

ESSAYS ON TRUE ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANITY

Volume 2 (2010-2014)

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INTRODUCTION

This book is a continuation of my earlier *Essays on True Orthodox Christianity. Volume 1*. It includes essays I have written on various subjects related to True Orthodoxy between the years 2010 and 2014.

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1. ORTHODOXY AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION

It is generally assumed by Orthodox Christians that Orthodoxy is a liberal religion in the sense that it favours freedom of religion in general. It is pointed out with some pride that Orthodoxy has never had an institution to compare with the Catholic Inquisition, and that Orthodoxy has been the persecuted, rather than the persecutor, throughout her history. Orthodox persecutors such as Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great have been rare exceptions to the rule – and condemned ones at that.

I believe that this is basically true. However, it is always dangerous to identify Orthodoxy with any popular dogma of the modern age. Even when Orthodoxy appears to coincide with popular sentiment, there are almost always subtle but important differences to be noted and qualifications to be made. And the motivation for the position in question is almost invariably different. It may therefore be useful to examine the Orthodox position on freedom of religion in the context of a brief historical survey.

The Origin of the Idea

The modern world prides itself on its religious toleration as if this were a mark of its superiority over all previous civilizations, which, supposedly, were constantly persecuting dissidents. However, no society has ever practised complete toleration of all opinions. Rather, societies differ amongst themselves in those opinions which they tolerate, and those they do not tolerate, and in the manner and severity with which they persecute dissidents. Thus if earlier societies persecuted what they considered to be religious heresies, our contemporary society persecutes such attitudes as racism, “homophobia” and holocaust-denial. Just as there is no society which does not punish crime in general, and does not send murderers to prison, so there is no society which does not have a certain consensus of ideas that it acts in various ways to preserve and enforce, using the stick as well as the carrot.

In fact, if we were to define the main difference between ancient and modern societies, it would not be that ancient societies were intolerant while modern societies are tolerant, but that ancient societies in general practised tolerance without elevating it into a supreme value, whereas modern societies, in accordance with its cult of freedom in all its forms, has elevated religious tolerance into an absolute value, a human “right”, in and for itself.

The main motive of religious toleration in the ancient world was simply political expediency – a multi-ethnic and multi-faith population is more easily controlled if all its faiths are respected and legalized. Another motive was superstition. After all, calculated the ruler (who was almost always religious), the god of this people is more likely to help me if I do not persecute his people...

Consider, for example, Imperial Rome before Constantine. Contrary to what is generally thought, periods of persecution were intermittent and generally short-lived, and directed exclusively at Christians. (The Soviet persecution of the twentieth century was, by contrast, far more intense and persistent, and directed at all religions.)

As Perez Zagorin writes, Rome “was tolerant in practice in permitting the existence of many diverse religious cults, provided their votaries also complied with the worship of the divine emperor as part of the state religion. Unlike Christianity and Judaism, Roman religion had no sacred scriptures and did not depend on any creed, dogmas, or ethical principles. It consisted very largely of participation in cult acts connected with the worship of various deities and spirits that protected the Roman state and were associated with public, family, and domestic life. At nearly all stages of their history the Romans were willing to accept foreign cults and practices; this de facto religious pluralism is entirely attributable to the polytheistic character of Roman religion and had nothing to do with principles of values sanctioning religious toleration, a concept unknown to Roman society or law and never debated by Roman philosophers or political writers.”¹

Christianity introduced a new depth and a new complexity to the question of religious toleration. On the one hand, the Christians, like the Jews, rejected the idea of a multiplicity of gods, and insisted that there was only one name by which men could be saved – that of the One True God, Jesus Christ. This position did not logically imply that Christians wanted to persecute people of other faiths. But the “exclusivism” of Christianity, then as now, was perceived by the pagan-ecumenist majority, whether sincerely or insincerely, as a threat to themselves.

On the other hand, the Christians set no value on the forcible conversion of people to the Faith: man, being in the image of God, was free, and could come to God only by his own free will. As the Christian lawyer Tertullian put it: “It does not belong to religion to force people to religion, since it must be accepted voluntarily.”² In his *Barring of Heretics* (ca. 200) Tertullian insisted on the truth of Christianity and declared that heretics could not be called Christians. Nevertheless, he was he was “opposed to compulsion in religion and stated in other works that ‘to do away with freedom of religion [*libertas religionis*]’ was wrong. While Christians, he said, worship the one God and pagans worship demons, both ‘human and natural law’ ordain that ‘each person may worship whatever he wishes’.”³

However, Tertullian was writing at a time when the Church, as a persecuted minority, clearly benefited from religious toleration. What if the Church herself were to gain political power?

The Idea in Early Byzantium

If Christian rulers were to take the Old Testament Kings David and Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah as their models, then they would recognize that rulers were *required* by God to defend the faith of the people *as their first duty*. The prophets constantly reminded them that they would be judged by God in accordance with their fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this duty.

¹ Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 4.

² Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 2.

³ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

This same duty was taken very seriously by the greatest of the New Testament kings, Constantine I, Theodosius I and Justinian I. Constantine is often unjustly blamed by Protestants for introducing religious intolerance into the State. However, what he did - deliver the Church from the Diocletian persecution, and introduce certain laws which facilitated Christian worship - can hardly be called intolerance. True, he exiled the heretic Arius, but he is not known to have killed anyone for his faith. For, as he declared: "It is one thing to undertake the contest for immortality voluntarily, another to compel others to do it likewise through fear of punishment."⁴ In accordance with the Edict of Milan and his own personal convictions, St. Constantine practised religious toleration throughout his life. While not hiding his Christianity, and characterizing paganism as "superstition", he allowed the pagans to practise their faith. Thus in 324 he wrote: "I wish, for the common good of the empire and of all men, that Thy people should be in peace and remain exempt from troubles. May those who are in error joyfully receive the enjoyment of the same peace and tranquillity as the believers, for the sweetness of concord will have the power to correct them also and lead them on the right path." In addition to allowing the pagans to practise their religion, Constantine never excluded them "from the administration of the State: one finds them among the praetorian prefects, the prefects of Rome, the ministers and even the entourage of the Emperor."⁵

After Constantine, a period of religious intolerance ensued. The Emperor Constantius, an Arian, was also a persecutor of Orthodox Christians. And in the late 340s the Donatist Marculus was executed. Julian the Apostate was a pagan and persecuted pagans, killing the holy Martyrs Eusebius and Artemius. It was during the reign of Theodosius I (379-395) that the question of religious freedom was confronted directly for the first time, and in 384 Bishop Priscillian of Avila was executed on a charge of sorcery.⁶

The Holy Fathers of the fourth century rejected the idea of killing people for their faith. As S.V. Troitsky writes: "Christians are called to freedom (Galatians 5.13), and every religious act of conscious Christians must bear on itself the mark of freedom. The ancient Christian writer Lactantius demonstrated that religion exists only where there is freedom, and disappears where freedom has disappeared, and that it is necessary to defend the truth with words and not with blows (verbis, non verberibus).⁷ 'The mystery of salvation,' writes St. Gregory the Theologian, 'is for those who desire it, not for those who are compelled'. The 108th canon of the Council of Carthage cites the law of Honorius that 'everyone accepts the exploit of Christianity by his free choice', and Zonaras in his interpretation of this canon writes: 'Virtue must be chosen, and not forced, not involuntary, but voluntary... for that which exists by necessity and violence is not firm and constant'.⁸

⁴ Quoted in Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, London: Penguin Books, 1988, p. 637.

⁵ Pierre Maraval, "La Louve et la Croix" (The She-Wolf and the Cross), *Histoire* (Le Figaro), 8, June-July, 2013, p. 63.

⁶ Jonathan Hill, *Christianity: The First 400 Years*, Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2013, pp. 233, 294.

⁷ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 19.

⁸ Troitsky, *Khristianskaia Philosophia Braka* (The Christian Philosophy of Marriage), Paris: YMCA Press, p. 207.

(At the same time, extending the boundaries of the empire for the sake of facilitating mission was justified. Thus according to St. Gregory the Great, following Augustine, war could be waged “for the sake of enlarging the res publica within which we see God worshipped... so that the name of Christ will travel among the subject people through the preaching of the faith.”⁹)

Non-violence to heretics combined with mercilessness to heresy was especially emphasised by St. John Chrysostom (+407), who wrote: “Christians above all men are forbidden to correct the stumblings of sinners by force... It is necessary to make a man better not by force but by persuasion. We neither have authority granted us by law to restrain sinners, nor, if it were, should we know how to use it, since God gives the crown to those who are kept from evil, not by force, but by choice.”¹⁰ St. John interpreted the parable of the wheat and the tares to mean that the heretics (the tares) should not be killed – although they were to be resisted in other ways.

Thus Hieromonk Patapios writes: “As we can see from the many occurrences of the phrase ‘stop the mouths of the heretics’ in his writings, St. John showed not the slightest indulgence towards false teachings; indeed, much of his life as a preacher was devoted to combating such heretics as the Eunomians, the Judaizers, and the Manichaeans. However, he was resolutely opposed to the use of violence by the authorities to subdue heretics. And it is this reservation of his that must be carefully understood, if one is to grasp what may seem to be a contradictory view of heretics. He knew from pastoral experience that heretics were far more likely to be turned aside from their errors by prayer: ‘And if you pray for the Heathens, you ought of course to pray for Heretics also, for we are to pray for all men, and not to persecute. And this is good also for another reason, as we are partakers of the same nature, and God commands and accepts benevolence towards one another’ (*Homilies on the First Epistle to St. Timothy*, 7). Near the end of this homily on the dangers of anathematizing others, he says that ‘we must anathematize heretical doctrines and refute impious teachings, from whomsoever we have received them, but show mercy to the men who advocate them and pray for their salvation.’ In other words, we must love the heretic, but hate the heresy.”¹¹

However, it may be wondered whether St. John’s words should be interpreted as an absolute ban on any kind of coercion in any circumstances. For there were other prominent and holy Christians contemporary with him who did approve of some measure of coercion in some circumstances. In particular, there was the question of the rights of the Christian emperor. If the Church as an institution or individual Christians could only persuade, not coerce, was it not the task of the emperor to coerce, or at any rate limit the activity of those who refused to be persuaded?

It is significant that no prominent churchman denounced the undoubtedly coercive laws passed against pagans and heretics by the Emperor Theodosius I (379-395).

⁹ St. Gregory, *Registrum*, 1.73.

¹⁰ St. John Chrysostom, quoted by Fr. Antonious Henein, orthodox-tradition@egroups.com, 8 August, 2000.

¹¹ Patapios, “On Caution regarding Anathematization”, *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XVII, N 1, January, 2000, p. 22.

Theodosius decreed, writes John Julius Norwich, “that only those who professed the consubstantiality of the Trinity (in other words the Nicene Creed) could be considered *Catholic Christians* – a designation that appears here for the first time. ‘All others,’ the edict continues, ‘we pronounce to be mad and foolish, and we order that they shall bear the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to bestow on their conventicles the title of churches: these are to be visited first by divine vengeance, and secondly by the stroke of our own authority, which we have received in accordance with the will of heaven.’”¹²

As Perez Zagorin writes, Theodosius “proscribed various heresies by name, ordered the confiscation of churches and private houses where heretics met for worship, and deprived them of the right to make wills or receive inheritances. In the case of certain heretical sects [the Manichaeans] he commanded that their members be hunted down and executed. In his attempt to enforce uniformity of belief he also instituted legislation against paganism, including a comprehensive enactment in 395 forbidding anyone of whatever rank or dignity to sacrifice to or worship ‘senseless images’ constructed ‘by human hands’, on pain of heavy fines and other penalties. He was likewise the first emperor to impose penalties on Christians who profaned their baptism by reverting to paganism.

“... All subjects were expected to be worshippers in this [the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic] Church; and in addition to the spiritual and political authority its bishops wielded, it had the power of the state at its disposal to enforce its faith against heretics. The practical toleration and religious pluralism that had formerly been the Roman custom no longer existed. The change that took place is epitomised in an appeal made in 384 by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus – a Roman senator, orator, and prefect of Rome, and a defender of paganism – to the emperors Theodosius I and Valentinian II to restore the altar of the goddess victory to the Senate House (it had been removed by imperial decree after standing there for over 350 years, since the reign of the emperor Augustus at the beginning of the first century). Speaking in the name of the proscribed ancient religion of Rome, Symmachus declared that ‘each nation has its own gods and peculiar rites. The Great Mystery cannot be approached by one avenue alone... Leave us the symbol on which our oaths of allegiance have been sworn for so many generations. Leave us the system which has given prosperity to the State.’ His plea was of no avail, however, for the cross of Christ had conquered the Roman Empire, and the altar of Victory remained banished and abandoned.”¹³

Zeal against heretics was, of course, not the exclusive preserve of the emperors. In 388 some Christians burned down the synagogue in Callinicum on the Euphrates. Theodosius ordered its rebuilding at the Christians’ expense. However, St. Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan, wrote to him: “When a report was made by the military Count of the East that a synagogue had been burnt down, and that this was done at the instigation of the bishop, you gave command that the others should be punished,

¹² Norwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

¹³ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 24. However, Hill argues that it was not Theodosius’ measures but Justinian’s persecution in the sixth century that was “the first really thorough attempt on the part of the Roman authorities to stamp out paganism, and the first time that the various laws against paganism were seriously enforced” (*op. cit.*, p. 301).

and the synagogue be rebuilt by the bishop himself... The bishop's account ought to have been waited for, for priests are the calmers of disturbances, and anxious for peace, except when even they are moved by some offence against God, or insult to the Church. Let us suppose that the bishop burned down the synagogue... It will evidently be necessary for him to take back his act or become a martyr. Both the one and the other are foreign to your rule: if he turns out to be a hero, then fear lest he end his life in martyrdom; but if he turns out to be unworthy, then fear lest you become the cause of his fall, for the seducer bears the greater responsibility. And what if others are cowardly and agree to construct the synagogue? Then... you can write on the front of the building: 'This temple of impiety was built on contributions taken from Christians'. You are motivated by considerations of public order. But what is the order from on high? Religion was always bound to have the main significance in the State, which is why the severity of the laws must be modified here. Remember Julian, who wanted to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem: the builders were then burned by the fire of God. Do you not take fright at what happened then?... And how many temples did the Jews not burn down under Julian at Gaza, Askalon, Beirut and other places? You did not take revenge for the churches, but now you take revenge for the synagogue!"¹⁴ "What is more important," he asked, "the parade of discipline or the cause of religion? The maintenance of civil law is secondary to religious interest."¹⁵ Ambrose refused to celebrate the Liturgy until the imperial decree had been revoked. Theodosius backed down...

The "Ambrosean" position may be tentatively formulated as follows. On the one hand, in relation to those outside her the Church can herself adopt no coercive measures; she can do no more than reason, plead and threaten with *God's* justice at the Last Judgement. Her only means of "coercion", if it can be called that, is the excommunication of unrepentant Christians from her fold. On the other hand, the Church blesses the Christian State to use other, more physical means of coercion against those over whom she has no more influence. The purpose of this is not to *convert*; for only persuasion can convert, and as St. Basil the Great says, "by violence you can frighten me, but not persuade me". But there are other legitimate and Christian purposes for coercion: justice against evildoers, the restriction of their influence, and the protection of the young and weak in mind...

However, even St. Ambrose never advocated the *execution* of heretics or Jews. This aversion against the execution of heretics is found in other saints. Thus when St. Martin of Tours (+397) signed the decision of a Synod condemning the Spanish heretic Priscillian and handing him over to the Emperor for execution, he felt the reproaches of his conscience, and never again attended a Synod of Bishops.¹⁶

So can we say that the execution of heretics is *absolutely* forbidden by Orthodox Christianity? Not quite... In the *Lives of the Saints* we find a few instances of the saints blessing the execution of heretics. We even find cases in which saints who are not secular rulers have executed heretics or magicians themselves. Thus in *The Acts of the*

¹⁴ St. Ambrose, *Letter 40*, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 69.

¹⁵ Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1987, 1995, p. 164.

¹⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Life of St. Martin of Tours*. St. Ambrose of Milan and Bishop Siricus of Rome also protested the execution (Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295).

Apostles we read how the Apostle Peter in effect executed Ananias and Sapphira. Again, the Apostles Peter and Paul by their prayers brought about the death of Simon Magus. Again, St. Basil the Great prayed for, and obtained, the death of Julian the Apostate (by the sword of St. Mercurius the Great Martyr). And the holy hierarchs Patrick of Ireland and Leo of Catania in effect executed particularly stubborn perverters of the people.

In later Byzantium, where heresy was considered a state crime, some of the most extreme heretics – for example, the Paulicians or Bogomils – were sometimes executed, although saints such as Theodore the Studite were opposed to it, citing the parable of the tares (Matthew 13.29).¹⁷

The Position of St. Augustine

At this point it will be useful to consider the position of St. Augustine of Hippo, who was baptized by St. Ambrose, and who took the “Ambrosean position” a step further.

Perez Zagorin writes: “Augustine carried on a long theological combat with three formidable heresies, Manichaeism, Pelagianism, and Donatism. Among his writings against the last of these and its followers, the Donatists, he left an invaluable record of his reflections on the justification of coercion against heretics to enforce religious truth. At the time he became bishop of Hippo, Donatism, which took its name from one of its first leaders, Donatus, bishop of Carthage, had already existed in North Africa for more than eighty years and had undergone considerable persecution. Originating in the early fourth century in an ecclesiastical controversy over a bishop who had [allegedly] compromised with paganism during the persecution by the emperor Diocletian and was therefore considered a betrayer of the faith, the Donatists formed a schismatic and rival church with its own clergy. Rigorists who believed in a church composed exclusively of the holy, they maintained that an unworthy priest could not perform a valid sacrament. By insisting on the rebaptism of converts, the Donatist church declared its rejection of the sacramental character of Catholic baptism. To some extent Donatism represented an expression of social protest against the profane world as a domain ruled by Satan. Its more extreme advocates, a fanatical fringe of zealots and ascetics known as Circumcellions, sought a martyr’s death by any means, including suicide; they gathered as bands of marauding peasants who attacked estates and committed other acts of violence. As a self-described church of martyrs, the Donatists condemned the alliance between Catholicism and the Roman authorities as a renunciation of Christ in favour of Caesar, and their bishop Donatus was reported to have said, ‘What has the Emperor to do with the Church?’ In the course of its history Donatism became a considerable movement, although it remained largely confined to North Africa.

“In his numerous writings against this heresy, one of Augustine’s constant aims was to persuade its followers by means of reason and arguments to abandon their errors and return to the Catholic Church. He did his best to refute its doctrines in a

¹⁷ 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. 100, 11-12.

number of treatises and at first opposed any use of coercion against these heretics. A lost work of 397 repudiated coercion, and in an undated letter to a Donatist churchman he wrote: "I do not intend that anyone should be forced into the Catholic communion against his will. On the contrary, it is my aim that the truth may be revealed to all who are in error and that... with the help of God, it may be made manifest so as to induce all to follow and embrace it of their own accord." To several Donatists he wrote in around 398 that those who maintain a false and perverted opinion but without 'obstinate ill will' - and especially those 'who have not originated their error by bold presumption' but received it from their parents or others, and who see truth with a readiness to be corrected when they have found it - are not to be included among heretics. The heretic himself, however, 'swollen with hateful pride and with the assertion of evil contradiction, is to be avoided like a mad man'.

"Nevertheless, Augustine eventually reversed his position and decided to endorse coercion. Looking back at this development some years later, he said that at first he had believed that no one should be forced into the unity of Christ, and that the Church should rely only on speaking, reasoning, and persuasion 'for fear of making pretended Catholics out of those whom we knew as open heretics'. But then proven facts caused him to give up this opinion when he saw Donatists in his own city 'converted to Catholic unity by the fear of imperial laws' and those in other cities recalled by the same means. Reclaimed Donatists, he contended, were now grateful that 'fear of the laws promulgated by temporal rulers who serve the Lord in fear has been so beneficial' to them.

"We first learn of Augustine's change of mind in the treatise he wrote (ca. 400) as a reply to a letter by the Donatist bishop Parmenian, a leading spokesman of the movement. In this work he justified the intervention of the imperial government against the Donatists by making Saint Paul's theology of the state, as the apostle outlined it in the thirteenth chapter of his letter to the Romans (Romans 13.1-7). There Paul instructed Christians to be obedient to the higher powers as the minister ordained by God and armed with the sword for the repression of evildoers. In the light of this apostolic teaching, Augustine insisted that the emperors and the political authorities had the God-given right and duty to crush the sacrilege and schism of the Donatists, since they were as obligated to repress a false and evil religion as to prevent the crime of pagan idolatry. He further pointed out that the Donatists were guilty of many cruelties and had themselves appealed to the emperors in the past against the dissidents in their own church. Denying that those of them condemned to death were martyrs, he described them instead as killers of souls and, because of their violence, often killers of bodies.

"One of the arguments he put forward in defense of force in this work was his interpretation of Jesus' parable of the tares in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 13.24-30). This famous text was destined to be cited often during subsequent centuries in discussions of toleration and persecution, and to occupy a prominent place in the tolerationist controversies of the era of the Protestant Reformation. The parable first likens the kingdom of heaven to a good seed and then relates how a man sowed good seed in the ground, whereupon his enemy came in the night and planted tares, or

weeds, there as well. When the wheat appeared, so did the tares. The man's servants asked their master if they should pull up the tares, but he forbade them lest they also uproot the wheat. He ordered that both should be left to grow until the harvest, and then the reapers would remove and burn the tares and gather the wheat into the barn. The parable's point would seem to be that good people and sinners alike should be allowed to await the Last Judgement to receive their due, when God would reward the good with the kingdom of heaven and punish the bad with the flames of hell. Augustine, however, drew from it a very different lesson: if the bad seed is known, it should be uprooted. According to his explanation, the only reason the master left the tares to grow until the harvest was the fear that uprooting them sooner would harm the grain. When this fear does not exist because it is evident which is the good seed, and when someone's crime is notorious and so execrable that it is indefensible, then it is right to use severe discipline against it, for the more perversity is corrected, the more carefully charity is safeguarded. With the help of this interpretation, which reversed the parable's meaning, Augustine was able not only to justify the Roman government's repression of the Donatists but to provide a wider reason for religious persecution by the civil authorities.

"Augustine elaborated his position in favour of coercion in religion in a number of letters. In a lengthy epistle to the Donatist Vincent, he argued for the utility of coercion in inducing fear that can bring those who are subject to it to the right way of thinking. Maintaining that people could be changed for the better through the influence of fear, he concluded that 'when the saving doctrine is added to useful fear', then 'the light of truth' can drive out 'the darkness of error'. To reinforce this view, he quoted the parable of the feast in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 14. 21-23), another of the texts that was to figure prominently in future tolerationist controversy. In this parable, a man prepared a great feast to which he invited many guests who failed to appear. After summoning from the city the poor, blind, and lame to come and eat, he found that room still remained, so he ordered his servants to 'go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in [compelle intrare in the Latin Vulgate], that My house may be filled'. 'Do you think,' Augustine asked in a comment on this passage, 'that no one should be forced to do right, when you read that the master of the house said to his servants, "Whomever you find, compel them to come in"' . He referred also to the example of the conversion of the apostle Paul, who 'was forced by the great violence of Christ's compulsion to acknowledge and hold the truth' (Acts 9.3-18). The main point, he claimed, was not whether anyone was forced to do something, but whether the purpose of doing so was right or wrong. While no one could be made good against his will, the fear of punishment could persuade a person to repudiate a false doctrine and embrace the truth he had previously denied, as had happened to many Donatists who had thankfully become Catholics and now detested their diabolical separation.

"In dealing with heresy, Augustine thus laid great stress on what might be called the pedagogy of fear to effect a change of heart. He did not see coercion and free will as opposites in religious choice but claimed that fear plays a part in spontaneous acts of the will and may serve a good end. In one of his most important statements on the subject, contained in a letter of 417 to Boniface, the Roman governor of Africa, he propounded a distinction between two kinds of persecution. '[T]here is an unjust persecution,' he said, 'which the wicked inflict on the Church of Christ, and ... a just

persecution which the Church of Christ inflicts on the wicked.' The Church persecutes from love, the Donatists from hatred; the Church in order to correct error, the Donatists to hurl men into error. While the Church strives to save the Donatists from perdition, the latter in their fury kill Catholics to feed their passion for cruelty. Augustine was convinced that the coercion of heretics was therefore a great mercy because it rescued them from lying demons so that they could be healed in the Catholic fold. He rejected the objection of those who said that the apostles had never called upon the kings of the earth to enforce religion, since in the apostles' time there had been no Christian emperor to whom they could appeal. It was necessary and right, however, for kings to forbid and restrain with religious severity actions contrary to God's commandments, and to serve God by sanctioning laws that commanded goodness and prohibited its opposite.

"While admitting that it was better to lead people to the worship of God by teaching than to force them through fear of suffering, Augustine nevertheless averred that the latter way could not be neglected. Experience proved, he claimed, that for many heretics it had been a blessing to be driven out by fear of bodily pain to undergo instruction in the truth and then follow up with actions what they had learned in words. Schismatics, he noted, protested that men have freedom to believe or not to believe, and that Christ never used force on anyone. To this objection he countered with his previous argument that Christ had first compelled Paul to cease his persecution of the Christian Church by striking him blind at his conversion and only then taught him. 'It is a wonderful thing,' he said, 'how he [Paul] who came to the gospel under the compulsion of bodily suffering labored more in the gospel than all the others who were called by words alone.' Once again he drew on the injunction compelle intrare in the Gospel of Luke to affirm that the Catholic Church was in accord with God when it compelled heretics and schismatics to come in. In other letters he denied that the 'evil will' should be left to its freedom, and cited not only this same parable and the example of Christ's compulsion of Paul, but also God's restraint of the IsraÉlites from doing evil and compelling them to enter the land of promise (Exodus 15.22-27), as proof of the Church's justice in using coercion.

"Although after his change of mind Augustine consistently approved the policy of subjecting heretics to coercion, he never desired that they should be killed. In writing to Donatists, he often stated that he and his brethren loved them and acted for their good, and that if they hated the Catholic Church, it was because 'we do not allow you to go astray and be lost'. Donatists had been subject to previous imperial legislation against heresy, but between 405 and 410 the emperor Honorius decreed a number of heavy penalties against them that put them outside the protection of the law for their seditious actions; he ordered their heresy to be put down in 'blood and proscription'. Augustine frequently interceded with the Roman authorities to spare their lives. In 408 he wrote to the proconsul of Africa urging Christian clemency and praying that though heretics [should] be made to feel the effect of the laws against them, they should not be put to death, despite deserving the extreme punishment, in the hope that they might be converted. To another high official he pleaded in behalf of some Donatists tried for murder and other violent acts that they should be deprived of their freedom but not executed that they might have the chance to repent.

“Although repression weakened Donatism, it failed to eliminate this deeply rooted heresy, which survived until the later seventh century when the Islamic conquest of North Africa destroyed every form of Christianity in this region. In the course of his career, Augustine, who was not only an outstanding thinker but a man of keen and sensitive conscience, wrestled strenuously with the problem of heresy and the achievement of Catholic unity by the use of coercion... ‘Pride’, he once wrote, ‘is the mother of all heretics,’ and fear could break down this pride and thus act as an auxiliary in the process of conversion. Whether the heretic was really sincere in professing a change of mind under the threat of bodily pain was a question that could best be left to God. Augustine certainly did not recommend the death penalty for heretics but strove tirelessly to save their souls from eternal perdition. He supported their repression by the Roman imperial government in the hope of restoring them to the Catholic Church, and because, as he said in a letter to some Donatists, ‘nothing can cause more complete death to the soul than freedom to disseminate error’.”¹⁸

St. Augustine’s scriptural justification for his teaching here has seemed to many to be forced and artificial. However, it is more difficult to refute his general contention that *some* form of physical coercion practised against inveterate sinners and heretics – but not extending to execution, for that would be “uprooting the tares” – is justified. Just as God sends all kinds of physical calamities on men in order to humble their pride and make them examine more responsive to the true teaching, so for the same reasons (and also to protect the young and the weak in mind) earthly rulers should punish those who publicly blaspheme God or distort His teaching in a particularly serious manner. Certainly, such punishments were accepted by most Christian societies, including the Byzantine and Russian empires, until recent times. Only in our times has it seemed right to imprison a man for slandering another man, but to allow the vilest slanderers of Almighty God to go scot-free...

Underlying the argument that heresy should not be punished, - physically, at any rate, - there seems to be the false idea that the sins of man can be divided into “mental” and “physical”, and that only physical sins (murder, theft) need to be punished physically. However, as Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov writes: “Man is a bodily being. Moral ‘persuasion’ is inseparable from moral ‘coercion’, and in certain cases also from physical ‘violence’. If one says: ‘Act through moral persuasion, but do not dare to resort to physical violence’, this is either absurdity or hypocrisy. Every conviction sooner or later unfailingly finds its expression in forms of physical action for the simple reason that man is not [only] spirit and lives in a physical form. All our acts represent a union of spiritual and physical acts. If a man does something, it is unfailingly accompanied by physical actions. This relates both to good and to evil. One can oppose evil sometimes by moral persuasions, but at other times it is impossible to resist it otherwise than physically, and then ‘resistance’ and ‘violence’ are morally obligatory.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-32, 33.

¹⁹ Tikhomirov, “O Smysle Vojny” (“On the Meaning of War”), in *Khristianstvo i Politika (Christianity and Politics)*, Moscow: GUP “Oblizdat”, 1999, pp. 206-207

Roman Catholic Intolerance

The balanced and Orthodox view, therefore, is that persuasion is always to be preferred to compulsion, but that physical punishments *excluding* execution are appropriate for particularly dangerous and stubborn heretics, both in order to humble them and make them more amenable to correction, and in order to protect those who might be corrupted by their words. However, this attitude began to be undermined in the West from the time of Charlemagne, who attempted to “convert” multitudes of Saxons in the “wild east” of his domains at the edge of the sword. After the fall of the West from Orthodoxy in 1054, the acceptance of conversion by force became widespread. Or rather, the view now was that if someone would not be converted voluntarily, he might as well be killed, since he was clearly worthless and destined for hell fire anyway...

This view was most notoriously expressed in the crusades. Thus in the first crusade of 1098-99, the Muslim and Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem were slaughtered en masse. Again, Bernard of Clairvaux said about the Wendish (Baltic) crusade of 1147: “We expressly forbid that for any reason whatsoever they should make a truce with those peoples, whether for money or for tribute, until such time as, with God’s help, either their religion or their nation be destroyed.”²⁰ Both the religion and the nation were duly destroyed... For, as Bernard stressed “the knight of Christ need fear no sin in killing the foe, he is a minister of God for the punishment of the wicked. In the death of a pagan a Christian is glorified, because Christ is glorified.”²¹

Even the Orthodox Russians were considered to be in need of this militaristic kind of conversion. Thus in 1150 Bishop Matthew of Crakow asked Bernard to “exterminate the godless rites and customs of the Ruthenians [Russians]”.²² But even the Pope was repulsed by the crusaders’ sacking of Constantinople in 1204, an event that finally sealed the schism between East and West. And yet in 1209, the same Pope, Innocent III, gave an expedition against the Cathar heretics the status of a crusade. At Muret in 1213 the Catholic crusaders from northern France overcame the Cathars of southern France and a terrible inquisition and bloodletting followed. Indeed, according to Barbara Ehrenreich, “the crusades against the European heretics represented the ultimate fusion of church and military... In return for an offer of indulgences, northern French knights ‘flayed Provence [home of the Cathars], hanging, beheading, and burning ‘with unspeakable joy.’ When the city of Béziers was taken and the papal legate was asked how to distinguish between the Cathars and the regular Catholics, he gave the famous reply: ‘Kill them all; God will know which are His...’”²³

This slaughter was legalised at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, in which it was declared a bounden duty to kill heretics: “If a temporal Lord neglects to fulfil the demand of the Church that he shall purge his land of this contamination of heresy, he

²⁰ Bernard, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, in Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, pp. 487-488.

²¹ Aristeides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994, p. 65.

²² Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 125.

²³ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*, London: Virago Press, 1998, p. 172.

shall be excommunicated by the metropolitan and other bishops of the province. If he fails to make amends within a year, it shall be reported to the Supreme Pontiff, who shall pronounce his vassals absolved from fealty to him and offer his land to Catholics. The latter shall exterminate the heretics, possess the land without dispute and preserve it in the true faith... Catholics who assume the cross and devote themselves to the extermination of heretics shall enjoy the same indulgence and privilege as those who go to the Holy Land..."²⁴

The theological justification for the extermination of heretics was given some years later by Thomas Aquinas: "There is the sin, whereby they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be shut off from the world by death. For it is a much more serious matter to corrupt faith through which comes the soul's life, than to forge money, through which temporal life is supported. Hence if forgers of money or other malefactors are straightway justly put to death by secular princes, with much more justice can heretics, immediately upon conviction, be not only excommunicated but also put to death."²⁵

We can agree with Aquinas that heresy is a more serious sin than forging money. But, as we have seen, if we follow the natural (non-Augustinian) interpretation of the parable of the tares, the Lord expressly forbids the execution of heretics for a very specific reason – "lest you uproot the wheat together with the tares". Such a warning and prohibition was especially applicable to the Roman Catholic West after the foundation of the Inquisition in 1231, when the inquisitors themselves were heretics and many of their victims were probably innocent of the charges against them. For in the Inquisition only one verdict was possible: guilty. As the *Libro Negro* of the inquisitors said, "if, notwithstanding all the means employed, the unfortunate wretch still denies his guilt, he is to be considered as a victim of the devil: and, as such, deserves no compassion...: he is a son of perdition. Let him perish among the damned..."²⁶

The Revival of Tolerance

In the early sixteenth century, in the wake of the resurrection of the old pagan ideas of the dignity of man, the pagan idea of religious toleration also revived. We say "pagan", because the justification adduced for religious toleration was not Orthodox Christian, but what we would now call ecumenist: a belief that religious differences are not worth fighting and dying over. This humanist attitude would not survive the appearance of Protestantism in the 1520s and the religious wars that followed; but it revived again in the more sceptical eighteenth century.

We find it well expressed in Sir Thomas More's fantasy-manifesto, *Utopia: the Best State of the Commonwealth* (1516). On the island of Utopia, or Land of Nowhere, King Utopus has introduced a social system characterized by common ownership of property and religious toleration, with no official church or religion.

²⁴ Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, third edition, 1999, p. 147

²⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ii. Q. xi; in Bettenson & Maunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-148.

²⁶ Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 164.

“King Utopus, even at the first beginning hearing that the inhabitants of the land were before his coming thither at continual dissension and strife among themselves for their religions, perceiving also that this common dissension (whiles every several sect took several parts in fighting for his country) was the only occasion of his conquest over them all, as soon as he had gotten the victory, first of all made a decree that it should be lawful for every man to favour and follow what religion he would, and that he might do the best he could to bring other to his opinion, so that he did it peaceably, gently, quietly, and soberly, without hasty and contentious rebuking and inveighing against others. If he could not by fair and gentle speech induce them unto his opinion, yet he should use no kind of violence, and refrain from displeasing and seditious words. To him that would vehemently and fervently in this cause strive and contend was decreed banishment or bondage.

“This law did King Utopus make, not only for the maintenance of peace, which he saw through continual contention and mortal hatred utterly extinguished, but also because he thought this decree should make for the furtherance of religion...

“Furthermore, though there be one religion which alone is true, and all other vain and superstitious, yet did he well foresee (so that the matter were handled with reason and sober modesty) that the truth of its own power would at the last issue out and come to light. But if contention and debate in that behalf should continually be used, as the worst men be most obstinate and stubborn and in their evil opinion most constant, he perceived that then the best and holiest religion would be trodden underfoot and destroyed by most vain superstitions, even as good corn is by thorns and weeds overgrown and choked.”²⁷

More seems to be hovering here between two contrary propositions: that free debate will ultimately lead to the triumph of truth (“the truth of its own power would at the last issue out and come to light”), and that this freedom will be used by the worst men for the triumph of heresy (“then the best and holiest religion would be trodden underfoot”). More himself came to favour the second proposition over the first, and for nearly two hundred years thereafter, it would be the second proposition that would be believed by the majority of men.²⁸ As late as 1646 Thomas Edwards wrote: “Religious toleration is the greatest of all evils; it will bring in first scepticism in doctrine and looseness of life, then atheism”.²⁹

The beginning of a politics of toleration can be seen in Germany in 1555, when the war between Catholicism and Lutheranism was brought to an end temporarily by the Peace of Augsburg and its formula: cuius regio eius religio - the religion of a country, whether Catholic or Lutheran, was to be determined by the faith of its ruler. This Peace may not have been much comfort to a Catholic living in a Lutheran state, or to a Lutheran living in a Catholic state, but it at least recognized a plurality of religions in Germany as a whole. But the peace did not prove lasting: in 1618 there began the still

²⁷ More, *Utopia*, book II, pp. 119-120.

²⁸ In *Dialogue concerning Heresies* (1529), More advocated the execution of the new breed of heretics, the Protestants. He himself was executed by Henry VIII for his faithfulness to the Pope.

²⁹ Edwards, in Roy Porter, *Enlightenment*, London: Penguin, 2000, p. 105.

bitterer Thirty Years War. This ended with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which modified the Augsburgian framework to allow Calvinism as a third religious alternative for rulers, acknowledging that “subjects whose religion differs from that of their prince are to have equal rights with his other subjects” (V. 35).

We see a similar pattern of limited tolerance followed by renewed persecution in France. In 1598 the Catholic King Henry IV promulgated the Edict of Nantes, which put an end to the bloody war between the French Catholics and Calvinist Huguenots, keeping Catholicism as the official religion of France while giving religious freedom to the Protestants. But in the early seventeenth century the Protestants rebelled several times, which led to a revoking of their privileges and the complete revocation of the Edict by Louis XIV in 1685. This elicited the emigration of many thousands of Huguenots to other countries. But Louis’ revival of Catholic militarism was finally quenched in the early eighteenth century after the failure of his wars against Protestant Holland and England.

