happened many times. Almost every time a 'daughter' Church separated from its mother-Church, this was linked with a schism and bans. That was the case, for example, when the Bulgarian Church separated from Constantinople in a self-willed manner in 1872.

"There are only three possible ways of removing such a ban and restoring peace in the Church. 1. If the disobedient group of bishops repents and returns into obedience to church authority. 2. If the church authority itself becomes softer and removes the ban. 3. If the church authority is unbending, those under ban can appeal to a higher ecclesiastical instance. For example, in 1935 there was a reconciliation between the Synod of the Church Abroad and Metropolitan Evlogy and Metropolitan Theofil, who returned into obedience to the Synod, and their bans were removed. But in relation to the bans placed on the 'splinters' by the ROCOR Synod (for example, on the Suzdal group), the problem consists in the fact that the church authority that imposed the bans no longer exists (since it has fallen into Sergianism), and so it is impossible to be reconciled and freed from the ban. For the ban can be removed only by that Church which imposed it (Apostolic Canon 32; Canon 5 of the First Ecumenical Council) or by a Church Council that is significantly more authoritative. Nor is it possible to appeal to a high ecclesiastical instance, insofar as that also does not exist for us. Of course, many 'splinters' claim the right of succession from the ROCOR Synod, but as has already been said, such claims are groundless. Insofar as there is no possibility, according to the canons, of removing the bans imposed by the ROCOR Synod before 2007 or by the Synod Metropolitan Vitaly (2001-2007), it makes no sense to recognize these bans. We have to consider them to be non-existent. These bans could be removed by a common council of the hierarchs of the 'splinters'.

"As regards the mutual bans imposed by the hierarchy of the 'splinters' on each other, these were sometimes imposed on the basis of incorrect canonical ideas. For that reason it would be possible simply to ignore them. As one contemporary church actor says, the process of 'the gathering of the splinters' must at the initial stage be more 'theoretical', and not organizational-administrative. It is time, finally, to compose a vivid and convincing ideology, or, expressing oneself in theological language, an 'ecclesiology of the splinters', which would gradually become more popular and influential than the old 'administrative-synodal' ecclesiology."

There is much we can sympathize with in these words. However, they suffer from the same lack of clarity and contradictoriness that we noted earlier. First, with regard to the bans placed on each other by the hierarchs of the "splinters", Igumen Andrei sees the only solution in their being removed "by a common council of the hierarchs of the 'splinters'". Theoretically, that is possible – something similar happened in 1985 in the True Orthodox Church of Greece. But the True Orthodox Church of Greece remains as divided now as it was in 1985...

Moreover, how can he be confident that any kind of unanimity will be

achieved in this “common council”? And what if the bans are fully deserved and should remain in force? To take just one example: both RTOC and ROAC and the new jurisdiction to which Igumen Andrei himself belongs have strong and justified grounds for refusing to accept “Metropolitan” Agathangel, the leader of the largest of the “splinters”.

On the other hand, he says, some of the bans were imposed, “on the basis of incorrect canonical ideas. For that reason it would be possible simply to ignore them.” True – but again, what chance is there of achieving unanimity on this?

As for the so-called “ecclesiology of the splinters”, Igumen Andrei writes: “In my opinion, such an ‘ecclesiology of the splinters’ was defined clearly enough by ukaz №362. As Protopriest Nikolai Artemov put it: ‘In essence, ukaz №362 sanctioned the reconstruction of the whole of the Russian Church on the principle of metropolitan or church districts preserving spiritual unity amongst themselves with the possibility of freely defining their common life on the level of the complete Russian Church.’”

This definition contributes nothing. How can these “metropolias” overlapping each other and having no community of faith between each other – nor any unifying centre for the resolution of disputes – possibly constitute one Russian Church?

The truth is that, while it might be a comforting idea to think that all the “splinters”, however unstable in their beliefs or shaky in their apostolic succession some of them may be, are equally valid branches of the True Russian Church, this is in fact a fantasy – and a dangerous fantasy, for it might encourage the idea that we should be seeking some kind of “lowest common denominator” on the basis of which to unite the Russian Church, which would almost certainly lead to the falling into heresy of the main body of the “reunited” Church. Of course, if the “common Council” were really able to separate the wheat from the chaff, and truth from heresy, there might be some point in it. But questions of the faith and apostolic succession would have to be addressed squarely – and there is no sign that Igumen Andrei’s jurisdiction, for one, wishes to do that.

“In conclusion,” he says, “I cite the word of one of the confessors of the Russian Church: ‘From history we see that sometimes nothing has united the parts of the Universal Church other than communion in the One Bread – Christ, the one Head in the heavens... The Church will not perish when its external unity is destroyed. She does not value external organization, but cares for preserving her truth.’”

Certainly, the Church’s unity is not constituted by any external organization, but by an inner commonality of faith – that is the main lesson of the Soviet period of Church history. But there remains a persistent demand that this inner unity should be *shown*, that it be *declared*. For “with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and *with the mouth* confession is made unto salvation” (Romans

10.10).

So if Bishop Andrei really wishes the unity in truth of the Russian Church, he should show a good example by proclaiming his confession with his mouth. I would suggest that the following truths need to be part of his – and every other Russian bishop’s – confession:

1. The MP is a graceless organization created by Stalin, not by the Lord Jesus Christ. As a long-time collaborator with the Bolsheviks, it falls directly under the anathema of the Russian Council of 1918 against the Bolsheviks and their collaborators.
2. The MP and all the Orthodox members of the World Council of Churches fall under ROCOR’s anathema against ecumenism of 1983.
3. The subtler version of ecumenism known as Cyprianism because of Metropolitan Cyprian of sorry memory also falls under the 1983 anathema. Since it was also condemned as such by the True Orthodox Church of Greece in 1986, all ordinations of Russian bishops carried out by the Cyprianites in 2006 and later are invalid.

Of course, this is only a beginning – but it would be a good beginning, which would serve to separate many of the wolves from the sheep.

Beyond confessing the true faith, there is one other important thing we can do to attain unity: we can pray for the appearance of a True Orthodox Tsar who will sort out the mess created by the heretics and their collaborators among the True Orthodox; for historically speaking, the external, organizational unity of the Church has been restored only by Orthodox emperors and kings.

For example, as the fifth century wore on, and the chaos caused by the heretics increased, the emperors were called upon to take a more active role in Church affairs. Thus we see in the life of St. Hypatius of Rufinianus that the Emperor, as well as the hierarchs, was required to defend the faith at the time of the Third Ecumenical Council in 431: “When Nestorius had left for Ephesus, and the Council had assembled, on the day when he should be deposed, Saint Hypatius saw in a vision that an angel of the Lord took hold of Saint John the Apostle, and led him to the most pious Emperor [Theodosius II] and said to him, ‘Say to the Emperor: “Pronounce your sentence against Nestorius”.’ And he, having heard this, pronounced it. Saint Hypatius made note of this day, and it was verified that Nestorius was deposed on that very day...”

Nor did the Church have any objection to this – so long as the Emperor was Orthodox. Some “interference” by them was even sanctioned by Canon 93 (96) of the Council of Carthage in the year 419: “It behoves the gracious clemency of their Majesties to take measures that the Catholic Church, which has begotten them as worshippers of Christ in her womb, and has nourished them with the strong meat of the faith, should by their forethought be defended, lest violent men, taking advantage of the times of religious excitement, should by fear

overcome a weak people, whom by arguments they were not able to pervert". As an ancient epitome of this canon puts it: "The Emperors who were born in the true religion and were educated in the faith, ought to stretch forth a helping hand to the Churches. For the military band overthrew the dire conspiracy which was threatening Paul."