Of course, some relaxation of religious persecution was only to be expected, when in Germany, for example, as a result of the Thirty Years War, between a third and a half of the population lay dead. No society can continue to take such losses without disappearing altogether. Believers on both sides of the conflict were exhausted. They longed for a rest from religious passions and the opportunity to rebuild their shattered economies in peace. It was as a result of this cooling of religious passions, and rekindling of commercial ones, that the idea of religious toleration was born. Or rather, *reborn*. For, as we have seen, even the fiercest of ancient despotisms of the past had gone through phases of religious toleration – for example, the Roman empire in the late third century, or the Mongols in the thirteenth.

The first country to introduce religious toleration in a systematic and enduring manner was Holland. Shortly after the Union of Utrecht (1579), when the seven northern provinces resolved to fight for their independence against Spain, the Dutch declared that not only all Protestant sects, but also Jews and even – most surprisingly, given the current war against Catholic Spain – Roman Catholics were given freedom to practise their beliefs. All strictly religious faiths were given liberty alongside the newest and most important faith, Capitalism. As the English Catholic poet Andrew Marvell put it in his poem, “The Character of Holland” (1653):

*Hence Amsterdam, Turk-Christian-Pagan-Jew,
Staple of Sects and Mint of Schism grew;
That Bank of Conscience, where not one so strange
Opinion but finds Credit, and Exchange.
In vain for Catholicks ourselves we bear;
The universal church is onely there.*

Holland has maintained its reputation of being in the vanguard of liberty, toleration and permissiveness to the present day. It was not by chance that when the foremost expression of the modern ecumenical movement, the “universal church” of the World Council of Churches, was founded in 1948, its centre was designated in Amsterdam...

Other countries did not immediately follow the lead given by Holland and Germany. Thus in England religious passions continued to exclude toleration until after the triumph of Cromwell. For, as Winstanley wrote in *The Law of Freedom* (1651), Cromwell “became the main stickler for liberty of conscience without any limitation. This toleration became his masterpiece in politics; for it procured him a party that stuck close in all cases of necessity.”

Cromwell’s supporter, the poet John Milton, produced a whole tract, *Areopagitica* (1646) in favour of freedom of speech and the abolition of censorship. “Let her [Truth] and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter? “Besides, “how”, he asked ironically, “shall the licensers themselves be confided in, unless we can confer upon them, or they assume to themselves above all others in the Land, the grace of infallibility and uncorruptedness?”

Not that Calvinism was an inherently tolerant creed. Calvin asked “why good magistrates shouldn’t draw the sword given them by heaven to repress the apostates who openly mock God and profane and violate his sanctuary”.³⁰ And “the Calvinist dogma of predestination,” as Porter points out, “had bred ‘enthusiasm’, that awesome, irresistible and unfalsifiable conviction of personal infallibility.”³¹

So the English revolutionaries were not the most tolerant of men... But the tide was turning. Shortly after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, King Charles II tried to persuade the English parliament to introduce religious toleration on the Dutch model, but failed. But in Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* (1668) we can see people’s revulsion from the methods of the wars of religion:

*Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery...
As if religion were intended
For nothing else but to be mended.*

And he described the rise of another, no less pernicious tendency – the enthronement of the love of money above every value:

*What makes all doctrines plain and clear?
About two hundred poundes a year.
And that which was true before
Proved false again? Two hundred more...*

English Liberalism

It was not until the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, when the Dutch King William was invited to accept the throne of England, that religious toleration began to become

³⁰ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

³¹ Porter, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

universally accepted by polite society in England. However, it was in need of a philosophical justification. This was provided by the English philosophers Hobbes and Locke, especially the latter.

Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), published during Cromwell's Protectorate, at first sight seems a recipe for intolerance – indeed, the most complete tyranny of the State over the religious beliefs of its citizens. For religious truth, according to Hobbes, was nothing other than that which the sovereign ruler declared it to be: “An opinion publicly appointed to be taught cannot be heresy; nor the Sovereign Princes that authorise them heretics.”

Being in favour of the absolute power of the sovereign, Hobbes was fiercely opposed to the other major power in traditional societies, religion, which he relegated to an instrument of government; so that the power of censorship passed, in his theory, entirely from the Church to the State.

However, Hobbes was not opposed to dissent so long as it did not lead to anarchy, “for such truth as opposeth no man's profit nor pleasure, is to all men welcome.” In fact, he did not believe in objective Truth, but only in “appetites and aversions, hopes and fears”, and in the power of human reason to regulate them towards the desired end of public and private tranquillity. He was not anti-religious so much as a-religious.

Hobbesean indifference to religion was a step towards its toleration, but it did not go very far. It was Locke, according to Roy Porter, who became the real “high priest of toleration”: “In an essay of 1667, which spelt out the key principles expressed in his later *Letters on Toleration*, Locke denied the prince's right to enforce religious orthodoxy, reasoning that the ‘trust, power and authority’ of the civil magistrate were vested in him solely to secure ‘the good preservation and peace of men in that society’. Hence princely powers extended solely to externals, not to faith, which was a matter of conscience. Any state intervention in faith was ‘meddling’.

“To elucidate the limits of those civil powers, Locke divided religious opinions and actions into three. First, there were speculative views and modes of divine worship. These had ‘an absolute and universal right to toleration’, since they did not affect society, being either private or God's business alone. Second, there were those – beliefs about marriage and divorce, for instance – which impinged upon others and hence were of public concern. These ‘have a title also to toleration, but only so far as they do not tend to the disturbance of the State’. The magistrate might thus prohibit publication of such convictions if they would disturb the public good, but no one ought to be forced to forswear his opinion, for coercion bred hypocrisy. Third, there were actions good or bad in themselves. Respecting these, Locke held that civil rulers should have ‘nothing to do with the good of men's soul or their concernments in another life’ – it was for God to reward virtue and punish vice, and the magistrate's job simply to keep the peace. Applying such principles to contemporary realities, Locke advocated toleration, but with limits: Papists should not be tolerated, because their beliefs were ‘absolutely

destructive of all governments except the Pope's'; nor should atheists, since any oaths they took would be in bad faith.³²

"As a radical Whig in political exile in the Dutch republic, Locke wrote the first *Letter on Toleration*, which was published, initially in Latin, in 1689. Echoing the 1667 arguments, this denied that Christianity could be furthered by force. Christ was the Prince of Peace, his gospel was love, his means persuasion; persecution could not save souls. Civil and ecclesiastical government had contrary ends; the magistrate's business lay in securing life, liberty and possessions, whereas faith was about the salvation of souls. A church should be a voluntary society, like a 'club for claret'; it should be shorn of all sacerdotal pretensions. While Locke's views were contested – Bishop Stillingfleet, for example, deemed them a 'Trojan Horse' – they nevertheless won favour in an age inclined, or resigned, to freedom of thought and expression in general."³³

"Since you are pleased to enquire," wrote Locke, "what are my thoughts about the mutual toleration of Christians in their different professions of religion, I must needs answer you freely, that I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristical mark of the true church."³⁴

As A.L. Smith interprets his thought: "Religion is a man's private concern, his belief is part of himself, and he is the sole judge of the means to his own salvation. Persecution only creates hypocrites, while free opinion is the best guarantee of truth. Most ceremonies are indifferent; Christianity is simple; it is only theologians who have encrusted it with dogma. Sacerdotalism, ritual, orthodoxy, do not constitute Christianity if they are divorced from charity. Our attempts to express the truth of religion must always be imperfect and relative, and cannot amount to certainty... Church and State can be united if the Church is made broad enough and simple enough, and the State accepts the Christian basis. Thus religion and morality might be reunited, sectarianism would disappear with sacerdotalism; the Church would become the nation organised for goodness..."³⁵

Such lukewarmness would hardly have satisfied a truly religious nation; but from 1688 England's religious zeal rapidly cooled, and to this day "toleration" represents for English Christianity the cardinal virtue, perhaps the only essential virtue, and certainly more important than true faith...

Nevertheless, it was ironic, in view of Locke's anti-Catholicism, that the first ruler who legislated for tolerance was the Catholic King James II, who bestowed freedom of religion on Catholics, Anglicans and Non-Conformists in his *Declaration of*

³² According to the principles of this father of liberalism, therefore, communist parties should be banned, as well as the expression of communist opinions, first, because communists are atheists, and therefore cannot be trusted to keep their oaths, and secondly because they work towards the destruction of all non-communist governments. (V.M.)

³³ Porter, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-197.

³⁴ Locke, *A Letter concerning Toleration* (1689).

³⁵ Smith, "English Political Philosophy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. VI; The Eighteenth Century, 1909, p. 813.

Indulgence (1688), declaring: “We cannot but heartily wish, as it will easily be believed, that all the people of our dominions were members of the Catholic Church; yet we humbly thank Almighty God, it is and has of long time been our constant sense and opinion (which upon divers occasions we have declared) that conscience ought not to be constrained nor people forced in matters of mere religion: it has ever been directly contrary to our inclination, as we think it is to the interest of government, which it destroys by spoiling trade, depopulating countries, and discouraging strangers, and finally, that it never obtained the end for which it was employed...”³⁶

The generosity shown by James to non-Catholics was not reciprocated by his Protestant successors, William and Mary, who, through the *Toleration Act* (1689) and *Declaration of Indulgence* (1690), re-imposed restrictions on the Catholics while removing them from the Protestants. To this day the heir to the British throne is still not allowed to marry a Catholic... The justification given for this was purely secular: “Some ease to scrupulous consciences in the exercise of religion” was to be granted, since this “united their Majesties’ Protestant subjects in interest and affection...” In other words, tolerance was necessary in order to avoid the possibility of civil war between the Anglicans and the Non-Conformist Protestants.

For, as Porter goes on, “the so-called Toleration Act of 1689 had an eye first and foremost to practical politics, and did not grant toleration. Officially an ‘Act for Exempting their Majesties’ Protestant Subjects, Dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of Certain Laws’, it stated that Trinitarian Protestant Nonconformists who swore the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance and accepted thirty-six of the Thirty-nine Articles [the official confession of the Anglican Church] could obtain licences as ministers or teachers. Catholics and non-Christians did not enjoy the rights of public worship under the Act – and non-Trinitarians were left subject to the old penal laws. Unitarians, indeed, were further singled out by the Blasphemy Act of 1697, which made it an offence to ‘deny any one of the persons in the holy Trinity to be God’. There was no official Toleration Act for them until 1813, and in Scotland the death penalty could still be imposed – as it was in 1697 – for denying the Trinity.

“Scope for prosecution remained. Ecclesiastical courts still had the power of imprisoning for atheism, blasphemy and heresy (maximum term: six months). Occasional indictments continued under the common law, and Parliament could order books to be burned. Even so, patriots justly proclaimed that England was, alongside the United Provinces, the first nation to have embraced religious toleration – a fact that became a matter of national pride. ‘My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection which I frequently made, how like a king I looked,’ remarked Defoe’s castaway hero, Robinson Crusoe; ‘we had but three subjects, and they were of different religions. My man Friday was a pagan and a cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist: however, I allowed liberty of conscience throughout my dominions’.

³⁶ Bettenson & Maunder, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

“Two developments made toleration a *fait accompli*: the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695³⁷, and the fact that England had already been sliced up into sects. It was, quipped Voltaire, a nation of many faiths but only one sauce, a recipe for confessional tranquillity if culinary tedium: ‘If there were only one religion in England, there would be danger of despotism, if there were only two they would cut each other’s throats; but there are thirty, and they live in peace’ [*Letters concerning the English Nation*].”³⁸

The more religious justifications of tolerance offered by More or Milton were no longer in fashion. In the modern age that was beginning, religious tolerance was advocated, not because it ensured the eventual triumph of the truth, but because it prevented war. And war, of course, “spoiled trade”...

“To enlightened minds,” writes Porter, “the past was a nightmare of barbarism and bigotry: fanaticism had precipitated bloody civil war and the axing of Charles Stuart, that man of blood, in 1649. Enlightened opinion repudiated old militancy for modern civility. But how could people adjust to each other? Sectarianism, that sword of the saints which had divided brother from brother, must cease; rudeness had to yield to refinement. Voltaire saw this happening before his very eyes in England’s ‘free and peaceful assemblies’: ‘Take a view of the *Royal Exchange* in London, a place more venerable than many courts of justice, where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian transact together as tho’ they all profess’d the same religion, and give the name of Infidel to none but bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist, and the Churchman depends on the Quaker’s word. And all are satisfied’. [*Letters concerning the English Nation*]. This passage squares with the enlightened belief that commerce would unite those whom creeds rent asunder. Moreover, by depicting men content, and content to be content – differing, but agreeing to differ – the *philosophe* pointed towards a rethinking of the *summum bonum*, a shift from God-fearingness to a selfhood more psychologically oriented. The Enlightenment thus translated the ultimate question ‘How can I be saved?’ into the pragmatic ‘How can I be happy?’”³⁹

The American Idea

During the eighteenth century, under the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment, the idea of religious toleration underwent a subtle but important change in Europe. This was the change from toleration as “a utilitarian expedient to avoid destructive strife” to toleration as “an intrinsic value”.⁴⁰ It became a dogma of the Enlightenment and Masonry that a ruler could not impose his religion on his subjects, because one’s faith was an accident of one’s birth. In fact, certain rulers, such as Frederick the Great, adopted an attitude of complete religious indifference. However, the *complete* separation of Church and State, religion and politics, was still

³⁷ This put an end to pre-publication censorship. From now on, as Porter remarks, “though laws against blasphemy, obscenity and seditious libel remained on the statute book, and offensive publications could still be presented before the courts, the situation was light years away from that obtaining in France, Spain or almost anywhere else in *ancien régime* Europe.” (*op. cit.*, p. 31).

³⁸ Porter, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

³⁹ Porter, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁰ Isaiah Berlin, “Nationalism”, in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, London: Pimlico, 1998, p. 581.

unheard-of in Europe. This idea was first put into practice in *the United States*, a land founded mainly by Calvinist refugees fleeing from the State's persecution of their religion. It marks the furthest application of the principle of negative liberty, freedom *from*. For what the Calvinist refugees valued above all was the freedom to practice their religion free from any interference from the State.

K.N. Leontiev writes: "The people who left Old England and laid the foundations of the States of America were all extremely religious people who did not want to make any concessions with regard to their burning personal faith and had not submitted to the State Church of Episcopal Anglicanism, not out of progressive indifference, but out of godliness.

"The Catholics, Puritans, Quakers, all were agreed about one thing - that there should be mutual tolerance, not out of coldness, but out of necessity. And so the State created by them for the reconciliation of all these burning religious extremes found its centre of gravity outside religion. Tolerance was imposed by circumstances, there was no inner indifferentism."⁴¹

"After the Revolution," however, writes Karen Armstrong, "when the newly independent states drew up their constitutions, God was mentioned in them only in the most perfunctory manner. In 1786, Thomas Jefferson disestablished the Anglican church in Virginia; his bill declared that coercion in matters of faith was 'sinfull and tyrannical', that truth would prevail if people were allowed their own opinions, and that there should be a 'wall of separation' between religion and politics. The bill was supported by the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians of Virginia, who resented the privileged position of the Church of England in the state. Later the other states followed Virginia's lead, and disestablished their own churches, Massachusetts being the last one to do so, in 1833. In 1787, when the federal Constitution was drafted at the Philadelphia Convention, God was not mentioned at all, and in the Bill of Rights (1789), the First Amendment of the Constitution formally separated religion from the state: 'Congress shall make no laws respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof'. Henceforth faith would be a private and voluntary affair in the United States. This was a revolutionary step and has been hailed as one of the great achievements of the Age of Reason. The thinking behind it was indeed inspired by the tolerant philosophy of the Enlightenment, but the Founding Fathers were also moved by more pragmatic considerations. They knew that the federal Constitution was essential to preserve the unity of the states, but they also realized that if the federal government established any single one of the Protestant denominations and made it the official faith of the United States, the Constitution would not be approved. Congregationalist Massachusetts, for example, would never ratify a Constitution that established the Anglican Church. This was also the reason why Article VI, Section 3, of the Constitution abolished religious tests for office in the federal government. There *was* idealism in the Founders' decision to disestablish

⁴¹ Leontiev, "Vizantizm i Slavianstvo" ("Byzantinism and Slavism"), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavism), Moscow, 1996, p. 124. As a matter of fact, the Puritans of Massachusetts and Long Island were far from tolerant in the beginning. The impetus to toleration came mainly from the Quakers of Pennsylvania.

religion and to secularize politics, but the new nation could not base its identity on any one sectarian option and retain the loyalty of all its subjects. The needs of the modern state demanded that it be tolerant and, therefore, secular.”⁴²⁴¹

The religious toleration of the United States has undoubtedly been a precious boon for the immigrants from many countries and of many faiths who have fled there to escape persecution. But it is based on a false assumption from an Orthodox Christian point of view. That assumption was well expressed by a law report in 1917: “If... the attitude of the law both civil and criminal towards all religions depends fundamentally on the safety of the State and not on the doctrines or metaphysics of those who profess them, it is not necessary to consider whether or why any given body was relieved by the law at one time or frowned on at another, or to analyse creeds and tenets, Christian and other.”⁴³⁴²

However, as we have seen, the idea that the safety of the State is completely independent of the religion confessed by its citizens is false. For, as Solomon says: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14.34). The history of the people of Israel, and of several New Testament nations, demonstrates that their prosperity depended crucially on their fulfilling of the commandments of God. The idea that the religion of a State has no bearing on its prosperity could occur only to a person who has not studied history (or any human science) or believes in a Deist conception of God as a Being Who created the world but does not interfere in its history thereafter. In fact, the religion, and hence the morality, of a nation’s rulers is a vitally important factor determining its destiny.

Therefore, according to Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, the state has the duty to put some limits on religious freedom for the sake of preserving that religious consciousness which forms its own spirit. “The idea [of religious tolerance] appears good, but it is fair only when the subject and limits are precisely and correctly determined. The idea of protecting the unity of the ruling confession in the state (thereby preserving the popular spirit – a source of strength for the state and an important aid to governance) should come before the idea of religious tolerance and should impose limits on the latter.”⁴⁴

Also false is the idea that anyone worshipping “according to the dictates of his own conscience” is for that reason alone worthy of protection. “Conscience” very often refers, not to the real voice of God speaking in the soul of man, but to any voice, however demonic, that a man *thinks* is the voice of God. It is therefore inherently dangerous to consider a religion worthy of protection, not because it is objectively true, but because the believers are sincere in their beliefs, whether these are in fact true or false, profitable to society or profoundly harmful to it. False religion is always harmful, both for its adherents, and for those right-believers who are tempted away

⁴² Armstrong, *The Battle for God: a History of Fundamentalism*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2001, p. 85.

⁴³ *Bowman v. Secular Society, Ltd.* (1917) A.C. 406. Quoted in Huntingdon Cairns (ed.), *The Limits of Art*, Washington D.C.: Pantheon Books, 1948, p. 1353.

⁴⁴ Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in George Frazee, “Skeptical Reformer, Staunch Tserkovnik: Metropolitan Philaret and the Great Reforms”, in Vladimir Tsurikov (ed.), *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867*, Jordanville: Variable Press, 2003, pp. 169-170.

from the right path by them. We would never accept the argument that a poison can be sold freely so long as its traders sincerely believe it to be harmless or because the traders “are accountable to God alone” for the harm they cause. And the spiritual poison of heresy is far more harmful than material poison, in that it leads, not simply to the temporal dissolution of the body, but to the eternal damnation of the soul.

Of course, it is another question *how* a false religion is to be combated. Crude persecution is counter-productive. Persuasion and education that respects the freewill of the heretic is undoubtedly the best means of combating false belief. Then he is able to come freely, with the help of God’s grace and by the free exercise of his reasoning power, to a knowledge of the truth. However, what about those who are too young to reason for themselves or for some other reason unable to exercise their reasoning powers? If allowed to live in a truly Christian atmosphere, these weak ones may become stronger in faith and have less need of the protection of the State. But while they are still weak, the influence of heretics, if unchecked, could lead them astray. It is a generally accepted principle that the young and the weak are entitled to the protection of the State against those who would exploit their weakness to their destruction. So in cases where the heretic stubbornly continues to lead others astray, physical forms of oppression may be justified. The spiritually strong may refuse to offer physical resistance to religious evil, choosing instead the path of voluntary martyrdom. But the spiritually weak cannot choose this path, and must be protected from the evil, if necessary by physical means. Indeed, one could argue that the government that does not protect the weak in this way is itself persecuting them, laying them open to the most evil and destructive influences. For, as Sir Thomas More’s King Utopus understood, “the worst men be most obstinate and stubborn and in their evil opinion most constant”, so that without some restraint on them “the best and holiest religion would be trodden underfoot by most vain superstitions, even as good corn is by thorns and weeds overgrown and choked.”⁴⁵

The Russian Idea

The Russian State accepted the Byzantine laws on the spreading of heresy without substantial alteration. From St. Vladimir to Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich there were death penalties for “blasphemy”, for “seducing from the Orthodox Faith into Islam [Judaism]”, for “wizardry” and “sacrilege”.

In practice, however, the Russian State – again, following Byzantium – very rarely executed heretics. One of the very few exceptions was the execution of a few leaders of the Judaizing heresy at the beginning of the sixteenth century by Great Prince Basil III. Some have speculated that such harshness betrayed the influence of the contemporary Spanish Inquisition, which was also directed primarily at Judaizing heretics. Be that as it may, it should be remembered that the Judaizing heresy represented a most serious threat to both the Church *and the State* of Moscow. The executions elicited protests from the Trans-Volga elders, but were supported by St. Joseph of Volotsk.

⁴⁵ More, *Utopia*, book II, pp. 119-120.

St. Joseph's argument was set out in his work, *The Enlightener*. Essentially, he argued that heretics should be executed only if they aggressively try and bring others into their heresy. He pointed out that the holy apostles and fathers did not seek the punishment of heretics when they kept themselves to themselves, but only when they sought to corrupt others to their false teachings:

"In *The Acts of the Apostles* there is a description of how, when the holy Apostles Peter and John came to Samaria, Simon Magus offered him silver and said: 'Give me the ability that upon whomever I lay my hand he receives the Holy Spirit' - and the holy apostles did not condemn him to death at that time. But when he came to complete dishonour, and began to corrupt the pious, and seduce the believers, then they condemned him to death.

"St. John the Theologian acted in exactly the same way. As long as Kinop lived in his own house and did not seduce any of the faithful, he was not condemned. But when he arrived in the city intending to corrupt the believers, he was condemned to death. The holy Apostle Philip also acted in exactly the same way: he did not go to the chief priest, and did not condemn him; but when he saw that the chief priest had come only in order to corrupt the pious, then he condemned him to death.

"The Apostle Paul acted in a similar way: he did not begin to search out Elymas the sorcerer, to condemn or destroy him. But when he saw that he was seducing the Proconsul from the faith, he condemned him so that he became blind and could not see the sun.

"When St. John Chrysostom saw that the Arians were living in Constantinople and caused no harm to any of the Orthodox, he himself also did no evil to them. But when he saw that they were occupied in seduction and were composing a series of songs and hymns so as to shake faith in the Unity of Essence, he asked the Emperor to drive them out of the city.

"In exactly the same way when St. Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza, saw that the Manichaeen heretics were living in Gaza and were not seducing any of the Orthodox, he did not condemn them. But when he saw that they had come there to seduce the Christians, he condemned them at first to dumbness, and then to death.

"In the same way St. Leo, Bishop of Catania, did not at first condemn Heliodorus the heretic to death. But when he saw that he had come to the church and was sowing confusion in order to seduce those who were faithful to piety, he went out of the church and arranged that Heliodorus should be burned with fire, and then he returned to the church and served the Divine service.

"In the same way when St. Theodore, Bishop of Edessa, found many heretics in Edessa who did not want to cause any particular harm to the Orthodox, he did not do them any evil. But when he saw that they had gathered to do such an evil, to seduce the Orthodox and steal church property, he even set off for Babylon and asked the Emperor to destroy the heretics.

“And there are many further cases in the Divine Writings, when heretics holding to certain heresies and not doing any harm to the Orthodox are not judged by our Holy and God-bearing Fathers. But when they see that the faithless heretics are intending to seduce the Orthodox, then they condemn them. That is how we, too, should act...”⁴⁶

The arguments for and against religious toleration became especially fierce towards the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century in Russia. Although the Orthodox Church retained a privileged position in Russia, as she had done in Byzantium, the restrictions on other confessions were light, and did not constitute religious persecution in any meaningful sense (in spite of much, especially Jewish, propaganda to the contrary). Moreover, many argued that if these restrictions were removed completely while keeping the Orthodox Church in the dependence on the State imposed on her by Peter the Great, the Orthodox Church would be in fact *less* free than other confessions. Nevertheless, liberals and atheists attacked the restrictions on non-Orthodox confessions in the name of freedom of conscience and the word.

According to the famous St. Ambrose of Optina (+1891), this propaganda was entirely western in origin and was very harmful, especially to the educated people. “Was any benefit gained by religious tolerance in Russia in relation to foreign nations: the French and others, not to speak of the Jew, who, as a people rejected by God, is despised by all, and nowhere has any significance? Religious tolerance of the indicated nations could have no influence on the simple people, because the way of life of our simple people is completely different from the condition and situation of these nations: but in the circle of Russian educated people this religious tolerance had a great influence on morality and on their domestic way of life. Now many educated people bear only the name of Orthodox, but in actual fact completely adhere to the morals and customs of those of foreign lands and foreign beliefs. Without any torment of conscience they violate the regulations of the Orthodox Church concerning fasts and gather together at balls and dances on the eves of great Feasts of the Lord, when Orthodox Christians should be in church in prayerful vigil. This would be excusable if such gatherings took place on the eves of ordinary days, but not on the eves of Feasts, and especially great Feasts. Are not such acts and deeds clearly inspired by our enemy, the destroyer of souls, contrary to the commandment of the Lord which says: carry out your ordinary affairs for six days, but the seventh (festal) day must be devoted to God in pious service? How have Orthodox Christians come to such acts hated by God? It is for no other reason than indiscriminate communion with believers of other faiths...”⁴⁷

The liberals were especially aroused by the excommunication of the novelist Lev Tolstoy in 1901, although this was a purely internal affair of the Church, and amounted to no more than the public recognition – which Tolstoy himself did not dispute – that he no longer believed in Orthodoxy and so could no longer be counted as a member of the Orthodox Church.

⁴⁶ St. Joseph, “Slovo ob Osuzhdenii Eretikov” (Sermon on the Condemnation of Heretics).

⁴⁷ St. Ambrose, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 90

Much needed clarification was introduced into this debate by Archbishop Ambrose of Kharkov, who made an important distinction between freedom of conscience and the other freedoms. "What, it seems, could be better," he asked, "than to present to people the possibility of going freely along the path to the knowledge of the truth, without restraining or limiting them by other people's influence? What could be better than the independent development in them of various mental powers and gifts? But in fact it turns out that for the majority a teacher and leader on the path to the truth is required, because they themselves do not find this path and often even do not see it and do not recognize it, although it is clearly indicated to them. Would it not be better to give people the opportunity to exercise their freedom in independent activity in accordance with the laws of Divine and human righteousness, without any interference of guides? Then one could only rejoice at the appearance in them of the special perfections of human nature that are particular to each person. But in fact it turns out that people sometimes so forget and trample on these laws that one has to put them in prison. If people are such in relation to the knowledge of the truth and in free activity in accordance with the laws of righteousness, then can they be different when they are alone with their conscience, which is the expression of the common condition of a man? Obviously not."

Archbishop Ambrose pointed out that the consciences of men are in very various conditions. Some have "crude, sensual" consciences, which remain unfeeling even when they have committed great crimes. Others "speak lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4.2). Others have "literalist" consciences, who will forgive great crimes, but not infringements of ritual rules. Still others have "fanatical" consciences, which in their zeal to spread their faith will not shrink from imposing their views on others by force. Others have "servile" consciences, which may be overwhelmed by the consciousness of their sins, but can find no way out of their condition. Still others have "fearful" consciences; they are overwhelmed and overcome by fear after committing merely trivial offences.

And then there is the conscience of the saint, who, when he sins, immediately repents thoroughly and deeply, and recovers his habitual peace of mind and joy of heart. Only this conscience is truly *free*, being able to retain its equilibrium and clarity even under conditions of the fiercest persecution. This freedom consists "not in external rights and advantages, social and political, but in the unshakeable feeling of inner peace, in the inner liberation of the spirit from all hindrances to the observance of the law that arise in the damaged nature of man."

It follows that there is an important distinction between freedom of conscience, which depends on the moral condition of a man, and freedom of the press, of the word, of religion, etc. The latter, external freedoms may or may not advance the inner freedom that is freedom of conscience. They are justified if they do promote inner freedom in the given situation, and not justified if they do not. It is the task of the ruler to discern when they are justified and when they are not.

"And so," concludes Archbishop Ambrose, "we must seek for freedom of conscience, not in the sphere of earthly rights, but in the sphere of spiritual perfections."

We must expect it, not from state laws, but from our own moral labours and exploits, and ask for it, not from earthly kings and rulers, but from the Lord God. As regards the broadening of rational freedom in public life, we must discuss freedom of thought, freedom of the word, freedom of convictions, freedom of confession, but not freedom of conscience. All these varieties of freedom can only be paths to freedom of conscience, but it itself stands higher than them. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (II Corinthians 3.17)."⁴⁸

So freedom of conscience in this sense is the ultimate, absolute value, while all the other varieties of freedom are only valuable relatively speaking, depending on their contribution to the absolute value, and can be evil if they do not contribute to it. Russian society was soon to see the point of this distinction when Tsar Nicholas II issued his ukaz of April 17, 1905, the Sunday of Pascha, "On the Strengthening of the Principles of Religious Toleration", which removed most of the restrictions on the non-Orthodox confessions. The result was not universal peace and joy, but a horrific explosion of anti-Orthodox and anti-monarchist feeling...

St. John of Kronstadt was one of those highly critical of the decree, seeing it as one product of the revolutionary unrest: "Look what is happening in this kingdom at the present time: everywhere students and workers are on strike; everywhere there is the noise of parties who have as their goal the overthrowing of the true monarchical order established by God, everywhere the dissemination of insolent, senseless proclamations, disrespect for the authority of the ruling powers established by God, for 'there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God': children and young people imagine that they are the master and commanders of their own fates; marriage has lost all meaning for many and divorces at will have multiplied to endlessness; many children are left to the whims of fate by unfaithful spouses; some kind of senselessness and arbitrariness rule... Finally, an unpunished conversion from Orthodoxy into any faith whatever is allowed [by the Decree of April 17, 1905]; even though the same Lord we confess designated death in the Old Testament for those denying the law of Moses.

"If matters continue like this in Russia and the atheists and the anarchist-crazies are not subjected to the righteous retribution of the law, and if Russia is not cleansed of its many tares, then it will become desolate like the ancient kingdoms and cities wiped out by God's righteous judgement from the face of the earth for their godlessness and their wickedness: Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Greece-Macedonia.

"Hold fast, then, Russia, to your faith, and your Church, and to the Orthodox Tsar if you do not wish to be shaken by people of unbelief and lawlessness and if you do not wish to be deprived of your Kingdom and the Orthodox Tsar. But if you fall away from your faith, as many intelligenty have fallen away, then you will no longer be Russia or Holy Rus', but a rabble of all kinds of other faiths that wish to destroy one another."

⁴⁸ Archbishop Ambrose, "O Svobode Sovesti" (On Freedom of Conscience), in *Polnoe Sobranie Propovedej*, volume 2, Kharkov, 1902.

The situation was not improved, but made worse, by the publication of the Manifesto of October 17, which granted “real personal inviolability, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association” to all. Now there was no bar on the most blasphemous and hate-filled revolutionary propaganda. The result: the revolution of 1905, which almost overturned the Russian State. Even after the revolution had been crushed, the freedoms remained in place; with the result that unrestrained slander against the Tsar and the Church continued until the unprecedented tragedy of 1917. So unfettered freedom led to the most repressive and God-hating tyranny in history...

Conclusions

1. Since man is by nature free and rational, he cannot be brought to a knowledge of the truth through the essentially irrational means of physical coercion, although physical punishments such as imprisonment may help him indirectly by humbling his pride. For the Christian, the aim of the Christian life is freedom of conscience in the sense of complete inner freedom to do God’s will. External freedoms are valued only to the extent that they contribute to, and do not hinder, the attainment of inner, spiritual freedom.
2. Although free in essence, man, because of youth or weakness of will or mind, can be physically coerced into renunciation of his faith by evil tyrants, or seduced by evil teachers into heresy or unbelief. It is the duty of the Christian, as an individual and in society, to do everything in his power to protect his weaker brethren from such a disaster. The justification of censorship and those restrictions on freedom - and restrictions of some kind are to be found in all societies - is that while man is free according to his original nature, some men are less free than others by virtue of their youth or lack of education. And their freedom is further weakened by being brought into bondage by evil ideas and passions. Once a man has been infected by false ideas, the only cure is reasoned argument, education; we cannot convert him by force. But we can reasonably limit his freedom to infect others, especially the intellectually weak and children, and to lead them into false religion and immorality.
3. In the Christian State, some restriction of freedom of speech, press and assembly in order to restrict the influence of evil teachers is in accordance with reason and has always been blessed by the Church. For we should remember that the present disastrous state of the world has been brought about in large measure by the cult of freedom carried to irrational extremes. The most illiberal and anti-religious State in history, the Soviet Union, was brought into being largely through the infiltration of liberal ideas from the West into Russia and their acceptance in the educated layers of society and eventually by the Russian State. We should always remember that external freedoms can be used for evil as well as for good.
4. In the non-Christian State, the influence of evil teachers will inevitably be dominant. And so restrictions will be placed not, for example, on atheism or blasphemy or homosexuality, but on racism or sexism or “religious

exclusivism". In such circumstances, while trying to guard themselves from the evil influence exerted by these teachers, Christians will be in favour of such freedoms as will enable them to worship and practise their faith without persecution. Contemporary Orthodox Christians have special reason to value religious toleration, in that we form a very small minority in almost every contemporary state, and would almost certainly be subjected to persecution if some such principle were not in force.

5. Religious toleration should never be confused with *ecumenism* – that is, the idea that all religions are in principle equal. In fact, it is the combination of the idea of religious toleration with ecumenism in modern societies that constitutes probably the greatest contemporary threat to religious freedom. For if all religions are considered equal, it becomes a crime to say that any one of them is superior or truer than the others. Thus religious indifference ultimately leads to a resumption of religious persecution... It follows that religious toleration must be exercised together with religious *discrimination* – that is, discrimination in favour of the one true religion. And if that is not possible in any contemporary society, insofar as none of them is ruled by Orthodox Christian rulers, we must nevertheless work for the establishment of those laws and habits which make it easier for men to come to a knowledge of the truth and true morality and escape from the snares of falsehood. For in the final analysis, it is not religious freedom that is the ultimate value, but religious *truth*, since, as the Lord says, “ye shall know the *truth*, and the *truth* shall make you free” (John 8.32).

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2. THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF ROMANS 5.12

One of the most important controversies in modern theological thought centres on the true meaning of the doctrine of original sin – or, as many prefer to call it, the forefather’s, or ancestral sin. The traditionalists insist that while Adam alone was personally responsible for his sin in the Garden of Eden, nevertheless in some mysterious but real way his sin, and therefore guilt for that sin, is transmitted by inheritance from Adam to all his descendants. The modernists, on the other hand, declare that there is no such generic connection, that we inherit sinful inclinations and mortality from Adam, but not his sin as such with its attendant guilt.

The modernist view is much easier to understand, more commonsensical than the traditional view, and has therefore been eagerly adopted by many. The modernists explain their divergence from the common tradition of Christendom in both East and West by the “Babylonian captivity” of Eastern Orthodox theology to Roman Catholic, scholastic modes of thought. However, the traditionalists argue that the mysteriousness of the traditional doctrine is not an argument against it, and that the vast weight of scriptural and patristic evidence in favour of it cannot be so easily dismissed...

The traditionalists have employed many arguments to support the traditional teaching. One of them goes as follows. We know that even newly born babies are born with sin in them. For “who shall be pure from uncleanness? Not one, even if his life is but one day upon the earth” (Job 14.4-5). Moreover, it is the tradition of the Church to baptize new-born babies “for the remission of sins”. But what sin and whose sin can this be? It is generally agreed that young babies are not *personally* responsible for any sin; they are too young to be accounted guilty of committing personal sins. So are we talking here about sinful inclinations, rather than sin itself? No, because while babies certainly do have sinful inclinations, these are not removed in the baptismal font. Holy Baptism and Chrismation give grace to fight against sinful inclinations, but do not by themselves remove those inclinations: it is only after a long struggle that the freewill of man, strengthened by grace, gains the victory over them – and in very, very few is this victory complete within the bounds of mortal life. There remains, therefore, only one alternative: that babies are baptized for the remission of the sin *of Adam*...

Another argument goes as follows. St. Paul describes an exact parallel between the fall of man in the First Adam, and the redemption of man in the Second Adam, Christ: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5.19). However, according to the modernists, it is not true that many were made sinners through Adam. So it must be equally untrue that many are made righteous through Christ! So the modernist view, by undermining the doctrine of original sin, undermines the doctrine of redemption also...

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However, the modernists believe that they have a more powerful argument than any of these. They believe that perhaps the most important Scriptural passage relating to original sin – Romans 5.12 – has been mistranslated in the West, and that this wrong translation has entered, through St. Augustine and the scholastics, into the blood stream of Western theology, both Catholic and Protestant, and from there into the Orthodox theology that has been influenced by the West. This “original sin” of the Augustinian West has been inherited by almost the whole of traditional Orthodox theology; and only since the publication of such works as Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky’s *Dogma of Redemption* (1926) and Fr. John Romanides’ *Ancestral Sin* (1957) has Orthodox theology begun to liberate itself from its Western Babylonian captivity.

Now the modernists wish to translate Romans 5.12 as follows: “Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, so also death passed to all men, *because* (or “in that” or “inasmuch as”) all men have sinned”. The Greek phrase translated here as “because” is: εφ’ω, which in the Slavonic translation of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius is translated as v nem, or, in English, “in him”. Metropolitan Anthony argues that the translation of SS. Cyril and Methodius is wrong, in spite of the fact that they were highly educated (and holy) Greeks translating from their native tongue. “Let us consider the original Greek text,” he writes: “the words ‘in that’ translate the Greek εφ’ω, which means: ‘because’, ‘since’ (Latin tamen, quod)... Therefore, the correct translation of these words of the Apostle Paul is: ‘and so death passed upon all men, because all have sinned’ (and not just Adam alone)”.⁴⁹

If we follow this, the (supposedly) correct translation, according to Metropolitan Anthony, “Adam was not so much the cause of our sinfulness as he was the first to sin, and even if we were not his sons, we still would sin just the same. Thus one should think that we are all sinners, even though our will be well directed, not because we are descendants of Adam, but because the All-knowing God gives us life in the human condition (and not as angels, for example), and He foresaw that the will of each of us would be like that of Adam and Eve. This will is not evil by nature, but disobedient and prideful, and consequently it needs a school to correct it, and this is what our earthly life in the body is, for it constantly humbles our stubbornness. In this matter this school attains success in almost all its pupils who are permitted to complete their whole course, that is, live a long life; but some of God’s chosen ones attain this wisdom at an early age, namely those whom Providence leads to the Heavenly Teacher or to His ‘co-workers’”.⁵⁰ As he put it in another place: “God knew that each of us would sin in the same way as Adam, and for that reason we are his descendants... Knowing beforehand that every man would display Adam’s self-will, the Lord allows us to inherit Adam’s weak, ill, mortal nature endowed with sinful tendencies, in the struggle with which, and still more in submitting to which, we become conscious of our nothingness and humble ourselves.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Khrapovitsky, *The Dogma of Redemption*, Montreal: Monastery Press, 1972, p. 47.

⁵⁰ *The Dogma of Redemption*, pp. 47-48.

⁵¹ Khrapovitsky, *Attempt at a Christian Catechism*, Third Article, Victoria, Australia, 1990, p. 45.

However, while this appears to dispel one paradox and apparent injustice – that we should be guilty for a sin we did not commit – it by no means dispels other, no less difficult ones. For is it not unjust that we should inherit a nature inclined to sin and doomed to death before we have done anything worthy of death? Metropolitan Anthony’s explanation is that God, foreseeing that we would sin like Adam, gave us a corrupt and mortal nature in anticipation of that. But this implies that whereas in the case of Adam death is clearly the wages of sin and the just punishment for the crime he committed, in our case the punishment *precedes* the crime, and therefore cannot be perceived as the wages of sin. Is this not just as unjust? Nor is it convincing to argue, as does the metropolitan, that we are encumbered with a sinful and mortal nature, not as a punishment for sin, but in order to humble us, that is, in order to prevent worse sin in the future. For first: if we needed to be humbled, we clearly were already in sin – the sin of pride. And secondly: how can sin be reduced by endowing us with a nature inclined to sin?! Why not provide us with a sinless nature to begin with?

But God *did* provide us with a sinless nature to begin with, and it is we, not God, who have caused its corruption. Metropolitan Anthony, however, is forced by the logic of his argument, which denies that our sinfulness was caused by Adam’s original sin, to attribute it to God Himself. As he writes: “Let us now ask: Who was responsible for fashioning human nature so that a good desire and repentance are, nevertheless, powerless to renew a man in actuality and so that he falls helplessly under the burden of his passions if he does not have grace assisting him? God the Creator, of course.”⁵² This is perilously close to the assertion that God is the author of evil – or, at any rate, of the evil of human nature since Adam, which is clearly contrary to the Orthodox teaching that God created everything good in the beginning. So the idea that God created sinful natures, natures subject to death, is contrary to Orthodox teaching.

We conclude that Metropolitan Anthony’s teaching on original sin, based on the modernist translation of εφ’ω in Romans 5.12, is not Orthodox. Therefore we should not be surprised to find that his interpretation of this passage is supported only by certain well-known heretics. Thus Origen, in his *Commentary on Romans*, says: “The apostle stated most categorically that the death of sin has passed to all men because all have sinned... Therefore even if you say that Abel was righteous, still he cannot be excused, for all have sinned, including him.” The emphasis here, as with Metropolitan Anthony, is on the fact that all men *individually* have sinned, so that it is their personal, individual sins that cause their death, not the sin they inherit from Adam. Again, Pelagius writes in his commentary: “As long as people sin as Adam sinned they died... Or perhaps we should understand that death passed on to all who lived in a human and not in a heavenly manner.”⁵³ Again, there is no mention made of any sinful *inheritance* from Adam...

The Holy Fathers, on the other hand, contrary to these heretics and contrary to Metropolitan Anthony, stress the causal link between the sin of Adam and our death.

⁵² *The Dogma of Redemption*, p. 40. Cf. similar statements in his *Catechism*, p. 54, “On the Fourth Article”.

⁵³ Origen and Pelagius, in Gerald Bray (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: VI. Romans*, Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998, pp. 136, 137.

Thus St. Athanasius the Great writes: “When Adam had transgressed, his sin reached unto all men”.⁵⁴ Again, St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: “[All men] have been condemned to death by the transgression of Adam. For the whole of human nature has suffered this *in him*, who was the beginning of the human race.”⁵⁵ Again, St. Symeon the Theologian writes: “When our Master descended from on high He by His own death destroyed the death that awaited us. The condemnation that was the consequence of our forefather’s transgression he completely annihilated.”⁵⁶ Again, St. Gregory Palamas writes: “Before Christ we all shared the same ancestral curse and condemnation poured out on all of us from our single Forefather, as if it had sprung from the root of the human race and was the common lot of our nature. Each person’s individual action attracted either reproof or praise from God, but no one could do anything about the shared curse and condemnation, or the evil inheritance that had been passed down to him and through him would pass to his descendants.”⁵⁷ Again, St. Anastasius of Sinai writes: “In Adam we became co-inheritors of the curse, not as if we disobeyed that divine commandment with him but because he became mortal and transmitted sin through his seed. We became mortals from a mortal...”⁵⁸ Again, St. Gennadius Scholarius writes: “Everyone in the following of Adam has died, because they have all inherited their nature from him. But some have died because they themselves have sinned, while others have died only because of Adam’s condemnation – for example, children”.⁵⁹

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Now let us return to a closer examination of the meaning of εφ’ω in Romans 5.12. If we open Joseph Thayer’s authoritative *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, and look at the various usages of the preposition επι with the dative case, we find *both* usages in the New Testament. Thus εφ’ω is sometimes equivalent to επι τουτω, οτι, meaning “on the ground of this, because”, and is used in this sense in II Corinthians 5.4 and Philippians 3.12. On the other hand, in other places – for example, Mark 2.4, Mark 13.2, Matthew 9.16, Luke 5.36, Mark 2.21, Matthew 14, 8, 11, Mark 6.25, Mark 6.55, Mark 6.39, John 11.38, Acts 8.16 and Revelation 19.14 - επι with the dative case is equivalent to the Latin *in* with the ablative case, indicating the place where or in which something takes place or is situated. This place can also be a person, as in the famous passage: “Thou art Peter, and on this rock (επι ταυτη τη πετρα) I will build My Church” (Matthew 16.18; cf. Ephesians 2.20).⁶⁰

The conclusion to be drawn is that from a purely grammatical point of view the two translations are *equally possible and equally correct*. Therefore the decision as to

⁵⁴ St. Athanasius the Great, *Four Discourses against the Arians*, I, 51.

⁵⁵ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Romans* 5.15, P.G. 74:785C; quoted in Nikolaos Vassiliadis, *The Mystery of Death*, Athens: “Sotir”, 1993, p. 85.

⁵⁶ St. Symeon, *The Discourses*, V: On Penitence, 9.

⁵⁷ St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 5: On the Meeting of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ*, in Christopher Veniamin, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2002, vol. I, p. 52.

⁵⁸ St. Anastasius, quoted in J. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, Ridgewood, N.J.: Zephyr Publishing, 2002, p. 34, note 64.

⁵⁹ St. Gennadius, in Bray, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁶⁰ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Edinburgh, 1901, pp. 232, 233.

which of them actually represents the meaning of the Apostle Paul cannot be determined on purely grammatical or linguistic grounds, but must be made on grounds of (1) coherence with the context of the passage, and (2) conformity with the general dogmatic teaching of the Apostle. And at this point the weight of evidence comes very strongly down on the side of the traditionalist interpretation.

1. The Context of the Passage. In his polemic with Metropolitan Anthony, Archbishop Eleutherius of Lithuania writes: "The two halves into which we can divide the content of this verse [Romans 5.12] through the conjunctions 'as' (ὡσπερ) and 'so also' (καὶ οὕτως) represent, not a parallelism, and not a comparison, but a correspondence, according to which the first is the base, the common thesis, while the second is the conclusion from it. This logical connection is indicated by the conjunction 'also'... With the universalism characteristic of the Apostle, and the highly generalizing flight of his thought, St. Paul in the first half speaks about the sin of the forefathers as being the cause of death in the world generally, and not in humanity alone. For the whole of creation is subject to corruption and death, not willingly but 'by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same' (Romans 8.12-22), because of the sin of Adam...

"From this general proposition the holy Apostle draws the conclusion concerning people that for the very same cause, that is, because of the sin of one man, they also die."⁶¹

In order to clarify this point, St. Paul goes on, in the following verses (5.13-14, cf. 7.8-9), to point out that before the Law of Moses the personal sins of men were not imputed to them, they were not counted as having committed them.⁶² *And yet they died.* But death is "the wages of sin" (Romans 6.23). So of what sin was their death the wages? There can only be one answer: *Adam's*. Thus *those who died before the Law of Moses died in spite of the fact that no personal transgressions were imputed to them, so that their death was "the wages of sin", not in the sense of being the result of their personal transgressions, but of the sin of Adam. For before the Law only Adam was condemned to die because of his personal transgression.*

In order to understand this point, it will be useful to introduce the distinction between *personal sin* and *the law of sin*, between sin as the *act* of a human *person*, and sin as the *state* or *condition* or *law* of human *nature*. This distinction is made by St. Paul in Romans, as Archbishop Theophan of Poltava points out: "The holy apostle clearly distinguishes in his teaching on original sin between two points: παραπτώμα or transgression, and ἀμαρτία or sin. By the first he understood the personal transgression by our forefathers of the will of God that they should not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, by the second – the law of sinful disorder that entered human nature as the consequence of this transgression. ["I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at work with the law

⁶¹ Archbishop Eleutherius, *On Redemption*, Paris, 1937 p. 47. This polemic took place in 1925, and consisted of a book-length correspondence between the two hierarchs.

⁶² As St. Augustine writes: "He says not that there was no sin but only that it was not counted. Once the law was given, sin was not taken away, but it began to be counted" (*On Romans*, 27-28).

of my mind and making me captive to *the law of sin* which dwells in my members” (Romans 7.22-23).] When he is talking about the inheritance of the original sin, he has in mind not παραπτώμα or transgression, for which only they are responsible, but αμαρτία, that is, the law of sinful disorder which afflicted human nature as a consequence of the fall into sin of our forefathers. And ἠμαρτον - sinned in 5.12 must therefore be understood not in the active voice, in the sense: they committed sin, but in the middle-passive voice, in the sense: αμαρτωλοι in 5.19, that is, became sinners or turned out to be sinners, since human nature fell in Adam.”⁶³

We find essentially the same distinction in St. Maximus the Confessor: “There then arose sin, the first and worthy of reproach, that is, the falling away of the will from good to evil. Through the first there arose the second – the change in nature from incorruption to corruption, which cannot elicit reproach. For two sins arise in [our] forefather as a consequence of the transgression of the Divine commandment: one worthy of reproach, and the second having as its cause the first and unable to elicit reproach”.⁶⁴

Thus the original sin of Adam, in the sense of his personal transgression, *the* original sin which no other person shares or is guilty of, has engendered sinful, corrupt, diseased, mortal human nature, the law of sin, which we all share because we have all inherited it, but of which we are not guilty since we cannot be held personally responsible for it. And if this seems to imply *two* original sins, - *the* original sin committed by Adam alone, and *our* original sin, which we inherit from him, - this is in fact not far from the thinking of the Holy Fathers.

Those who died before the Law – including the pre-Flood Patriarchs, the victims of the Flood, Abraham, the Sodomites etc. – died, *not* because they were accounted guilty of any personal transgression (παραπτώμα), whether Adam’s or their own, “for sin is not imputed where there is no law” (Romans 5.13), but because of the law of sin (αμαρτία) which they inherited from Adam. Of course, in the case of the Sodomites, for example, there was grave sin among them, and their deaths were not unrelated to that sin. But this *personal* element did not directly cause their deaths, but only, as St. Theophan the Recluse points out, *hastened* it⁶⁵: the primary cause of their deaths was not their personal transgressions (παραπτώματα) but the law of sin (αμαρτία) living in them as in every other descendant of Adam. Later, after the Law, personal sin and guilt *is* imputed to men because of their transgression of the Law, and as a result they incur the curse of death not only on Adam’s account but also on their own. So those living after Moses die for a double reason: their personal transgressions and the law of sin they inherit from Adam.

Some modernists accept this distinction in principle, but then distort it by defining sin as exclusively personal transgression, while redefining what we have called “the

⁶³ Archbishop Theophan, *The Patristic Teaching on Original Sin*, in *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, № 3 (20), 2000, p. 22.

⁶⁴ St. Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 42.

⁶⁵ Bishop Theophan, *Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul*, St. Petersburg, 1912, Moscow, 2002, p. 345.

law of sin" as "the consequences of sin". In other words, for the modernists sin can only be personal and individual, the result of a free and conscious act of a single man. Any other form of "sin" is in fact not sin properly speaking, but the consequences of sin - consequences which are harmful and tragic, but not sinful in themselves.

Now this kind of thinking is very congenial to the western, individualist and rationalist mind. But it does not correspond to the mind-set of the Bible. According to the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers, there is a sin that is strictly personal, which cannot be attributed to any other person than the one who freely and consciously committed it. And there is a sin that is "collective" as it were, which, although caused by a personal sin (that of Adam), spreads from the individual person to the collective human nature, and from there to every human being who inherits that nature quite independently of their free and conscious acts. These two forms of sin should be distinguished for clarity's sake, but *they are both sin*, both defile man and alienate him from God. Indeed, among the "consequences of sin", as the modernists admit, are sinful inclinations, such as lust, anger, pride, etc. But how can such "sinful inclinations" not be sin in a real sense? They *are* sin, but in the sense of "the law of sin" that attaches to our common nature rather than the "transgression" which attaches to our individual persons.

2. Other Passages in St. Paul's Epistles. Now the question arises: are there any other passages in St. Paul's works which would indicate that he accepted the traditional interpretation of εφ'ω in Romans 5.12 as meaning "in him" (i.e., in Adam)? And the answer is: yes. For in I Corinthians 15.22 we read: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." If we all die in Adam, then this is because we all sin in Adam. It is impossible to argue: yes, we all die in Adam, but we do not sin in him; for the sin is the cause of our dying. Therefore the traditionalist translation of Romans 5.12 is supported by I Corinthians 15.22.

But in what sense are we "in" Adam? In a rather literal sense, in that his nature is physically transmitted to us. For, as St. Basil the Great writes, what we inherit from Adam "is not the personal sin of Adam, but the original human being himself", who "exists in us by necessity".⁶⁶ So Adam "exists in us by necessity", and with him there also exists his sin - not his personal sin, but his sinful human nature. Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "Evil was mixed with our nature from the beginning... through those who by their disobedience introduced the disease. Just as in the natural propagation of the species each animal engenders its like, so man is born from man, a being subject to passions from a being subject to passions, a sinner from a sinner. Thus sin takes its rise in us as we are born; it grows with us and keeps us company till life's term".⁶⁷

Other passages in St. Paul confirm the traditionalist interpretation by emphasizing *the exact correspondence between Adam and Christ, between Adam who made all his descendants by carnal birth sinners and Christ Who makes all His descendants by spiritual birth righteous*: "As through one man's transgression [judgement came] on

⁶⁶ Quoted in Demetrios Tzami, *I Protologia tou M. Vasileiou*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 135 (in Greek).

⁶⁷ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes*, 6, PG. 44, 1273.

all men to condemnation, so through one man's act of righteousness [acquittal came] to all men for justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in to increase the transgression; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5.18-21).

Just as we do not have the life and holiness of Christ and do not do His works *ourselves*, and yet receive His life and holiness through His Body and Blood - that is, by His being *in* us, so we did not commit the personal transgression of Adam, and are not responsible for that sin, and yet receive his sinfulness through his being *in* us through physical procreation - as the traditionalists affirm but the modernists deny.

St. John Chrysostom writes: "Adam is a type of Christ in that just as those who descended from him inherited death, even though they had not eaten of the fruit of the tree. So also those who are descended from Christ inherit His righteousness, even though they did not produce it themselves... What Paul is saying here seems to be something like this. If sin, and the sin of a single man moreover, had such a big effect, how it is that grace, and that the grace of God - not of the Father only but also of the Son - would not have an even greater effect? That one man should be punished on account of another does not seem reasonable, but that one man should be saved on account of another is both more suitable and more reasonable. So if it is true that the former happened, much more should the latter have happened as well."⁶⁸

Again, St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "Just as Adam sowed sinful impurity into pure bodies and the yeast of evil was laid into the whole of our mass [nature], so our Lord sowed righteousness into the body of sin and His yeast was mixed into the whole of our mass [nature]"^{.69}

Again, St. Ambrose of Milan writes: "In Adam I fell, in Adam I was cast out of paradise, in Adam I died. How shall God call me back, except He find me in Adam? For just as in Adam I am guilty of sin and owe a debt to death, so in Christ I am justified."⁷⁰

Again, St. Gregory Palamas writes: "Just as through one man, Adam, liability to death passed down by heredity to those born afterwards, so the grace of eternal and heavenly life passed down from the one divine and human Word to all those born again of Him"^{.71}

Thus just as Adam sinned, and so brought sin and death on all his descendants, even though they had not committed his original, personal sin, so Christ brought remission of sins and eternal life to all His descendants (the children of the Church), even though they have not rejected sin as He has. If the original curse and punishment

⁶⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 10 on Romans*.

⁶⁹ St. Ephraim, in Archbishop Theophan, op. cit.

⁷⁰ St. Ambrose of Milan, *On the death of his brother Satyrus*.

⁷¹ St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 16, 17; Veniamin, op. cit.*, p. 190.

was “unjust”, the liberation from the curse and redemption is also “unjust”. But the one “injustice” wipes out the other “injustice” and creates the Righteousness of God.

It is therefore vain to seek, as does Metropolitan Anthony, a rational justification of our inheritance of original sin. It *is* unjust – from a human point of view. And the fact that we later sin of our own free will does not make the original inheritance just. However, this “injustice” is wiped out by the equal injustice of Christ’s blotting out *all* our sins – both original sin, and our personal sins – through his unjust death on the Cross. As Archbishop Seraphim of Lubny writes: “If we bear in mind that by the sufferings of One all are saved, we shall see no injustice in the fact that by the fault of one others are punished.”⁷²

May 8/21, 2010.
St. John the Apostle.

3. ROMANIDES, THE CYPRIANITES, HEAVEN AND HELL

The marasmic family of heresies that I will call “Romanideanism” after its most famous exponent, the new calendarist Fr. John Romanides, appears to be eating its way into the flesh of the True Orthodox and Traditionalist Churches. The latest victim, to judge from a recent issue of *Orthodox Tradition* (vol. XXVII, 3, 2010, pp. 12-19), is the archdiocese of Etna, California, which is part of the so-called “Synod of Resistance”, otherwise known as the “Cyprianites”. Here, several months after the publication of a generally approbatory article on the life of Romanides, we see a Romanidean article by the newcalendarist Fr. George Metallinos on heaven and hell reprinted in full with no commentary – which would seem to imply approval of its content. Similarly, the March, 2009 issue of the Cyprianite journal, *The Shepherd*, reproduces an article by Romanides. Are we witnessing a gradual acceptance by the Cyprianites of this arch-heretic and his serious distortions of the Orthodox teaching on salvation?

Let us look more closely at the article by Metallinos, an ardent admirer of Romanides. After various scriptural and liturgical references, Metallinos presents his major thesis as follows: “Paradise and hell are not two different places. (This version is an idolatrous concept.) They signify two different situations (ways), which originate from the same uncreated source, and are perceived by man as two, different experiences. Or, more precisely, they are the same experience, except that they are perceived differently by man, depending on man’s internal state. This experience is the sight of Christ inside the uncreated light of His divinity, of His ‘glory’. From the moment of His Second Coming, through to all eternity, all people will be seeing Christ in His uncreated light. That is when ‘those who worked evil in their lifetime will go towards the resurrection of their life, while those who have worked evil in their lifetime will go towards the resurrection of judgement’ (John 5.29). In the presence of Christ, mankind will be separated (‘sheep’ and ‘goats’, to His right and His left). In other words, they will be discerned in two separate groups: those who will be looking upon Christ as paradise (the ‘exceeding good, the radiant’) and those who will be looking upon Christ as hell (‘the all-consuming fire’, Hebrews 12.29).

⁷² *The Holy Hierarch Seraphim Sobolev*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1992, p. 72.

“Paradise and hell are the same reality...”⁷³

If Metallinos wrote these words in order to *shock*, he succeeded. The common-sense reaction to these words is: “How can it be true that paradise and hell are the *same* experience, the *same* reality?! Surely no two experiences or realities could be more different!”

Of course, there is a purpose to this “shock-therapy”. Metallinos is trying, in typically Romanidean fashion, to shock us out of our traditional understanding of heaven and hell, which he considers to be rooted in a western, “scholastic” mind-set. And he thinks he has the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers on his side. But perhaps his ideas have more in common with modern western thinkers, especially the existentialists, and less with the Holy Fathers, than he thinks...

Let us begin with the statement that paradise and hell are not two different *places*, but two different *experiences*. Now if he had said that Paradise and hell are *not only* places, *but also* experiences, or spiritual conditions, we would not have objected. But Metallinos seems to give a purely subjective, psychological or “noetic” interpretation of heaven and hell that is completely abstracted from anything spatio-temporal or material.

This is clearly false. God planted paradise, or Eden, “toward the east” in a definite part of planet earth which tradition associates with what is now the neighbourhood of the city of Tabriz in North-Western Iran, and “*placed* there the man that He had formed” (Genesis 2.8). Paradise had (and has) earth, and plants, and rivers, and birds and trees. After the fall of man, the entrance to paradise was blocked by the sword of the Seraphim, and then paradise itself was removed from the earth, in order that it should not be corrupted. But it has only changed *place*; it has not ceased to be what it was in the beginning. The Apostle Paul was taken up to paradise, which is also called the Third Heaven (II Corinthians 12.1-4) – and he admits the possibility that he was there *in body* as well as soul, which implies that paradise is *physical*, as well as a spiritual reality. Again, St. Irenaeus writes that “Enoch of old, having pleased God, was translated in the body, foreshowing the translation of the righteous... The Elders... say that those who have been translated are taken to paradise, and remain there until the consummation of all things, being the first to enter into incorruption.”⁷⁴ If Enoch, who has not died, is in paradise *in the body*, then paradise is a *physical place* even now, after its translation from the earth – although its physicality is an incorrupt physicality, not like our corrupt earth.

Of course, the Fathers also understand paradise in other ways: as the mind in which God dwells noetically, and as a type of future, eschatological realities.⁷⁵ But these spiritual interpretations should not be seen as contradicting the physical reality. Even

⁷³ Metallinos, “Paradise and Hell in the Orthodox tradition”, *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XXVII, 3, 2010, pp. 12-19.

⁷⁴ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 5:1; cf. V, 36:1.

⁷⁵ St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: “Paradise He planted afterwards as a sign of the age to come” (*First Ethical Discourse*).

in St. John's vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem, after "the first heaven and the first earth have passed away" (Revelation 21.1), there is still a place "in the middle of its street" for the tree of life, for its leaves and for the river of paradise (Revelation 22.2).

Similarly, hell has always been understood to be a place, albeit not an *ordinary* place. And just as heaven and paradise have always been understood to be "up", above us, so hell has always been understood to be below us, in the bowels of the earth. Thus St. Paul's words have a definite spatial connotation: "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those *under the earth*" (Philippians 2.9).

A sophisticated rationalist will mockingly reply: "Do you mean to say that if you go far enough up from earth in a spaceship you will someday reach heaven, or if you dig a hole far enough into the earth you will eventually reach hell?!" No, we do not mean that. Clearly, when Christ descended into hell and then ascended into heaven, he entered a region that is in some sense beyond our normal space-time continuum. Of course, modern physics has revealed that space-time is very far from what it seems to be to our normal, unsophisticated sense-perception. We experience it in four dimensions, but modern string-theory physicists believe it has eleven! So the question arises: could paradise and hell be in one of the seven dimensions that we do not normally experience? Or even in a twelfth dimension not yet discovered by scientists? Even if we give negative answers to these questions, and conclude that heaven and hell exist in some completely different kind of reality, we must nevertheless accept the fact that heaven and hell must in some way *interact* with our familiar four dimensions of space and time. For when Christ ascended into heaven, he definitely went *up* in relation to the observing Apostles, and not down, or to the right or left. And again, when He descended into hell, he definitely went *down*, and not in any other direction.

As C.S. Lewis writes, referring to the "New Nature" of Christ's resurrection Body, "the New Nature is, in the most troublesome way [for sophisticated rationalists], interlocked at some points with the Old. Because of its novelty we have to think of it, for the most part, metaphorically; but because of the partial interlocking, some facts about it [the local appearances, the eating, the touching, the claim to be corporeal] come through into our present experience in all their literal facthood – just as some facts about an organism are inorganic facts, and some facts about a solid body are facts of linear geometry."⁷⁶

Again, Fr. Seraphim Rose writes that, in reacting to an over-materialist understanding of heaven and hell, "many Christians... have gone to the opposite extreme and declare that heaven is 'nowhere'. Among Roman Catholics and Protestants there are sophisticated analogies which proclaim that heaven is 'a state, not a place', that 'up' is only a metaphor, the Ascension of Christ... was not really an 'ascension', but only a change of state. The result of such apologies is that heaven and hell become very vague and indefinite conceptions, and the sense of their reality begins to disappear – with disastrous results for Christian life, because these are the very realities toward which our whole earthly life is directed.

⁷⁶ Lewis, *Miracles*, London: Fount, 1974, p. 162.

“All such apologies, according to the teaching of Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, are based on the false idea of the modern philosopher Descartes that everything that is not material is ‘pure spirit’ and is not limited by time and space. This is not the teaching of the Orthodox Church. Bishop Ignatius writes: ‘The fantasy of Descartes concerning the independence of spirits in space and time is a decisive absurdity. Everything that is limited is necessarily dependent on space’ (vol. III, p. 312). ‘The numerous quotations from the Divine service books and the works of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church decided with complete satisfaction the question as to where paradise and hell are located... With what clarity the teaching of the Orthodox Eastern Church indicates that *the location of paradise is in the heavens and the location of hell is in the bowels of the earth*’ (vol. III, pp. 308-9; the emphasis is his). Here we shall only indicate just how this teaching is to be interpreted.

“It is certainly true, as Bishop Ignatius’ numerous citations indicate, that all Orthodox sources – the Holy Scripture, Divine services, Lives of Saints, writings of Holy Fathers – speak of paradise and heaven as ‘up’ and hell as ‘down’, under the earth. And it is also true that since angels and souls are limited in space..., they must always be in one definite *place* – whether heaven, hell, or earth...

“Heaven, therefore, is certainly a place, and it is certainly *up* from any point on the earth, and hell is certainly *down*, in the bowels of the earth; but these places and their inhabitants cannot be seen by men until their spiritual eyes are opened... Further, these places are not within the ‘coordinates’ of our space-time system: airliner does not pass ‘invisibly’ through paradise, nor an earth satellite through the third heaven, nor can the souls waiting in hell for the Last Judgement be reached by drilling for them in the earth. They are not *there*, but in a different *kind* of space that begins right here but extends, as it were, in a different direction...”⁷⁷

Returning to Metallinos, we can agree that heaven is “noetic”; but we cannot deny that it is also in some real sense a place, because we humans, in both our souls and our bodies, are located in space and time; we are circumscribed. Even the angels are circumscribed; they cannot be in two places at once. Only God and His Grace are completely uncircumscribed, not bounded by space and time. So when our souls are sent by God to heaven and hell, they are sent to places, because they cannot be in a non-place, so to speak. True, the space and time of the other world, as Fr. Seraphim says, are different in some ways from the space and time we know. That is, the images of heaven and hell that we form in our earth-bound imagination are more or less inadequate to the reality. And yet both the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the experiences of many who have been to the other world and come back, agree that they are places, even if they are much more than *merely* places...

Let us turn to Metallinos’ statement that heaven and hell “are the same experience, except that they are perceived differently by man”. As it stands, this statement makes no logical, let alone theological sense. An experience is an event in one man’s subjective consciousness. If it is an experience in heaven or of heaven, then it must be

⁷⁷ Rose, *The Soul after Death*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1980, pp. 129-131.

joyful; if it is in hell or of hell, then it must be painful. But a joyful experience cannot be the same as a painful experience: they must be *different* experiences. The experience of Uncreated Grace as described by the saints could be called an experience of heaven on earth. In any case, it cannot be described as an experience of hell...⁷⁸

As for one and the same experience being "perceived differently", this is possible, but only later, in recollection. But this is not what Metallinos is saying. He is saying that at the Second Coming of Christ, the righteous will look upon the Uncreated Light – the Divine Fire that will sweep through the whole universe – and rejoice, being enlightened but not burned, while the sinners will look upon It and grieve, being burned but not enlightened. This is *true*, as the patristic references cited by Metallinos prove. But the truth of this statement by no means proves that heaven and hell are *one* experience. Rather, it demonstrates that the righteous and the sinners have *two*, *completely different experiences in relation to one and the same event* – the Appearance of Christ in all His Majesty at the Second Coming.

All spiritual experiences, insofar as they involve an interaction between the uncreated God and created man, have a *dual* nature. It is a characteristic of Romanides and his followers that they tend to emphasize the uncreated, Divine aspect of these experiences at the expense of their created, human aspect. This "eschatological monophytism" has the effect, as Fr. Seraphim Rose noted, of making our ideas about heaven and hell vague and indefinite, with disastrous consequences for the spiritual life. In view of this, it would be advisable for the Cyprianites not to publish the works of Romanides, Metallinos and other new calendarist heretics, or at any rate publish them with a spiritual health warning and with clear refutations of their less reliable parts. Otherwise, we might begin to think that they actually believe the same as the modernists...

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⁷⁸ For example, St. Gregory of Sinai writes: "The energy of grace is the power of spiritual fire that fills the heart with joy and gladness, stabilizes, warms and purifies the soul, temporarily stills our provocative thoughts, and for a time suspends the body's impulsions. The signs and fruits that testify to its authenticity are tears, contrition, humility, self-control, silence, patience, self-effacement and similar qualities, all of which constitute undeniable evidence of its presence."

4. ORTHODOXY AND ROMANTICISM

Jacques Barzun described how the concept of the hero arises out of Romanticism: "In Romanticism thought and feeling are fused; its bent is toward exploration and discovery at whatever risk of error or failure; the religious emotion is innate and demands expression. Spirit is a reality but where it is placed varies and is secondary: the divine may be reached through nature or art. The individual self is a source of knowledge on which one must act; for one is embarked - *engagé*, as the 20C Existentialists say. To act, enthusiasm must overcome indifference or despair; impulse must be guided by imagination and reason. The search is for truths, which reside in particulars, not in generalities; the world is bigger and more complex than any set of abstractions, and it includes the past, which is never fully done with. Meditating on past and present leads to the estimate of man as great and wretched. But heroes are real and indispensable. They rise out of the people, whose own mind-and-heart provides the makings of high culture. The errors of heroes and peoples are the price of knowledge, religion, and art, life itself being a heroic tragedy."⁷⁹

Two men did more than anyone else to instil the cult of the Romantic hero into the European bloodstream: Napoleon and Byron.

The Romantic Hero (1) Napoleon

Napoleon, the French conqueror of Germany, united the two streams of the Enlightenment and the Counter-Enlightenment in himself. For, on the one hand, he spread the rationalist ideals of the French Enlightenment throughout Europe. And on the other, he was the object and idol of Romantic enthusiasm, the "world spirit" triumphing over all adversity.

Madame de Stael called Napoleon Robespierre on horseback. After all, he came from Corsica, which in 1755 had successfully rebelled from Genoa, and for which Rousseau wrote one of his most seminal works, *Project de constitution pour la Corse*, in 1765. But, like Cromwell (and Caesar), he found that in order to save the republic he had to take control of it and rule it like a king.

His chance came on 19 Brumaire (November 10), 1799, when he overthrew the Directory, describing parliamentarism as "hot air", and frightened the two elective assemblies into submission. On December 13 a new constitution was proclaimed with Bonaparte as the first of three Consuls with full executive powers. And on December 15 the three Consuls declared: "Citizens, the Revolution is established upon its original principles: it is consummated..."⁸⁰

Paul Johnson writes: "The new First Consul was far more powerful than Louis XIV, since he dominated the armed forces directly in a country that was now organized as a military state. All the ancient restraints on divine-right kingship - the Church, the aristocracy and its resources, the courts, the cities and their charters, the universities

⁷⁹ Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Perennial, 2000, p. 491.

⁸⁰ M.J. Cohen and John Major (eds.), *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 530.

and their privileges, the guilds and their immunities – all had been swept away by the Revolution, leaving France a legal blank on which Bonaparte could stamp the irresistible force of his personality.”⁸¹

But, again like Caesar and Cromwell, he could never confess to being a king in the traditional sense. Under him, in Norman Davies’ phrase, “a pseudo-monarchy headed pseudo-democratic institutions.”⁸² So, as J.M. Roberts writes, while Napoleon reinstated monarchy, “it was in no sense a restoration. Indeed, he took care so to affront the exiled Bourbon family that any reconciliation with it was inconceivable. He sought popular approval for the empire in a plebiscite and got it.”⁸³

“This was a monarchy Frenchmen had voted for; it rested on popular sovereignty, that is, the Revolution. It assumed the consolidation of the Revolution which the Consulate had already begun. All the great institutional reforms of the 1790s were confirmed or at least left intact; there was no disturbance of the land sales which had followed the confiscation of Church property, no resurrection of the old corporations, no questioning of the principle of equality before the law. Some measures were even taken further, notably when each department was given an administrative head, the prefect, who was in his powers something like one of the emergency emissaries of the Terror...”⁸⁴

Cromwell had eschewed the trappings of monarchy, but Napoleon embraced them avidly. The trend towards monarchy and hierarchy developed; and “earlier than is generally thought,” writes Philip Mansel, “the First Consul Bonaparte aligned himself with this monarchical trend, acquiring in succession a guard (1799), a palace (1800), court receptions and costumes (1800-02), a household (1802-04), a dynasty (1804), finally a nobility (1808)... The proclamation of the empire in May 1804, the establishment of the households of the Emperor, the Empress and the Imperial Family in July, the coronation by the pope in December of that year, were confirmations of an existing monarchical reality.”⁸⁵

Moreover, Napoleon spread monarchy throughout Western Europe. Kingdoms were established or re-established with still greater monarchical power - and all ruled by Napoleon’s relations by blood or marriage. According to Stendhal, Napoleon’s court “totally corrupted” him “and exalted his amour propre to the state of a disease... He was on the point of making Europe one vast monarchy.”⁸⁶

“‘The French empire shall become the metropolitan of all other sovereignties,’ Napoleon once said to a friend. ‘I want to force every king in Europe to build a large palace for his use in Paris. When an Emperor of the French is crowned, these kings

⁸¹ Johnson, *Napoleon*, London: Phoenix, 2002, p. 46.

⁸² Davies, *Europe: A History*, London: Pimlico, 1997, p. 701.

⁸³ The result of the plebiscite was 3,571,329 ‘yes’ votes to 2,570 ‘noes’. As Johnson points out, “Bonaparte was the first dictator to produce fake election figures.” (op. cit., pp. 49-50). (V.M.)

⁸⁴ Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon, 1996, pp. 589-590.

⁸⁵ Mansel, “Napoleon the Kingmaker”, *History Today*, vol. 48 (3), March, 1998, pp. 40, 41.

⁸⁶ Mansel, op. cit., p. 43.

shall come to Paris, and they shall adorn that imposing ceremony with their presence and salute it with their homage.”⁸⁷

“As one of his secretaries Baron Meneval wrote, he saw himself as ‘the pillar of royalty in Europe’. On January 18th, 1813, he wrote to his brother Jerome that his enemies, by appealing to popular feeling, represented ‘upheavals and revolutions... pernicious doctrines.’ In Napoleon’s opinion his fellow monarchs were traitors to ‘their own cause’ when in 1813 they began to desert the French Empire, or in 1814 refused to accept his territorial terms for peace...”⁸⁸

Jocelyn Hunt writes: “Kings before 1791 were said to be absolute but were limited by all kinds of constraints and controls. The Church had an almost autonomous status. Bonaparte ensured that the Church was merely a branch of the civil service. Kings were anointed by the Church, and thus owed their authority to God: Bonaparte took power through his own strength, camouflaged as ‘the General Will’ which, as Correlli Barnett acidly remarks, ‘became synonymous with General Bonaparte’.⁸⁹ When he became emperor in 1804, he crowned himself...”

“The First Consul’s choice of ministers was a far more personal one than had been possible for the kings of France. Bonaparte established a system of meeting his ministers individually, in order to give his instructions. In the same way, Bonaparte chose which ‘ordinary’ citizens he would consult; kings of France had mechanisms for consulting ‘the people’ but these had fallen into disuse and thus, when the Estates General met in 1789, the effect was revolutionary. Bonaparte’s legislative body was, until 1814, submissive and compliant...”

“Police control and limitations on personal freedom had been a focus of condemnation by the Philosophes before the Revolution, but had not been entirely efficient: a whole industry of importing and distributing banned texts had flourished in the 1770s and 1780s. Bonaparte’s police were more thorough, and so swingeing were the penalties that self-censorship rapidly became the safest path for a newspaper to take. Bonaparte closed down sixty of the seventy-three newspapers in Paris in January, 1800, and had a weekly summary prepared of all printed material, but he was soon able to tell his Chief of Police, Fouché, ‘They only print what I want them to.’⁹⁰ In the same way, the hated lettres de cachet appear limited and inefficient when compared to Bonaparte’s and Fouché’s record of police spies, trials without jury and

⁸⁷ Adam Zamoyski, *1812: Napoleon’s Fatal March on Moscow*, London: Harper Perennial, 2004, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Mansel, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁸⁹ Johnson writes: “He liked the vague and abstract notion of Rousseau’s concept, the General Will, offering a ruling elite that knew its business the opportunity to harness the people to a national effort without any of the risks of democracy. In practice an elite always formed itself into a pyramid, with one man at its summit. His will expressed the General Will... and gave it decisiveness, the basis for action. Constitutions were important in the sense that window-dressing was important in a shop. But the will was the product to be sold to the nation and, once sold, imposed” (*op. cit.*, p. 17). (V.M.)