Again, at the time of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, when the Emperors were the Holy Marcian and Pulcheria, St. Isidore of Pelusium believed that some interference by these emperors was needed 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 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." It was acting justly, in 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".

This points to the main function of the Emperor or Tsar in the life of the Church. He is *the focus of unity* and even, to some extent, *the restorer of unity* at times of extreme impiety and organizational chaos. So let us pray:

O Lord, Thou Remitter of the all the debts of sin, grant the grace of forgiveness to the sinful land of Russia which Thou hast punished with bitter wounds. Yet not in Thy wrath, but according to the multitude of Thy compassions and Thine ineffable mercy cleanse the Orthodox land of the godless foe; raise up, O Compassionate One, thine anointed tsar, and hearken unto us; grant peace to the Church and salvation to Thy people, the Tsar and all the countless assembly of new martyrs entreat Thee, the one blessed God of our fathers.

ADDENDUM. Since the first version of this article was written, Bishop Andrei has shown by his actions what he really means by his not easily understood ecclesiology. It means freedom for his oskolok (ROCANA) to seize

parishes from other oskolki!

First he seized the Sydney parish of RTOC, claiming that their hierarch, Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk, was not looking after them. Archbishop Tikhon was on his way from Siberia to Australia (a long and expensive journey!), but on his arrival was not allowed to address an assembly of his own parish! Moreover, those in the parish who wanted to remain faithful to Archbishop Tikhon and RTOC were not given the opportunity to defend their church allegiance and property except through a court case, which would have cost a vast sum of money that they did not have.

Then, in September, 2020, Bishop Andrei and his fellow "schismatics from a schismatic" (Agathangel) entered into communion with the Serbian True Orthodox Church under Bishop Akakije. So far we have not seen any official confession of faith of this new union. But we can guess that it will try very hard to be different from that of RTOC - but without being very honest or precise about it. For when Akakije broke with RTOC he claimed that RTOC had "a new ideology" - but refused to specify what this "new ideology" was. Then he proceeded to accept a group of priests from RTOC in Omsk under his omophorion whose reasons for separation from RTOC were very open and precise: they believed that the Moscow Patriarchate had grace and refused to accept RTOC's official confession (proclaimed at their Odessa Sobor in 2008) that the MP had no grace. So it is fair to presume that the new union of STOC and ROCANA will not proclaim that the MP has no grace, but, if they talk about the issue at all, will adopt the usual Cyprianite ploy that a sufficiently large, Ecumenical or Pan-Orthodox Council has not yet been convened to resolve the issue!

This, of course, is the critical issue that divides the new formation, not only from RTOC, but also from St. Philaret, Archbishop Averky and the other zealots of old ROCOR, as well as the other Russian True Orthodox jurisdictions - ROCiE and ROAC - that agree with RTOC in seeing the MP as a pseudo-church with no grace, in accordance with many earlier conciliar decisions of the True Church including ROCOR's 1983 anathema against ecumenism.

At least there is no mystery about that!

July 13/26, 2017; revised September 15/28, 2020.

34. SUPER-ECUMENISM, THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Ecumenism may be defined as a process of spiritual globalization working in parallel with the processes of political and economic globalization. It accelerated in the years 1990-94.

Since the early 1920s Orthodoxy had been split into two camps: the "World Orthodox", who joined the ecumenical movement, and the "True Orthodox", who rejected ecumenism (and other important issues, such as Sergianism). In 1948 the Greek-speaking Churches, and those Local Churches in Constantinople's orbit, joined the World Council of Churches. At first, the Moscow Patriarchate and the East European Churches within its orbit, rejected this; but from 1961 they, too, joined the WCC. In the 1980s, and especially in the years 1990-94, at the ecumenical assemblies of Canberra, Chambésy and Balamand, all the Local Churches of World Orthodoxy, with the exception of Jerusalem, were enthusiastic participants in the ecumenical movement, both inter-Christian and inter-religious ecumenism.

Besides the World Council of Churches, one of the movement's main organs was the World Constitution and Parliament Association (WCPA), which was founded in 1959. Although its aims were political and economic, it clearly had ramifications for religious organization. For, as a 1992 report made clear: "Its members in their turn are representatives of such organizations as, for example: the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, Green Peace, the World Muslim Congress, the Council on Foreign Relations, the World Court, and the ambassadors and ministers of many countries. This organization has already arranged several meetings of a Provisional World Parliament and passed eleven laws of a World Codex of laws. It is interesting that the WCPA has divided the whole world into *ten kingdoms*, employing precisely that term in English: 'kingdoms'. It is proposed that a new world financial system will be introduced immediately the first *ten countries* confirm a World Constitution, since the remaining countries will then be forced to accept this constitution for economic reasons. At the present time the WCPA is trying to convene a Constitutional Assembly so as to substitute the constitution of the USA for the World Constitution. In 1990 the WCPA sent a letter to all heads of government in which it declared the formation of a World Government, and after this many leaders of states openly began to speak about the New World Order."³⁷

In September, 1990, inter-Christian ecumenism took a major step forward at Chambésy, Switzerland, where a Declaration was agreed between a Joint Commission of Orthodox and Monophysite (called "Oriental Orthodox" in the

³⁷ *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 15, 1992, p. 16.

documents), the Orthodox and Monophysites being 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 (τη θεωρια μονη).”

This was already completely unacceptable to the Orthodox, and represented a heretical, Monophysite formulation. The two natures and wills of Christ are not distinguishable “only in thought”, but also in reality. Paragraph Seven also spoke of the two natures being distinguishable “only in thought”, which implied, as Ludmilla Perepiolkina points out “an *absence of this distinction in reality*”.³⁸

Paragraph Five stated: “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*.”³⁹

Paragraph Eight stated: “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 did *not* commit themselves to accepting the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils in the way the Orthodox did, but only “positively responded to their affirmation”, which means *nothing* in dogmatic terms.

Paragraph Nine stated: “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.”

³⁸ Perepiolkina, *Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 251.

³⁹ Perepiolkina, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

This was 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 claimed 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 Monophysitism, were wrong, and the whole controversy was simply based on some linguistic misunderstandings!

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

Although the Chambesy unia was not formally ratified by the Moscow Patriarchate, this was for completely non-theological reasons⁴⁰, and the MP has continued to act as if the unia were valid and true. It was therefore with complete justification that the Holy Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostom (Kioussis) issued declared in July, 1991:-

“At Chambésy the Orthodox and the Monophysites agreed that ‘now they have clearly understood that both families (i.e. the Orthodox and the Monophysites)

⁴⁰ Perepiolkina, op. cit., p. 252.

have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological Faith and the unbroken continuity of the Apostolic tradition...'

"... How is it possible to accept as correct that which has now been understood by twenty-one representatives of the Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches – that is, that for fifteen hundred years the Orthodox and Monophysites had the same Christological Faith – when it is a fact that *four* Ecumenical Councils condemned the latter as heretical? Is it possible that the Holy Fathers who took part in them were mistaken, and were unjust towards the Monophysites? Was there not to be found even one of the 630 Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, of the 165 Fathers of the Fifth, of the 227 of the Sixth, or of the 367 of the Seventh, to understand this which the ecumenist Orthodox of Chambésy have now understood – that is, that the Monophysites are not heretics? So it is that 1,389 Holy Fathers are in error, and the twenty-one representatives of the innovative Orthodox are right? Are we to believe that the Holy Spirit did not enlighten the Holy Fathers? Are we to deny the divine inspiration of the Holy Councils? Heretical and blasphemous! Even more boldly, are we to assert that St. Euphemia, who sealed with a miracle the Definition of Faith of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, misunderstood the 'Orthodoxy' of the Monophysites because she did not understand the language? A fearsome thing!