⁹⁰ As he said to Metternich: “You see me master of France; well, I would not undertake to govern her for three months with liberty of the press” (Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 530). (V.M.)

imprisonment without trial. Bonaparte's brief experience as a Jacobin leader in Ajaccio had taught him how to recognise, and deal with, potential opponents.⁹¹

"The judiciary had stood apart from the kings of the ancien régime: while the King was nominally the supreme Judge, the training of lawyers and judges had been a matter for the Parlements, with their inherent privileges and mechanisms. The Parlements decided whether the King's laws were acceptable within the fundamental laws of France. Under the Consulate, there were no such constraints on the legislator. The judges were his appointees, and held office entirely at his pleasure; the courts disposed of those who opposed or questioned the government, far more rapidly than had been possible in the reign of Louis XVI. Imprisonment and deportation became regularly used instruments of control under Bonaparte.

"Kings of France were fathers to their people and had a sense of duty and service. Bonaparte, too, believed that he was essential to the good and glory of France, but was able to make his own decisions about what constituted the good of France in a way which was not open to the king. Finally, while the monarchy of France was hereditary and permanent, and the position of First Consul was supposed to be held for ten years, Bonaparte's strength was demonstrated when he changed his own constitution, first to give him the role for life and then to become a hereditary monarch. All in all, no monarch of the ancien régime had anything approaching the power which Bonaparte had been permitted to take for himself...

"When a Royalist bomb plot was uncovered in December, 1800, Bonaparte seized the opportunity to blame it on the Jacobins, and many were guillotined, with over a hundred more being exiled or imprisoned. The regime of the Terror had operated in similar ways to remove large numbers of potential or actual opponents. Press censorship and the use of police spies ensured that anti-government opinions were not publicly aired. The Declaration of the Rights of Man had guaranteed freedom of expression; but this freedom had already been eroded before Bonaparte's coup. The Terror had seen both moral and political censorship, and the Directory had on several occasions exercised its constitutional right to censor the press. Bonaparte appears merely to have been more efficient...

"Bonaparte certainly held power without consulting the French people; he took away many of the freedoms they had been guaranteed in 1789; he taxed them more heavily than they had been taxed before. [In 1803 he wrote:] 'I haven't been able to understand yet what good there is in an opposition. Whatever it may say, its only result is to diminish the prestige of authority in the eyes of the people'."⁹²

In 1804, he even declared himself emperor with the name Napoleon, after which Beethoven tore out the title-page of his Eroica symphony, which had been dedicated

⁹¹ Johnson writes: "Fouché, who operated the world's first secret police force, and who was the prototype of Himmler or Beria, was an important element in Bonaparte's legacy of evil, for some of his methods were widely imitated in Austria and Prussia, where they became permanent, and even in harmless Sweden, where they were carried out by Bonaparte's marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte" (op. cit., p. 105). (V.M.)

⁹² Hunt, op. cit., pp. 104, 105-106, 107, 108, 112.

to him, and said: "So he too is nothing but a man. Now he also will trample all human rights underfoot, and only pander to his own ambition; he will place himself above everyone else and become a tyrant..."⁹³

For, as de Tocqueville wrote: "Absolute government found huge scope for its rebirth [in] that man who was to be both the consummator and the nemesis of the Revolution."⁹⁴

So Napoleon was undoubtedly a despot, but a despot who could claim many precedents for his despotism in the behaviour of the Jacobins and Directory. And if he was not faithful to the forms of the revolution in its early phase, replacing democracy (of a despotic kind) with monarchy (of a populist kind), he nevertheless remained faithful to its fundamental principles, the principle, on the one hand, that nobody and nothing should be independent of the State (the principle of totalitarianism), and on the other, the principle that the Nation was the supreme value, and serving and dying for the Nation - the supreme glory.

However, writes Adam Zamoyski, "it was not so much a matter of France 'über alles'. 'European society needs a regeneration,' Napoleon asserted in conversation in 1805. 'There must be a superior power which dominates all the other powers, with enough authority to force them to live in harmony with one another - and France is the best placed for that purpose.' He was, like many a tyrant, utopian in his ambitions. 'We must have a European legal system, a European appeal court, a common currency, the same weights and measures the same laws,' Napoleon once said to Joseph Fouché: 'I must make of all the peoples of Europe one people, and of Paris the capital of the world.'"⁹⁵

And yet "at bottom," as Johnson notes, "Bonaparte despised the French, or perhaps it would be more exact to say the Parisians, the heart of the 'political nation'. He thought of them, on the basis of his experience during the various phases of the Revolution, as essentially frivolous."⁹⁶

The truth is, therefore, that it was neither the State nor the Nation that Bonaparte exalted above all, - although he greatly increased the worship of both in later European history, - but himself. So the spirit that truly reigned in the Napoleonic era can most accurately be described as *the spirit of the man-god, of the Antichrist*, of whom Bonaparte himself, as the Russian Holy Synod quite rightly said, was a forerunner. This antichristian quality is most clearly captured in Madame De Staël's characterization: "I had the disturbing feeling that no emotion of the heart could ever reach him. He regards a human being like a fact or a thing, never as an equal person like himself. He neither hates nor loves... The force of his will resides in the imperturbable calculations of his egotism. He is a chess-master whose opponents happen to be the rest of humanity... Neither pity nor attraction, nor religion nor

⁹³ Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 531.

⁹⁴ De Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution (The Ancient Regime and the Revolution)*, 1856, book 3, chapter 8 ; in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 527.

⁹⁵ Zamoyski, 1812, p. 9.

⁹⁶ Johnson, op. cit., p. 119.

attachment would ever divert him from his ends... I felt in his soul cold steel, I felt in his mind a deep irony against which nothing great or good, even his own destiny, was proof; for he despised the nation which he intended to govern, and no spark of enthusiasm was mingled with his desire to astound the human race..."⁹⁷

Napoleon inspired many imitators. The most famous of them was Simon Jose Antonio de la Santissima Trinidad de Bolivar.

Bolivar is a good example of the terrible spiritual damage done to a whole generation of young men by the heroic image of Napoleon. Just as Napoleon himself stood between the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the passion of the Counter-Enlightenment, uniting them in the image of himself fighting for both the ideals of the Enlightenment and the death-defying glory of the romantic hero, so did Bolivar and a host of similar adventurers in Central and South America aspire to unite national "liberation" with personal glory.

"Bolivar arrived in the French capital just in time for Napoleon's coronation as Emperor of the French, an event he watched with fascination. In March 1805 ... he saw Napoleon crown himself king of Italy. 'I centred my attention on Napoleon and saw nothing but him out of that crowd of men,' he wrote. He travelled on to Rome under the spell of this vision and there, after considering what he had seen, he ascended the Monte Sacro, where he fell on his knees and swore an oath before Rodriguez to liberate South America."⁹⁸

Bolivar seized his chance after Napoleon deposed King Ferdinand VII of Spain, which eventually unleashed a strong nationalist backlash in Spain - but not before breaking the legal links between Spain and its colonies in the Americas. Returning to Venezuela, Bolivar proceeded to win, lose and finally reconquer Caracas from the Spaniards in a series of civil wars distinguished by appalling savagery on both sides. Although the Venezuelan Republic had been proclaimed on a whites-only franchise in 1811, thereby excluding all Indians and blacks from "the nation", and although Bolivar himself was a slave-owner and to all intents and purposes Spanish, on reconquering Caracas in 1813 he immediately likened all royalist Spaniards to wandering Jews, to be "cast out and persecuted", and declared: "Any Spaniard who does not work against tyranny in favour of the just cause, by the most active and effective means, shall be considered an enemy and punished as a traitor to the country and in consequence shall inevitably be shot. Spaniards and Canarios, depend upon it, you will die, even if you are simply neutral, unless you actively espouse the liberation of America."⁹⁹ Bolivar was as good as his word, and proceeded to slaughter the whole Spanish population of Caracas - whereupon the people he had supposedly come to liberate, the Indians and blacks, both free and slave, marched against him under the slogan of "Long live Ferdinand VII"! After murdering a further 1200 Spaniards in retaliation, Bolivar then harangued the inhabitants of Caracas, saying: "You may

⁹⁷ De Staël, in Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁹⁸ Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁹⁹ Marc Almond, *Revolution*, London, 1999, p. 89.

judge for yourselves, without partiality, whether I have not sacrificed my life, my being, every minute of my time in order to make a nation of you."¹⁰⁰

Like his idol Napoleon, and many Latin American strongmen since, Bolivar did not like the people expressing its will in elections, which he called "the greatest scourge of republics [which] produce only anarchy". The liberator of Mexico, Agustin de Iturbide, agreed, proclaiming himself Emperor in 1822. But such unrepublican immodesty was nothing compared to Bolivar's, who "hung in the dining room of his villa outside Bogota a huge portrait of himself being crowned by two genii, with the inscription: 'Bolivar is the God of Colombia'."¹⁰¹

The Romantic Hero (2) Byron

Romanticism in art is closely related to idealism in philosophy. Fr. Georges Florovsky writes that romantics such as Goethe, Carlyle, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Hartmann, Renan and Maeterlinck "at first cautiously, and then with greater and greater ardour, swelled the waves of 'irrationalism'. Everywhere and in everything, right to the religious feeling of the world and the aesthetic perception of life. Beginning with 'literary' phrases about the 'bankruptcy' of science and ending with immersion in the satanic abysses of black magic and the revival of the orgiastic cult of Dionysius and Ceres, from a superficial atheist denial of Christian dogmatics to an inspired justification of 'the many forms of religious experience', from a call to return to nature to futurism - everywhere we see clear manifestations of a profound disbelief in rational knowledge, in 'the wisdom of systems'. 'Intuition' triumphantly squeezed out 'logic', and the very ideal of scientific knowledge of 'the truth' paled - sometimes in the unclear light of biological adaptation to the conditions of existence, sometimes in the vivid flame of mystical feeling and pantheistic joy. The dynamic nature of the cosmos began to be felt. The proud dream of Feiervach to 'create' God was revived, the old idea of 'the evolving Absolute' and the unfinished nature of the world was resurrected."¹⁰²

The Romantic conception of a dynamic, unfinished world undermined faith in eternal values and verities, and, combined with the idea of ever-oscillating polarities, paved the way for the Hegelian schema of thesis-antithesis-synthesis - albeit usually without the synthesis. Thus according to Goethe, writes Ellendea Proffer, "at the heart of everything lies a contradiction - attraction and repulsion, creation and destruction - that men see as good and evil, heaven and hell. Goethe felt that moral concepts were really only one facet of the whole, a whole in which immorality and amorality are at least equally represented. The main thing is activity - the surge of life, an everlasting repetition that never progresses, good never really does triumph over evil, but the movement in itself is what is important. All these contradictions are inseparable from one another and from God Himself."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹⁰¹ Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

¹⁰² Florovsky, "Khitrost' Uma" (The Cunning of the Mind), in *Vera i Kul'tura (Faith and Culture)*, St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰³ Proffer, "Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*: Genre and Motif", in Laura Weeks (ed.), *The Master and Margarita: A Critical Companion*, Northwestern University Press, 1996, pp. 106-107.

Sir Isaiah Berlin's definition is also illuminating: "Since the Greeks, and perhaps long before them, men have believed that to the central questions about the nature and purpose of their lives, and of the world in which they lived, true, objective, universal and eternal answers could be found. If the answers could not be discovered by me, then perhaps by someone more expert or wiser than I; if not in the circumstances in which I found myself, then in others more propitious: in an innocent and happy past – a Garden of Eden from which our ancestors had for their sins been expelled, or perhaps in a golden age that still lay in the future, which posterity (perhaps after much labour and suffering) would, or at any rate could, one day reach. It was assumed that all the truly central problems were soluble in principle even if not in practice. Somewhere true answers to all genuine questions must exist, if not in the minds of men, then in the mind of an omniscient being – real or imaginary, material or ideal, a personal deity, or the universe come to full consciousness of itself.

"This presupposition, which underlies most classical and Christian thought, orthodox and heretical, scientific and religious, was connected with the belief that, whether men knew it or not, the whole of life on earth was in some sense bound up with the search for answer to the great, tormenting questions of fact and of conduct; of what there is, was, will be, can be; of what to do, what to live by, what to seek, hope for, admire, fear, avoid; whether the end of life was happiness or justice or virtue or self-fulfilment or grace and salvation. Individuals, schools of thought, entire civilisations differed about what the answers were, about the proper method of discovering them, about the nature and place of moral or spiritual or scientific authority – that is to say, about how to identify the experts who are qualified to discover and communicate the answers. They argued about what constitutes such qualifications and justifies such claims to authority. But there was no doubt that the truth lay somewhere; that it could in principle be found. Conflicting beliefs were held about the central questions: whether the truth was to be found in reason or in faith, in the Church or the laboratory, in the insights of the uniquely privileged individual – a prophet, a mystic, an alchemist, a metaphysician – or in the collective consciousness of a body of men – the society of the faithful, the traditions of a tribe, a race, a nation, a social class, an academy of experts, an elite of uniquely endowed or trained beings – or, on the contrary, in the mind or heart of any man, anywhere, at any time, provided that he remained innocent and uncorrupted by false doctrines. What was common to all these views – incompatible enough for wars of extermination to have been fought in their name – was the assumption that there existed a reality, a structure of things, a rerum natura, which the qualified enquirer could see, study and, in principle, get right. Men were violently divided about the nature and identity of the wise – those who understood the nature of things – but not about the proposition that such wise men existed or could be conceived, and that they would know that which would enable them to deduce correctly what men should believe, how they should act, what they should live by and for.

"This was the great foundation of belief which romanticism attacked and weakened. Whatever the differences between the leading romantic thinkers – the early Schiller and the later Fichte, Schelling and Jacobi, Tieck and the Schlegels when they were young, Chateaubriand and Byron, Coleridge and Carlyle, Kierkegaard, Stirner,

Nietzsche, Baudelaire – there runs through their writings a common notion, held with varying degrees of consciousness and depth, that truth is not an objective structure, independent of those who seek it, the hidden treasure waiting to be found, but is itself in all its guises created by the seeker. It is not to be brought into being necessarily by the finite individual: according to some it is created by a greater power, a universal spirit, personal or impersonal, in which the individual is an element, or of which he is an aspect, an emanation, an imperfect reflection. But the common assumption of the romantics that runs counter to the philosophia perennis is that the answers to the great questions are not to be discovered so much as to be invented. They are not something found, they are something literally made. In its extreme Idealistic form it is a vision of the entire world. In its more familiar form, it confines itself to the realm of values, ideals, rules of conduct – aesthetic, religious, social, moral, political – a realm seen not as a natural or supernatural order capable of being investigated, described and explained by the appropriate method – rational examination or some more mysterious procedure – but as something that man creates, as he creates works of art; not by imitating, or even obtaining illumination from, pre-existent models or truths, or by applying pre-existent truths or rules that are objective, universal, eternal, unalterable but by an act of creation, the introduction into the world of something literally novel – the activity, natural or supernatural, human or in part divine, owing nothing to anything outside it (in some versions because nothing can be conceived as being outside it), self-subsistent, self-justified, self-fulfilling. Hence that new emphasis on the subjective and ideal rather than the objective and the real, on the process of creation rather than its effects, on motives rather than consequences; and, as a necessary corollary of all this, on the quality of the vision, the state of mind or soul of the acting agent – purity of heart, innocence of intention, sincerity of purpose rather than getting the answer right, that is, accurate correspondence to the ‘given’. Hence the emphasis on activity, movement that cannot be reduced to static segments, the flow that cannot be arrested, frozen, analysed without being thereby fatally distorted; hence the constant protest against the reduction of ‘life’ to dead fragments, of organism to ‘mere’ mechanical or uniform units; and the corresponding tendency towards similes and metaphors drawn from ‘dynamic’ sciences – biology, physiology, introspective psychology – and the worship of music, which, of all the arts, appears to have the least relation to universally observable, uniform natural order. Hence, too, the celebration of all forms of defiance directed against the ‘given’ – the impersonal, the ‘brute fact’ in morals or in politics – or against the static and the accepted, and the value placed on minorities and martyrs as such, no matter what the ideal for which they suffered.

“This, too, is the source of the doctrine that work is sacred as such, not because of its social function, but because it is the imposition of the individual or collective personality, that is, activity, upon inert stuff. The activity, the struggle is all, the victory nothing: in Fichte’s words, ‘Frei sein ist nichts – frei werden ist der Himmel’ (‘To be free is nothing – to become free is very heaven’). Failure is nobler than success. Self-immolation for a cause is the thing, not the validity of the cause itself, for it is the sacrifice undertaken for its sake that sanctifies the cause, not some intrinsic property of it.

“These are the symptoms of the romantic attitude. Hence the worship of the artist, whether in sound, or word, or colour, as the highest manifestation of the ever-active spirit, and the popular image of the artist in his garret, wild-eyed, wild-haired, poor, solitary, mocked-; but independent, free, spiritually superior to his philistine tormentors. This attitude has a darker side too: worship not merely of the painter or the composer or the poet, but of that more sinister artists whose materials are men – the destroyer of old societies, and the creator of new ones – no matter at what human cost: the superhuman leader who tortures and destroys in order to build on new foundations – Napoleon in his most revolutionary aspect. It is this embodiment of the romantic ideal that took more and more hysterical forms and in its extreme ended in violent irrationalism and Fascism. Yet this same outlook also bred respect for individuality, for the creative impulse, for the unique, the independent, for freedom to live and act in the light of personal, undictated beliefs and principles, of undistorted emotional needs, for the value of personal life, of personal relationships, of the individual conscience, of human rights. The positive and negative heritage of romanticism – on the one hand contempt for opportunism, regard for individual variety, scepticism of oppressive general formulae and final solutions, and on the other self-prostration before superior beings and the exaltation of arbitrary power, passion and cruelty – these tendencies, at once reflected and promoted by romantic doctrines, have done more to mould both the events of our century and the concepts in terms in which they are viewed and explained than is commonly recognised in most histories of our time.”¹⁰⁴

Romanticism is individualism par excellence: but it has a collectivist analogue in nationalism. M.S. Anderson writes: “From one point of view, to be a romantic was to stress the individual and the unique, genius, originality, spontaneity. Yet at the same time the romantic sense of history emphasized the impossibility of escaping completely from the past and asserted that the development of human institutions was continuous, not something that proceeded by jumps. Moreover the populism which some of the more politically radical romantics affected, like the organic conception of the state and the emphasis on corporate bodies and peasant communities which appealed to others, did not square easily with assertive individualism.”¹⁰⁵

“For Byronic romantics,” writes Berlin, “‘I’ is indeed an individual, the outsider, the adventurer, the outlaw, he who defies society and accepted values, and follows his own – it may be to his doom, but this is better than conformity, enslavement to mediocrity. But for other thinkers ‘I’ becomes something much more metaphysical. It is a collective – a nation, a Church, a Party, a class, an edifice in which I am only a stone, an organism of which I am only a tiny living fragment. *It* is the creator; I myself matter only in so far as I belong to the movement, the race, the nation, the class, the Church; I do not signify as a true individual within this super-person to whom my life is organically bound. Hence German nationalism: I do this not because it is good or right or because I like it – I do it because I am a German and this is the German way to live. So also modern existentialism – I do it because I commit myself to this form of

¹⁰⁴ Berlin, “The Essence of European Romanticism”, *The Power of Ideas*, op. cit., pp. 201-204.

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, *The Ascendancy of Europe, 1815-1914*, London: Longman, 1985, p. 337.

existence. Nothing makes me; I do not do it because it is an objective order which I obey, or because of universal rules to which I must adhere; I do it because I create my own life as I do; being what I am, I give it direction and I am responsible for it. Denial of universal values, this emphasis on being above all an element in, and loyal to, a super-self, is a dangerous moment in European history, and has led to a great deal that has been destructive and sinister in modern times; this is where it begins, in the political ruminations and theories of the earliest German romantics and their disciples in France and elsewhere."¹⁰⁶

Thus modern European nationalism is the fruit of the union of two ideas coming from two different directions: the French Enlightenment idea of the *sovereignty* and *rights* of the Nation, and the German Counter-Enlightenment idea of the *uniqueness* and *self-justification* of the Nation.

¹⁰⁶ Berlin, "My Intellectual Path", *The Power of Ideas*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

5. PREDESTINATION, ST. AUGUSTINE AND FR. PANTELEIMON

There is, as everyone knows, an heretical, Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Less well known is the fact that there is also an Orthodox doctrine. It is contained in two verses from St. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* and in the patristic commentaries on it. Almost the same as the Orthodox doctrine is the teaching of St. Augustine, who, however, made some unguarded comments (what writer does not make unguarded comments occasionally?) that have been interpreted as supporting Calvinism and have caused his name to be vituperated almost ad infinitum by today's "new soteriologists". Finally, there is the teaching of Fr. Panteleimon of Boston, followed by that of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, who appear not to know the Orthodox doctrine of predestination, who revile St. Augustine even more than other "new soteriologists", and who have a teaching that in effect denies true predestination, substituting the vain and feeble surmises of human justice for a God-fearing prostration before the abyss of God's judgements.

Let us look at each of these doctrines in turn.

1. Calvinism. The first, Calvinism, can be disposed of quickly because all Orthodox agree that it is false. Calvin believed that all human beings are assigned by God in a completely arbitrary manner to two categories: the saved and the damned, and that there is nothing that any man can do to take himself out of one category and into the other. "Predestination" for him meant "predetermination" and fatalism; and it involved the denial of the place of freewill in our salvation.

2. The Orthodox Teaching. St. Paul writes: *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, Who are the called according to His purpose. Those whom He foreknew (προεγνώ) He also predestined (προωρισεν) to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8.28-29).*

St. John of Damascus writes: "He foreknows what is upon us, but He does not predestine them. Because neither does He will evil to be done, nor does He force virtue. And so, predestination is the act of the divine foreknowing command. He predestines, then, those things which do not depend upon us, according to his foreknowledge. Because God by His foreknowledge has already decided everything according to His goodness and justice."¹⁰⁷

Again, commenting on this passage, St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "God knows everything - both the past, and the present, and the future, - the beginning and the end of every man, and in accordance with this knowledge He makes His decisions: in knowing beforehand, He foresees; in deciding how things must be beforehand, He predestines. He sees beforehand all the free actions of men and, in accordance with them, He predestines concerning them. So here the Lord foresaw who will truly believe in Jesus Christ and follow Him through an exact fulfilment of His commandments and, having been sanctified by grace, will become a saint. Therefore He also predestined that these should be saints, 'in conformity with the image of His

¹⁰⁷ St. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 44.

Son', that is, that in the sacrament of Baptism, with the help of the gifts of grace, they should be clothed in the image of Jesus Christ and become like Him, which they will attain in full measure in the future life: so that the Incarnate Son of God should be 'the first-born' – the first to re-establish in Himself a pure human nature, and the first among His followers – His brethren. That is God's predestination concerning those who are being saved. How does He bring it to fulfilment?

"Moreover, those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified (v. 30). This predestination of men to salvation God accomplishes and brings to fulfilment by drawing them to Christ (John 6.44), by disposing their spirit to realize the necessity of salvation in Christ; then by justification – by liberating them from sins and regenerating the spirit of those who believed in Him by the grace of the Holy Spirit; and, finally, he finishes by glorifying them also in the body in the life to come.

*"If such is the love of God for those who are marked for salvation, then no obstacles, external or internal, should frighten Christians on their path."*¹⁰⁸

Decree 3 of the Synod of Jerusalem (1672) states: "We believe the most good God to have from eternity predestinated unto glory those whom He has chosen, and to have consigned unto condemnation those whom He has rejected; but not so that He would justify the one, and consign and condemn the other without cause. For that would be contrary to the nature of God, who is the common Father of all, and no respecter of persons, and would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth {1 Timothy 2:4}. But since He foreknew the one would make a right use of their free-will, and the other a wrong, He predestinated the one, or condemned the other. And we understand the use of free-will thus, that the Divine and illuminating grace, and which we call preventing [or, prevenient] grace, being, as a light to those in darkness, by the Divine goodness imparted to all, to those that are willing to obey this – for it is of use only to the willing, not to the unwilling – and co-operate with it, in what it requires as necessary to salvation, there is consequently granted particular grace. This grace co-operates with us, and enables us, and makes us to persevere in the love of God, that is to say, in performing those good things that God would have us to do, and which His preventing grace admonishes us that we should do, justifies us, and makes us predestinated. But those who will not obey, and co-operate with grace; and, therefore, will not observe those things that God would have us perform, and that abuse in the service of Satan the free-will, which they have received of God to perform voluntarily what is good, are consigned to eternal condemnation.

"But to say, as the most wicked heretics do and as is contained in the Chapter [of Cyril's' Confession] to which this answers – that God, in predestinating, or condemning, did not consider in any way the works of those predestinated, or condemned, we know to be profane and impious. For thus Scripture would be opposed to itself, since it promises the believer salvation through works, yet supposes God to be its sole author, by His sole illuminating grace, which He bestows without

¹⁰⁸ St. Theophan, *Tolkovanie Poslanij Sv. Apostola Pavla*, Moscow, 2002, p. 369.

preceding works, to show to man the truth of divine things, and to teach him how he may co-operate with it, if he will, and do what is good and acceptable, and so obtain salvation. He takes not away the power to will – to will to obey, or not obey him.

“But than to affirm that the Divine Will is thus solely and without cause the author of their condemnation, what greater defamation can be fixed upon God? and what greater injury and blasphemy can be offered to the Most High? We do know that the Deity is not tempted with evils, {cf. James 1:13} and that He equally wills the salvation of all, since there is no respect of persons with Him. we do confess that for those who through their own wicked choice, and their impenitent heart, have become vessels of dishonor, there is justly decreed condemnation. But of eternal punishment, of cruelty, of pitilessness, and of inhumanity, we never, never say God is the author, who tells us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. {Luke 15:7} Far be it from us, while we have our senses, to believe or to think this; and we do subject to an eternal anathema those who say and think such things, and esteem them to be worse than any infidels.”¹⁰⁹

Bishop Elias Miniatos summed up the matter well: “God desires, and if man desires also, then he or she is already predestined.”¹¹⁰

We can draw two preliminary conclusions from this commentary:

(i). Predestination is by no means incompatible with man’s free will. In fact, predestination is the working of God’s Providence *together with, in harmony with* man’s free will. Man shows a will to be saved, and God predestines him to be saved, that is, runs to meet that good will by arranging all things in such a way that he will in fact be saved. For example, he leads him to meet the True Church, gives him the desire to be baptized, sends him good teachers, sends him temptations that he can overcome and which thereby, through his overcoming them, bring him closer to God, but removes temptations that he would not be able to overcome, which would lead him to falling away from God...

Many stumble at the Orthodox doctrine of predestination because they assume that God’s foreknowledge of the events of a person’s life “predestines” in the sense of “predetermines” them – wholly, and without room for the exercise of freewill. But this, as we have seen, is not the meaning of “predestination”. In any case, as St. Justin the Martyr writes: “The cause of future events is not foreknowledge, but foreknowledge is the *result* of future events. The future does not flow from foreknowledge, but foreknowledge from the future. It is not Christ Who is the cause of the betrayal of Judas. But the betrayal is the cause of the Lord’s foreknowledge.”¹¹¹ Again, Diodore writes: “This text does not take away our free will. It uses the word *foreknew* before *predestined*. Now it is clear that *foreknowledge* does not by itself impose any particular kind of behaviour. What is said here would be clearer if we started from the end and worked backwards. Whom did God glorify? Those whom He justified.

¹⁰⁹ <https://books.google.com/books?id=m4kXAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA114..>

¹¹⁰ Miniatos, “On Predestination”, *Orthodox Life*, November-December, 1990. p. 28.

¹¹¹ St. Justin, in Miniatos, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Whom did He predestine? Those whom He foreknew, who were called according to His plan, i.e., who demonstrated that they were worthy to be called by His plan and made conformable to Christ."¹¹²

(ii). Predestination is only for those who show a will to be saved (cf. also Ephesians 1.5), not for those who show no such good will. That is, as St. Paul says, it is for *them that love God, Who are the called according to His purpose* – by which is meant, according to the Holy Fathers, those who are both called *and respond* to the call. Again, Origen says: "In Scripture, words like *foreknew* and *predestined* do not apply equally to both good and evil. For the careful student of the Bible will realize that these words are used only of the good..."¹¹³ Again, St. Theodoret of says: "This [predestination] is not true of everyone but only of believers. Nor do things simply work together – they work together for good. If someone asks for something which will not contribute to his good, he will not get it, because it is not good for him to get it."¹¹⁴

3. St. Augustine's Teaching. Without entering into a detailed discussion of St. Augustine's teaching, a few relevant points will be made here. First, it is often claimed that St. Augustine rejected the place of man's free-will in his salvation. This is simply not true. It is true that, meditating on St. Paul's words in Romans 9.14-21, where the apostle places great emphasis on God's election rather than on man's making himself worthy of election (for example: "It depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy" (v.10)), Augustine does say some things that have been interpreted in a Calvinist sense. But he vehemently rejected the charge that he denied free will. "Thus, when it was objected to him that 'it is by his own fault that anyone deserts the faith, when he yields and consents to the temptation which is the cause of his desertion of the faith' (as against the teaching that God *determines* a man to desert the faith), Augustine found it necessary to make no reply except: '*Who denies it?*' (*On the Gift of Perseverance*, ch. 46)."¹¹⁵ Again, he writes: "It is our part to believe and to will and His part to give to those who believe and will the ability to do good works through the Holy Spirit".¹¹⁶ A perfect statement of the Orthodox doctrine of synergy!¹¹⁷

Michael Allen Gillespie writes that "Augustine employed this notion of the will in his early struggles against the Manicheans. The Manicheans had suggested that if God were omnipotent, he must be the source not merely of good but of evil. And if he were

¹¹² Diodore, in Gerald Bray (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. VI. Romans*, Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1998, p. 235.

¹¹³ Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, in Bray, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

¹¹⁴ St. Theodoret, *Interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans*, in Bray *op. cit.*, p. 234.

¹¹⁵ Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1983, p. 18.

¹¹⁶ St. Augustine, *Commentary on Romans 9.15*, in Bray, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

¹¹⁷ Again he wrote: "Just read the books of Chronicles and this is what you will find written in the second book: 'And the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabs who border on the Ethiopians. And they came up to the land of Judah and wasted it, and they carried away all substance that was found in the king's house.' Here we have a clear indication of how God stirs up enemies to lay waste those countries that He judges to be deserving of such punishment. And yet, was it not of their own will that the Philistines and Arabs came to lay waste the country of Judah? Or did they so come of their own will that the Scripture lies where it tells us that the Lord stirred up their spirit to do so? On the contrary. Both statements are true because they did come of their own will and God did stir up their spirit" (*On Grace and Free Will*, 21.42)

not the source of evil, then there must not be one God, but two, an evil creator and a good redeemer. Augustine countered this argument by asserting the independence of the human will not as a foundation for human dignity but in order to show that the source of evil lay not in God but in man. God grants humans freedom, and they freely choose to do evil. In this way Augustine was able to make divine unity or simplicity compatible with divine goodness.

“The problem with the attribution of such freedom to man is that it might be construed to imply that just as humans chose to sin and therefore merited damnation, so they can choose not to sin and thereby earn salvation. This was precisely the conclusion that Pelagius drew. This idea, however, was anathema to Christians because it implied that Christ and his sacrifice were unnecessary. In his attacks upon this position, Augustine was forced to rethink his earlier notion of freedom. In the earlier debate he used the term *libero arbitrio*. In the later debate he sometimes used the term *seruum arbitrium*, but more characteristically employed the phrase *liberum arbitrium captivatum*, the free will that has been taken captive by sin. Augustine thus did not abandon the idea of the freedom of the will that is essential to human responsibility, but asserted that it could not be effective without grace. While he believed that grace was necessary to salvation, he was also clear that once the bonds of sin were removed, the individual will had to will the good to merit salvation.”¹¹⁸

However, Augustine is more culpable in his teaching that some are “predestined to eternal death”. For, as we have seen, there is no such thing in the Orthodox teaching, but only predestination to salvation. Moreover, there are some grounds for believing that he did not accept the apostle’s words that “God wills that all men should be saved” in their literal sense.¹¹⁹ But here, too, we must be careful not to ascribe to him a Calvinist kind of fatalism. In the passage where Augustine speaks of “predestination to eternal death”, he immediately adds: “not only because of the sins which they add of their own willingness, but also because of original sin”.¹²⁰ In other words, “predestination to eternal death” is not the result of some kind of completely inscrutable and arbitrary choice on the part of God, but of the sins of man. This does not remove the error of Augustine’s phrase, but it does make us think that he did not mean “predestination” in the Calvinist sense here, but rather something closer to “condemnation”.

4. The Teaching of Fr. Panteleimon. This is preceded by a ritual condemnation of St. Augustine of the kind that we have become so accustomed to in the writings of the “new soteriologists” such as Romanides and Kalomiros. Only in the mouth of Fr. Panteleimon it is more extreme than anything I have read elsewhere: “Both Origen and Augustine were so enamored by pagan philosophy, that they fell into great errors and heresies. I maintain that what Origen was in the East, Augustine was in the West – the originator of all heresies that followed in their time. There is no heresy in the East which does not have its seeds in Origen, and no heresy in the West that does not have its seeds in Augustine.

¹¹⁸ Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, University of Chicago Press, 2008, pp. 142-143.

¹¹⁹ Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹²⁰ St. Augustine, *The Soul and Its Origin*, in William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1979. p. 139.

“Because of this novel teaching of predestination, Augustine not only did not have any problem with consigning most of mankind to eternal damnation. But there could be no other way about it. He had no qualms about this. In his pagan legalistic mind, this is what God’s justice demanded, and consequently God was bound. He would not, or to put it more plainly, *could* not overrule His own Divine justice and predestination.” (p. 5).

It is not our intention to provide a detailed defence of St. Augustine here – that is being done by other better qualified writers.¹²¹ However, we cannot pass this shameless onslaught in silence. First, to suppose that Augustine “had no problem with consigning most of mankind to eternal damnation” is to imply that he was a completely heartless monster – for which there is absolutely no evidence. C.S. Lewis once said of a similar attack on Augustine: “They speak as if he *wanted* unbaptized babies to go to hell...” On the contrary, it is quite clear that Augustine *grieved* over the massa damnata, and would have liked to reject the conclusion he drew from Holy Scripture – the conclusion that cannot be avoided by anyone who studies the Scriptures objectively – the conclusion, namely, that “many are called but few are chosen”, and that there are many more who travel the broad way to perdition than enter the strait gate that leads to salvation...

Again, we cannot in any way agree that it was pagan. His bowing down before the abyss of God’s judgements, and His God-fearing refusal to question them, far from showing that He believed that God was bound by some pagan goddess of chance or necessity, shows his profoundly Orthodox refusal to twist the evidence in favour of a more palatable theodicy. There is nothing pagan in the assertion that “God’s justice requires expiation for sin”, any more than it is pagan to say that “God’s love required that He die as a sacrifice for the sin”. In both statements we are simply making assertions about the nature of God as He reveals Himself in His actions towards us. We are saying that God always acts in accordance with justice as well as love in order to abolish sin and reconcile men to Himself.

Irrational nature is bound by necessity, the laws of nature that God has decreed. Rational beings are free, in that they can act in accordance with their nature or against it. But the absolute freedom that belongs to God alone is far above the freedom of rational creatures. As St. Maximus the Confessor explained, God does not have freewill in the sense that He makes choices between good and evil – which always presupposes the possibility of committing evil. Rather He is like the Child in Isaiah Who, “before he knows either to prefer evil or choose the good, [or] before He shall know good or evil, refuses the evil, to choose the good” (7.15-16). That is, good is so intrinsic to His nature that He chooses it without any possibility of choosing the opposite. Thus God is just, not because He makes a choice between acting justly and acting unjustly (which is the case with all those who have not reached perfection and deification), still less because He is compelled to by some external force or principle, but because justice flows from his nature like light from the sun or water from a

¹²¹ Notably Deacon Romaric d’Amico, a True Orthodox Christian from Paris who is writing a thesis on St. Augustine defending him against the misrepresentations of the new soteriologists.

source. That is why God does not simply act justly: as St. John of the Ladder says, He *is justice* - no less than He is love.¹²²

Having clarified this point, let us pass on to Fr. Panteleimon's main thesis, which is that *it is unjust that men who have never had the opportunity to become Orthodox in this life should not have a second chance after death*. This is related to his further thesis that *Christ's Descent into Hell is repeated continuously in order to give this chance to those who have died before having Orthodoxy taught to them*. Which is related (although the connection is not immediately obvious) to his further thesis that *the idea propagated by St. Augustine and several Orthodox Popes that in His Descent into Hell Christ did not save all those who listened to Him is false*.

Let us begin with this third thesis. We know concerning Christ's Descent into Hell that "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, who were at one time disobedient when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared" (I Peter 3.19-20). But do we know whether all these accepted His preaching and were saved?

Fr. Panteleimon cites the story of a monk to whom the philosopher Plato appeared, saying that He had believed in Christ's preaching when He descended into Hell, and so was saved. Fair enough; so we know that Plato was saved, and we may hope that other worthies among the ancients, such as Socrates, were also saved. But does that entitle us to say that *all* were saved?

St. Cyril of Alexandria makes it clear that not all were saved: "while Christ was able to preach to all those who were alive at the time of His appearing and those who believed in Him were blessed, so too He was able to liberate those in Hades who believed and acknowledged Him, by His descent there. However, the souls of those who practiced idolatry and outrageous ungodliness, as well as those who were blinded by fleshly lusts, *did not have the power to see him, and they were not delivered.*"¹²³

The Old Testament provides us with several examples of men of evil life who serve for the New Testament Church as exemplars of vice, and even, in some cases, as forerunners of the Antichrist. We think of Cain and Lamech; of Esau of whom it is written that God "hated" him; of Ham and Canaan; of Nimrod; of the Pharaoh that pursued Moses; of Core, Dathan and Abiram; of the Amalekites and the Philistines and the Assyrians, such as Sennacherib; of Jeroboam and Ahab and Jezabel; of Haman; and of Herod the Great. Although we cannot be sure that all these were damned, it seems extremely unlikely that they were all saved...

And what about Judas, whom Christ called "the son of perdition" and a "devil", who would have done better never to have been born? He died before Christ, and presumably witnessed His preaching in Hell. And yet the tradition of the Church is that he remains in Hell and is destined for the eternal fire of gehenna...

¹²² St. John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 24.23.

¹²³ St. Cyril, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Vol. 11, InterVarsity Press, 2000, p. 107-108.

But Fr. Panteleimon says: "If Hades were not annihilated by our Saviour in His descent but only a 'bite' (morsus in Latin), in the words of Saint Gregory the Great, was taken out, then what is there to be so jubilant about and celebrate?" (p. 6).

Are we to assume, then, that since Fr. Panteleimon *is* celebrating, he believes that everyone is saved by the "continuous" descent of Christ into Hades? Surely not, for this is the heretical Origenist theory of the salvation of all!

Fr. Panteleimon goes on to criticize Fr. Panagiotis Carras for writing: "The *effect* of the unique Descent into Hades is eternal, not the process. Christ is not continuously descending and teaching in Hades." And yet Fr. Panagiotis is surely correct. The Descent into Hades took place at one time, and one time only, just as the Crucifixion of Christ took place at one time, and one time only...

Against this, however, Fr. Panteleimon cites the fact in the feasts of the Church we are transported out of space and time, so that we chant: "Today the Virgin giveth birth...", "Today there is born of the Virgin..." Today there hangeth upon a tree..." (p. 8).

But the fact that we, through the mystery of the liturgy and "Church time", are enabled to take part in these past events *now* by no means entails that these events are *repeated* every time we participate in them. The *celebrations* are repeated, but the event itself remains unique and unrepeatable.

We can understand this most clearly with regard to the Crucifixion. This took place at one single point in space-time, and the fixedness of the event is emphasized in the Creed, where we declare that He "was crucified *under Pontius Pilate*" - that is, under *this* procurator of Judaea, and not an earlier or later one. True, in a mystical sense the Lamb of God was sacrificed before the beginning of time, and His Sacrifice avails throughout time to reconcile sinners with God, being continually offered at the Divine Liturgy. But this continual offering is of *one and the same Sacrifice*; for, unlike the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the Sacrifice of Christ on the altar of the Cross was "once for all (εφραπαξ)" (Hebrews 10.10). "After He had offered *one* Sacrifice for sins *for ever*, He sat down on the right hand of God... For by *one* offering He hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10.12, 14).

The fruit of the Cross is the Descent into Hades and its destruction. But just as Christ's Blood was shed "for many" (Matthew 26.28), not for all, - because not all believe in Him, - so the Descent into Hades was for the liberation of many, not of all, because not all believed in His preaching. Similarly, we read that when Christ appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, they worshipped Him, "but some doubted" (Matthew 28.17)... So at every stage of the economy of our salvation there is division, choice, "election". Some through their ready faith are predestined to salvation, while others reject that opportunity.

But what of the patristic sayings that speak of Christ conquering death in *all*? Here we must make a distinction between *salvation* and *liberation from physical death*. As

regards salvation, as we have said, there is always division, separation, election. But as regards deliverance from death, this is a universal gift to all mankind. For at the General Resurrection, as a direct result of Christ's conquest of death in His own Body, all without exception will be raised from the dead and restored to their bodies. That is why death is no longer death in the proper sense, but falling asleep. And so: "Sleepers, awake!" is a truly universal call and gift...¹²⁴

"Finally," writes Fr. Panteleimon, "we come to the issue of pagans who never heard of or were given an opportunity in this life to accept or deny our Saviour, as evidently those pagans that lived before the appearance in the flesh of the Redeemer, and those millions upon millions that came after Christ until our times..."

"It is a given for us Orthodox Christians that when our Saviour descended into Hades, He redeemed as many as accepted Him as the Christ, both from among the righteous of the Old Testament, and the pagans. For the Roman Catholics, following Augustine and his teaching concerning predestination, no pagan was saved - all were predestined to be damned." (p. 12)

Actually, Augustine's teaching on predestination has nothing directly to do with the issue whether any pagans were saved at the Descent into Hades. Nor does Fr. Panteleimon produce any direct quotation from St. Augustine to prove that he believed that all pagans, both before and after Christ, are damned forever. This lack of direct quotations from St. Augustine is something we find in all the "new soteriologists", and especially in their father, Romanides; for their purpose is not to establish exactly what the great African Father really said and meant, but rather to create a "straw man", a scapegoat - or, more precisely, a diversion, behind which to introduce their own innovatory teachings.

Fr. Panteleimon continues: "If the pagans before Christ were given this opportunity [to have the Gospel preached to them at the Descent into Hades], why should it be denied to the pagans that come after? Why this discrimination between the pagans before Christ and those after Christ? Both lived and died without ever having been given an opportunity to accept or deny the Saviour. Is this the God of love and mercy that we know and worship, to give one group this opportunity and yet deny it all that come after because He so wills it according to His 'predestination'?" (pp. 12-13). Having already cited some examples of pagans and heretics being saved from Hades through the prayers of the Church, Fr. Panteleimon evidently thinks that the answers to these questions are self-evident, even if, just a little later, he admits that he and Metropolitan Ephraim consider the idea of a "second chance" for pagans to be no more than "a possibility".

However, Fr. Panteleimon's questions are strictly unanswerable, because they are posed from the standpoint of human justice, which is completely powerless to plumb the depths of Divine Justice. Fr. Panteleimon has invented the idea of "continual" Descents into Hades, because that is what his very human and very personal sense of

¹²⁴ See Fr. Georges Florovsky, "Redemption", in *Creation and Redemption*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1976, pp. 143-149.

justice requires. But then, knowing that there is no evidence whatever for such an idea, he tries to protect himself by saying that he put it forward only as "a possibility".

A much more reliable approach is to begin from what we know about Divine Justice, Divine Omniscience and Divine Omnipotence.

God knows the hearts of men even before they are born, when they are still in the womb. He does not need to see their actions in order to know who they are. So if He takes a man away from this world before he has encountered the Orthodox Gospel, we cannot accuse him of injustice - perish the thought!

If we question God's judgements, then we are implicitly placing ourselves in judgement over Him, as if we could be more just than He. What folly could be greater than this? "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, He put no trust in His servants; and His angels He charged with folly. How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust? (Job 4.17-19). "For who shall say, What hast Thou done? Or who shall withstand His judgement? Or who shall accuse Thee for the nations that perish, whom Thou hast made?" (Wisdom of Solomon 12.12).

And yet this appears to be what Fr. Panteleimon and Metropolitan Ephraim are doing. Those who have never heard the Orthodox Gospel, they are implying, do not deserve to go to Hades. Or at any rate they deserve "a second chance" - as if God has "made a mistake" and confined to Hades someone who should be in Paradise, and to "correct the mistake", the man should be given another chance!

But suppose that God in His omniscience knows that if the man heard the Orthodox Gospel he would reject it? Or that, having accepted it, he would fall away later? Perhaps God in His mercy does not send him an Orthodox preacher in order that he should not become guilty of rejecting it, or falling away from it? Of course, these are merely human speculations to explain God's judgements. But as such they are no less valid than Fr. Panteleimon's about a "second chance"... Better than either course is humbly to accept God's judgements as just even if we do not understand why or how they can be just.

Fr. Panteleimon says that those who have never heard the Orthodox Gospel are, or should be, judged by whether they have kept the natural law, not whether they have kept the Christian law which they never heard. This seems reasonable enough - according to human justice. But the question then arises: why did the man not hear the Orthodox Gospel? It is no use saying: because he lived in a pagan country where there were no Christian preachers. Such an obstacle is easily overcome by God...

*

Let us begin again, from the certainty of Holy Scripture...

There is a light that "enlightens every man who comes into the world" (John 1.9). And if there are some who reject that light, abusing their freewill, this is entirely their

fault. As St. John Chrysostom says, "If there are some who choose to close the eyes of their mind and do not want to receive the rays of that light, their darkness comes not from the nature of the light, but from their own darkness in voluntarily depriving themselves of that gift."¹²⁵

No one is completely deprived of the knowledge of God. Thus St. Jerome writes: "Ours and every other race of men knows God naturally. There are no peoples who do not recognise their Creator naturally."¹²⁶ And St. John Chrysostom writes: "From the beginning God placed the knowledge of Himself in men, but the pagans awarded this knowledge to sticks and stones, doing wrong to the truth to the extent that they were able."¹²⁷ Again, Chrysostom writes: "One way of coming to the knowledge of God is that which is provided by the whole of creation; and another, no less significant, is that which is offered by conscience, the whole of which we have expounded upon at greater length, showing how you have a self-taught knowledge of what is good and what is not so good, and how conscience urges all this upon you from within. Two teachers, then, are given you from the beginning: creation and conscience. Neither of them has a voice to speak out; yet they teach men in silence."¹²⁸

Now before the Coming of Christ God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14.16). However, since His Coming He permits this no longer, but insists that men, using the witness of creation and conscience, and helped by the Providence (Predestination) of God, should come to the full truth in the new and still greater witness that He has provided, the Church. For if a man follows the teachers given to everyone, creation and conscience, then the Providence of God, with Whom "all things are possible" (Matthew 19.26), will lead him to the teacher that provides all the knowledge any man could need - "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth" (I Timothy 3.15). For "it is *not possible*," writes St. John Chrysostom, "that one who is living rightly and freed from the passions should ever be overlooked. *But even if he happens to be in error, God will quickly draw him over to the truth.*"¹²⁹ Again, as Chrysostom's disciple, St. John Cassian, says: "When God sees in us some beginnings of good will, He at once enlightens it, urging it on towards salvation."¹³⁰

This point was developed in an illuminating manner by Cassian's French contemporary (and disciple of St. Augustine), Prosper of Aquitaine: "The very armies that exhaust the world help on the work of Christian grace. How many indeed who in the quiet of peacetime delayed to receive the sacrament of baptism, were compelled by fear of close danger to hasten to the water of regeneration, and were suddenly forced by threatening terror to fulfil a duty which a peaceful exhortation failed to bring home to their slow and tepid souls? Some sons of the Church, made prisoners by the enemy, changed their masters into servants of the Gospel, and by teaching them the faith they became the superiors of their own wartime lords. Again, some foreign pagans, whilst serving in the Roman armies, were able to learn the faith in our country,

¹²⁵ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 8 on John*.

¹²⁶ St. Jerome, *Treatise on Psalm 95*.

¹²⁷ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on Romans*, 2.

¹²⁸ St. Chrysostom, *First Homily on Hannah*, 3.

¹²⁹ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on Matthew*, 1.

¹³⁰ St. Cassian, *Conferences*, XIII, 8.

when in their own lands they could not have known it; they returned to their homes instructed in the Christian religion. Thus nothing can prevent God's grace from accomplishing His will... For all who at any time will be called and will enter into the Kingdom of God, have been marked out in the adoption which preceded all times. And just as none of the infidels is counted among the elect, so none of the God-fearing is excluded from the blessed. For in fact God's prescience, which is infallible, cannot lose any of the members that make up the fullness of the Body of Christ."¹³¹

Another striking example of how God can bring anyone to the truth, however apparently hopeless his situation, is provided by the story of God's favour to the Aleuts of Alaska, to whom He sent angels to teach them the Orthodox Faith in the absence of any human instructor. Fr. John Veniaminov (later St. Innocent, metropolitan of Moscow (+1879)) relates how, on his first missionary journey to Akun island, he found all the islanders lined up on the shore waiting for him. It turned out that they had been warned by their former shaman, John Smirennikov, who in turn had been warned by two "white men", who looked like the angels on icons. Smirennikov told his story to Fr. John, who wrote: "Soon after he was baptised by Hieromonk Macarius, first one and later two spirits appeared to him but were visible to no one else... They told him that they were sent by God to edify, teach and guard him. For the next thirty years they appeared to him almost every day, either during daylight hours or early in the evening - but never at night. On these occasions: (1) They taught him in its totality Christian theology and the mysteries of the faith... (2) In time of sickness and famine they brought help to him and - though more rarely - to others at his request. (When agreeing to his requests that they help others, they always responded by saying that they would first have to ask God, and if it was His will, then they would do it.) (3) Occasionally they told him of things occurring in another place or (very rarely) at some time in the future - but then only if God willed such a revelation; in such cases they would persuade him that they did so not by their own power, but by the power of Almighty God.

"Their doctrine is that of the Orthodox Church. I, however, knowing that even demons believe - and tremble with fear [James 3.19], wondered whether or not this might be the crafty and subtle snare of him who from time immemorial has been Evil. 'How do they teach you to pray, to themselves or to God? And how do they teach you to live with others?' He answered that they taught him to pray not to them but to the Creator of all, and to pray in spirit, with the heart; occasionally they would even pray along with him for long periods of time.

"They taught him to exercise all pure Christian virtues (which he related to me in detail), and recommended, furthermore, that he remain faithful and pure, both within and outside of marriage (this perhaps because the locals are quite given to such impurity). Furthermore, they taught him all the outward virtues..."¹³²

¹³¹ Prosper, *The Call of the Nations*, II, 33.

¹³² Paul Garrett, *St. Innocent, Apostle to America*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979, pp. 80-81.

Very apt was the comment of one of the first who read this story: "It is comforting to read about such miraculous Divine Providence towards savages, sons of Adam who, *though forgotten by the world, were not forgotten by Providence.*"¹³³

These cases lead us to draw the following conclusions: (1) Divine Providence is able to save *anyone* in *any* situation, providing he loves the truth. Therefore (2), although we cannot declare with categorical certainty that those who die in unbelief or heresy will be damned forever, neither can we declare that they will be saved because of their ignorance; for they may be alienated from God "*through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*" (Ephesians 4.18), and not simply through the ignorance that is caused by external circumstances. Therefore (3) there is no need to posit any "second chance", still less a "continual Descent into Hades". And so (4) if we, who know the truth, say that people who died in ignorance of the Gospel did not need to become Christians in order to be saved, then we shall be guilty of indifference to the truth; for which we shall certainly merit damnation.

For while we cannot presume to know the eternal destinies of individual men, we do know this, that the Word of God is true that declares: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16.16). And again: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3.5).¹³⁴

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¹³³ Garrett, op. cit., p. 85, footnote.

¹³⁴ "Weep for the unbelievers! Weep for those who differ not a whit from them, those who go hence without illumination [Baptism], without the seal [Chrismation]! These truly deserve our lamentation, our tears. They are outside the royal city with those who have been found guilty, with the condemned. "Verily, verily, I say unto you: except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of heaven'." (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on Philippians*, 4).

6. ON FAITH AND THE ROOTS OF UNBELIEF

Faith is a gift of God. As the Apostle Paul says, "By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing - it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2.9). And again: "To another - faith by the same Spirit" (I Corinthians 12.9).

When the Apostle Peter made his famous declaration of faith in the Divinity of Christ, the Lord made it clear that this was a gift from God: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Who is in the heavens" (Matthew 16.17). For, as He said to the Jews: "No man can come unto Me unless the Father Who hath sent Me draw him... Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (John 6.44, 45). Indeed, as St. John Cassian writes, "so much did the apostles realize that everything which pertains to salvation was bestowed on them by the Lord that they asked for faith itself to be given them by the Lord when they said: 'Increase our faith,' for they did not presume that its fullness would come from free will but believed that it would be conferred on them by a gift of God. The Author of human salvation teaches us how even our faith is unstable and weak and by no means sufficient unto itself, unless it has been strengthened by the Lord's help, when He says to Peter: 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan has sought to sift you like wheat, but I have asked My Father that your faith might not fail.'"¹³⁵

The Naturalness of Faith

Although faith is a gift of God, it is nevertheless true that faith is natural to man. This is the result of man being made in the image of God, so that there is, as it were, an interface between God and man. Thus St. Augustine says that in the heart of man is a hole in the shape of God Himself. And St. Jerome says: "Ours and every other race of man knows God naturally. There are no people who do not recognize their Creator naturally."¹³⁶ Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "The soul preserves within itself the image of the divine grace. For our reason surmises that divinity itself, whatever it may be in its inmost nature, is manifested in... universal supervision and the critical discernment between good and evil."

What is meant by "universal supervision" and "the critical discernment between good and evil"?

The mind of man in its natural, inbuilt searching for its Archetype, the Word and Wisdom of God, looks in two directions: inward and outward. Looking inward, it finds *conscience*, that faculty in himself which discerns the Law of God and "critically discerns between good and evil". Looking outwards, it finds *creation*, that witness to the omnipotence of God and His "universal supervision" of all things. In the one case the mind of man compels him to recognize that one God created all things, and in the other - that he is a sinner, a transgressor of a moral law that emanates from the same Creator God. This dual vision gives him a firm conviction, not only of the existence of God, but also of His power and goodness.

¹³⁵ St. John Cassian, *Conferences*.

¹³⁶ St. Jerome, *Treatise on Psalm 95*.

St. John Chrysostom says: "One way of coming to a knowledge of God is that which is provided by the whole of creation; and another, no less significant, is that which is offered by conscience, the whole of which we have expounded upon at greater length, showing you how you have a self-taught knowledge of what is good and of what is not so good, and how conscience urges all this upon you from within. Two teachers, then, are given you from the beginning: creation and conscience. Neither of them has a voice to speak out; they teach men in silence..."¹³⁷

That creation is a guide to faith is witnessed by David: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands" (Psalm 18.1). For, as the Apostle Paul says, "His invisible properties are clearly seen by the things that are made from the creation of the world, both His everlasting power and His Divinity" (Romans 1.20). Therefore those who do not believe the witness of creation "are without excuse" (1.20). As St. John Chrysostom says, "From the beginning God placed the knowledge of Himself in men, but the pagans awarded this knowledge to sticks and stones, doing wrong the truth to such an extent as they were able. For really, the truth remained unharmed, its own glory being immutable. And how, O Paul, is it plain that God put this knowledge in them? 'Because,' he says, 'what can be known of Him is manifested in them' (Romans 1.19). But this is assertion, not proof. Only reason it out for me, and show me that the knowledge of God was evident to them, and that they wilfully turned aside from it. Whence, then, was it plain? Did He send them a voice from above? Of course not! But He did something that was better able to draw them to Him than a voice: He put creation in front of them so that the wise and the simple, the Scythian and the barbarian, having learned by vision the beauty of what they saw, might mount up to God."¹³⁸

The second guide to faith, conscience, is called by St. Paul the natural law, which he contrasts with the written, Mosaic law. "For when the Gentiles who do not have the [written] law do by nature the things of the law they are a law unto themselves, showing the work of the law written in their hearts. And their conscience also beareth witness, while their thoughts accuse of even excuse each other" (Romans 2.15, 16).

St. Dorotheus of Gaza takes up this theme: "When God created man, He breathed into him something divine, as it were a hot and bright spark added to reason, which lit up the mind and showed him the difference between right and wrong. This is called the conscience, which is the law of his nature. This is compared to the well which Jacob dug, as the Fathers say, and which the Philistines filled up (Genesis 26.15). That is, to this law of conscience adhered the patriarchs and all the holy men of old before the written law, and they were pleasing to God. But when this law was buried and trodden underfoot by men through the onset of sin, we needed a written law, we needed the holy prophets, we needed the instruction of our Master, Jesus Christ, to reveal it and raise it up and bring to life through the observance of the commandments that buried spark. It is in our power either to bury it again, or, if we obey it, to allow

¹³⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Hannah*, 3; translated in W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, volume 1, Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1979.

¹³⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on Romans*, 2; translated in Jurgens, *op. cit.*

it to shine and illuminate us. When our conscience says to us, 'Do this!' and we despise it, and it speaks again and we do not do it but continue to despise it, at last we bury it and it is no longer able to speak clearly to us from the depths where we have laid it. But like a lamp shining on a damaged mirror, it reflects things dimly and darkly, just as you cannot see the reflection of your face in muddy water. We are found unable to perceive what our conscience says to us so that we think we have hardly any conscience. No one is without a conscience since it is something divinely implanted in us, as we have already said, and it can never be destroyed. It always patiently reminds us of our duties, but sometimes we do not perceive that we are despising it and treading it underfoot."¹³⁹

Many have abandoned the darkness of idolatry by following the voices of creation and conscience alone. Such, for example, was St. Barbara, who even before she had heard of Christ rejected her father's idols and believed in the One Creator of heaven and earth. For she heeded both the voice of creation and the voice of her conscience, which recoiled from those "most odious works of witchcrafts, and wicked sacrifices; and also those merciless murderers of children and devourers of man's flesh, and the feasts of blood, with their priests out of the midst of their idolatrous crew, and the parents, that killed with their own hands souls destitute of help" (Wisdom of Solomon 12.4-6). But her father, who had the same witnesses to the truth as she, rejected it - to the extent of killing his own daughter.¹⁴⁰

Although the conscience cannot be destroyed, since it is part of the image of God in man, in idolaters and unbelievers like St. Barbara's father it is "defiled" (Titus 1.15); they "have their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4.2). Men with seared consciences cannot believe. That is why St. Paul often links faith and a good conscience (cf. I Timothy 1.5, 1.19).

St. Theophan the Recluse does the same: "'He that believeth not in the Son of God is condemned already' (John 3.18). For what? For the fact that when light is all around, he remains in darkness, due to his love for it. Love of darkness and hatred of the light make him entirely to blame, even without his determining where the truth lies; for he who has sincere love for the truth will be led by this love from the darkness of deception to the light of truth. One example is the Holy Apostle Paul. He was a sincere lover of truth; devoted with all his soul to what he considered to be true, without any self-interest. Therefore, as soon as he was shown that the truth lay not in what he considered to be true, at that very moment he cast aside the old - which proved to be untrue - and cleaved with all his heart to the new which was tangibly proven to be the truth. The same occurs with every sincere lover of the truth. The truth of Christ is clear as day: seek and ye shall find. Help from above is always ready for the sincere seeker. Therefore, if someone remains in the darkness of unbelief, it is only due to his love for that darkness and for that he is already condemned."¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ St. Dorotheus, *Discourses and Sayings*; translated by E.P. Wheeler, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1977, pp. 104-105.

¹⁴⁰ *The Lives of the Women Martyrs*, Buena Vista: Holy Apostles Convent, 1991, pp. 528-542.

¹⁴¹ St. Theophan, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year*, Platina: St. Herman Brotherhood, 2010, p. 90.

Atheism, like idolatry, is the product of evil works and a seared conscience. St. John Maximovich says: "The Prophet David, long before the Incarnation of Christ, clearly showed the reason why men strive to convince themselves that there is no God: 'They are corrupt and abominable in iniquities' (Psalm 52.2). Moral corruption forces men to tremble before the future judgement; the conscience accuses them of sins. But men wish to soothe themselves, to stifle the conscience. They convince themselves that 'there is no God'."¹⁴²

Men with seared consciences have for centuries tried to demonstrate that faith is a chance product of special circumstances and therefore not natural at all. However, it is interesting to note that recently scientists have come to the conclusion that faith in God is natural. Ruth Gledhill writes: "Human beings are predisposed to believe in God and afterlife, according to a study by academics at the University of Oxford.

"The findings of a three-year, £1.9 million research project suggest that there is an inbuilt bias in the mind towards seeing the world in religious or spiritual terms. This means that public life will always have a strong religious dimension, and that religion will always have an impact on public life, the project leaders say.

"'It means you cannot separate religion and public life,' said Roger Trigg, a philosophy professor and co-director of the project. Professor Trigg, from the Ian Ramsey Centre in the Theology Faculty at Oxford, said: 'The mind is open to supernatural agency. There are lots of explanations. It is certainly linked to basic cognitive architecture, in other words, the way we think.'"¹⁴³

Of course, cognitive scientists do not see this evidence for the innateness or naturalness of faith as evidence that the object of faith exists. On the contrary, they see it as proof that belief in God is a product of subjective bias – a similar bias to that which Freud saw when he linked belief in God the Father to the existence of a subjective need for a father-figure. And yet there is an inconsistency in the scientists' thought here. For when, for example, they find cells in the visual cortex specifically designed to detect certain colours, or shapes, or movement, they interpret this as a functional adaptation to the colours, shapes and movements that objectively exist in the environment. When, however, research reveals a propensity to believe in God in the "basic cognitive architecture" of man, they interpret this, not as adapted to the objective existence of God, but as "bias", a kind of harmful mutation...¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² St. John Maximovich, in *St. Herman Calendar 1980*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman Press.

¹⁴³ Gledhill, "Are we programmed to believe in God? Not quite, but He really is in the mind, say scientists", *The Times*, Friday, May 13, 2011, p. 21.

¹⁴⁴ Here is another example of science appearing to confirm faith. Boston University psychologist George Stavros, Ph.D., wanted to find out whether repeating the Jesus Prayer for ten minutes each day over the 30 days would affect these people's relationship with God, their relationships with others, their faith maturity, and their "self-cohesion" (levels of depression, anxiety, hostility, and interpersonal sensitivity). In short, Stavros was asking whether the Jesus Prayer can play a special role in a person's "journey to the heart." The answer—at least on all the scales that showed any significant effect compared to the control group—turned out to be a resounding yes (<http://orthodoxwayoflife.blogspot.com/2011/05/science-studies-jesus-prayer.html>).

Faith is natural because there is a light “that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1.9). This light can be identified in a general sense with *the love of the truth* – truth in all spheres, dogmatic, scientific, moral, aesthetic. Faith is kindled in us when the Light of Christ the Truth unites with the light of the love of the truth that is implanted in our minds by God at our creation, which is made in the image of His Truth. We who have faith “have the Mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2.6), because our minds, given wings by our love of the truth, have been united with the Mind of Christ, “in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2.4). As for those, writes St. John Chrysostom, “who choose to close the eyes of their mind and do not want to receive the rays of that light, their darkness comes not from the nature of the light, but from their own darkness in voluntarily depriving themselves of that gift.”¹⁴⁵ And so they “receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved” (II Thessalonians 2.10).

This mystery of the voluntary rejection of the light by those who do not love the truth was revealed in a vision to a nun, the sister of the famous novelist Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, who rejected the teaching of the Orthodox Church and died excommunicate: “When I returned from the burial of my brother Sergius to my home in the monastery, I had some kind of dream or vision which shook me to the depths of my soul. After I had completed my usual cell rule, I began to doze off, or fell into some kind of special condition between sleep and waking, which we monastics call a light sleep. I dropped off, and beheld... It was night. There was the study of Lev Nikolayevich. On the writing desk stood a lamp with a dark lampshade. Behind the desk, and leaning with his elbows on it, sat Lev Nikolayevich, and on his face there was the mark of such serious thought, and such despair, as I had never seen in him before... The room was filled with a thick, impenetrable darkness; the only illumination was of that place on the table and on the face of Lev Nikolayevich on which the light of the lamp was falling. The darkness in the room was so thick, so impenetrable, that it even seemed as if it were filled, saturated with some materialisation... And suddenly I saw the ceiling of the study open, and from somewhere in the heights there began to pour such a blindingly wonderful light, the like of which cannot be seen on earth; and in this light there appeared the Lord Jesus Christ, in that form in which He is portrayed in Rome, in the picture of the holy Martyr and Archdeacon Laurence: the all-pure hands of the Saviour were spread out in the air above Lev Nikolayevich, as if removing from invisible executioners the instruments of torture. It looks just like that in the picture. And this ineffable light poured and poured onto Lev Nikolayevich. But it was as if he didn't see it... And I wanted to shout to my brother: Levushka, look, look up!... And suddenly, behind Lev Nikolayevich, - I saw it with terror, - from the very thickness of the darkness I began to make out another figure, a terrifying, cruel figure that made me tremble: and this figure, placing both its hands from behind over the eyes of Lev Nikolayevich, shut out that wonderful light from him. And I saw that my Levushka was making despairing efforts to push away those cruel, merciless hands...

¹⁴⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 8 on John*; in Jurgens, *op. cit.*

“At this point I came to, and, as I came to, I heard a voice speaking as it were inside me: ‘The Light of Christ enlightens everyone!’”¹⁴⁶

A modern example is provided by Daniel Everett, an American missionary to the Pirahã Indians of the Amazonian rain-forest. “One day,” he says, “a group of the men came to the house and said we know why you’re here. You want to tell us about Jesus. He said that other missionaries before me had tried to tell them about Jesus. He said we don’t want to be Americans. We are Pirahã. We don’t want Jesus. We want to drink and we want to have many women, and we don’t want to live like you. But we like you, so if you want to stay here, you can stay here. But just don’t talk to us about Jesus.”

“After this,” writes William Leith, “something strange happened. Everett began to think that perhaps the Pirahã were ‘morally superior’ to Westerners like himself. They were happy, fatalistic, at one with nature. He began to lose his faith in Jesus...”¹⁴⁷

What happened to Everett was sad, but it was not strange. The Pirahã rejected the Gospel because they did not want to change their lifestyle; they wanted “to drink and... have many women”. Their language had no words for the past, only for the present; and this was reflected in their philosophy, which contained no account of the creation of the world, nor of the future judgement, but was “happy and fatalistic” – “Eat, drink, for tomorrow we die”.

Everett, tragically, was attracted to this pagan morality, for it appealed to his fallen nature. He even came to believe that this amorality was “morally superior”. And so he lost his faith...

“This is the condemnation,” says the Lord, “that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3.19-21).

The Preconditions of Faith

Let us say a little more about the preconditions of faith, why it is given to some and not to others.

Clearly, as we know, faith is not given to everyone; and those who do receive it do so to different degrees, with different degrees of purity and constancy. The parable of the Sower teaches that some to whom faith is given have it snatched away by demons, while others lose their faith in the time of persecution, while still others lose it through preoccupation with the cares and riches of this life (Matthew 13.18-23). As Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria writes: “The Father draws those who have the capacity, in accordance with their free will, while those who have made themselves incapable He does not draw to the faith. Just as a magnet does not attract everything that draws

¹⁴⁶ I.M. Kontzevich, *Optina Pustyn' i ee Vremia*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1970, pp. 372-73 .

¹⁴⁷ Leith, “Lost in Translation”, *Seven* magazine, April 18, 2012.

near to it, but only iron, so God draws near to all, but attracts only those who are capable and display a certain kinship with Him.”¹⁴⁸

We have seen already that conscience is a natural, inborn guide to faith, and that those who follow their conscience in departing from evil and doing good thereby attract the gift of grace to themselves. A clear example of this is the first Gentile convert, the centurion Cornelius, “a devout man who feared God with all his house, who gave many alms to the people, and always prayed to God” (Acts 10.2). The Angel who appeared to Cornelius and led him to the Apostle Peter pointed out that his good works had attracted the favour of God: “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God” (10.4).

On the other hand, the “good” thief was saved through a sudden infusion of faith although he had lived an evil life until literally his very last hours. Tradition records that he had done a good deed to Christ when the Holy Family fled to Egypt. But still: his election seems paradoxical if good works were really a precondition of the gift of faith...

The truth is that good deeds are valuable only if they are the expression of a good *heart*. Faith “worketh through love”, according to St. Paul (Galatians 5.6), and love is found in the *heart*. The good heart is that “good soil” in which the seed of faith takes root and grows. Not all deeds that are considered good come from a good heart – that is, are the works of true love. Thus “though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing” (I Corinthians 13.3).

It is a good heart that attracts the grace of faith, even if, as in the case of the good thief, circumstances sometimes hinder the goodness of the heart from being manifest in good works. That is why, when the Lord upbraided the Apostles for not believing in Him after His resurrection, He reproached them for their “unbelief and *hardness of heart*” (Mark 16.14), linking faithlessness with heartlessness. Again, He said to Luke and Cleophas: “O fools and *slow of heart*, to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24.25). And yet, on recovering their faith, these same disciples said: “Did not our *heart* burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24.32).

St. Gregory Palamas confirms that faith is located in the heart rather than in the head: “I hold that our holy faith is... a vision of our heart which passes beyond all sensation and all understanding, for it transcends all the intellectual faculties of our soul. Faith is a firm assurance of the things for which we hope (Hebrews 11.1), an intellection of the heart.”¹⁴⁹

A good heart naturally produces good works. So those who produce truly good works out of a good heart will eventually receive the gift of faith. For “it is not

¹⁴⁸ Blessed Theophylact, quoted by Archbishop Averky in his commentary on John 6.

¹⁴⁹ St Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, II, 3. 40; in J. Meyendorff, *A Study of St. Gregory Palamas*, London: The Faith Press, 1964, p. 155.

possible,” says Chrysostom, “that one who is living rightly and freed from the passions should ever be overlooked. But even if he happens to be in error, God will quickly draw him over to the truth.”¹⁵⁰ Again, as Chrysostom's disciple, St. John Cassian, says: “When God sees in us some beginnings of good will, He at once enlightens it, urging it on towards salvation.”¹⁵¹

Conversely, evil works darken the heart, making it difficult to receive faith, while lack of faith disposes the heart to evil works. Thus the Apostle says that the love of money has led some to “err from the faith” (I Timothy 6.10). Again, there are evil men who, “just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so they oppose the truth: men of corrupt mind, reprobate concerning the faith” (II Timothy 3.8). They “creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, who are led away with divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” (II Timothy 3.6-7).

It is not only the cruder and more obvious kinds of sin that harden the heart against faith. In St. John's Gospel we find a fascinating analysis of why His opponents, the Pharisees, could not believe in Him. The Pharisees were respectable people, zealots for the law, but they did not believe in Christ because they secretly envied Him, because He did not share their revolutionary ideals, and because He rebuked their hidden sins.

A still deeper cause of their unbelief was their pride in their collective infallibility, their sheep-like refusal to step beyond the party line: “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him?” (John 7.48). The Apostle Thomas, on the other hand, showed a commendable individualism when he refused to believe in the testimony of his fellow apostles until he had himself seen the evidence for their faith. For initially faith is always a personal matter: we do not believe simply because others believe, but because, the truth having been revealed to us personally, we can say with conviction: “I believe...” Later, when we have become convinced that our fellow men have received the same faith as we have, we can believe on their authority. And this is still more commendable; for as the Lord said of those who believe in the physical resurrection, not on the basis of their own experience, but on the authority of the Apostle Thomas: “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20.29).

The example of the Apostle Thomas shows that while faith is, as St. Gregory Palamas says, a vision of the heart that goes beyond all intellection, it does not exclude the workings of logic and the senses, but rather includes them within its own super-logical and super-sensory vision. Thus the Lord “showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being *seen* of them forty days” (Acts 1.3). And in Thomas' case physical sight was supplemented by a still more primitive and direct form of physical proof – *touch*. At first, it may seem as if this kind of faith is surprisingly akin to the research of a private detective or scientist in its use of physical evidence and logic. And indeed, the analogies are obvious. When a forensic scientist,

¹⁵⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on Matthew*, 1.

¹⁵¹ St. Cassian, *Conferences*, XIII, 8.

for example, looks down a microscope and sees a certain DNA sequence in a blood sample, and from there infers (or a jury infers on the basis of his evidence) that a certain person is guilty of a certain crime, he is going from what is visible to the naked eye (the blood sample) to what is not visible to the naked eye (DNA) to a certain historical event (the crime). Similarly, Thomas went from what was visible to his naked eye and accessible to his touch (the hands and the side of Christ) to a certain historical event (His Crucifixion) to a conclusion concerning what was not visible to his naked eye (Christ's Resurrection and Divinity). And yet there is a vital difference. Whereas the scientist never goes beyond what is *in principle* visible and material, Thomas, in inferring that Christ was "my Lord and my God" took "the leap of faith" into that which is *in principle* invisible and immaterial.

The secular scientist - out of the hardness of his heart and pride in the collective infallibility of the unbelieving scientific establishment - is incapable of taking the leap of faith that his evidence appears to demand: he refuses to infer the existence of God (or souls or angels) from his data. But the believer, without in any way abandoning logic or the evidence of the senses, but rather pursuing them to their true end, comes to believe in God, in the soul and in angels. For "we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5.7) - not by ignoring the evidence of our senses but by transcending them through the supra-ocular vision of faith. For "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen" (Hebrews 11.1).

If pride, and sheep-like obedience to the collective party-line, is the chief obstacle to faith in the intellectuals and leaders of the people, among the people themselves it is more likely to be fear of falling out with the leaders. Thus the parents of the man born blind, whom Christ healed, refused to recognize the miracle "because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John 9.22). Of all these unbelievers, both rulers and ruled, the Lord said: "How can ye believe, who receive honour from each other, and seek not the honour that cometh from God alone?" (John 5.44).

This leads us to the conclusion that the real precondition of faith is *love of the truth above all else*. Good works out of a good heart predispose a man to receive faith, but even an immoral man can receive faith if the love of the truth is greater in him than the deception of his passions. That is why the publicans and the prostitutes believed in Christ before the Pharisees. And that is why the Samaritan woman, on being rebuked for her immorality by Christ, did not say: "How dare you!" or "How do you know?", but "Sir, I perceive that Thou are a prophet" (John 4.19) and then: "Come and see a Man Who told me everything that ever I did: is this not the Christ?" (John 4.29).

If the Light of Christ enlightens everyone, then there is no one who cannot come to the True Faith. If a man follows the teachers given to everyone, creation and conscience, then the Providence of God, with Whom "all things are possible" (Matthew 19.26), will lead him to "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth" (I Timothy 3.15). For "it is not possible," writes St. John Chrysostom, "that one who is living rightly and freed from the passions should ever be overlooked. But even

if he happens to be in error, God will quickly draw him over to the truth."¹⁵² Again, St. John Cassian says: "When God sees in us some beginnings of good will, He at once enlightens it, urging it on towards salvation."¹⁵³ For God wishes that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. So there is no reason for him not to give the gift of faith to every man who does not block his mind to it.

Faith, Ignorance and the Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

Against this the modern ecumenists argue: "Most men have never had the Gospel preached to them, and so belong to other faiths simply out of ignorance, because they were born into non-Christian societies or families. Their lack of true faith is therefore not their fault, and the All-loving and All-just God will certainly not condemn them for it. Indeed (continues the argument in some of its forms), all that is necessary for salvation is good faith, by which we do not mean the one true faith (for there is no such thing), but *sincerity*, even if that sincerity is manifested in non-Christian beliefs and actions: blessed are the sincere, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven."