"The Orthodox and the Monophysites agree that 'both families accept the first *three* Ecumenical Councils...' [But] the Orthodox Church accepts *seven* Ecumenical Councils. At Chambésy, at the demand of the Monophysites, the Orthodox delegates accepted the recognition of the first three; the rest are *put aside* and are considered a matter *only* for the Chalcedonian Orthodox. For the Monophysites, who are condemned as heretics and anathematised by them, it *is* appropriate to oppose these four other Ecumenical Councils. But is it permissible for men, however modernist they might be, who would be called Orthodox, and who declare themselves hierarchs and theologians, to limit the Ecumenical Councils to three? How do they dare? How did they sign such a grossly treasonous agreement? At least those who signed the false union of Florence-Ferrara [with Rome], when they returned to the capital and repented, declared 'Let our hands be cut off' and abjured the false union...

"One can only be horrified at the betrayal of those who signed the agreement at Chambésy. Those who were deposed and anathematised as heretics by four Ecumenical Councils are now recognized as 'saints' and 'Fathers' of the innovating Church... Who are they? There is Dioscorus, whom the Fourth Ecumenical Council anathematised as being of one mind with the heretic Eutyches... and the rest against whom the Orthodox Church cries out the Anathema which is read in the hearing of all on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Now the modernist Orthodox would honor them in their churches, make icons of them and light candles to them, asking forgiveness because our Holy Fathers unjustly condemned them as heretics...

“Let all who signed the agreement at Chambésy know that they have ceased to be Orthodox, since they are communicants of the heresy of the Monophysites.

“Those who signed the agreement at Chambésy did not sign as individuals. Chiefly, they signed as representatives of their Churches, and their Churches accepted the agreement at Chambésy...

“Therefore we denounce this new false union which was signed at Chambésy by the representatives of the Autocephalous Churches and Patriarchates, who, after 1,500 years, have fallen into the heresy of Monophysitism... and... the New Calendarist State Church for all that has been stated, and declare it to be heretical henceforth. We call upon every faithful Orthodox person, following upon the treasonous agreement at Chambésy, to choose between Orthodoxy and Monophysitism. Whoever wants to remain Orthodox, whoever wants to remain a member of the Body of the Church of Christ, must immediately cease all relationship and communion with the heretical and monophysitizing shepherds of the Churches which signed and accepted the agreement of Chambésy.

“All who remain disinterested or silent, and ally themselves with the supporters of the agreement of Chambésy, have simply embraced Monophysitism and its wrong-thinking ‘Fathers’ Dioscorus, Severus, Timothy, and the other heretics. Such people have upon their heads the anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils. They are outside the Church, outside of salvation, and their portion is with that of all the heretics.

“We have spoken. Let every Orthodox faithful take up his responsibilities before God and man. ‘Let us stand aright; let us stand with fear.’”⁴¹

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Chambésy was soon producing other concrete fruits. Thus in 1991 it was followed by the Seventh General Assembly of the WCC in Canberra, at which the Orthodox delegates were among those invited by aboriginal pagans to pass through a “cleansing cloud of smoke” uniting Aboriginal to Christian spirituality (!). In spite of this, Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev), head of the Department of

⁴¹ From the translation in *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XIII, No 1, January-February, 1991, pp. 29-30. See also Metropolitan Calliopius of Pentapolis, *Prodosia tis Orthodoxias* (A Betrayal of Orthodoxy), Piraeus, 1991; *O Pharos tis Orthodoxias* (The Lighthouse of Orthodoxy), October, 1991, No 66, p. 120; 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, No 3, May-June, 1991; "Dossier sur les Accords de Chambésy entre Monophysites et Orthodoxes" (Dossier on the Chambésy Agreements between the Monophysites and the Orthodox), *La Lumière du Thabor* (The Light of Tabor), No 31, 1991.

External Relations of the MP, said that the WCC was “our common home and we want it to be the cradle of the one church”.⁴²

However, in 1992 a Russian parliamentary commission revealed Gundiaev, the present patriarch, and almost all his hierarchical colleagues, was a KGB Agent. This was confirmed recently in Bulgaria: “The Sofia District Court found that the statement of the former Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria Valery Simeonov that Patriarch Kirill (Gundiaev) was an ‘agent’ of the KGB was true. As reported by [Novosti Bulgaria](#) on April 14, it is a question of decision No. 20069484 in case No. 18199/2018 on the application of Emil Milanov.

“Another similar lawsuit was filed by a retired general and leader of the pro-Russian organization International Slavic Community - Perun 2000, secretary of the Russophiles movement and chairman of the Renaissance Bulgaria party, Emil Milanov.

“Valery Simeonov was able to prove in court that the information he had spread about Kirill's cooperation with the KGB under an operational pseudonym was true. ‘It has been proven that the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kirill, is a second-rate Soviet agent of the KGB. The one who said that human rights are a new heresy. And he still dared to administer justice over the Bulgarian president,’ said Valery Simeonov.”⁴³

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On July 22, 1991, the Synod of the Antiochian Patriarchate (which included the notoriously pro-Islamic Metropolitan George Khodre) implemented a series of measures aimed at achieving full union with the Monophysite Syriac Church. These included a prohibition on proselytism among the Monophysites and full eucharistic communion. ⁴⁴Then, on November 12, 1991 Patriarch Ignatius IV of Antioch issued an “Official Statement of the Orthodox Church of Antioch on Relations between the Eastern Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox Churches of Antioch” in which the unia between his Church and the Syrian Monophysites (called here “the Syrian Orthodox Churches”) was proclaimed as follows:

“1. We affirm the total and mutual respect of the spirituality, heritage and Holy Fathers of both Churches. The integrity of both the Byzantine and Syriac liturgies is to be preserved.

⁴² *Christian News*, April 1 and 8, 1991; in "Ecumenism down under", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, vol. XXIV, No 45 (1149), August 5/18, 1991, p. 3; *Keston News Service*, No 370, March 7, 1991, p. 2.

⁴³ Published in Credo Press, April 17, 2021.

⁴⁴ *The Word*, April, 1992.

"2. The heritage of the Fathers in both Churches and their traditions as a whole should be integrated into Christian education curricula and theological studies. Exchanges of professors and students are to be enhanced.

"3. Both Churches shall refrain from accepting any faithful from one Church into the membership of the other, irrespective of all motivations or reasons.

"4. Meetings between the two Churches, at the level of their Synods, according to the will of the two Churches, will be held whenever the need arises.

"5. Every Church will remain the reference and authority for its faithful, pertaining to matters of personal status (marriage, divorce, adoption, etc.).

"6. If bishops of the two Churches participate at a holy baptism or funeral service, the one belonging to the Church of the baptized or deceased will preside. In case of a holy matrimony service, the bishop of the bridegroom's Church will preside.

"7. The above mentioned is not applicable to the concelebration in the Divine Liturgy.

"8. What applies to bishops equally applies to the priests of both Churches.

"9. In localities where there is only one priest, from either Church, he will celebrate services for the faithful of both Churches, including the Divine Liturgy, pastoral duties, and holy matrimony. He will keep an independent record for each Church and transmit that of the sister Church to its authorities.

"10. If two priests of the two Churches happen to be in a locality where there is only one Church, they take turns in making use of its facilities.

"11. If a bishop from one Church and a priest from the sister Church happen to concelebrate a service, the bishop will preside even when it is the priest's parish.