However, God attaches little value to sincerity *per se*: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Proverbs 12.15), and: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death" (Proverbs 14.12). In any case, if true faith in Christ were not absolutely necessary for salvation, and one could be saved without knowing Him, then it would not have been necessary for the Martyrs to confess Him, for the Apostles to preach Him, or for Christ Himself to become incarnate for our sakes.

"Are you saying, then," retort the ecumenists, "that all the Hindus and Buddhists will be damned?!"

We neither assert this nor deny it, preferring to "judge nothing before the time" (I Corinthians 4.5). We know with complete certainty about the perdition of only a few men (Judas, Arius, etc.), just as we have complete certainty about the salvation of only a few men (those whom the Church has glorified as saints). As Archbishop Theophan of Poltava wrote, when asked about the salvation of the Jews: "When St. Anthony the Great was thinking about questions of this kind, nothing concerning the essence of these questions was revealed to him, but it was only told him from on high: 'Anthony, pay attention to yourself!', that is, worry about your own salvation, but leave the salvation of others to the Providence of God, for it is not useful for you to know this at the present time. We must restrict ourselves to this revelation in the limits of our earthly life."¹⁵⁴

Nevertheless, when compassion for unbelievers is taken as a cloak from under which to overthrow the foundations of the Christian Faith, it is necessary to say something more, not as if we could say anything about the salvation or otherwise of specific people (for that, as Archbishop Theophan says, has been hidden from us), but

¹⁵² St. Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on Matthew*, 1.

¹⁵³ St. Cassian, *Conferences*, XIII, 8.

¹⁵⁴ Archbishop Theophan, *Pis'ma Arkhiiepiskopa Feofana Poltavskogo*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1976, p. 31 .

in order to re-establish those basic principles of the Faith, ignorance of which will undoubtedly place us in danger of damnation.

The first principle is that God is omnipotent and able to bring anyone to the Church however unpromising the circumstances in which they live. The ways in which He brings people to the faith are very varied. Thus Prosper of Aquitaine writes: "The very armies that exhaust the world help on the work of Christian grace. How many indeed who in the quiet of peacetime delayed to receive the sacrament of baptism, were compelled by fear of close danger to hasten to the water of regeneration, and were suddenly forced by threatening terror to fulfil a duty which a peaceful exhortation failed to bring home to their slow and tepid souls? Some sons of the Church, made prisoners by the enemy, changed their masters into servants of the Gospel, and by teaching them the faith they became the superiors of their own wartime lords. Again, some foreign pagans, whilst serving in the Roman armies, were able to learn the faith in our country, when in their own lands they could not have known it; they returned to their homes instructed in the Christian religion. Thus nothing can prevent God's grace from accomplishing His will... For all who at any time will be called and will enter into the Kingdom of God, have been marked out in the adoption which preceded all times. And just as none of the infidels is counted among the elect, so none of the God-fearing is excluded from the blessed. For in fact God's prescience, which is infallible, cannot lose any of the members that make up the fullness of the Body of Christ."¹⁵⁵

However, there are few today who have a living faith in God's ability to bring anyone to the faith, whatever his situation. It may therefore be useful to cite the famous example of God's favour to the Aleuts of Alaska, to whom He sent angels to teach them the Orthodox Faith in the absence of any human instructor. Fr. John Veniaminov (later St. Innocent, metropolitan of Moscow (+1879)) relates how, on his first missionary journey to Akun island, he found all the islanders lined up on the shore waiting for him. It turned out that they had been warned by their former shaman, John Smirennikov, who in turn had been warned by two "white men", who looked like the angels on icons.

Smirennikov told his story to Fr. John, who wrote: "Soon after he was baptised by Hieromonk Macarius, first one and later two spirits appeared to him but were visible to no one else... They told him that they were sent by God to edify, teach and guard him. For the next thirty years they appeared to him almost every day, either during daylight hours or early in the evening - but never at night. On these occasions: (1) They taught him in its totality Christian theology and the mysteries of the faith... (2) In time of sickness and famine they brought help to him and - though more rarely - to others at his request. (When agreeing to his requests that they help others, they always responded by saying that they would first have to ask God, and if it was His will, then they would do it.) (3) Occasionally they told him of things occurring in another place or (very rarely) at some time in the future - but then only if God willed such a revelation; in such cases they would persuade him that they did so not by their own power, but by the power of Almighty God.

¹⁵⁵ Prosper, *The Call of the Nations*, II, 33.

"Their doctrine is that of the Orthodox Church. I, however, knowing that even demons believe - and tremble with fear [James 3.19], wondered whether or not this might be the crafty and subtle snare of him who from time immemorial has been Evil. 'How do they teach you to pray, to themselves or to God? And how do they teach you to live with others?' He answered that they taught him to pray not to them but to the Creator of all, and to pray in spirit, with the heart; occasionally they would even pray along with him for long periods of time.

"They taught him to exercise all pure Christian virtues (which he related to me in detail), and recommended, furthermore, that he remain faithful and pure, both within and outside of marriage (this perhaps because the locals are quite given to such impurity). Furthermore, they taught him all the outward virtues..."¹⁵⁶

Very apt was the comment of one who read this story: "It is comforting to read about such miraculous Divine Providence towards savages, sons of Adam who, *though forgotten by the world, were not forgotten by Providence.*"¹⁵⁷

In spite of this and many other examples, it remains true that ignorance - real, involuntary ignorance - constitutes grounds for clemency according to God's justice, as it is according to man's. The Lord cried out on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do*" (Luke 23.24); and one of those who were forgiven declared: "I obtained mercy because I acted *in ignorance*" (I Timothy 1.13; cf. Acts 3.17, 17.30). For our Great High Priest is truly One "Who can have compassion *on the ignorant*, and on them that are out of the way" (Hebrews 5.2).

However, there is also such a thing as *wilful*, voluntary ignorance. It was wilful ignorance of which the Lord accused the Pharisees when He said: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9.41). And St. Paul was speaking of this kind of ignorance when he said that men may be alienated from God "through the ignorance that is in them, *because of the blindness of their heart*" (Ephesians 4.18), and not simply through the ignorance that is caused by external circumstances. Pagans and evolutionists "have no excuse", according to the Apostle, because they deny the evidence of the existence of God that is accessible to everyone from creation. Again, St. Peter says of those who deny the Flood: "This they are *willingly ignorant of*, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished..." (II Peter 3.5-7).

Wilful ignorance is very close to conscious resistance to the truth, which receives the greatest condemnation according to the Word of God. Thus those who accept the Antichrist will do so "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had

¹⁵⁶ Paul Garrett, *St. Innocent, Apostle to America*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979, pp. 80-81.

¹⁵⁷ Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 85, footnote.

pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2.10-12). And if it seems improbable that God should send anyone a strong delusion, let us remember the lying spirits who, with God's permission, deceived the prophets of King Ahab because they only prophesied what he wanted to hear (I Kings 22.19-24).

Conscious, willing resistance to the truth is the same as that "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" which, in the words of the Lord, "shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matthew 12.31). As Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) explains: "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or 'sin unto death', according to the explanation of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (VIII, 75), is a conscious, hardened opposition to the truth, 'because the Spirit is truth' (I John 5.6)."¹⁵⁸ It is not that God does not want to forgive all sins, even the most heinous: it is simply that he who bars the way to the Spirit of truth is thereby blocking the way to the truth about himself and God, and therefore to the forgiveness of his sins. As St. Augustine says: "The first gift is that which is concerned with the remission of sins... Against this gratuitous gift, against this grace of God, does the impenitent heart speak. This impenitence, then, is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁹

Wilful ignorance can be of various degrees. There is the wilful ignorance that refuses to believe even when the truth is staring you in the face – this is the most serious kind, the kind practised by the Pharisees and the heresiarchs. But a man can also be said to be wilfully ignorant if he does not take the steps that are necessary in order to discover the truth – this is less serious, but still blameworthy, and is characteristic of many of those who followed the Pharisees and the heresiarchs out of fear of falling out with them.

Thus we read: "That servant who knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and he to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12.47-48). To which the words of St. Theophylact of Bulgaria are a fitting commentary: "Here some will object, saying: 'He who knows the will of his Lord, but does not do it, is deservedly punished. But why is the ignorant punished?' Because when he might have known he did not wish to do so, but was the cause of his own ignorance through sloth."¹⁶⁰ Or, as St. Cyril of Alexandria puts it: "How can he who did not know it be guilty? The reason is, because he did not want to know it, although it was in his power to learn."¹⁶¹ To whom does this distinction apply? St. Cyril applies it to false teachers and parents, on the one hand, and those who follow them, on the other. In other words, the blind leaders will

¹⁵⁸ Metropolitan Anthony, "The Church's Teaching about the Holy Spirit", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 27, no. 3, May-June, 1977, p. 23.

¹⁵⁹ St. Augustine, *Homily 21 on the New Testament*, 19, 20. See also St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Discourse XXIII*, 1. There are other interpretations of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which complement and follow from this one. Thus St. Ambrose (*On Repentance*, II, 24), followed by St. Augustine (*Homily 21 on the New Testament*, 28), regards heretics and schismatics as blasphemers against the Holy Spirit insofar as they deny the Spirit and Truth that is in the True Church.

¹⁶⁰ St. Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel according to St. Luke* 12.47-48.

¹⁶¹ St. Cyril, *Homily 93 on Luke*. Translated by Payne Smith, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 376.

receive a greater condemnation than the blind followers - which is not to say, however, that they will not *both* fall into the pit (Matthew 15.14).

For, as Bishop Nicholai Velimirovich writes: "Are the people at fault if godless elders and false prophets lead them onto foreign paths? The people are not at fault to as great an extent as their elders and the false prophets, but they are at fault to some extent. For God gave to the people also to know the right path, both through their conscience and through the preaching of the word of God, so that people should not blindly have followed their blind guides, who led them by false paths that alienated them from God and His Laws."¹⁶²

Conclusion

Faith is a gift of God to all those who love the truth from a good heart. Although it is a gift, it is natural for man to have faith insofar as he is made in the image of God – his love of the truth is made in the image of the Truth Himself. The reception of faith is aided by the mute teachers of creation and conscience, and completed by the vocal teacher that is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. There are no external circumstances that can prevent a man from coming to the true faith if he loves the truth and follows the teachers that are given to all men: creation and conscience. Only hardness and blindness of heart, leading to wilful, voluntary ignorance, can blind a man to the light that enlightens every man that comes into the world. So it is left to us only to cry: "Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!" (Mark 9.24).

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¹⁶² Bishop Nicholas, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, vol. II, p. 149.

7. ROMANIDES AND ORIGINAL SIN

From Eve of old the transgression came upon mankind.
Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple, Mattins, Canon, Ode 3, troparion.

Modern man hates the idea of sin more than all other ideas. He will do anything to avoid admitting that he is sinful in more than a superficial sense. Sin must be excused, or denied, or redefined as something different from sin. Great theoretical systems such as Marxism, Darwinism and Freudianism are constructed in order to explain how we are supposedly not sinful at all: the real causes of "sin" are our biological inheritance, our childhood training, our nationality or our position in the class system. And if sin is not sin as traditionally understood, then it follows that the traditional methods of expiating sin are invalid or based on a misunderstanding.

This being the case, it is not surprising that attempts to reinterpret the idea of sin and its expiation have crept into the Orthodox Church and Orthodox theology. The main exponent of the renovationist attitude towards sin has been the Greek-American new calendarist, Fr. John Romanides, whose admirers and followers are now to be found in the highest positions in World Orthodoxy, and even in the True Orthodox Church. Romanides has attacked the traditional concepts of sin and expiation from sin at three points: the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine of the Sacrifice for sin on the Cross, and the doctrine of Holy Baptism. Let us examine his teaching on original sin...

Can Sin be Inherited?

Nobody pretends that the doctrine of original sin is easy to understand: it is mysterious and to a certain degree counter-intuitive. But then so are several of the deepest and most central teachings of the Orthodox Faith. The temptation for the rationalist mind is to try and strip away the mystery and replace it with something that is clearer, more commonsensical. In the case of original sin, it is difficult for us to understand how sin can be passed down from Adam and Eve to all their descendants.

It is not *personal* responsibility for Adam's *personal* sin that is inherited. For how can we be personally responsible for something that happened before we were even born? However, a certain sinful pollution of human *nature* is inherited by all those who have the same nature as Adam. As St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: "Human nature is sinful from its very conception. God did not create man sinful, but pure and holy. But since the first-created Adam lost this garment of sanctity, not from any other sin than pride alone, and became corruptible and mortal, all people also who came from the seed of Adam are participants of the ancestral sin from their very conception and birth. He who has been born in this way, even though he has not yet performed any sin, is already sinful through this ancestral sin."¹⁶³

This is the teaching of the Orthodox Church. And that is why babies are baptized "for the remission of sins", even before they have committed any personal sins. So a

¹⁶³ St. Symeon, *Homily 37*, 3.

certain mystery remains: the mystery of *inherited, collective guilt* that is manifest in the fact that every human being comes into this world *already polluted by sin*.

Now the idea of collective guilt is accepted by many even of those outside the Church. Thus there are many in the contemporary generation of Germans who feel guilt for the sins of the Nazis even though they were not born at that time. The sin of a single man can be felt to taint his whole family or even his whole nation. But the idea that the sin of the father of mankind could have tainted the whole of the human race is rejected by the Romanideans.

Of course, this rejection is not new. The British monk Pelagius (ca. 354-420) was perhaps the first openly to question original sin. And although the ideas of Pelagius are not identical to those of Romanides, there is much in the old polemic between Pelagius and his main opponent, St. Augustine of Hippo, that is relevant to an evaluation of Romanideanism.

Thus St. Augustine defends the idea of collective guilt as follows: "Why did Ham sin and yet vengeance was declared against his son Canaan? Why was the son of Solomon punished [for Solomon's sin] by the breaking up of the kingdom? Why was the sin of Ahab, king of Israel, visited upon his posterity? Now we read in the sacred books, 'Returning the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them' (Jeremiah 32.18) and 'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation' (Exodus 20.5)?... Are these statements false? Who would say this but the most open enemy of the divine words?"¹⁶⁴

However, there are other passages of Holy Scripture that appear to deny the idea of collective or inherited guilt. Thus: "Parents shall not die for their children, nor children for their parents" (Deuteronomy 2.16). Moreover, in some cases there may be hidden reasons that partially explain the apparent injustice of children suffering for their parents. Thus St. John Chrysostom, commenting on Canaan's suffering for his father Ham's sin, writes: "Seeing their children bearing punishment proves a more grievous form of chastisement for the fathers than being subject to it themselves. Accordingly, this incident occurred so that Ham should endure greater anguish on account of his natural affection, so that God's blessing should continue without impairment and so that his son in being the subject of the curse should atone for his own sins. You see, even if in the present instance he bears the curse on account of his father's sin, nevertheless it was likely that he was atoning for his own failings..."¹⁶⁵

Again, Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich wrote to a "Mrs. J.": "You complain about the bad fate of your cousin. Her suffering, you say, is unexplainable. Her husband, an officer, contracted a vile disease and died in a mental institution. She caught the disease from her husband and now she is in a mental institution as well. You praise her as a good and honourable woman and you marvel, how could the all-knowing God allow such a marriage to even happen, and then for such an innocent creature to suffer so much? If your cousin is indeed so innocent and honourable as you believe,

¹⁶⁴ St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, 6.25.82.

¹⁶⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 29.21.

then her suffering has befallen her, of course, without her own sin. Then you have to look for a cause in the sin of her parents. It is said for the Most High that He is 'visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation' (Exodus 34.7). I know you will say that which is usually said – why should children suffer for the sins of the parents? I will ask you also – how else would the Lord God scare the people from sinning except by visiting their children with the punishment for the sin?"¹⁶⁶

And in another place Bishop Nikolai writes: "All men from the first to the last are made from the same piece of clay, therefore they all, from the first to the last, form one body and one life. Each is responsible for all, and each is influencing all. If one link of this body sins, the whole body must suffer. If Adam sinned, you and I must suffer for it..."¹⁶⁷

However, the Romanideans can reply to this: "We do not deny that Adam's descendants *suffer for* his sin. But we cannot accept that they are *guilty of* his sin. Rather, they inherit, not the sin itself, but its punishment."

This is plausible, and yet it does not go to the heart of the matter. For let us recall the distinction made earlier between *personal sin* and *the sinfulness of nature* or "the law of sin" (Romans 7.23). This is the distinction between sin as the *act* of a human *person*, and sin as the *state or condition or law* of human *nature*.

Archbishop Theophan of Poltava points out that St. Paul "clearly distinguishes in his teaching on original sin between two points: παραπτώμα or transgression, and αμαρτία or sin. By the first he understood the personal transgression by our forefathers of the will of God that they should not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, by the second – the law of sinful disorder that entered human nature as the consequence of this transgression. When he is talking about the inheritance of the original sin, he has in mind not παραπτώμα or transgression, for which only they are responsible, but αμαρτία, that is, the law of sinful disorder which afflicted human nature as a consequence of the fall into sin of our forefathers. And ἠμαρτον - 'sinned' in Romans 5.12 must therefore be understood not in the active voice, in the sense: 'committed sin', but in the middle-passive voice, in the sense: αμαρτωλοι in 5.19, that is, 'became sinners' or 'turned out to be sinners', since human nature fell in Adam."¹⁶⁸

We find essentially the same distinction in St. Maximus the Confessor: "There then arose sin, the first and worthy of reproach, that is, the falling away of the will from good to evil. Through the first there arose the second – the change in nature from incorruption to corruption, which cannot elicit reproach. For two sins arise in [our] forefather as a consequence of the transgression of the Divine commandment: one worthy of reproach, and the second having as its cause the first and unable to elicit

¹⁶⁶ Velimirovich, in Fr. Milorad Loncar (ed.), *Missionary Letters of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich*, Grayslake, IL.: New Gracanica Monastery, 2009, part 2, Letter 177, p. 215.

¹⁶⁷ Velimirovich, "The Religious Spirit of the Slavs", *Sabrana Dela* (Collected Works), vol. 3, p. 124.

¹⁶⁸ Archbishop Theophan, "The Patristic Teaching on Original Sin", in *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, № 3 (20), 2000, p. 22.

reproach".¹⁶⁹ Thus the original sin of Adam, in the sense of his personal transgression, *the* original sin which no other person shares or is guilty of, has engendered sinful, corrupt, diseased, mortal human nature, the law of sin, which we all share because we have all inherited it, but of which we are not guilty since we cannot be held personally responsible for it. And if this seems to introduce two original sins, this seems to correspond to the teaching of the Holy Fathers.

We have inherited the "second" original sin, the law of sin, in the most basic way: through the sexual propagation of the species. For "in sins," says David, - that is, in a nature corrupted by original sin, - "did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 50.5). It follows that even newborn babies, even unborn embryos, are sinners in this sense. For "even from the womb, sinners are estranged" (Psalm 57.3). And as Job says: "Who shall be pure from uncleanness? Not even one, even if his life should be but one day upon the earth" (Job 14.4).

Again, St. Anastasius of Sinai writes: "In Adam we became co-inheritors of the curse, not as if we disobeyed that divine commandment with him but because he became mortal and *transmitted sin* through his seed. We became mortals from a mortal..."¹⁷⁰

Again, St. Gennadius Scholarius, Patriarch of Constantinople, writes: "Everyone in the following of Adam has died, because they have all inherited their nature from him. But some have died because they themselves have sinned, while others have died only because of Adam's condemnation - for example, children".¹⁷¹

Christ was born from a virgin who had been cleansed beforehand from all sin by the Holy Spirit precisely in order to break the cycle of sin begetting sin. For, as St. Gregory Palamas writes: "If the conception of God had been from seed, He would not have been a new man, nor the Author of new life which will never grow old. If He were from the old stock and had inherited its sin, He would not have been able to bear within Himself the fullness of the incorruptible Godhead or to make His Flesh an inexhaustible Source of sanctification, able to wash away even the defilement of our First Parents by its abundant power, and sufficient to sanctify all who came after them."¹⁷²

We conclude that children can indeed inherit sin from their parents, not simply in the sense that they inherit the *punishment* for their parents' sin, but also in the sense that they inherit *sin itself* - although this inherited sin is not the *personal* sin of their parents, but the sinful *nature* that they inherit from them. This takes place on the level of the family, of the nation, and of mankind as a whole. Thus just as the sin of a father can poison the life of his children, and the sin of a Lenin or a Hitler can poison the

¹⁶⁹ St. Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 42.

¹⁷⁰ St. Anastasius, quoted in Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr, 2002, p. 34, note 64.

¹⁷¹ St. Gennadius, in K. Staab (ed.) *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church: Collected and Edited Catena*, Munster in Westfalen, 1933, 15:362.

¹⁷² St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 14, 5*; in Christopher Veniamin, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002, volume 1, p. 159.

lives of generations of Russians or Germans, so the sin of Adam and Eve has poisoned the lives of all their generations after them.

This is possible because, while human persons are multiple and distinct from each other, human nature is *one*. For, as St. Basil the Great writes, what we inherit from Adam “is not the personal sin of Adam, but the original human being himself”, who “exists in us by necessity”.¹⁷³ That is why St. Gregory Palamas calls Adam’s sin “*our* original disobedience to God”, “*our* ancestral sin in Paradise”.¹⁷⁴ It follows, as St. Athanasius the Great writes, that “when Adam transgressed, his sin reached unto all men...”¹⁷⁵ And this, as St. Cyril of Alexandria writes, “not because they sinned along with Adam, for they did not then exist, but because they had the same nature as Adam, which fell under the law of sin”.¹⁷⁶

What is Sin?

But Romanides’ radicalism goes further than his denial of the inheritance of sin: it extends to his understanding of sin as such. Thus even Adam’s sin is not deemed by him to be sin in the usual sense. “Many understand the fall now as an ethical fall, whereas when St. Symeon the New Theologian speaks about the fall, he does not have in mind an ethical fall... Symeon the New Theologian is an ascetic. He teaches asceticism and not ethics. He has in mind that men do not have noetic prayer. That is what he means...

“In the Augustinian tradition sin has appeared under an ethical form, whereas in the Fathers of the Church it has the form of illness and the eradication of sin is presented under the form of therapy. When we have illness, we have therapy. Sin is an illness of man and not simply a disorder of his when he does not obey God like a subordinate. For sin is not an act and transgression of the commandments of God, as happens with a transgression of the laws of the State, etc. There exist laws, a transgressor transgresses the law and must be punished by the law. Augustine understood sin in this way, that is, that God gave commands, man transgressed the command of God and consequently was punished.”¹⁷⁷

This is nonsense. First, the contrast drawn between ethics and asceticism is false. Sin is the primary category of ethics, and asceticism is the science and art of the struggle against sin. So the sin of Adam and Eve was *both* an ethical *and* an ascetic fall. Ascetics train themselves to guard themselves against sinful thoughts coming from the world, the flesh and the devil. Eve failed to guard herself and therefore sinned. St. Paul says, “the woman being deceived was in the transgression (παραβασις)” (I Timothy 2.15) – and “transgression” is an ethical category.

¹⁷³ St. Basil, quoted in Demetrios Tzami, *I Protologia tou M. Vasileiou*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 135.

¹⁷⁴ St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 31*, col. 388C.

¹⁷⁵ St. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Four Discourses against the Arians*, I, 12.

¹⁷⁶ St. Cyril,

¹⁷⁷ Romanides, in Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos), *Empeiriki Dogmatiki tis Orthodoxou Katholikes Ekklesias kata tis Proforikes Paradoxeis tou p. Ioannou Romanidi* (The Empirical Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church according to the Oral Traditions of Fr. John Romanides), Levadeia: Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos, 2011, volume 2, pp. 186, 187-188.

Secondly, the darkening of the mind and the loss of noetic prayer are the *consequences* of the original sin, not the sin itself. Romanides defines the fall as “the identification of the energies of the mind [νοῦς] with the energies of the logical faculty [της λογικης]. When the mind was darkened, [it] was identified in energy with the logical faculty and the passions.”¹⁷⁸ Maybe. But this is the *consequence* of the fall, not the fall itself. Nor does St. Symeon the New Theologian teach anything different. As we have seen, his teaching on original sin is completely traditional - what Romanides calls “Augustinian”!

Thirdly, while sin can be called illness, and the process of removing sin – therapy, this in no way implies that the illness is not the illness *of sin*. While there are obvious analogies with physical illness, sin is more than a physical illness. Whereas an ordinary physical disease is morally neutral, so to speak, the disease of original sin is far from being such: it is a *sinful* condition, which therefore requires, not simply *treatment*, but *expiation* through repentance and sacrifice - which cannot be identified with any changes in the relationship between the mind and the logical faculty.

Fourthly, it is nonsense to say that “sin is not an act and transgression of the commandments of God”. Both the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers understand personal sin as precisely a transgression of the commandments of God. “The strength of sin is the law” (I Corinthians 15.56), and “where no law is, there is no transgression” (Romans 4.15). Therefore sin is precisely a transgression of the law or the commandment of God – in this case, the law that Adam and Eve were not to eat of the fruit of the tree of life.

As for the idea that “sin is an illness of man and not simply a disorder of his when he does not obey God like a subordinate”, does Romanides not think that man is God’s subordinate?! Of course, man in the unfallen state is not *merely* a subordinate: he is also God’s *son*. But even the sinless son is subordinate to his father, as Adam was to God in Paradise, and as Christ Himself will be to the Father at the Second Coming (I Corinthians 15.28).

Sin and Death

According to Romanides, what is passed down from Adam to his descendants is not sin, but *death*. Nor is death to be considered a punishment for sin, but God’s mercy. “God did not impose death on man as a punishment for any inherited guilt. Rather, God allowed death by reason of His goodness and His love, so that in this way sin and evil in man should not become immortal.”¹⁷⁹

This is half true. What is true is that God did not create death, and that man (with the devil), rather than God, is the cause of the entrance of death into the world. Moreover, death is a mercy insofar as it stops the continuation of sin, and allows sinful human nature to be dissolved into its elements and resurrected in a sinless form at the

¹⁷⁸ Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., volume 2, p. 190.

¹⁷⁹ Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., volume 2, p. 193.

General Resurrection from the dead. But none of this entails that death is not *also a punishment*.

That death is *both* punishment *and* mercy is indicated by St. Athanasius the Great: "By punishing us with death, the Lawgiver cut off the spread of sin. And yet through that very punishment He also demonstrated His love for us. He bound sin and death together when He gave the law, placing the sinner under punishment of death. And yet He ordered things in such a way that the punishment might in itself serve the goal of salvation. For death brings about separation from this life and brings evil works to an end. It sets us free from labour, sweat and pain, and ends the suffering of the body. Thus the Judge mixes His love for us with punishment."¹⁸⁰

So what we inherit from Adam and Eve, according to Romanides, is not sin in any shape or form, but only death, including the process of corruption and ageing that leads to death. It follows that for him every human being is born in complete innocence, and only becomes sinful later. "The Fathers emphasize that every man is born as was Adam and Eve. And every man goes through the same fall. The darkening of the mind happens to everyone. In the embryo, where the mind [*vous*] of man exists, it is not yet darkened. Every man suffers the fall of Adam and Eve by reason of the environment."¹⁸¹

As we have seen, this teaching is directly contradicted by St. Symeon the New Theologian, one of Romanides' "heroes": "Human nature is sinful from its very conception". And another of his heroes, Nicholas Cabasilas, writes: "We have not seen even one day pure from sin, nor have we ever breathed apart from wickedness, but, as the psalmist says, 'we have gone astray from the womb, we err from our birth' (*Psalm* 58.4)."¹⁸² And perhaps the Father he admires most of all, St. Gregory Palamas, writes: "Before Christ we all shared the same ancestral curse and condemnation poured out on all of us from our single Forefather, as if it had sprung from the root of the human race and was the common lot of our nature. Each person's individual action attracted either reproof or praise from God, but no one could do anything about the shared curse and condemnation, or the evil inheritance that had been passed down to him and through him would pass to his descendants."¹⁸³

Since Romanides regards every human being as pure when he first comes into the world, without any specifically sinful inheritance, he is forced to see the consequent fall of every man as coming, not from *inside* his nature, but from *outside*, from his *environment*. "The fall of the child comes from the environment, from parents, from uncles, from friends, etc. If the child is in the midst of a good environment, this child can grow without a problem, with noetic prayer. The child has less of a problem than the adults. He learns quickly. The child is destroyed by the environment..."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 6.1.

¹⁸¹ Romanides, in Vlachos, *op. cit.*, volume 2, p. 197.

¹⁸² Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, II, 7; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, p. 77.

¹⁸³ St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 5: On the Meeting of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ*, in Veniamin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁴ Romanides, in Vlachos, *op. cit.*, volume 2, p. 197.

Only one thing from *within* human nature contributes to man's fall, according to Romanides: the process of ageing and corruption. For this engenders the *fear* of death, which in turn engenders the multitude of passions. This was Romanides' revolutionary thesis in his first major work, *The Ancestral Sin* (1957), but it became less prominent in his later work. There he writes: "Because of the sins that spring forth from the fear of death 'the whole world lieth in wickedness'. Through falsehood and fear, Satan, in various degrees, motivates sin."¹⁸⁵

Again he writes: "All human unrest is rooted in inherited psychological and bodily infirmities, that is, in the soul's separation from grace and in the body's corruptibility, from which springs all selfishness. Any perceived threat automatically triggers fear and uneasiness. Fear does not allow a man to be perfected in love... The fountain of man's personal sins is the power of death that is in the hands of the devil and in man's own willing submission to him."¹⁸⁶

Now there is an important element of truth in this thesis, which is valuable and should not be denied. But it is also an exaggeration, which ignores and obscures certain vital facts. We shall come to these facts after citing his most extensive exposition of his thesis in full: "When we take into account the fact that man was created to become perfect in freedom and love as God is perfect, that is, to love God and his neighbour in the same unselfish way that God loves the world, it becomes apparent that the death of the soul, that is, the loss of divine grace, and the corruption of the body have rendered such a life of perfection impossible. In the first place, the deprivation of divine grace impairs the mental powers of the newborn infant; thus, the mind of man has a tendency toward evil from the beginning. This tendency grows strong when the ruling force of corruption becomes perceptible in the body. Through the power of death and the devil, sin that reigns in man gives rise to fear and anxiety and to the general instinct of self-preservation or survival. Thus, Satan manipulates man's fear and his desire for self-satisfaction, raising up sin in him, in other words, transgression against the divine will regarding unselfish love, and provoking man to stray from his original destiny. Since weakness is caused in the flesh by death, Satan moves man to countless passion and leads him to devious thoughts, actions, and selfish relations with God as well as with his fellow man. Sin reigns both in death, and in the mortal body because 'the sting of death is sin'.

"Because of death, man must first attend to the necessities of life in order to stay alive. In this struggle, self-interests are unavoidable. Thus, man is unable to live in accordance with his original destiny of unselfish love. This state of subjection under the reign of death is the root of man's weaknesses in which he becomes entangled in sin at the urging of the demons and by his own consent. Resting in the hands of the devil, the power of the fear of death is the root from which self-aggrandizement, egotism, hatred, envy, and other similar passions spring up."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 77.

¹⁸⁶ Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 116, 117.

¹⁸⁷ Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 162-163.

In another work, Romanides writes: "Because [a man] lives constantly under the fear of death, [he] continuously seeks bodily and psychological security, and thus becomes individualistically inclined and utilitarian in attitude. Sin... is rooted in the disease of death."¹⁸⁸

But this is an exaggeration: the fear of death is not the root of *all* evil. Many pagan vices have nothing to do with the fear of death. When the warrior risks his life in order to rape and plunder, is his motivation the fear of death? No, it is lust and greed – which are stronger than the fear of death that threatens rapists and plunderers. As for the more subtle but still more serious sins, such as pride, these are much more primordial than the fear of death. The devil did not rebel against God out of fear of death, but simply out of pride.

There is no doubt that the fear of death, which is natural to man in his corrupted state, provides an incentive to sin. Nevertheless, this fear is *not* sin in itself, which is proved by the fact that Christ, having assumed a corruptible but sinless body, allowed Himself to feel the fear of death in the Garden of Gethsemane. The fear of death is an innocent passion in itself, otherwise Christ, Who is completely sinless, would not have allowed Himself to feel it. Personal sin begins only when out of fear of death we turn away from God's commandments. Christ feared death in the Garden, but He did not allow this fear to turn Him away from the feat of dying for the salvation of the world, but trampled on His fear, showing Himself to be perfect in love. The holy martyrs also conquered the fear of death in their martyric exploits. But the exploit was not in the fact that they did not fear death, but in that they did not allow this fear to turn them away from the confession of Christ.

The root of all evil is the desire to live in defiance of God and His law, which is pride. That was the motivation of Eve when she took of the forbidden fruit. She feared neither God nor the death that God prophesied would take place if she disobeyed Him. If we look for a cause of her pride in her own nature or in her environment, we look in vain. For sin, as Dostoyevsky powerfully demonstrated in *Notes from Underground*, is ultimately irrational.

If sin were not irrational, but the determined effect of a definite cause, it would not be sin. Thus if all the blame could be placed on the devil, it would not be her sin, but the devil's. And if the blame could be placed on her nature alone, again it would not be her sin, but simply an inevitable product of her nature, like the behaviour of animals. But her nature was not fallen and not purely animalian. The mystery and the tragedy of sin – both before the fall and after the fall – lies in the fact that, whatever incitements to sin exist in our nature or in our environment, they do not explain the sin, and therefore do not excuse it. The much-maligned St. Augustine was surely right in attributing the cause of the fall to pride, and in not seeking any cause of that pride in anything beyond itself.

Romanides continues: "In addition to the fact that man 'subjects himself to anything in order to avoid dying', he constantly fears that his life is without meaning.

¹⁸⁸ Romanides, "The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius of Antioch".

Thus, he strives to demonstrate to himself and to others that it has worth. He loves flatterers and hates his detractors. He seeks his own and envies the success of others. He loves those who love him and hates those who hate him. He seeks security and happiness in wealth, glory, bodily pleasures, and he may even imagine that his destiny is a self-seeking eudaemonistic and passionless enjoyment of the presence of God regardless of whether or not he has true, active, unselfish love for others. Fear and anxiety render man an individualist. And when he identifies himself with a communal or social ideology it, too, is out of individualistic, self-seeking motives because he perceives his self-satisfaction and *eudaemonia* as his destiny. Indeed, it is possible for him to be moved by ideological principles of vague love for mankind despite the fact that mortal hatred for his neighbour nests in his heart. These are the works of the 'flesh' under the sway of death and Satan."¹⁸⁹

In support of his thesis Romanides quotes from St. John Chrysostom on the phrase "sold under sin" (Romans 7.14): "Because with death, he is saying, there entered in a horde of passions. For when the body became mortal, it was necessary for it also to receive concupiscence, anger, pain, and all the other passion which required much wisdom to prevent them from inundating us and drowning our reason in the depth of sin. For in themselves they were not sin, but in their uncontrolled excess this is what they work."¹⁹⁰

But Chrysostom does not so much support Romanides' thesis here as limit and correct it. He limits it by referring only to what we may call *physical* passions, such as concupiscence, anger and pain: there is no reference to pride. He corrects it by indicating that these passions are not in themselves sinful. They may incite sin by attempting to inundate our reason. But it is our reason that sins or refrains from sin by giving in to, or resisting, passion.

The physical passions are fallen, a corruption of the original unfallen nature of man. Nevertheless, God allowed their introduction into our nature in order to counteract the effects of death. Thus concupiscence was allowed to enter in order that man should want to reproduce himself, and be able to do so in his new, corrupt body. Pain was introduced in order that he should learn what is dangerous for his existence; and anger in order that he should fight against such dangers. Since these passions are useful and good for our continued existence in the conditions of the fall and death, the saint does not call them sinful as such, even though they can lead to sin and are the product, in their present form, of sin. Nor are they the direct product of death, but rather a form of *resistance* to death. So Chrysostom does not support Romanides' thesis that death is the direct cause of sin.

More in favour of Romanides' thesis are the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Because he [Adam] fell under sin and slipped into corruptibility, pleasures and filthiness assaulted the nature of the flesh, and in our members was unveiled a savage law. Our nature, then, became diseased by sin through the disobedience of one, that is, of Adam. Thus all were made sinners, not by being transgressors with Adam,

¹⁸⁹ Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 163-164.

¹⁹⁰ St. John Chrysostom, quoted in Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 167, note 45.

something which they never were, but by being of his nature and falling under the law of sin... Human nature fell ill in Adam and subject to corruptibility through disobedience, and, therefore, the passions entered in."¹⁹¹

However, even here it is not said that death and corruptibility are the cause of our nature's sickness, but the other way round: our nature's sickness is the cause of death and corruptibility, and the cause of that sickness is sin ("our nature... became diseased *by sin*"), which is, of course, a perfectly Orthodox thought. So the only difference between St. Cyril and St. John Chrysostom is that while Cyril prefers to speak about our nature falling under *the law of sin*, Chrysostom prefers to speak about the introduction of *passions* (concupiscence, anger, pain) which, if not checked by our reason, lead to sinful acts, but which are not sinful in themselves. This difference, as Romanides himself admits, is only a matter of terminology.¹⁹²

Romanides tries to encapsulate the argument that death is the cause of sin by asserting that "death is a kind of parasite in which sin dwells".¹⁹³ This is an elegant phrase, but it is not immediately clear what it means. He comes closest to a clarification a little later: "Because of the action of the devil through the death of the soul, that is, the loss of divine grace, and the infirmity of the flesh, men are born with a powerful inclination toward sin. And all, whether in knowledge or in ignorance, violate the will of God. All are born under captivity to the devil, death, and sin. Moreover, as a result, they fail to attain to their original destiny, that is, to moral perfection, immortality, and theosis, and are bereft of the glory of God."¹⁹⁴

As it stands, this is perfectly acceptable – distinctly more so than his earlier statements. For his earlier statements stressed the fear of death, *physical* death, as the cause of sin, which is patently not true for many sins; whereas here he places the emphasis on the much broader and deeper category, "the death of the soul, the loss of divine grace". Nevertheless, this passage still begs the question: what is the cause of the death of the soul? Is it not sin? And whose sin could this be, if not Adam's, insofar as we are already born in the condition of spiritual death before we have committed any personal sin?

Romanides reverses the true relationship between sin and death. "Instead of the wages of sin being death," writes Patrick Pummill, "it is turned upside down and the wages of death becomes sin. No doubt, death fuels the fire of sin, but the inner fallenness/corruption we inherit from Adam is the root of human sin".¹⁹⁵ St. Augustine expressed essentially the same thought, against a very similar error of the Pelagians, as follows: "People speak in this way, who wish to wrest men from the apostle's words into their own thought. For where the apostle says, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so passed upon all men', they wish the meaning to be not that sin passed over, but death... [But] *all die in the sin, they do not*

¹⁹¹ St. Cyril, *Commentary on Romans*, P.G. 74: 788-789; quoted in Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 168.

¹⁹² Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 167, note 45.

¹⁹³ Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 164.

¹⁹⁴ Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 165.

¹⁹⁵ Pummill, personal communication.

sin in the death."¹⁹⁶ The Council of Orange (529) also condemned the Romanidean thesis: "If anyone asserts that Adam's transgression injured him alone and not his descendants, or declares that certainly death of the body only, which is the punishment of sin, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul, passed through one man into the whole human race, he will do an injustice to God, contradicting the Apostle who says: 'As through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, so also death passed into all men, in whom all have sinned'" (canon 2).

Romans 5.12

Romanides' seemingly most powerful argument rests on his rejection of the translation of Romans 5.12 used by the Council of Orange above. His translation goes: "As through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, so also death came upon all men, *because of which* [ἐφ'ᾧ in Greek] all have sinned." This implies that all men sin because of death; so death is the cause of sin. Another translation favoured by many theologians is as follows: "As through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, so also death came upon all men, *because* all have sinned." This implies that sin is the cause of death, but not in the strict sense of the transmission of Adam's sin to everyman, but in the sense that everyman's own sin causes *his own* death. The traditional translation, however, which was adopted not only in the Orthodox West but also in the Slavonic translation of SS. Cyril and Methodius, is as follows: "As through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, so also death came upon all men, in whom [i.e. in Adam] all have sinned." This implies that all men are sinners because they are "in" Adam by nature.

Now let us return to a closer examination of the meaning of 'ἐπι' in Romans 5.12. If we open Joseph Thayer's authoritative *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, and look at the various usages of the preposition ἐπι with the dative case, we find *both* usages in the New Testament. Thus 'ἐπι' is sometimes equivalent to 'ἐπι τούτῳ, οὗτι', meaning "on the ground of this, because", and is used in this sense in II Corinthians 5.4 and Philippians 3.12. On the other hand, in other places - for example, Mark 2.4, Mark 13.2, Matthew 9.16, Luke 5.36, Mark 2.21, Matthew 14, 8, 11, Mark 6.25, Mark 6.55, Mark 6.39, John 11.38, Acts 8.16 and Revelation 19.14 - 'ἐπι' with the dative case is equivalent to the Latin in with the ablative case, indicating the place where or in which something takes place or is situated. This place can also be a person, as in the famous passage: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock (ἐπι ταύτη τη πέτρα) I will build My Church" (Matthew 16.18; cf. Ephesians 2.20).

Romanides' translation is excluded, not only because "because of which" corresponds to neither of the two possible translations of ἐφ'ᾧ, but also because the second half of the verse, in his translation, is *in direct contradiction* to the first. For while the first half says that death came into the world through sin, the second half says that sin came into the world through death! It seems very unlikely that St. Paul would have meant to contradict himself in one and the same sentence!

For, as Archbishop Eleutherius of Lithuania writes: "The two halves into which we

¹⁹⁶ St. Augustine, *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum*, IV, 4.7.

can divide the content of this verse [Romans 5.12] through the conjunctions 'as' (ὡσπερ) and 'so also' (καὶ οὕτως) represent, not a parallelism, and not a comparison, but a correspondence, according to which the first is the base, the common thesis, while the second is the conclusion from it. This logical connection is indicated by the conjunction 'also'... With the universalism characteristic of the Apostle, and the highly generalizing flight of his thought, St. Paul in the first half speaks about the sin of the forefathers as being the cause of death in the world generally, and not in humanity alone. For the whole of creation is subject to corruption and death, not willingly but 'by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same' (Romans 8.12-22), because of the sin of Adam...

Having established that, from a purely grammatical and linguistic point of view, the Greek conjunction ἐφ' ᾧ can be translated as "because" or "in whom", but *not* as "because of which", let us try and determine which of the two linguistically possible translations is correct. This decision will be made on grounds of (1) coherence with the context of the passage, and (2) conformity with the general dogmatic teaching of the Apostle Paul.

1. The Context of the Passage. In order to clarify his meaning in Romans 5.12, St. Paul goes on, in the following verses (5.13-14, cf. 7.8-9), to point out that before the Law of Moses the personal sins of men were not imputed to them; they were not counted as having committed them.¹⁹⁷ *And yet they died*. But death is "the wages of sin" (Romans 6.23). So of what sin was their death the wages? There can only be one answer: *Adam's*. Thus those who died before the Law of Moses died in spite of the fact that no personal transgressions were imputed to them, so that their death was "the wages of sin", not in the sense of being the result of their personal transgressions, but of the sin of Adam. For before the Law only Adam was condemned to die because of his personal transgression.

Let us restate this point, using the distinction between a personal transgression (παραπτώμα) and the law of sin (ἁμαρτία) that was outlined earlier. Those who died before the Law – including the pre-Flood Patriarchs, the victims of the Flood, Abraham, the Sodomites, etc. – died, *not* because they were accounted guilty of any personal transgression (παραπτώμα), "for sin is not imputed where there is no law" (Romans 5.13), but because of the law of sin (ἁμαρτία) which they inherited from Adam. Of course, in the case of the Sodomites, for example, there was grave sin among them, and their deaths were not unrelated to that sin. But this *personal* element did not directly cause their deaths, but only, as St. Theophan the Recluse points out, *hastened* it¹⁹⁸: the primary cause of their deaths was not their personal transgressions (παραπτώματα) but the law of sin (ἁμαρτία) living in them as in every other descendant of Adam. Later, after the Law, personal sin and guilt *is* imputed to men because of their transgression of the Law, and as a result they incur the curse of death not only on Adam's account but also on their own. So those living after Moses die for

¹⁹⁷ As St. Augustine writes: "He says not that there was no sin but only that it was not counted. Once the law was given, sin was not taken away, but it began to be counted" (*On Romans*, 27-28).

¹⁹⁸ Bishop Theophan, *Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul*, St. Petersburg, 1912, Moscow, 2002, p. 345.

a double reason: their personal transgressions and the law of sin they inherit from Adam.

The modernists define sin as exclusively personal transgression, while redefining what we have called “the law of sin” as “the consequences of sin”. In other words, for the modernists sin can only be personal and individual, the result of a free and conscious act of a single man. Any other form of “sin” is in fact not sin properly speaking, but the consequences of sin – consequences which are harmful and tragic, but not sinful in themselves.

Now this kind of thinking is very congenial to western individualist and rationalist thinking. But according to the Holy Scriptures and Fathers, there is *both* a sin that is strictly personal, which cannot be attributed to any other person than the one who freely and consciously committed it, *and* a sin which, although caused by a personal sin (that of Adam), spreads from the individual person and his human nature to every human being who inherits that same human nature quite independently of their free and conscious acts. These two forms of sin should be distinguished for clarity’s sake, but *they are both sin*; both defile man and alienate him from God.

2. Other Passages in St. Paul’s Epistles. Now the question arises: are there any other passages in St. Paul’s works which are consistent with the traditional interpretation of εφ’ω in Romans 5.12 as meaning “in him” (i.e., in Adam)? And the answer is: yes. For in I Corinthians 15.22 we read: “As in Adam (εν τω Αδαμ) all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” If we all die in Adam, then there can be no objection to saying that we all become sinners *in* him, as the traditionalist translation of Romans 5.12 asserts, insofar as “death is the wages of sin” and sin is “the sting of death”.

Adam and Christ

But in what sense are we “in” Adam? In a rather literal, physical sense, as we have seen earlier. Adam, “the original human being himself”, is in us; he “exists in us by necessity” (St. Basil the Great). For all men, “from the first to the last, form one body and one life” (Bishop Nikolai). So if Adam is in us, his sinful human nature is in us, too.

We can see this more clearly if we recall St. Paul’s teaching on *the exact correspondence between Adam and Christ, between Adam who made all his descendants by carnal birth sinners and Christ Who makes all His descendants by spiritual birth righteous*: “As through one man’s transgression [judgement came] on all men to condemnation, so through one man’s act of righteousness [acquittal came] to all men for justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5.18-20)

Just as personally we do not have the life and holiness of Christ, and yet receive His life and holiness through receiving His Body and Blood – that is, by His being *in* us, so we did not commit the personal transgression of Adam, and yet receive his sinfulness and death through his being *in* us.

The Holy Fathers confirm this critical point of the exact correspondence between Adam and Christ. Thus St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "Just as Adam sowed sinful impurity into pure bodies and the yeast of evil was laid into the whole of our mass [nature], so our Lord sowed righteousness into the body of sin and His yeast was mixed into the whole of our mass [nature]".¹⁹⁹

Again, St. Ambrose of Milan writes: "In Adam I fell, in Adam I was cast out of paradise, in Adam I died. How shall God call me back, except He find me in Adam? For just as in Adam I am guilty of sin and owe a debt to death, so in Christ I am justified."²⁰⁰

Again, St. John Chrysostom writes: "Adam is a type of Christ in that just as those who descended from him inherited death, even though they had not eaten of the fruit of the tree. So also those who are descended from Christ inherit His righteousness, even though they did not produce it themselves... What Paul is saying here seems to be something like this. If sin, and the sin of a single man moreover, had such a big effect, how it is that grace, and that the grace of God - not of the Father only but also of the Son - would not have an even greater effect? That one man should be punished on account of another does not seem reasonable, but that one man should be saved on account of another is both more suitable and more reasonable. So if it is true that the former happened, much more should the latter have happened as well."²⁰¹

Again, St. Gregory Palamas writes: "Just as through one man, Adam, liability to death passed down by heredity to those born afterwards, so the grace of eternal and heavenly life passed down from the one divine and human Word to all those born again of Him".²⁰²

Again, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "Evil was mixed with our nature from the beginning... through those who by their disobedience introduced the disease. Just as in the natural propagation of the species each animal engenders its like, so man is born from man, a being subject to passions from a being subject to passions, a sinner from a sinner. Thus sin takes its rise in us as we are born; it grows with us and keeps us company till life's term".²⁰³

It is this, the patristic teaching on original sin that is contradicted by the teaching of Fr. John Romanides...

May 27 / June 9, 2011.

¹⁹⁹ St. Ephraim, quoted by Archbishop Theophan, *op. cit.*

²⁰⁰ St. Ambrose of Milan, *On the death of his brother Satyrus.*

²⁰¹ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 10 on Romans.*

²⁰² St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 16, 17; Veniamin, op. cit., p. 190.*

²⁰³ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes, 6, PG. 44, 1273.*

8. ROMANIDES, HOLY SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE

The central idea of “the supreme new-calendarist theologian”, as he has been called, Fr. John Romanides,²⁰⁴ is that the whole of Orthodox theology and Orthodox life can be reduced to the formula “purification, illumination, deification” (or, as he prefers to say, divinization). As he puts it, “*Apart from purification, illumination and deification nothing else exists. No theology, that is.*”²⁰⁵

Let us examine this idea in the context of Romanides’ understanding of theology, Holy Scripture and science...

Deification, or glorification, according to Romanides, is the same as the vision of God in His Uncreated Energies; that is, theosis (deification) = theoria (the vision of God). Alternatively, it may be defined as “the perfection of personhood in the vision of the uncreated glory and rule of Christ in and among his saints, the members of his body, the church. Faith, prayer, theology, and dogma are the therapeutical methods and signposts on the road of illumination to perfection which, when reached, abolishes faith, prayer, theology, and dogma, since the final goal of these is their abolition in glorification and selfless love.”²⁰⁶

The therapeutic process by which the soul is purified, illumined and deified through God’s Grace is the touchstone of all theological truth. Truth is known as such because it “works” therapeutically, bringing the soul and body of man to the condition of deification/glorification for which he was created. All heresies and “pseudomorphoses” of the truth in the contemporary Christian world, including the Orthodox Christian world, are to be explained in terms of ignorance of, or deviation from, this saving path. True doctrine is recognized by the fact that it helps men to travel the path of purification, illumination and deification. False doctrine is recognized by the opposite: the failure to achieve, or make progress towards, deification. The possessors of truth, therefore, are, first and foremost, the glorified saints, the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and Fathers, who have met the Lord of Glory face to face in the Light of His Uncreated Energies. This meeting gives them a knowledge of God that is certain and unerring, and is the source of all true knowledge of God.

Such knowledge is beyond all words and concepts; the deified cannot convey their knowledge of God to those who have not been purified and illumined. The best they can do is provide *signposts* to the truth in the form of created words and symbols. Such are the Holy Scriptures, the Symbol of the Faith, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the Definitions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils.

²⁰⁴ Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens, “Eikonomia kai oikoumenismos” (Iconoclasm and Ecumenism), <http://www.ecclesiagoc.gr/el/diafora/140-eikonomahia-kai-oikoumenismos>, February, 2011.

²⁰⁵ Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos), *Empeiriki Dogmatiki tis Orthodoxou Katholikes Ekklesias kata tis Proforikes Paradeiseis tou p. Ioannou Romanidi* (The Empirical Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church according to the Oral Traditions of Fr. John Romanides), Levadeia: Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos, 2011, volume 2, p. 295.

²⁰⁶ Romanides, “A Therapeutic Theme”, in James L. Kelley, *Realism of Glory: Lectures on Christology in the Works of Protopresbyter John Romanides*, Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2009, p. vi.

Theology in the true sense is the experience of deified men, which cannot be expressed in words. The words of the Scriptures and the Fathers can be relied on insofar as they are the words of deified men. And the words of professional or amateur “theologians” are reliable to the extent that they faithfully reflect the teachings of deified men. But words, being merely created symbols, must not be confused with the Uncreated Reality.

There is much that we can agree with here. The true theologian is truly, as the patristic saying goes, “the man who prays”. And insofar as the end of true prayer is the complete union with God that we call deification, the title of “theologian” can worthily be given only to those who have prayed well and achieved this end – that is, the saints.

The saints’ knowledge of God is not theoretical, but “theoric”, to use Romanides’ term; for it is based, not on “theory”, or hypothesis, but on theoria, or direct vision of God. Most “theologians”, by contrast, being still mired in sin and in need of purification, are called such only by condescension. For while they speak and write about the same Being as the true theologians, they do so “through a glass, darkly,” without the immediate, face-to-face apprehension of the truth possessed by the theologian-saints. This does not mean that their work is not necessary or useful, - if it *is* true, - but only that it is difficult, dangerous, and to a certain degree derivative...

Nevertheless, it is not *completely* derivative. For even the lowliest of believers, insofar as he *is* a believer, has a certain direct, definite and certain knowledge of God. For faith is possessed in differing degrees by all believers, and faith, as the Apostle Paul says, is “the substance [hypostasis] of things hoped for, the proof [elegkhos] of things not seen” (Hebrews 11.1). This “proof” provides certainty, and even if that which is proven is not seen it is nevertheless known in a real sense. For “ye have an anointing from the Holy One,” says the Apostle John, “and ye *all* have knowledge” (I John 2.20). Of course, the knowledge of God by faith alone cannot compare with the knowledge of Him that was given to the Apostles on Mount Tabor, when through a transmutation of their senses they actually *saw* God in His uncreated Glory – and lived to tell the story. And yet the lowlier knowledge is not to be scorned, and was actually blessed by Christ when He said to Thomas: “Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20.29).

Romanides has very little to say about the “unseeing vision” of God that is faith, and far more about the direct vision of God in theoria-theosis. As a correction of an under-emphasis on deification in western theologians, this is understandable. Nevertheless, the correction has gone too far in his system. It is important that we – and especially we who are converts from the western heresies – should be reminded of the ultimate goal of all faith and works in the complete union with God and the deification of human nature. But no less important is it to know what are the first steps in the ascent to God. These are, according to St. Maximus the Confessor, faith and the fear of God. Faith engenders the fear of hell, which engenders the struggle against the

passions, which leads eventually to the supreme state, love.²⁰⁷ Romanides' system suffers from its over-emphasis on the higher stages of the ascent to God at the expense of the lower. The lower steps of faith, and justification by faith, are one of the central themes of the New Testament. But Romanides says very little about faith, and seriously distorts the dogma of justification by faith...

Romanides controversially insists that the traditional sources of the faith - the Holy Scriptures, the Symbol of the Faith, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the Definitions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils - must not be "idolized" as the word of God. "Holy Scripture is not the word of God, it is *about* the Word of God. Everywhere 'about', not revelation itself or the word of God."²⁰⁸ There are uncreated, ineffable words of Revelation, such as those that St. Paul heard in Paradise. But the words of Scripture are created, and therefore not Revelation, but *about* Revelation. "God's revelation to mankind," he writes, "is the experience of theosis. In fact, since revelation is the experience of theosis, an experience that transcends all expressions and concepts, the identification of Holy Scripture with revelation is, in terms of dogmatic theology, pure heresy."²⁰⁹

And yet the Holy Fathers (and not only Augustine) appear to have embraced this "pure heresy"! For while they were perfectly aware of the distinction between the Uncreated and the created, and understood that the words of Holy Scripture are created in origin, nevertheless they insisted that they *are* the words of God. This applies not only to the words uttered by Jesus Christ Himself, the hypostatic Word of God: they apply to every word of Holy Scripture. For the Holy Spirit "spoke through the Prophets", as the Symbol of Faith says: the Scriptures are the created words spoken through the lips of a created man by the Uncreated Spirit, and as such completely reliable and accurate. Thus St. Basil the Great writes: "Plainly it is a falling away from faith and an offence chargeable to pride, either to reject anything that is in Scripture, or to introduce anything that is not in Scripture".²¹⁰ Again, St. Gregory the Theologian writes: "We who extend the accuracy of the Spirit to every letter and serif [of Scripture] will never admit, for it were impious to do so, that even the smallest matters were recorded in a careless and hasty manner by those who wrote them down."²¹¹ Again, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus writes: "Nothing of discrepancy will be found in Sacred Scripture, nor will there be found any statement in opposition to any other statement."²¹²

The more modern Fathers say the same things. Thus shortly before the Russian revolution, St. Barsanuphius of Optina wrote: "In the Apocalypse it is said: 'Blessed is he that readeth the words of this book.' If this is written, it means that it is really so, for the words of the Sacred Scripture are the words of the Holy Spirit."²¹³

²⁰⁷ St. Maximus, *First Century on Love*, 2-3.

²⁰⁸ Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 292.

²⁰⁹ Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, The Dalles, Oregon: Uncut Mountain Press, 2008, p. 109.

²¹⁰ St. Basil, *On the Faith*, P.G. 31, col. 677.

²¹¹ St. Gregory, *In Defence of his Flight to Pontus*, 2, 105.

²¹² St. Epiphanius, *Panacea against all Heresies*, 70, 7.

²¹³ St. Barsanuphius, in Sergius Fomin, *Russia before the Second Coming* (First Edition), Sergiev Posad, 1993, p. 79.

Romanides continues: "Today Protestants and Roman Catholics are under the impression that *God* gave Holy Scripture to the Church. This idea has so greatly influenced modern Orthodox thought that the Orthodox even agree with Protestants and Roman Catholics on this point...

"But now the Orthodox Church has to face a certain paradox. When you read the Old Testament, the New Testament, and even writings from Tradition, you will run across opinions that science proved to be false at least 150 years ago, especially on account of the breakthroughs in research made in the exact sciences. Naturally, this creates a serious problem for someone who does not fully grasp what the Fathers mean when they speak about divine inspiration. This problem mainly applies to the study of the Bible."²¹⁴

So the Bible is not the Word of God, according to Romanides, because it is contradicted by certain supposed findings of science...

What are these sciences that we can trust, supposedly, more than the Holy Scriptures? First of all, palaeontology. "For we now know that there exist human bones which are proved to have existed for three and a half million years."²¹⁵ And then anthropology. "The cosmology of Genesis when compared with the Babylonian cosmology presents striking similarities..."²¹⁶

In general, Romanides has a great respect – too great a respect – for science. He appears to believe in the "big bang", and evolution, and psychoanalysis, and seems completely oblivious of the powerful objections brought against all these theories by more independent-minded scientists... He believes that the process of purification, illumination and deification can be reflected in the future findings of neurobiology... Several times he compares his "empirical dogmatics" or "experiential theology" with medicine and psychiatry...

Theology is close to science, he says, because both are based on experience – the first, the experience of the Uncreated God, and the second, the experience of created nature. Holy Scripture, however, is inspired by God only when it speaks about the experience of the Uncreated God and how to arrive at it through purification, illumination or deification. But when it speaks about historical events, created things or the creation of the universe, it is unreliable and therefore not God-inspired. Then it should be corrected by the findings of modern science. For Holy Scripture "uses the science of its time, which is why it should not be seen as the revelation of God."²¹⁷

Romanides explains this position as follows: "Nobody can mix created truths with uncreated truths. They are not the same thing. Created truths are one thing, uncreated truths – something else. And insofar as there is no likeness [between them], created truth cannot be the way by which we know uncreated truth..."

²¹⁴ Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, p. 111.

²¹⁵ Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 294.

²¹⁶ Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 294.

²¹⁷ Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 295.

“Holy Scripture is not the source of knowledge of created truth, but of uncreated truth, that is, of the Revelation of the uncreated glory of God, and cannot be a guidebook either of medicinal or any other science. It is a Book that was written within the bounds of the knowledge of the time in which it was written.

“The place where Holy Scripture is infallible and a guide for the life of men is in the sections concerning purification, illumination and deification, which deification is the basis of the knowledge of God possessed by the Prophets, the Apostles and the saints of the Church.”²¹⁸

This “pick-and-choose” attitude to Holy Scripture is - paradoxically in view of Romanides’ virulent anti-westernism, - typically western. It demonstrates a lack of faith in the word of God that is typical of liberal Catholics and Protestants. And the reason is Romanides’ bowing down to the god of the West, scientism - or “half-science”, as Dostoyevsky called it.

As a consequence of his scientism Romanides believes (following Thomas Aquinas!) that the intellect should not be considered fallen; “for this,” as Sopko writes, interpreting his thought, “would be difficult to maintain in light of the many advances of modern science”²¹⁹... And yet, as Solomon the wise says, “a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind. We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labour; but who has traced out what is in the heavens, and who has learned Thy counsel, unless Thou give him wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from on high?” (Wisdom 9. 15-17). In other words, the mind of man is fallen, and needs correction and enlightenment from the Holy Spirit in the scientific endeavour of “guessing at what is on earth” and “tracing out what is in the heavens”.

Indeed, while we talk about “the advance of science”, this must be understood in a strictly relative sense; for while we know enormously more about microbes and subatomic particles and all kinds of natural phenomena than in the past, “the scientific world-view” of today represents a catastrophic regression from the world-view of Newton or Descartes, let alone that of the Holy Fathers. Thus modern scientists, with some exceptions, do not believe in God or the soul or angels, and embrace the purely mythical idea that the whole of creation, including man himself and his highest religious, artistic and scientific achievements, derives by chance from an infinitesimally small particle of matter that exploded some fourteen billion years ago. In fact, one of the few encouraging features of the modern world is that the evolution myth is being itself exploded by the findings of real science in many spheres.²²⁰ For, as one scientist said, “Small science separates from God and great science returns one to God”.²²¹ But Romanides was until his death naively oblivious of these developments.

²¹⁸ Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 301.

²¹⁹ Sopko, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

²²⁰ See, for example, Vance Ferrell, *Science vs. Evolution*, Altamont, TN: Evolution Facts, 2006.

²²¹ Quoted by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, in Fr. Milorad Loncar (ed.), *Missionary Letters of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich*, Grayslake, IL: New Gracanica Monastery, 2009, volum 2, p. 149.

However, naivety or involuntary ignorance in relation to recent developments in science is one thing: the deliberate ignorance – or worse, rejection – by a patristic scholar of the patristic understanding of the creation of the world, of the Book of Genesis, and of the nature of Holy Scripture in general, is quite another. Granted, the Book of Genesis is not written in the language of science. But neither is it written in the language of Babylonian mythology. It is simply *the truth* about creation – and in a perfectly objective, non-mythical, non-poetical and non-allegorical sense. For it is the direct revelation of God, the only “eye-witness” of creation, to the God-seer Moses, the only man counted worthy to “take down” that witness.

As Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: “We all know of the anti-religious arguments about the Scripture, and in particular about Genesis: that it is a creation of backward people who knew little of science or the world, that it is full of primitive mythology about “creator-gods” and supernatural beings, that it has all been taken from Babylonian mythology, etc. But no one can seriously compare Genesis with any of the creation myths of other peoples without being struck by the sobriety and simplicity of the Genesis account. Creation myths are indeed full of fabulous events and fairy-tale beings which are not even intended to be taken as the text is written. There is no competition between these texts and Genesis; they are not in the least comparable.

“Nonetheless, there is a widespread popular view – without foundation either in Scripture or in Church tradition – that Moses wrote Genesis after consulting other early accounts of the creation, or that he simply recorded the oral traditions that came down to him; that he compiled and simplified the tales that had come down to his time. This, of course, would make Genesis a work of human wisdom and speculation, and it would be pointless to study such a work as a statement of truth about the beginning of the world.

“... St. Isaac... describes how, in men of the highest spiritual life, the soul can rise to a vision of the beginning of things. Describing how such a soul is enraptured at the thought of the future age of incorruption, St. Isaac writes:

“‘And from this one is already exalted in his mind to that which preceded the composition (making) of the world, when there was no creature, nor heaven, nor earth, nor angels, nothing of that which was brought into being, and to how God, solely by His good will, suddenly brought everything from non-being into being, and everything stood before Him in perfection.’

“Thus, one can believe that Moses and later chroniclers made use of written records and oral tradition when it came to recording the acts and chronology of historical Patriarchs and kings; but an account of the beginning of the world's existence, when there were no witnesses to God's mighty acts, can come only from God's revelation; it is a supra-natural knowledge revealed in direct contact with God. And this is exactly what the Fathers and Church tradition tell us the book of Genesis is.

“St. Ambrose writes: ‘Moses “spoke to God the Most High, not in a vision nor in dreams, but mouth to mouth” (Numbers 12:6-8). Plainly and clearly, not by figures

nor by riddles, there was bestowed on him the gift of the Divine presence. And so Moses opened his mouth and uttered what the Lord spoke within him, according to the promise He made to him when He directed him to go to King Pharaoh: "Go therefore and I will open thy mouth and instruct thee what thou shouldest speak" (Exodus 4:12). For, if he had already accepted from God what he should say concerning the liberation of the people, how much more should you accept what He should say concerning heaven? Therefore, "not in the persuasive words of wisdom," not in philosophical fallacies, "but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power" (I Corinthians 2:4), he has ventured to say as if he were a witness of the Divine work: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth."

"In a similar vein, St. Basil writes at the very beginning of his *Hexaemeron*: 'This man, who is made equal to the angels, being considered worthy of the sight of God face to face, reports to us those things which he heard from God.'

"St. John Chrysostom in his *Homilies on Genesis* comes back again and again to the statement that every word of the Scripture is Divinely inspired and has a profound meaning - that it is not Moses' words, but God's: 'Let us see now what we are taught by the blessed Moses, who speaks not of himself but by the inspiration of the grace of the Spirit.'

"He then has a fascinating description of how Moses does this. We know that the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. In the Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), St. John the Theologian prophesied about the events of the end of the world and the future of the Church. How did they know what was going to happen? Obviously, God revealed it to them. St. John Chrysostom says that, just as St. John the Theologian was a prophet of things of the future, Moses was a prophet of things of the past. He says the following: 'All the other prophets spoke either of what was to occur after a long time or of what was about to happen then; but he, the blessed (Moses), who lived many generations after (the creation of the world), was vouchsafed by the guidance of the right hand of the Most High to utter what had been done by the Lord before his own birth. It is for this reason that he begins to speak thus: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," as if calling out to us all with a loud voice: it is not by the instruction of men that I say this; He Who called them (heaven and earth) out of non-being into being - it is He Who has roused my tongue to relate of them. And therefore I entreat you, let us pay heed to these words as if we heard not Moses but the very Lord of the universe Who speaks through the tongue of Moses, and let us take leave for good of our own opinions.'

"Thus, we should approach the early chapters of Genesis as we would a book of prophecy, knowing that it is actual events being described, but knowing also that - because of their remoteness to us and because of their very nature as the very first events in the history of the world - we will be able to understand them only imperfectly, even as we have a very imperfect understanding of the events at the very end of the world as set forth in the Apocalypse and other New Testament Scriptures. St. John Chrysostom himself warns us not to think we understand too much about the creation: 'With great gratitude let us accept what is related (by Moses), not stepping out of our own limitations, and not testing what is above us as the enemies of the truth

did when, wishing to comprehend everything with their minds, they did not realize that human nature cannot comprehend the creation of God.'

"Let us then try to enter the world of the Holy Fathers and their understanding of the Divinely inspired text of Genesis. Let us love and respect their writings, which in our confused times are a beacon of clarity which shines most clearly on the inspired text itself. Let us not be quick to think we 'know better' than they, and if we think we have some understanding they did not see, let us be humble and hesitant about offering it, knowing the poverty and fallibility of our own minds. Let them open our minds to understand God's revelation."²²²

It is important to realize also that Romanides' distinction between "uncreated truths" and "created truths" is quite irrelevant in the context of Holy Scripture. Romanides himself describes Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai as his deification/glorification, his entering into the Divine Light of God's uncreated Energies, where "uncreated truths" were revealed to him. And yet this uncreated Revelation was received by Moses in a specific historical time and place - "created truths", which, if not verified by science, would place the "uncreated truth" itself in doubt, according to Romanides' logic. For let us suppose that scientists discovered that Moses never went up Mount Sinai, and this encounter with God was not a historical event. Then the basis for believing in Moses' *uncreated* truth is severely weakened. Such is the dilemma of one who puts his faith in science and not in the Word of God... Moreover, the content of the Uncreated Revelation Moses received was a series of *created* truths - truths concerning sun and stars, earth and water, plants, animals and men... The important thing for us to know is not whether a given passage of Scripture is a description of uncreated or created truth, but simply whether it is *true*, coming from the Spirit of truth. Of course, there are vast differences in the sublimity and importance of the different truths revealed by Holy Scripture. The fact that Moses entered the Divine Darkness of Mount Sinai is far more sublime and important than the fact that Tobit is twice mentioned as being followed by his dog on his travels. And yet from the point of view of factual reliability the big fact and the small fact are on the same level, as being both communicated to us by God, Who says: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4.10). In any case, every Theophany recorded in the Holy Scripture, every meeting between God and man in glory, involves an "unconfused but undivided" meeting between Uncreated and created elements, between Eternity and Time, which only the sheerest rationalism will attempt to divide...

By denying that Holy Scripture is revelation in the true sense, and by asserting that large parts of Holy Scripture - the "created truths" concerning history, etc. - must be considered to be less reliable than other parts - the "uncreated truths" that "transcend all expressions and concepts", Romanides provides himself with a tool whereby he can degrade or completely reinterpret certain scriptural expressions and concepts that he does not like - for example, "justification" (which he reinterprets as "vivification") or "justice" (which he reinterprets as "love"). For he thereby introduces the idea that

²²² Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, <http://startingontheroyalpath.blogspot.com/2009/09/genesis-creation-and-early-man.html>.

there is a “higher” theology, that of deification, which is without words, expressions and concepts, and a “lower”, Biblical theology with words, expressions and concepts. And he who has the higher theology can correct, or even do without, the lower theology.

He buttresses this idea with the teaching that there is no likeness, no analogy at all “between teachings in the Bible and the truth about God. Why not? Because there is absolutely no similarity between God and creation. This is the reason why Biblical concepts about God are concepts that can be set aside and are set aside during the experience of theosis. Before theosis, these concepts are clearly helpful, necessary, correct, and right, but only as guideposts towards God, not as truths from God or about God.

“The Bible is a guide to God, but the description of God in the Bible does not bear any similarity to God. Holy Scripture talks about God; it talks about the Truth, but it is not the Truth. It is a guide to the Truth and the Way Who is Christ. The words in the Bible are simply symbols that contain certain concepts. These concepts lead us to Christ, but they are no more than thoroughly human concepts.

“So you cannot hope to theologize correctly simply because you have read the Bible and base your theology on the Bible. If you do this, you cannot avoid becoming a heretic, because Holy Scripture can be correctly interpreted only when the experiences of illumination or theosis accompanies the study or reading of the Bible. Without illumination or theosis, Holy Scripture cannot be interpreted correctly.”²²³

Let us separate the wheat from the chaff here. It is certainly true that Holy Scripture cannot be correctly interpreted without the help of the Holy Spirit. That help comes to us both directly and through the whole of the Holy Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church. However, it is not true that “you cannot avoid becoming a heretic” if you have not had the experience of illumination (by which Romanides means the conscious experience of the Holy Spirit praying in one’s heart) or theosis. If that were the case, then the vast majority of Orthodox Christians would in fact be heretics...

Orthodoxy or heresy is not determined by the presence or absence of a specific spiritual experience: it is determined by the sincere public acceptance or rejection of the official doctrinal pronouncements of the Orthodox Church. For, as the Apostle Paul says: “With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10.10). Of course, every dogma has an infinite depth; and that depth is plumbed only to the degree that one has made progress in the spiritual life; and those saints who have acquired prayer of the heart and seen the Divine Light undoubtedly plumb the depths of the dogmas to a far greater degree than us sinful mortals. Nevertheless, the criterion of Orthodoxy remains for all the “*holding fast the pattern of sound words*” (II Timothy 1.13), which is, as the Holy Church chants, “the garment of truth woven from the theology on high”.²²⁴

²²³ Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, p. 129.

²²⁴ *Pentecostarion*, Kontakion for the Sunday of the Holy Fathers.

Secondly, it is not true to say that since there is no similarity between God and creation, and that the words of the Bible are “simply symbols” containing “no more than thoroughly human concepts”. First, a symbol, as the original meaning of the word in Greek (*sym-bole*) suggests, is a thing that *brings together* a material form and an immaterial content into an indivisible and unrepeatable unity. The sign that this unity has been achieved is *beauty*. In *secular* thought and art, the content is a “thoroughly human” thought or emotion. In *sacred* thought and art, it is a “divinely human” thought or emotion – that is, one overshadowed by the Grace of God. And in rare examples of sacred art, such as the “Icon-not-made-by hand-of-man”, the content is *God Himself* (not in His Essence, of course, but in His uncreated Energies). Romanides appears to regard the words of Holy Scripture as “simply symbols” that cannot reveal the Uncreated God: at best, they are signposts, or instructions on how to attain to the true Revelation. But this, as he appears not to understand, was the position of the iconoclast heretics in the eighth and ninth centuries...

The iconoclasts did not object to the instructional use of icons – but only so long as they were not *venerated*, for that implied that they were not simply created objects, but *holy, Grace-filled* objects. However, if they were venerated, then they were idols, and should be destroyed. Thus for the iconoclasts the icons were essentially *opaque*, and were not the medium of communication with any higher reality; whereas for the Orthodox, the venerators of the holy icons, they were *transparent* – “windows into heaven”, in the expression of St. Stephen the Younger. Moreover, for the Orthodox the words of Holy Scripture are *verbal icons*, which is why the Book of the Gospel is venerated as an icon. For in the words of Holy Scripture we hear the voice of Him Who declared Himself to be the Word of the Father. And so our veneration of the created type does not mire us in idolatry, as Romanides suggests, but allows us to ascend in true worship to the Uncreated Archetype.

Thirdly, although there is no similarity between the *essence* of God and creation, there is a certain likeness between the *energies* of God and His rational creatures, men and angels. That is why man is said to be made in the image and likeness of God. And that is why it makes sense to talk of God’s “love”, “anger”, etc., which presupposes a certain likeness between the Divine and the human. These words were created to describe purely human emotions; but the Holy Scriptures use them also to indicate – approximately, but nevertheless truly – a certain likeness between human experience and God’s actions towards us. And when these words are found in Holy Scripture in reference to God we know that they are *the best approximation* to the truth and therefore cannot be replaced. Yes, they are human artefacts which are more or less inadequate in describing the mysteries of God. But this applies to *all* the anthropomorphic expressions of Holy Scripture. God neither loves nor hates as human beings do; both the love and the wrath of God are not to be understood in a human way. For, as St. John of Damascus says: “God, being good, is the cause of all good, subject neither to envy nor to any passion”.²²⁵ And, as St. Gregory the Theologian says, by virtue of our limitations and imperfection as human beings we introduce “something human even into such lofty moral definitions of the Divine

²²⁵ St. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book I, chapter 1.

essence as righteousness and love".²²⁶ "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55.8). And yet, provided we guard ourselves by this apophatic warning, our thoughts *can* ascend closer to the thoughts of God by accepting with gratitude and faith those words and images that God Himself has given us for our understanding, remembering that they are now not merely human words, but the Word of God, and that "the words of the Lord are pure words, silver that is fired, tried in the earth, brought to sevenfold purity" (Psalms 11.6). Moreover, we ourselves, by studying the Word of God in this way, become purer, loftier, more spiritual, more understanding.

Such understanding cannot be accomplished by replacing the vivid words of Holy Scripture with the dry categories of secular philosophy – or even of Romanidean theology. The Word of God is above all human attempts to explain it. And any attempt to "improve on" or "explain away", still less "set aside", the Word of God in Holy Scripture can only lead to distortions and heresies.

For, as Romanides' teacher, Fr. Georges Florovsky writes: "Revelation is the voice of God speaking to man. And man hears this voice, listens to it, accepts the Word of God and understands it. It is precisely for this purpose that God speaks; that man should hear him. By Revelation in the proper sense, we understand precisely this word of God as it is heard. Holy Scripture is the written record of the Revelation which has been heard. And however one may interpret the inspired character of Scripture, it must be acknowledged that Scripture preserves for us and presents to us the voice of God in the language of man... God speaks to man in the language of man. This constitutes the authentic anthropomorphism of Revelation. This anthropomorphism however is not merely an accommodation. Human language in no way reduces the absolute character of Revelation nor limits the power of God's Word. The Word of God can be expressed precisely and adequately in the language of man. For man is created in the image of God. It is precisely for this reason that man is capable of perceiving God, of receiving God's Word and of preserving it. The Word of God is not diminished while it resounds in human language. On the contrary, the human word is transformed and, as it were, transfigured because of the fact that it pleased God to speak in human language. Man is able to hear God, to grasp, receive and preserve the word of God..."