"12. Ordinations into holy orders are performed by the authorities of each Church for its own members. It would be advisable to invite the faithful of the sister Church to attend.

"13. Godfathers, godmothers (in baptism), and witnesses in holy matrimony, can be chosen from the members of the sister Church.

"14. Both Churches will exchange visits and will co-operate in the various areas of social, cultural, and educational work.

“We ask God's help to continue strengthening our relations with the sister Church, and with other Churches, so that we all become one community under one Shepherd.”⁴⁵

At the time of writing, the Orthodox and the Monophysites in Syria are indeed “one community” even if they do not yet have one shepherd, while the leaders of the other patriarchates frequently concelebrate with them...

As for Constantinople, in November, 2009 the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the honorary president of the Masonic “XAN” organization⁴⁶, said the following before the UN Diplomatic Corps: “The theological dialogue between our two Christian families – that is the Orthodox Church and the Ancient Oriental Churches, has formally ended the misunderstandings of the past. It is not theology that divides us...”

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The only exception to this “superecumenist” trend among the Local Churches of World Orthodoxy was Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem, who left the ecumenical movement on May 22, 1989, declaring with his Synod: “The Orthodox Church firmly believes that She possesses the full, complete truth and that She is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the repository of Divine Grace and Truth. She alone is the ark of security within which the unsullied teachings and sacred Tradition of the Faith are to be found and the fullness of their salvific character and expression. Further participation by the Orthodox in the dialogues is now becoming harmful, damaging and, indeed, dangerous. The non-Orthodox are taking advantage of these theological dialogues and are using these contacts against the Orthodox Church. Here in the Holy Land especially they are now saying, ‘Together with the Orthodox we are trying to find the truth.’ Thus, day after day they are increasingly successful in their proselytising and draw Orthodox believers into their ranks. The non-Orthodox are also showing photographs and video films to our people in which our representatives appear embracing the non-Orthodox and they tell our faithful: ‘the union of the churches has come; come to our churches for joint prayers.’ To such acts must also be added their tempting offers of houses (and housing is a pressing problem for the majority of the Arab population), offers of jobs and of financial assistance if the Orthodox will only join their religion. This draining away or, rather, bleeding of our Orthodox flock, but above all our primary desire and obligation to preserve the purity of the Orthodox Faith and Tradition from the dangerous activities of non-Orthodox has compelled us to put an end to the dialogues, not only with the Anglicans who for some time now have been ordaining women, but also with the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, as well as

⁴⁵ <http://www.antiochian.org.au/content/view/143/21>.

⁴⁶ *Kathimerini*, October 16, 1992.

with those Protestant denominations with whom the Church of Jerusalem has only more recently had theological dialogues."⁴⁷

Patriarch Diodorus showed that he was serious by refusing to sign the agreement of Chambésy with the Monophysites in 1990; he strongly criticized the official intercommunion between the Antiochian and Alexandrian patriarchates and the Monophysites; and in March, 1992, at the meeting of the heads of the Orthodox Churches in Constantinople, he argued forcefully for breaking *all* dialogue with the Vatican.

However, while more “conservative” than the other Churches of World Orthodoxy, the Jerusalem Patriarchate has never broken communion with World Orthodoxy, nor decisively broken with the major organizations of the ecumenical movement. It is relatively guarded in relation to other confessions only because it has to defend the Holy Places from the pretensions of Catholics, Armenians, Copts and others. In confirmation of this, we may cite the following joint statement of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the Antiochian Patriarchate, and Monophysites, Papists, and Protestants at the Seventh Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches in 1999: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us... Oriental Orthodox [*Monophysite*], Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical... We renew our commitment to strive to be [*the*] One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, according to the will of the Lord Jesus, 'so that they may be one' (John 17:11)... by opening our hearts and minds to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we encounter each other cooperatively, with respect, and with kindness. In Him, we are one."⁴⁸

The Constantinople Council issued a communiqué that more or less renounced missionary work among the Western heretics. After condemning the work of Catholic Uniates and Protestant fundamentalists in Orthodox countries, they went on to “remind all that every form of proselytism – to be distinguished from evangelization and mission – is absolutely condemned by the Orthodox. Proselytism, practiced in nations already Christian, and in many cases even Orthodox, sometimes through material enticement and sometimes by various forms of violence, poisons the relations among Christians and destroys the road towards their unity. Mission, by contrast, carried out in non-Christian countries and among non-Christian peoples, constitutes a sacred duty of the Church, worthy of every assistance” (point 4).

Here a dishonourable deal was being proposed: if you refrain from proselytising in Orthodox countries, we will not receive converts in western countries. Of course,

⁴⁷ *Agiotafitis* (Holy Sepulchre), translated in *The Canadian Orthodox Missionary Journal*, year 16, issue 5, № 134, September-October, 1989, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Dr. Fred Strickert, *The Washington Report: On Middle East Affairs: Christianity and the Middle East*, July/August 1999, pp. 84-85.

this renunciation of proselytism among western heretics had been implicit in the Ecumenical Patriarchate's statements since the encyclical of 1920, and in all the Orthodox leaders' actions in ecumenical forums since the 1960s. But it still came as a shock to see the "Orthodox Church" renouncing the hope of conversion and therefore salvation for hundreds of millions of westerners. Here the ecumenical "Orthodox" renounced the first commandment of the Lord to His Church after the Resurrection: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28.19-20). Patriarch Bartholomew confirmed his renunciation of proselytism on November 30, 1998, when, referring to the representatives of the Pope, he said: "In view of the fact that one Church recognizes the other Church as a locus of grace, proselytization of members from one Church to the other is precluded."⁴⁹

The 1992 communiqué also made threats against "schismatic groups competing with the canonical structure of the Orthodox Church" (point 3), i.e. the True Orthodox. This threat was made clearer when, in May, a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate together with a detachment of Athonite police expelled the Russian-American monks of the Skete of the Prophet Elijah on Mount Athos, who did not commemorate, not the patriarch, but ROCOR.⁵⁰

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Not only inter-Christian ecumenism, but also "super-", that is, inter-religious ecumenism was making gigantic strides in this period.

Thus on November 13, 1991 Patriarch Alexis of Moscow addressed the Rabbis of New York as follows: "Dear brothers, shalom to you in the name of the God of love and peace!... We are all brothers, for we are all children of the Old Testament on Mount Sinai, which, as we Christians believe, was renewed by Christ... Your law is our law, your prophets are our prophets."

This was a profound error, which was thoroughly exposed - and anathematized - by the holy Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatians and condemned by the 29th Canon of Laodicea: "But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ".

. There is a sense in which the Old Testament law and prophets were not destroyed, but fulfilled by Christ (Matthew 5.17) - that is, in the sense that He revealed their

⁴⁹ *Ekklesiastiki Alitheia* (Ecclesiastical Truth), December 12, 1998.

⁵⁰ Damian Thompson, "Holy Sanctuary in turmoil over monks' eviction", *The Daily Telegraph*, June 4, 1992 ecumenists seize Skete of the Prophet Elias", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XIII, № 4, July-August, 1991, pp. 1, 9. For other harassment of non-commemorators on Mount Athos, see Monk Maximus of the Great Lavra, *Human Rights on Mount Athos*, Welshpool: Stylite Publishing, 1990; "Of Truth and Falsehood: Allegations of the 'O.C.A.' and Response from the Holy Mountain", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XIII, № 3, May-June, 1991.

inner meaning. But “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ” (Galatians 3.24), and having found Christ, we follow, not the law of the Old Testament, but of the *New* Testament.

Some parts of the old law are still obligatory for Christians – the Ten Commandments, for example. But even there adjustments need to be made: the commandment to “keep the sabbath holy”, for example, applies now to Sundays and Church feast days, not to Saturdays. And the commandments against murder and adultery are now deepened to become commandments against anger and lust. As for circumcisions and animal sacrifices and the worship in the Temple on Mount Moriah, this is now definitely excluded, being replaced by the worship and sacraments of the Church. So the Jews’ law is *not* our law. Nor do they stand in a relationship of equality of honour to the Christians. As for the prophets, they prophesied about Christ; and it is the Christians, not the Jews, who have understood the prophecies and paid heed to them.

The patriarch continued: “Judaism and Christianity are united by a spiritual and natural affinity and positive religious interests. We are united with the Jews without renouncing Christianity. For this is not contrary to Christianity, but in the name and for the sake of Christianity. And the Jews are united with us also in the name and for the sake of genuine Judaism.”

Astonishing! Then why have the main persecutors of Orthodox Christianity for the last two thousand years been the Jews? And why does the Jews’ “holy” book, the Talmud, say such terrible things about Christ, the Mother of God and Christians in general? No: to be united with the Jews means precisely to renounce Christianity; it is to be united with Annas and Caiaphas and Judas and to be separated from Christ and the holy Apostles.

“We are separated from the Jews because we are not wholly Christian, and the Jews are separated from us because they are not wholly Jewish. Because full Christianity embraces Judaism and full Judaism is Christianity.”

The patriarch speaks truly about himself when he says he is “not wholly Christian”. More precisely, he is not Christian at all. For no Christian, whether “full” or not, can possibly embrace Judaism, which is the antithesis of Christianity. For the Jews reject every single article of the Nicene Creed with the possible exception of the first, about God the Father. And yet even here it cannot be said that the Jews know God the Father. For “who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father” (I John 2.22-23).

“The hierarchs, clergy and theologians of our Church resolutely and openly denounce all and sundry manifestations of anti-Semitism and enmity and pogroms against the Jews.”

The Orthodox Church rejects anti-Semitism, that is, a rejection of the Jews on the grounds of their race. She also rejects pogroms because pogroms are murder. But the Church is and will never cease to be anti-*Judaic*, because Talmudic Judaism is a lie, the worst of all lies.

“During the notorious Beilis trial, Archpriest Alexander Glagolev, a professor at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy, and Ivan Troitsky, a professor at the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy, firmly defended Beilis and resolutely rejected the accusations of ritual killings allegedly practised by the Jews. The Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, Antony (Vadkovsky), did much to protect the Jews from the anti-Semitic attacks of the extreme right-wing radical organizations. There were also many other hierarchs and theologians of our Church who courageously defended the Jews from the enmity and slanderous accusations made by the anti-Semitic circles: Metropolitan Makary (Bulgakov), Bishop Donatus (Babinsky) of Grodno, Bishop Vissarion (Nechaev), Archbishop Seraphim (Mescheryakov), Archbishop Makary (Miroliubov).”

Much could be said about the Beilis trial, which was indeed “notorious” – mainly because of the extreme pressure brought to bear upon witnesses by the Jews and their supporters, and the extreme inefficiency of the police work. Beilis was indeed acquitted, but the court also established that the victim, Andrew Yuschinsky, *had* been the victim of a ritual murder. The patriarch also ignored the fact that the Orthodox Church has officially glorified at least one victim of Jewish ritual murder – the Child Martyr Gabriel, to whom Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky wrote a service.

“We should also mention that many of our theologians and outstanding religious thinker, such as Vladimir Soloviev, Nicholas Berdiaev, and Father Sergius Bulgakov, stood up for the Jews. Vladimir Soloviev regarded the defence of the Jews, from the Christian point of view, to be one of the major tasks of his life. For him the main question was not whether the Jews were good or bad, but whether we Christians were good or bad. Much had been done for establishing a Christian dialogue by our famous religious thinkers of Jewish origin, Semyon Frank and Lev Shestov.

“In this difficult but sacred cause for all of us we hope for understanding and help from our Jewish brothers and sisters. We shall build, by our joint efforts, a new society – one that is democratic, free, open and just. It will be a society which no one will want to leave, and in which the Jews will live confidently and calmly, in an atmosphere of friendship, creative cooperation and fraternity between the

children of our common God – the Father of all, the God of your and our fathers...”⁵¹

During the visit of Alexis II to the U.S.A. in 1993 the chief rabbi of New York, Schneier, presented him with the prize “The Call of Conscience”. And both in 1991 and in 1993 the patriarch was a guest of a Zionist organization of the same name; he visited synagogues and met Jewish religious leaders... In 1992, the president of the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods, Sergei Poliakov, declared that the patriarch’s speech to the New York rabbis had been “clearly heretical”. In Tver diocese “almost 60% of the diocesan clergy” were refusing to commemorate the patriarch.⁵²

The MP was able to face down its dissidents. In its council in December, 1994, the patriarchate's participation in the WCC was unequivocally endorsed as having been inspired “primarily by considerations of the good it would do for the Church”. Then a purge of the anti-ecumenist brotherhoods began.⁵³ The decision was made to permit common prayers with heretics with the blessing of the local bishop!⁵⁴ And with the death in 1995 of the only anti-ecumenist in the hierarchy, Metropolitan John (Snychev) of St. Petersburg, the victory of the ecumenists appeared to have been sealed. The abomination of desolation, which had first been put up in the temple of the MP in 1927, with the enthronement of God-fighting atheism in the heart of the Church’s administration, now, four years after the fall of communism, was securely re-established there in a theistic form...

April 18 / May 1, 2021.
Holy and Great Saturday.

⁵¹ Shmakov, *Rech' Patriarkha Alekseia II k rabbinam g. Nyu Yoroka (S.Sh.A.) i Eres' Zhidovstvuyushchikh*, (The Speech of Patriarch Alexis II to the Rabbis of New York (U.S.A.) and the Heresy of the Judaisers) U.S.A., 1993 (MS), Moscow, 1992, pp. 8-10; Valery Kadzhaya, “Ask Peace for Jerusalem”, http://www.newtimes.ru/eng/detail.asp?art_id=778.

⁵² *Priamoj Put'* (The Straight Path), February, 1992, p. 5; E. Polyakov, "Khronika Tserkovnoj Zhizni v Yanvare-Fevrale 1992 g." (A Chronicle of Church Life in January-February, 1992) (MS), p. 2; *Russkii Pastyr'*, No 30, I-1998, p. 86. Cf. Fr. Timothy Alferov, "Nekotorie uroki dvizhenia 'nepominaishchikh' (Some Lessons of the Movement of the Non-Commemorators), *Russkii Pastyr'* (Russian Pastor), No 19, II-1994, pp. 102-104.

⁵³ A. Soldatov, "Obnovlenie ili obnovlenchestvo?" (Renovation or Renovationism?), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), No 20 (1521), October 15/28, 1994, pp. 6-9; *Service Orthodoxe de Presse* (Orthodox Press Service), No 194, January, 1995, pp. 7-10 (F); V.N. Osipov, "Pravoslavnoe serdtse na vetru", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), No 2 (1527), January 15/28, 1995, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁴ Perepiolkina, op. cit., p. 205; from the Documents and Reports of the Council published by the MP in 1995, p. 191.

35. THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHURCH AND STATE IN IVAN THE TERRIBLE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel very honoured to speak today to you on the subject of Ivan the Terrible: Church and State. But I am also somewhat shamefaced. Because I am only an amateur historian of Russia – and I see in my audience some real, professional historians, whose knowledge of Russia is, I am sure, much greater than mine. However, this does have the major advantage that if I make some big howlers in my talk, the real historians here will be able to correct them in the Q & A session.

You may well ask: Do I have any qualifications at all to talk about Ivan the Terrible? Well, I do have some training in psychology – and Ivan was definitely a terrible nutcase.

But one of the reasons why I left psychology for the study of Orthodox history is that in my view psychology rarely provides anything but superficial explanations of the people and events that interest me.

Take the question: “Why did Brutus kill Caesar?” Is this a psychological or a historical question? It is of course both. But does it really help us to know that, for the sake of argument, Brutus hated his father or was in love with his mother, and therefore wanted to take it out on his surrogate father, Julius Caesar? I don’t think so. I think it is much more useful to explain his behaviour in terms of his fundamental beliefs about Rome and republicanism, which is of course what most historians do.

In other words, I think it makes sense to attribute as much importance to a man’s conscious beliefs as to his subconscious motivation, even if he is mentally ill.

I think the same is true with the question that interests me: “Why did Ivan kill so many thousands of innocent men, women and children who were no conceivable threat to him?” The psychological answer would be: he was a paranoid schizophrenic, or he was reliving the trauma of his insecure childhood. So, as Ivan’s biographer Benson Bodrick puts it, he was “Ivan the Terrible” because he was also “Ivan the Terrified”. There may be some limited truth in this explanation, but I think it is rather superficial. A more satisfactory answer, in my view, would be in terms of Ivan’s fundamental beliefs, his views about Russia and the role of the Russian autocrat.

That is what I shall try to do in this lecture. Briefly my thesis is as follows:- Ivan had a distorted view of the relationship of the Church and the State, and in particular of the rights and duties of the tsar, on the one hand, and of the

metropolitan or patriarch on the other. When he discovered that several leading boyars did not want his infant son to succeed him, and when the one churchman whom he admired and who had exalted his authority, died, he lost all restraint. The rest is history.

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Now Ivan was a very intelligent man with an almost photographic memory who was extremely well-educated in the Holy Scriptures and Fathers of the Orthodox Church. As he revealed particularly in his correspondence with the rebel Prince Kurbsky, he was able to quote at length from the Orthodox teaching on his own and his subjects' respective rights and duties. So what was this teaching? At this point I must launch into a necessary excursus on what I may call the Orthodox "Theology of Politics" in the Byzantine and Kievan and early Muscovite periods. Then I will return to Ivan's own highly selective interpretation of this teaching.

In Byzantium there was a dominant, official theory of politics, which I shall call the symphonic theory, and a minor, unofficial theory, which I shall call the pagan or absolutist theory that became important in times of crises in the Church and State.

The symphonic theory stated that Church and State are independent authorities and institutions, both of which are derived from God, not men. Although independent, they are called by God to work together in "symphony" or harmony, for the sake of the salvation of the Christian race and the spreading of the Gospel to non-Christian peoples. Each had its own hierarchy, headed by the Patriarch in the Church and the Emperor in the State. The Patriarch was autonomous in the sphere of the Church and in all spiritual matters, and the Emperor was autonomous in the sphere of the State and in all secular matters. The Patriarch had the right to advise the Emperor on all legislation that affected faith and morality, and could object to any law that in his opinion violated any dogma of the faith or principle of morality. He also had the right to intercede for prisoners, widows and orphans, and in general for anyone whom he believed to have been wronged by the State. This right of intercession, *Pechalovanie* in Russian, became, as we shall see, very important in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. The Emperor, on his part, had the right to make his wishes known with regard to the appointment of bishops and patriarchs (in late Byzantium he could choose between a list of three candidates for the patriarchate presented to him by the Holy Synod). He also had the right to convene Church Councils (all seven of the Ecumenical Councils were convened by Byzantine Emperors, as well as all the important Local Councils convened in the Middle and Late Byzantine periods).

The symphonic theory worked pretty well and for a very long period of time not only in Byzantium, but also in many independent Christian states formed on

the model of Byzantium: from Anglo-Saxon England in the West to Georgia in the East, from Kiev and Moldavia in the north to Ethiopia and Yemen in the south. In the medieval period Serbia and Bulgaria were also what we may call “symphonic” States.

Let us now turn to the unofficial, rebel or heretical theory of politics. This was essentially a hangover from the period of the pagan Roman emperors before Constantine, who exercised supreme authority over both politics and religion in the Roman empire. The pagan emperors had the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, “Greatest Priest”, a title first assumed by Julius Caesar and then by Augustus and all subsequent Emperors. The early Christians, as is well known, in accord with the teaching of Christ, were quite prepared to obey the Emperors in all political matters – taxes, military service, etc. – but categorically refused to obey him in religious matters, and particularly in offering worship to the pagan gods, including those Emperors who proclaimed themselves to be gods.

However, the Christian Emperors, from the Emperor Gratian onwards, rejected the title *Pontifex Maximus* and confined themselves to political matters. Nevertheless, some of the heretical emperors continued to try and impose their will on the Church, and even to call themselves “priests”, to which the Church leaders, such as Saints Athanasius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, responded very strongly and defiantly. There is a famous case when the Emperor Julian the Apostate tried to turn the whole empire back to paganism, and Saints Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, who knew him from university days in Athens, flatly refused to recognize his authority and even prayed for his overthrow. He did not last long, being pierced through by a mysterious warrior in the sands of Mesopotamia...

But the pagan, absolutist tradition stubbornly refused to die completely. Thus Justinian’s juridical corpus contains the words: “what has pleased the prince has the force of law” (*quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem*). This was a fatal phrase which, if applied consistently, would have completely undermined the Byzantine symphony of powers that was also officially proclaimed in Justinian’s laws. And some emperors did try to use it in this way, for example the iconoclast emperors in the eighth and ninth centuries. Moreover, as the centuries passed the pagan, absolutist tradition gradually came to suppress the symphonic theory and dominate Byzantium, as the Emperors came to control the Church in what western scholars call “caesaropapism”. Thus by the late fourteenth century the Church showed itself voiceless and powerless when the Emperor John VIII travelled to Rome and quite openly became a Roman Catholic! In the old days, the Church would have excommunicated him on the spot as a heretic and the people of Byzantium would have rioted against him and kicked him out. But not now. And the very last emperor of Byzantium, Constantine XI, was in fact a uniate Roman Catholic.

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Let us now turn to Russia. Russia had, of course, received its Orthodoxy from Byzantium in the time of St. Vladimir, and for the next 500-600 years remained remarkably faithful to her spiritual mother. As Byzantium declined in strength, and Russia increased, the Russians never tried – unlike the Bulgarians – to free themselves from Byzantine tutelage and dominion. The Russian Church, in spite of its vast size, remained a junior metropolitan district of the Byzantine Church, ruled (usually) by a Greek metropolitan appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople; and the Russian Great Prince, though far more powerful than the Byzantine Emperor, remained in theory his younger brother and far inferior in status.

For the whole of the Kievan period, as well as during the Mongol yoke, Church-State relations were good. None of the Great Princes ruled despotically; for the Church enjoyed spiritual strength and prestige, and its leaders continued to exert a powerful beneficial influence on the rulers.

But then, in 1438-39, came an earth-shaking event: the Council of Florence. This was convened by the Pope of Rome and attended by the Byzantine Emperor and Patriarch together with many metropolitans and bishops. Its aim was to subordinate the Byzantine Church to Rome, in exchange for which the Pope would appeal to the western rulers to send military help to save Constantinople from the Turks. But the Greek Metropolitan Mark of Ephesus refused to sign the unia – as did the Russian and Georgian Churches. In fact, the Russian Great Prince Vassily II, Ivan the Terrible's great-grandfather, imprisoned the uniate Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev, who was sent to take control of the Russian Church (he then allowed him to escape to Rome, where he became a cardinal). Only a few years later, in 1453, Constantinople fell to the Turks – which the Russians (and many Greeks) saw as God's retribution on the old Empire for its apostasy.

These events had three very important consequences. First, the Russian Church and State was forced to break communion with the Byzantine Church and State, which had become heretical, and became de facto autocephalous, that is, independent. Russia had come of age; she was no longer tied to the apron-strings of Byzantium in either Church or State.

Secondly, the Russian Great Prince had played an important role in rejecting the uniate metropolitan, thereby preserving Russia in Orthodoxy. Therefore the prestige of the State went up, while that of the Church went down. Caesar had shown himself more zealous in giving the things of God to God than the Church. Ivan the Terrible took this lesson to heart...

Thirdly, the Russians experienced a burst of pride in their own state and nation, and began to lose their reverence for the Greeks. The influence of Byzantinism, the dominant theological and cultural influence in Russia for 500 years, began to decline. This was one of the motives of the development of the Third Rome ideology. The essential idea was that the Second Rome, Byzantium, had fallen, and Russia was left as the only independent Orthodox state and therefore the only possible successor of the Second Rome as the main defender of Orthodoxy throughout the world. Again, Ivan took this lesson to heart, as did the Old Believers in the seventeenth century.

As we come towards the end of the fifteenth century, and the beginning of the sixteenth, we witness the beginning of a deterioration in Church-State relations.

First of all, a very serious heresy, that of the Judaizers, made serious inroads into both Church and State. The rot went to the very top. Thus in 1492, the new Metropolitan of Moscow, Zossima, turned out to be a Judaizer. It was a bit like discovering that the Archbishop of Canterbury is in fact a Hindu or a Jehovah's Witness. The shock was great. The heresy was successfully ejected, but the leaders of society were very alarmed.

Then a serious quarrel broke out between the so-called Possessors and Non-Possessors, that is, between those who believed that the Church should own large landed estates and serfs, so as to be able to help the poor and the State, and those who believed that possessing such riches was spiritually harmful to the Church. The Possessors won the argument, but the Non-Possessors continued to be influential.

Then there arrived in Russia from Mount Athos in Greece a remarkable monk known as St. Maxim the Greek. He had been summoned to Moscow to work in the monastic libraries where there were many Greek manuscripts. As he got to know Russia and the Slavonic language better, St. Maxim noticed many mis-translations from Greek originals into Slavonic, and with the blessing of Metropolitan Varlaam, who valued his talents, he began to correct the texts. At the same time, he began to point out to the Russians that they should return to communion with Constantinople because while the Greeks had definitely fallen away at the Council of Florence, they had repented of their error and were now Orthodox again. As if that were not provocative enough for the incipient nationalism of the Russians, Maxim also began to upbraid Great Prince Vassily for his sins in the tradition of the bold confessor-hierarchs of the Byzantine Church. When a new metropolitan, Daniel, was appointed who was less sympathetic to Maxim and more fearful of the Great Prince, Maxim was thrown into prison, where he suffered for the next twenty years until released by Ivan the Terrible...

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And so we come to the reign of Ivan the Terrible. The real question was: which part of his education would he act upon? The symphonic theory of Church-State relations, the traditional system of governance in which allowed churchmen to rebuke Great Princes and Emperors, or the pagan, absolutist theory which put all power, in both Church and State, into the hands of the secular ruler?

For the first half of his reign it looked as if he would hold to the symphonic theory. Under the direction of an exceptionally capable and astute Church leader, Metropolitan Makary, who crowned and anointed him with the title of "tsar" in 1547, the Church recovered some of its damaged reputation and worked well with the Tsar in a series of *Zemskie Sobory*, or "Councils of the Land". In the whole of this first part of his reign, Ivan showed respect for Makary and the Church, and even, at the *Stoglav* Council of 1551, humbly declared that the hierarchs could and should rebuke him for his sins. It looked as if the traditional symphonic theory was firmly re-established.

However, there were some straws in the wind to indicate that there might be trouble ahead...

First, early in 1553, Ivan fell ill, seriously ill, so that it was thought that he might die. One of his most trusted advisers, Viskovaty, then suggested that he draw up a will and get the leading boyars to sign it. The will was drawn up making Ivan's infant son Dmitri his heir, and the boyars were now asked to pledge their allegiance to Ivan and his son before the Holy Cross. To Ivan's astonishment and rage, a significant faction of boyars refused to make the oath. They thought it foolish to swear an oath to a baby boy, which would necessitate a long period of regency with all its attendant instability. The favoured candidate of the boyars was Prince Vladimir Staritsky. This reactivated in Ivan his childhood memories of how he had been ill-treated by the boyars during the regency of his mother, Elena Glinskaya. To make matters worse, Vladimir Staritsky was defended by Protopriest Sylvester, who had been a very influential and trusted adviser of Ivan's. In punishment for having spoken up in defence of Staritsky, Sylvester was banished to the northern island fortress of Solovki...

Then Ivan suffered what must have looked like a serious insult to him from another ungrateful churchman. In 1552 he had scored a great victory over the Tartar khanate of Kazan. On his return to Moscow, he planned to go with his wife Anastasia on a pilgrimage to the Holy Trinity - Saint Sergei monastery in order to give thanks for his victory. However, the battle for Kazan had produced many casualties, and St. Maxim the Greek, recently released from prison by Ivan but undimmed in his zeal for righteousness, told Ivan that he must not go on pilgrimage now but attend to the needs of the widows and orphans of the soldiers

killed. If he did not, warned Maxim, his baby son Dmitri would die. Ivan rejected the warning, and went on pilgrimage. The baby died...

Throughout the 1550s whatever incipient leanings towards absolutism Ivan may have had were restrained by two good angels at his side. The first was his wife Anastasia, whom he loved and who was, by all accounts, a beautiful, kind and pious woman. The other was Metropolitan Makary, whom Ivan trusted, and who exalted the tsar's power and glory without allowing his own authority to be diminished.

The turning point came when these two good angels in the life of Ivan died. First Anastasia died on August 7, 1560. Ivan suspected her of having been poisoned by the boyars who did not like her family's influence in the Kremlin. And then, on December 31, 1563, Metropolitan Makary died. Grief, suspicion, even paranoia began to grip Ivan's heart against both boyars and churchmen.

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So the terrible year of 1564 dawned.

Ivan began to persecute the boyars, Prince Dmitri Obolensky was killed, and several others fled abroad, usually to Poland or Lithuania. One of those was Prince Andrei Kurbsky, who had been an important general of Ivan's in the Livonian war. There then began a fascinating correspondence between Ivan and Kurbsky.

What was this correspondence about?

First, it must be understood that the differences between the two men had nothing to do with democracy or human rights. Such ideas had not yet penetrated into Russia from the West, and would not do so until the last years of the reign of Catherine the Great.

Kurbsky lambasted Ivan for his cruelty to the boyars and generals. But underlying this complaint was the more fundamental complaint that the symphony between Church and State had broken down. This was partly Ivan's fault. But Kurbsky also laid into the Church for not upholding the Church's privileges in that symphonic relationship. Indeed, in a letter to a monk called Vassian, who was a Non-Possessor, he waxed very eloquent against the Church: "The clergy - we will not judge them, far be that from us, but bewail their wretchedness - are ashamed to bear witness to God before the tsar; rather they endorse the sin. They do not make themselves advocates of widows and orphans, the poor, the oppressed and the prisoners, but grab villages and churches and riches for themselves. Where is Elijah, who was concerned for the blood of Naboth and confronted the king? Where are the host of prophets who gave the unjust kings

proof of their guilt? Who speaks now without being embarrassed by the words of Holy Scripture and gives his soul as a ransom for his brothers? I do not know one. Who will extinguish the fire that is blazing in our land? No-one. Really, our hope is still only with God..."

Ivan, by contrast, upheld the essentially pagan, absolutist theory that the king or emperor has total power over both Church and State in his dominion. If the tsar sometimes executed innocent people, that was not the business of Kurbsky or anyone else, including the Church. He, the tsar, would have to answer for that before God. In any case, those who suffered innocently and patiently were martyrs for Christ, as St. Peter taught in his first epistle. The essential point was that the tsar held his authority from God, not men, and therefore, as St. Paul put it, he wielded his sword not in vain (Romans 13).

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We now come to what was, in my opinion, the decisive event in the whole of Ivan's reign. On December 3, 1564, Ivan abdicated from the throne - an absolutely unprecedented act which shocked and horrified the populace. For what would they do without a tsar? Russia had never been without a tsar or Great Prince. And now there were enemies on all sides: the Poles, the Swedes and the Lithuanians in the West, the Crimean Tatars in the South, and the resurgent Tartars of the Volga region in the East. How could they survive against these ruthless enemies without a tsar to lead them into battle? Actually, Ivan had shown himself to be a poor, even a cowardly military leader. But there was nobody to replace him, and several of the generals had already been executed or forced into exile.

Ivan withdrew with his "Chosen Thousand" supporters to the village of Kolomenskoye. He stirred up the people still more by specifically blaming not only the boyars for their ambition, but also the Church for interceding on behalf of his enemies. In order to prevent a people's uprising, in a scene immortalized by Eisenstein's cinematography, "Pimen, archbishop of Novgorod, was dispatched at the head of a delegation to plead with Ivan for forgiveness, and to beg him to return to Moscow 'to govern as he pleased, and to punish traitors at his discretion'.

"'We are but poor and inconsolable sheep,' Pimen told him, 'We are now without a shepherd, and the wolves of our enemies, surround us... In the past nations have been conquered and left without rulers; but that a mighty sovereign and abandon his loyal subjects and his tsardom - such things are unheard of, and not to be read in books. Let the Tsar proclaim the names of those whom he knows to be traitors, and let him punish them as he likes.'

The historian Benson Bobrick has very justly remarked on this petition: "*This momentous concession struck at the very heart of the Orthodox Church, for it abolished*

what was most precious in its advisory role to the tsar: the voice of mercy." Metropolitan Afanasy of Moscow, would have nothing to do with it and adamantly remained in Moscow..."⁵⁵ Afanasy maintained his oppositional stance, and thereby the honour of the Church, until May 19, 1566, when he resigned in protest at Ivan's evildoing and withdrew to the Chudov monastery. His successor, Archbishop German of Kazan, also rebuked Ivan for his sins and was therefore dismissed.

In this period, Ivan did something unprecedented in the history of Russia and, I think, of Europe. He divided up the whole of Russia into two zones. In one, the so-called Oprichnina, he ruled as an absolute monarch, a new Genghis Khan. In the other, the Zemshchina, life went on in accordance with traditional norms. However, life could not really go on as usual in the Zemshchina, because Ivan sent his "oprichniki", a band of weirdly dressed thugs, all over the towns and countryside, raping and killing and pillaging at will.

In the capital of his Oprichnina state within a state, Ivan would force his thugs to dress in monastic gear and attend long services in church. Ivan, too, would demonstrate great zeal for prayer in church, while at the same time drawing up lists of victims and popping downstairs for a bit of bloody torture at intervals. This of course was a blasphemous mockery of Orthodoxy.

In 1566 a genuinely holy man, Philip, abbot of the monastery of Solovki in the far north, was summoned to Moscow and made metropolitan. He pleaded with Ivan to abolish the Oprichnina. Ivan ignored him. He pleaded with Ivan to stop killing people. Ivan ignored him. Finally, the tsar got so tired of Philip's rebukes that he got him deposed and eventually, murdered.

After the death of St. Philip, Ivan's despotism and cruelty went into overdrive. In 1570 he marched to Novgorod, Russia's second city, and in the course of a few weeks killed and tortured thousands of people of all classes, ages, sex and rank. Among the victims was Archbishop Poemen, who had abandoned the Church's right of intercession some years before. So perhaps there was some Divine or poetic justice in the fact that nobody interceded for him now.

In fact, the only people of any class left who still resisted Ivan were the so-called "fools for Christ", poor men of no fixed abode who went about the cities and towns behaving in strange ways, sometimes completely naked even in winter, but often with the gift of prophecy and miracles. Two fools for Christ confronted Ivan during his reign. One was Basil the Blessed of Moscow, after whom St. Basil's cathedral on Red Square is named. And the other was St. Nikola of Pskov, who so frightened

⁵⁵ Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible*, p. 196.

Ivan that he abandoned Pskov before he could make it into the kind of desert filled with corpses that Novgorod had already become.

The Church remained supine and servile for the rest of Ivan's reign. Perhaps the most egregious example was its cooperation in the enthronement of a Tatar prince, Sain-Bulat, who had been baptized Simeon Bekhulatovich in 1573 and had served successfully as a general in Ivan's armies. In 1575 Ivan abdicated (for the second time) and ordered Simeon to be anointed by the metropolitan. Since the real tsar was still alive and very much in control, for the metropolitan to take part in such a pantomime was sacrilegious, to say the least.

And here, I believe, we find the key to the understanding of Ivan's behaviour. He knew, as a well-trained Orthodox, that the only limit on the tsar's power in an Orthodox state is not constitutional checks and balances, but the Church, and in particular the leader of the Church, the patriarch or metropolitan. In a truly religious people the voice of the patriarch is as the voice of God, and can be just as powerful a check and balance on the king's power as any laws or parliamentary institutions. We see this in the early Soviet period, when the only really independent voice in Russia was that of Patriarch Tikhon, whom the believing people venerated and obeyed until he was murdered in 1925, after which the way was open for Stalin to destroy the Church's leadership. So in his pathological drive for supreme and absolute power, Ivan had to destroy the Church's power.

Now that drive could manifest itself in killing members of the Church en masse. But, as history proves – and Ivan knew his Church history well – the Church actually increases in strength when its members are tortured and martyred for the faith. Indeed, as the old saying from the early Church went: “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”. What weakens the Church is when it is shown to violate its own principles and trample on its own holiness. That is why Ivan the Terrible – and after him Peter the Great – sought to *mock* the Church and force it to defile itself. The lily-livered metropolitans who flattered and obeyed him, and even created a pseudo-tsar for his pleasure, served that purpose well. For Ivan would attain supreme power, not when he tortured and subdued the bodies of his subjects, but when he poisoned their minds against their great hope and the other pillar of the symphony of powers – the Orthodox Church...

So by the end of Ivan's reign, Russia was devastated not only economically and demographically and militarily, but also spiritually. The path to recovery was long and difficult. But eventually, in 1612, the enemies of Russia, the Swedes and the Poles, were driven out, and in February, 1613, the first member of a new ruling dynasty, that of the Romanovs, was enthroned.

But let us note one vitally important fact about the establishment of the Romanov dynasty. It was not the State that took the initiative in driving the Poles

and the Swedes out of Russia, but the Church – in the person of Patriarch Hermogen. And it was not the State, or even the Tsar, Mikhail Romanov, who was the most powerful person in early seventeenth-century Russia, but the Tsar's father, Patriarch Philaret.

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