"When divine truth is expressed in human language, the words themselves are transformed. And the fact that the truths of the faith are veiled in logical images and concepts testifies to the transformation of word and thought – words become sanctified through this usage. The words of dogmatic definitions are not 'simple words', they are not 'accidental' words which one can be replaced by other words. They are eternal truths incapable of being replaced."²²⁷

May 20 / June 2, 2011.

The Ascension of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

²²⁶ St. Gregory the Theologian, *Sermon* 28.

²²⁷ Florovsky, "Revelation, Philosophy and Theology", in *Creation and Redemption*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976, p. 21, 22, 33.

9. ROMANIDES ON THE HOLY TRINITY

The new calendarist theologian Fr. John Romanides has been called “the supreme theologian” of our time. However, he is “supreme” only in one thing: in the number of Orthodox dogmas he has distorted in a heterodox direction. The present writer has already published articles against his heretical teachings on Original Sin, on the Cross, on Heaven and Hell, on the Image of God in Man, on Revelation and the Word of God, not to mention his absurd and essentially racist historical theories...

But his “supreme” heresy is probably that concerning God the Holy Trinity...

Let us take one fairly lengthy passage from his *Patristic Theology* (Uncut Mountain Press, Dalles, Oregon, 2008, pp. 139-140) and comment on it:-

“There are certain Orthodox theologians of Russian descent who claim that God is a personal God.”

Thank God for Russian theologians! But Romanides should not underestimate the theologians of his own race – there are very many Greek theologians who believe in a personal God. As do 100% of the Holy Fathers!

“They claim that God is not the God of philosophy, a construction of human philosophical thought, but that He is a personal God.”

Absolutely!

“Western tradition makes similar statements.”

Yes indeed. Not everything in Western tradition is false.

“But in Patristic tradition, God is not a personal God. In fact, God is not even God. God does not correspond to anything we can conceive or would be able to conceive.”

The last statement is true, and on its basis a clever theologian, speaking pompously about apophatic theology and the unknowability of God in His essence, could perhaps justify the statement “God is not God”. Nevertheless, this is “theology” designed to shock rather than to edify. As such, it is very far from the patristic tradition.

“The relationship between God and man is not a personal relationship and it is also not a subject-object relationship. So when we speak about a personal relationship between God and man, we are making a mistake. That kind of relationship between God and human beings does not exist. What we are talking about now has bearing on another error that some people make when they speak about a communion of persons and try to develop a theology based on a communion of persons using the relations between the Persons in the Trinity as a model. The relations between God and man are not like the relations between fellow human beings. Why? Because we are not on the same level or in the same business with God.”

But God came down to our level, and made it His business to enter into a personal relationship with us in Christ. Nor did this relationship only begin to take place after the Incarnation, as Romanides goes on to say:

“What we have just said holds true until the Incarnation. However, after the Incarnation of God the Word, we can have a personal relationship with God by means of and on account of the Incarnation. But this relationship is with God as the God-man (as the Son of God and the Son of man).”

God had a personal relationship with Adam and Eve before the Fall. He had a personal relationship with the patriarchs and prophets after the Fall. He spoke with Abraham and Jacob “face to face” (Genesis 32.20). He “spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33.11). He called David a man “after My own heart” (I Kings 13.13), and of Solomon He said: “I will be his Father, and he will be My son” (II Kings 7.14; I Chronicles 17.13). And David himself said of his relationship with God: “Thou hast held me by my right hand, and by Thy counsel hast Thou guided me, and with glory hast Thou taken me to Thyself” (Psalms 72.22).

What are these if not deeply personal relationships? – and all before the Incarnation of Christ. Of course, the relationship between God and man has been raised to a new level now that sin has been abolished through the Cross and Baptism, we have received the Holy Spirit through Chrismation and have participated in the Body and Blood of Christ. But the relationship existed also before the Fall, albeit in an imperfect way. Even then, God entered into relationships of great intimacy and love with the Righteous of the Old Testament. To call such relationships “non-personal” is an abuse both of language and of the facts.

What reason could Romanides have for denying that God is a Person(s) and that our relationship with Him is personal? The present writer can only speculate here, but the answer may lie in Romanides’ obsession with the distinction between the Essence and the Energies of God, according to which God is unknowable in His Essence, but knowable in His Energies. Now this is a valid and very important distinction, but Romanides abuses it as often as he uses it correctly. It would be an abuse, for example, to say that since God can only be known through His Energies, our relationship with Him can only be “energetic”, not personal. For Who is known through His Energies? Is it not the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – that is, the Persons of the Holy Trinity? So our relationship with God is both “energetic” and personal: we know the Persons of God through His Energies. For, as St. Paul says, God has “shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [His Energies] in the face of Jesus Christ [a Person]” (II Corinthians 4.6).

“Since God became man, the Incarnation brought about a special relationship between God and man or Christ and man, a relationship that is nevertheless non-existent when we consider the Holy Trinity as a whole. We do not have a relationship with the Holy Trinity or with the uncreated Divinity that is like our relationship with Christ. In other words, our relationship with the Father or with the Holy Spirit is not like our relationship with Christ. Only with Christ do we have a personal relationship.

The Holy Trinity came into personal contact with man only through the Incarnation, only through Christ. This relationship did not exist before the Incarnation, because we did not a relationship with God as we do with other people before the Incarnation..."

This is the height of impiety and the destruction of the whole of Christianity! The whole essence of our faith lies in our belief in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and in the possibility of our entering into a perfect, eternal and personal union with all Three Persons of the One God. And all the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers proclaim that that union has in fact been achieved in the Church.

All Three Persons of the Holy Trinity showed that they were "in the same business" with us, as Romanides puts it, when they said: "Let US go down and confuse their language" (Genesis 11.7). And all Three Persons appeared to Abraham in the form of men (Genesis 18). For, as St. Gregory Palamas writes: "I shall remind you of Abraham's most wonderful vision of God, when he clearly saw the One God in Three Persons, before He had been proclaimed as such. 'The Lord appeared unto him by the oak of Mamre; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and he ran to meet them.' He actually saw the One God Who appeared to him as Three. 'God appeared to him,' it says, 'and lo, three men.' Having run to meet the three men, however, he addressed them as one, saying, 'My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant'. The three then discoursed with him as though they were one. 'And he said to Abraham, Where is Sarah thy wife? I will certainly return unto thee about the same time of year: and Sarah thy wife shall have a son.' As the aged Sarah laughed on hearing this, 'the Lord said, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?' Notice that the One God is Three Hypostases, and the Three Hypostases are One Lord, for it says, 'The Lord said'." (Homily Eleven, "On the Cross", 9).

If, even after the Incarnation, we can have a personal relationship only with Christ, and not with the Father and the Holy Spirit, why does Christ tell us to pray directly to the Father in the words: "Our Father..."? Why does He say: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14.23)? And why, when Philip asked, "Lord, show us the Father", did the Lord reply: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (John 14.14).

As for the Holy Spirit, why, if we do not have a personal relationship with Him, do we pray to Him at the beginning of the Divine services: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth..."? Why did Christ call Him another Comforter, Who would "teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14.25)? And why, if we do not have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, does the Apostle Paul say that it is precisely the Spirit Who teaches us to have a deeper personal, filial relationship with the Father; "for you have received the Spirit of adoption, by Whom we cry out: 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8.16)?

The "empirical theology" of Romanides is a many-headed hydra that strangles our faith at many points, and even strikes it at its very heart – the fact of our real, personal,

empirically experienced communion with the One God in Three Persons. It is time for the true hierarchs of the Church, especially of the Church of Greece, where this heretic appeared, to investigate his teaching thoroughly and condemn it openly. Otherwise, they will become guilty of hiding the truth and allowing evil to triumph; for as Edmund Burke said: "For the complete triumph of evil it is sufficient only that good men do nothing..."

September 17/30, 2011.

10. PEDAGOGICAL AND RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

There are two kinds of justice: pedagogical and retributive. The first kind is an expression of God's love, and is applied by God in order to correct the sinner and help him to avoid His retributive justice. The second, retributive justice, is God's justice in the stricter sense: it is not applied to correct the sinner, but to reward him in accordance with his deserts. It is fashionable among many contemporary new calendarist Greek Orthodox theologians, such as Fr. John Romanides, Fr. George Metallinos and Christos Yannaras, and even among some Old Calendarist ones, such as Alexander Kalomiros, to deny the retributive justice of God. Thus in his famous article, "The River of Fire", Kalomiros writes: "God never takes vengeance. His punishments are loving means of correction, as long as anything can be corrected and healed in this life. They never extend to eternity..." (p. 6)

But how can this be true?! What about the sentence of death passed on all mankind? Is that not a punishment? What about the terrible deaths of various sinners, such as Ahab and Jezabel, Ananias and Sapphira, Heliodorus and Herod and Simon Magus? How can they be said to have been "loving means of correction", since they manifestly did not correct the sinners involved, who were incorrigible? And what about the torments of gehenna? Do they not extend to eternity? Will not the Lord Himself say to the condemned at the Last Judgement: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25.41)?

Many of God's punishments are indeed "loving means of correction" - that is, they are pedagogical. But when correction and pedagogy fail, then God punishes in a different, final, purely retributive way. Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich) distinguishes between the two kinds of punishment or judgement as follows: "One is conditional and temporary. We can refer to it as the pedagogical judgement of God over men in the school of this life. And the other judgement will be just and final. This is obvious from the many examples in the Holy Scriptures. God punished righteous Moses for one sin by not being allowed to enter the promised land towards which he spent forty years leading his people. This is the temporary and pedagogical judgement of God. It is there for the sinners to see and say with fright, 'If God did not forgive such a righteous man one sin, what will He then do to us who are laden with so many sins?' But Moses' punishment was not the final, conclusive judgement of God over him. Nor does it mean that Moses will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You know that this great servant of God appeared along with the prophet Elijah at the Transfiguration of the Lord. This testifies to the fact that even though he was punished once for one sin, he was not discarded by God nor left out of the eternal life. Pedagogical punishments, or pedagogical judgements of God, serve that very purpose - to correct people, and make them suitable for the Kingdom of Heaven. Or, look at that ill man at Bethesda who lay paralyzed for 38 years. The fact that his illness was there because of sin was clearly stated by the Lord when He said, 'Behold, now you are healthy; sin no more that even worse does not happen to you'. And what worse thing could happen to him than being cast out and left out of the Kingdom of Life at the Terrible Judgements of God because of his new sins?

“Our Saviour clearly spoke of the Terrible Judgement of God – of the day which ‘burns as a furnace’. When the sun and the moon darken, when the stars get confused and start falling, when the shining ‘sign of the Son of Man’ appears in that utter darkness, then the Lord Jesus will appear in power and glory to judge justly the living and the dead.”²²⁸

Kalomiros goes on: “Death was not inflicted upon us by God. We fell into it by our revolt.” (p. 6). And he quotes St. Basil: “God did not create death, but we brought it upon ourselves”.

Certainly God did not create death: we brought it upon ourselves by our wilful transgression of His commandment. But does this mean that God was completely inactive in His pronouncement of the sentence on Adam and Eve, in their expulsion from Eden, in His placing the cherubim with the sword of fire to prevent their return? Of course not! God did not will our first parents to fall. Nor did He, being Life Itself, create death. However, He *allowed* our first parents to fall, and He *permitted* death to enter into their life. Why? Partly in order to correct them, to humble them and lead them to repentance. Partly in order to cut off sin and allow the dissolution of the body for the sake of its future resurrection. And partly because *crime requires punishment*, because God is the just Judge Who cannot allow sin to go unpunished if it is not repented of.

Man is the ultimate cause of his own misery: but that by no means implies that God does not punish him. In fact, as St. John of Damascus writes, “a judge justly punishes one who is guilty of wrongdoing; and if he does not punish him he is himself a wrongdoer. In punishing him the judge is not the cause either of the wrongdoing or of the vengeance taken against the wrongdoer, the cause being the wrongdoer's freely chosen actions. Thus too God, Who saw what was going to happen as if it had already happened, judged it as if it had taken place; and if it was evil, that was the cause of its being punished. It was God Who created man, so of course he created him in goodness; but man did evil of his own free choice, and is himself the cause of the vengeance that overtakes him.”²²⁹

Again, St. Photius the Great writes: “Let us comprehend the depths of the Master’s clemency. He gave death as a punishment, but through His own death He transformed it as a gate to immortality. It was a resolution of anger and displeasure, but it announces the consummate goodness of the Judge...”²³⁰

Thus the truth is more complex than Kalomiros would have it. Death is *both* a punishment *and*, through Christ’s own Death and Resurrection, a deliverance from death. It is *both* judgement *and* mercy. Nor could it be otherwise; for God is *both* love *and* justice. As St. John of the Ladder says, He is called *justice* as well as love.²³¹

²²⁸ Fr. Milorad Loncar (ed.), *Missionary Letters of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich*, Grayslake, IL: New Gracanica Monastery, 2008, part 1, Letter 51, pp. 92-93.

²²⁹ St. John of Damascus, *Dialogue against the Manichaeans*, 37.

²³⁰ St. Photius, *Letter 3*, to Eusebia, nun and monastic superior, on the death of her sister; translated by Despina Stratoudaki White.

²³¹ St. John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 24.23.

Turning now to the question of eternal torments, we note that Kalomiros does not deny their existence, but denies that they are inflicted by God because “God never punishes” (p. 19). Rather, they are self-inflicted. “After the Common Resurrection there is no question of any punishment from God. Hell is not a punishment from God but a self-condemnation. As Saint Basil the Great says, ‘The evils in hell do not have God as their cause, but ourselves.’” (p. 16).

Kalomiros here follows Romanides in confusing two very different things: the crime of the criminal, and the sentence of the judge. If the judge sentences the criminal to prison for his crime, it is obvious that the primary cause of the criminal’s being in prison is his own criminal actions: it is the criminal himself who is ultimately responsible for his miserable condition – this is clearly the point that St. Basil is making. Nevertheless, it is equally obvious that the judge, too, has a hand in the matter. It is he who decides both whether the criminal is guilty or innocent, and the gentleness or severity of the sentence. In other words, there are two actors and two actions involved here, not one.

Kalomiros also confuses the free acts of the criminal and his involuntary submission to his sentence. Thus, corrupting the words of Christ in Matthew 25.41, he writes: “Depart freely from love to the everlasting torture of hate” (p. 20). But the sinners do not *freely* depart into the everlasting fire! On the contrary, they “gnash their teeth” there, witnessing, as the Fathers explain, to their fierce anger and *rejection* of the justice of their punishment. We may agree that they have been brought to this plight by their own sinful acts, freely committed. But they do not freely and willingly accept the punishment of those acts! The God-seer Moses and the Apostle Paul were willing to be cast away from God for the sake of the salvation of their brethren, the Jews – here we see the free acceptance of torture and punishment, but out of love. Those condemned at the Last Judgement, however, will be quite unlike these saints, and will be cast *against* their will into the eternal fire.

Again, Kalomiros distorts the nature of heaven and hell. In a characteristically modernist, rationalist manner he reduces them to *psychological states* only: a state of supreme joy and love enlightened by the fire of God’s grace, on the one hand, and a state of the most abject misery and hatred, burned but not enlightened by the fire of God’s grace, on the other. “This is hell: the negation of love; the return of hate for love; bitterness at seeing innocent joy; to be surrounded by love and to have hate in one’s heart. This is the eternal condition of all the damned. They are all dearly loved. They are all invited to the joyous banquet. They are all living in God’s Kingdom, in the New Earth and the New Heavens. No one expels them. Even if they wanted to go away they could not flee from God’s New Creation, nor hide from God’s tenderly loving omnipresence...” (p. 20).

Like all heretics, Kalomiros mixes truth with falsehood. So let us first freely admit what is true in his account. It is true that a large part of the torment of hell will be psychological: the hatred and bitterness that continues to seethe in the sinner’s heart – together with remorse, shame and the most soul-destroying despair. It is also true that that bitterness will be exarcebated by the thought of the “innocent joy” of the

blessed in Paradise. It is true, furthermore, that in a certain sense it is precisely God's love that torments the sinners in hell. For, as Archbishop Theophan of Poltava writes: "In essence the wrath of God is one of the manifestations of the love of God, but of the love of God in its relation to the moral evil in the heart of rational creatures in general, and in the heart of man in particular."²³²

However, it is stretching traditional theological understanding far too far to say that those condemned in the eternal fire of gehenna are at the same time "all living in God's Kingdom, in the New Earth and the New Heavens"! There is no place for the damned in God's Kingdom! As was revealed to St. John in the last chapter of Revelation: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For *outside* are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (22.14-15). In other words, the New Earth and the New Heavens, Paradise and the City of God, will *not* be accessible to the condemned sinners; they will *not* be living there! Nor is it true that even the damned will be "invited to the joyful banquet" and that "no-one will expel them". In *this* life, yes, even sinners are invited to the joyful banquet of communion with God in the Church. But on the last Day, when the sinner is found naked of grace, the King will say to His servants: "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22.13).

God is not as passive as Kalomiros makes out. He *acts* – and acts to expel the unrepentant sinner from His presence. Thus to the "inner darkness" of the sinner's hate-filled, graceless soul will be added the "outer darkness" of the *place* that is gehenna, where the river of fire will consume his *body* as well as his soul. This *outer* aspect of the eternal torments appears to have been ignored by Kalomiros in his over-psychological, over-abstract and over-sophisticated understanding of the torments of hell. And if he were to object: "There is no space or time as we understand it in the life of the age to come", we may reply: "As we understand it, in our present fallen and limited state - yes. And yet we cannot get rid of the categories of space and time altogether. Only God is completely beyond space and time. The idea of a *body* burning in hell is incomprehensible if it is not burning *somewhere*. Nor is the idea of our earth being transfigured into Paradise comprehensible if it not located in *any* kind of space..."

Kalomiros makes all these distortions of Holy Scripture because he fails to distinguish between the two kinds of Divine punishment or judgement. He refuses to admit that God punishes, not only pedagogically, to correct and rehabilitate the sinner, but also *retributively*, as a pure expression of His justice. Since retributive punishment does not lead to the rehabilitation of the sinner, he considers it pointless and cruel, and therefore unworthy of God. In other words, he sees no value in justice *in itself*, independently of its possible pedagogical or therapeutic effect.

And yet Holy Scripture is full of the idea of retributive justice as being the norm of existence, proceeding from the very nature of God. Thus: "To them there is no requital,

²³² Archbishop Theophan, *On Redemption*.

because they have not feared God; He hath stretched forth His hand in retribution" (Psalm 54.22). And again: "The Lord is the God of vengeance; the God of vengeance hath spoken openly. Be Thou exalted, O Thou that judgest the earth; render the proud their due" (Psalm 93.1-2; cf. Psalm 98.8; Isaiah 34.8; Jeremiah 50.15, 51.6; II Thessalonians 1.8). And again: "They [the martyrs] cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6.10). It goes without saying that in none of these quotations are God or the saints understood as being vengeful in a crudely human and sinful manner, as if they were possessed by a fallen passion of anger. As the Venerable Bede writes: "The souls of the righteous cry these things, not from hatred of enemies, but *from love of justice*."²³³ So the desire that justice should be done is by no means necessarily sinful; it may be pure, proceeding not from the fallen passion of anger, but from the pure love of justice. Indeed, when the Lord says: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Romans 12.19), He is not saying that justice should not be desired, but that it should be sought, not through the exercise of the fallen human passions, but through *God*, Who acts with the most perfect and passionless impartiality.

Even St. Basil the Great, upon whom Kalomiros relies so heavily, does not deny the idea of retributive justice in God – and precisely in the context of the river of fire. As he writes, commenting on the verse: "The voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire" (Psalm 28.6): "The fire prepared in punishment for the devil and his angels is divided by the voice of the Lord. Thus, since there are two capacities in fire, one of burning and the other of illuminating, the fierce and punitive property of the fire may await those who deserve to burn, while its illuminating and radiant part may be reserved for the enjoyment of those who are rejoicing."²³⁴

So the river of fire *is* punitive – for "those who deserve to burn". And it is punitive in a retributive sense, as expressing the pure love of justice that is part of the nature of God. Of course, God longs to have mercy even on the most inveterate sinner. But if that sinner does not wish to believe and repent, He wills that the sinner should be punished – even though the punishment can have no rehabilitative effect...

Another ardent proponent of the new soteriology in relation to the last things, is the new calendarist Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware). He is openly Origenist, and in his exposition shows that the modern denial of the retributive justice of God goes back to Origen. Let us examine his argument more closely...

Ware claims that while some passages of Holy Scripture clearly teach that many will burn in the flames of gehenna for ever and ever, there are others which promise the salvation of all. "It is important, therefore, to allow for the complexity of the Scriptural evidence. It does not all point in the same direction, but there are two contrasting strands. Some passages present us with a *challenge*. God invites but does not compel. I possess freedom of choice: am I going to say 'yes' or 'no' to the divine invitation? The future is uncertain. To which destination am I personally bound? Might I perhaps be shut out from the wedding feast? But there are other passages

²³³ St. Bede, *On Genesis* 4.10.

²³⁴ St. Basil, *On Psalm* 28.6.

which insist with equal emphasis upon *divine sovereignty*. God cannot be ultimately defeated. 'All shall be well', and in the end God will indeed be 'all in all'. Challenge and sovereignty: such are the two strands in the New Testament, and neither strand should be disregarded."²³⁵

And yet Ware clearly believes in the second strand, and not the first. The first group of quotations he calls "challenging", although these passages do not issue a challenge but state a fact: many will be damned for ever. As for the second, much smaller group, this he misinterprets.

Let us take I Corinthians 15.28: "When all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will be subject to Him Who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." St. John Chrysostom understands this passage as follows: "What is: 'that God may be all in all'? That all things may be dependent on Him, that nobody may suppose two beginningless authorities, nor another kingdom separated off; that is, that nothing may exist independent of Him."²³⁶ There is nothing here about universal salvation...

Again, Blessed Theodoret writes: "In the future life, when corruption has come to an end and immortality been given, there will be no place for the passions, and after the final expulsion of the passions not one form of sin will have any effect. Then God will dwell in everyone in a fuller, more perfect way."²³⁷ So the Divine sovereignty is expressed, not in the salvation of all men, but in the complete sanctification and deification of all those who are saved.

Ware's other "salvation of all" quotation is Romans 11.32: "God has imprisoned all in disobedience, that He may be merciful to all". But St. John Chrysostom writes: "'God has imprisoned all in disobedience'. That is, He brought them to the proof. He showed them forth as disobedient; but not in order that they might remain in disobedience, but that He might save the one [the Jews] through its rivalry with the other [the Gentiles] - the former through the latter, and the latter through the former."²³⁸ Again, the Apostle is not speaking here about universal salvation, but about how God in His wonderful Providence uses the rivalry between the Jews and the Gentiles in order to save as many as possible from both.

Ware now turns from Scripture to Church history, and discusses the heretic Origen, whose teaching on the apocatastasis, or restoration of all things and all men, was anathematized at the Fifth Ecumenical Council as follows: "If anyone maintains the mythical pre-existence of souls, and the monstrous apocatastasis that follows from this, let him be anathema." This should be enough for anyone who believes in the authority of the Seven Ecumenical Councils: the doctrine of apocatastasis is heretical and under anathema. But Ware tries to get round this by pointing out that the

²³⁵ Ware, "Dare we hope for the salvation of all?" in *The Inner Kingdom*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000, p. 197.

²³⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 39*, P.G. 61:372.

²³⁷ Blessed Theodoret, in Bishop Theophan, *Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla* (Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), Moscow, 2002, p. 208.

²³⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 19*, P.G. 60:652.

anathema “ does not only speaks about apocatastasis but links together two aspects of Origen’s theology: first, his speculations about the beginning, that is to say, about the pre-existence of souls and the precosmic fall; second, his teaching about the end, about universal salvation and the ultimate reconciliation of all things. Origen’s eschatology is seen as following directly from his protology, and both are rejected together... Suppose, however, that we separate his eschatology from his protology; suppose that we abandon all speculations about the realm of eternal logikoi [rational intellects existing prior to the conception of the eternal world]; suppose that we simply adhere to the standard Christian view whereby there is no pre-existence of the soul, but each new person comes into being as an integral unity of soul and body, at... the moment of the conception of the embryo within the mother’s womb. In this way we could advance a doctrine of universal salvation – affirming this, not as a logical certainty (indeed, Origen never did that), but as a heartfelt aspiration, a visionary hope – which would avoid the circularity of Origen’s view and so would escape the condemnation of the anti-Origen anathemas.”²³⁹

However, Ware’s and Origen’s “visionary hope” is dashed by the sober and penetrating vision of the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. First, the Fifth Ecumenical Council calls Origen’s doctrine of apocatastasis “monstrous” – which it would hardly do if it were true in itself, independently of the teaching of the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. This being the case, the “visionary hope” of universal salvation may be “heartfelt” (although “the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17.9)), but it is undoubtedly *false*, and therefore harmful. Hope that is not based on true faith, but on a false vision of reality, is a form of spiritual deception, and must be rejected. It is possible to “hope against hope”, that is, hope for something that looks impossible according to a secular, scientific point of view but is possible for Almighty God; but to hope against – that is, in direct contradiction to – the doctrines of the faith, can never be justified.

Nothing daunted, Ware continues to expound the Origenist teaching: “The strongest point in Origen’s case for universalism is his analysis of punishment. We may summarize his view by distinguishing three primary reasons that have been advanced to justify the infliction of punishment.

“First, there is the *retributive* argument. Those who have done evil, it is claimed, themselves deserve to suffer in proportion to the evil that they have done. Only so will the demands of justice be fulfilled: ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ (Exodus 21.24). But in the Sermon on the Mount Christ explicitly rejects this principle (Matthew 5.38). If we humans are forbidden by Christ to exact retribution in this way from our fellow humans, how much more should we refrain from attributing vindictive and retributive behaviour to God. It is blasphemous to assert that the Holy Trinity is vengeful. In any case, it seems contrary to justice that God should inflict infinite punishment for what is only a finite amount of wrongdoing.”²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Ware, op. cit., pp. 199-200, 200-201.

²⁴⁰ Ware, op. cit., p. 203.

In accusing others of blasphemy here, Ware undoubtedly falls into blasphemy himself. As we have seen, God *is* the God of vengeance. In the Sermon on the Mount He forbids men to take vengeance because in men the laudable desire for justice is mixed with the sinful passion of hatred. But God is able to do what men cannot do, with perfect freedom from sinful passion. That is why “vengeance is *Mine*, saith the Lord; *I* will repay” – an Old Testament text (Deuteronomy 32.35) that is twice quoted by New Testament authors (Romans 12.19; Hebrews 10.30). In saying that the Orthodox who believe in eternal torments “attribute vindictive and retributive behaviour to God”, Ware slanders the Orthodox by confusing the sinful passion of “vindictiveness” with the laudable longing for “retribution”, the natural and God-implanted desire that everybody should get their just deserts in the end.

Of course, there are modern heretics who deny that there is any laudable longing for retribution. Following the fashionable “science” of psychoanalysis, they ascribe any such longing to neurotic illness. Thus Fr. John Romanides says: “Should we identify religion with the final victory of universal justice? Are we obligated to have religion because there must be a God of justice Who will ultimately judge all mankind so that the unjust will be punished in Hell and the just (in other words, good boys and girls) will be rewarded in Heaven? If our answer is yes, then we must have religion so that justice will ultimately prevail and the human longing for happiness will be fulfilled. Is it conceivable for good boys and girls to be unhappy after their death in the life to come? It is inconceivable. And if they were wronged in this life, is it possible for these good boys and girls who suffered unjustly to receive no justice in the next life? It is impossible. And in Heaven shouldn’t they lead a pleasant life, a life of happiness? Of course, they should. But for all this to happen, life after death has to exist as well as a good and righteous God Who will settle the score with good and just judgement. Isn’t that how things stand? He has to exist, at least according to the worldview of Western theology in the Middle Ages.

“But then modern psychology comes along and discredits all of this. Modern psychology tells us that these views are products of the mind, because human beings have an inner sense of justice, which calls for naughty boys and girls to be punished and good boys and girls to be rewarded. And since compensation fails to take place in this life, the human imagination projects this idea into another life where it must take place. This is why someone who feels vulnerable becomes religious and believes in his religion’s doctrines. It also applies to someone who is devoted to justice and has profound and earnest feelings about what is right. They both believe, because the doctrinal teaching that they have accepted satisfies their psychological need for justice to be done. Their reasons are not based on philosophy or metaphysics but on purely psychological considerations...”²⁴¹

What a slander against the holy apostles, prophets and martyrs, who all longed for the final triumph of truth and justice! The Lord came “to proclaim good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to declare the acceptable year of the Lord, *the day of recompense*” (Isaiah 61.1-2). The whole burden of the Old Testament Prophets was an impassioned, yet

²⁴¹ Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, Dalles, Origen: Uncut Mountain Press, 2008, pp. 61-62.

holy lament against the injustice of man against God and against his fellow man, and a longing for the day of recompense when justice will be done by “the God of justice” (Malachi 2.17).

But “modern psychology”, says Romanides, has proved that the longing for that day is a projection of the human imagination, merely the expression of a (fallen) need! What then of those martyrs under the heavenly altar who cry out with a loud voice: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6.10). Is their cry based “on purely psychological considerations”? Is their faith and hope founded on a medieval worldview? Are they not deified saints in the Kingdom of heaven and so not in need of any “purely psychological” gratification? If even the saints in heaven cry out for justice and vengeance against evil, this shows that the love of justice is an essential part of holiness and in no way a subject for pseudo-psychological reductionism...

Returning now to Ware and his argument that finite sins do not merit infinite punishment, we are tempted to ask: “Shall mortal man be more just than God?” (Job 4.17). How can Ware dare to contest the judgement of God? In any case, St. John Chrysostom writes: - "Do not say to me, 'How is the balance of justice preserved if the punishment has no end?' When God does something, obey His demand and do not submit what has been said to human reasoning. In any case, is it not in fact just that one who has received countless good things from the beginning, has then done things worthy of punishment, and has not reformed in response either to threats or to kindness, should be punished? If it is justice you are after, we ought all on the score of justice to have perished at the very outset. Indeed even that would have fallen short of the measure of mere justice. For if a man insults someone who never did him any wrong, it is a matter of justice that he be punished. But what if he insults his Benefactor, Who without having received any favour from him in the first place, has done countless things for him - in this case the One Who was the sole source of his existence, Who is God, Who endowed him with a soul, Who gave him countless other gifts and purposed to bring him to heaven? If after so many favours, he not only insults Him but insults Him daily by his conduct, can there be any question of deserving pardon?

"Do you not see how He punished Adam for a single sin? 'Yes', you will say, 'but He had given him paradise and made him the recipient of very great kindness.' And I reply that it is not at all the same thing for a man in the tranquil possession of security to commit a sin and for a man in the midst of affliction to do so. The really terrible thing is that you sin when you are not in paradise but set amidst the countless evils of this present life, and that all this misery has not made you any more sensible. It is like a man who continues his criminal behaviour in prison. Moreover you have the promise of something even greater than paradise. He has not given it to you yet, so as not to make you soft at a time when there is a struggle to be fought, but neither has He been silent about it, lest you be cast down by all your labours.

"Adam committed one sin, and brought on total death. We commit a thousand sins every day. If by committing a single sin he brought such terrible evil on himself and introduced death into the world, what should we, who live continually in sin, expect

to suffer - we who in place of paradise have the expectation of heaven? This is a burdensome message; it does upset the man who hears it. I know, because I feel it myself. I am disturbed by it; it makes me quake. The clearer the proofs I find of this message of hell, the more I tremble and melt with fear. But I have to proclaim it so that we may not fall into hell. What you received was not paradise or trees and plants, but heaven and the good things in the heavens. He who had received the lesser gift was punished and no consideration exempted him; we have been given a greater calling and we sin more. Are we not bound to suffer things beyond all remedy?

"Consider how long our race has been subject to death on account of a single sin. More than five thousand years have passed and the death due to a single sin has not yet been ended. In Adam's case we cannot say that he had heard prophets or that he had seen others being punished for their sins so that he might reasonably have been afraid and learnt prudence if only from the example of others. He was the first and at that time the only one; yet he was still punished. But you cannot claim any of these things. You have had numerous examples, but you only grow worse; you have been granted the great gift of the Spirit, but you go on producing not one or two or three but countless sins. Do not think that because the sins are committed in one brief moment the punishment therefore will also be a matter of a moment. You can see how it is often the case that men who have committed a single theft or a single act of adultery which has been done in a brief moment of time have had to spend all their lives in prison or in the mines, continually battling with hunger and every kind of death. No one lets them off, or says that since the crime was committed in a brief moment the punishment should match the crime in the length of time it takes.

"'People do act like that,' you may say, 'but they are men, whereas God is loving towards mankind.' Yes, but even the men who act in this way do not do so out of cruelty but out of love for mankind. So since God is loving to mankind He too will deal with sin in this way. 'As great as is His mercy, so great also is His reproof' (Sirach 16.12). So when you speak of God as loving towards mankind, you are actually supplying me with a further reason for punishment, in the fact that the One against Whom we sin is such as this. That is the point of Paul's words: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Hebrews 10.31). I ask you to bear with these words of fire. Perhaps, yes, perhaps they may bring you some consolation. What man can punish as God has been known to punish? He caused a flood and the total destruction of the human race; a little later He rained down fire from on high and utterly destroyed them all. What human retribution can compare with that? Do you not recognise that even this case of punishment is virtually endless? Four thousand years have passed and the punishment of the Sodomites is still in full force. As His loving kindness is great, so also is His punishment..."²⁴²

Ware continues: "The second line of [Origen's] argument insists upon the need for a *deterrent*. It is only the prospect of hell-fire, it is said, that holds us back from evil-doing. But why then, it may be asked, do we need an unending, everlasting punishment to act as an effective deterrent? Would it not be sufficient to threaten

²⁴² St. John Chrysostom, *Homily IX on Corinthians*, 1-3. Translated in Maurice Wiles & Mark Santer (eds.) *Documents in Early Christian Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

prospective malefactors with a period of painful separation from God that is exceedingly prolonged, yet not infinite? In any case, it is only too obvious, especially in our day, that the threat of hell-fire is almost totally ineffective as a deterrent. If in our preaching of the Christian faith, we hope to have any significant influence on others, then what we need is not a negative but a positive strategy: let us abandon ugly threats, and attempt rather to evoke people's sense of wonder and their capacity for love."²⁴³

Again, Ware's lack of agreement with the Holy Fathers is evident. St. John Chrysostom says: "I have to proclaim hell so that we may not fall into it." But Ware, giving in to the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, prefers to talk about love – although love without justice is mere sentimentality. The truth is that he does not want to preach hell because he does not believe in it; it is no deterrent for him, so he cannot try and make it a deterrent for others. But the true pastor is called to preach "in season and out of season", whether people want to hear his message or not. And if he has real faith, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, then his word about the fire of gehenna *will* be believed.

Ware goes on: "There remains the *reformativ*e understanding of punishment, which Origen considered to be the only view that is morally acceptable. Punishment, if it is to possess moral value, has to be not merely retaliatory or dissuasive but remedial. When parents inflict punishment on their children, or the state on criminals, their aim should always be to heal those whom they punish and to change them for the better. And such, according to Origen, is precisely the purpose of the punishments inflicted upon us by God; He acts always 'as our physician'. A doctor may sometimes be obliged to employ extreme measures which cause agony to his patients. (This was particularly so before the use of anaesthetics.) He may cauterize a wound or amputate a limb. But this is always done with a positive end in view, so as to bring about the patients' eventual recovery and restoration to health. So it is with God, the physician of our souls. He may inflict suffering upon us, both in this life and after our death; but always He does this out of tender love and with a positive purpose, so as to cleanse us from our sins, to purge and heal us. In Origen's words, 'The fury of God's vengeance avails to the purging of our souls'.

"Now, if we adopt this reformativ and therapeutic view of punishment – and this is the only reason for inflicting punishment that can worthily be attributed to God – then surely such punishments should not be unending. If the aim of punishment is to heal, then once the healing has been accomplished there is no need for the punishment to continue. If, however, the punishment is supposed to be everlasting, it is difficult to see how it can have any remedial or educative purpose. In a never-ending hell there is no escape and therefore no healing, and so the infliction of punishment in such a hell is pointless and immoral. This third understanding of punishment, therefore, is incompatible with the notion of perpetual torment in hell; it requires us, rather, to think in terms of some kind of purgatory after death. But in that case this purgatory should be envisaged as a house of healing, not a torture chamber; as a hospital, not a

²⁴³ Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-204.

prison. Here, in his grand vision of God as the cosmic physician, Origen is at his most convincing..."²⁴⁴

In other words, according to Origen and Ware, there is no such thing as retributive justice in God: His justice is at all times purely reformatory or pedagogical or therapeutic. As Ware writes: "His justice is nothing other than His love. When He punishes, His purpose is not to requite but to heal."²⁴⁵

But if there is no such thing as just desert or requital, even the concept of mercy makes no sense. For mercy does not involve the rejection of the profoundly scriptural principle that *sin must be paid for* in one way or another, by one person or another, and that *what we sow we must reap*. It is the balancing of this (just) claim by another, equally powerful and just one. If the concept of just desert did not exist, then it would make no sense for a sinner to say: "I have sinned; I deserve to be punished". The true attitude is to recognize the claims of justice while pleading for mercy. This is the attitude of the Prodigal Son: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no longer worthy to be called Thy son. Make me as one of Thy hired servants." (Luke 15.18-19). The son recognized the claims of justice, which required that he be demoted from the status of sonship. And the Father had mercy on him, restoring him to sonship, *precisely because* the son recognized that he was not worthy of it, because he recognized the claims of justice. The same is true of the good thief on the cross, who was forgiven because *he recognized that he was being justly punished*. Thus his recognition of retributive justice was the condition of his punishment becoming pedagogical and therapeutic... It follows that mercy is possible only *in and through* the recognition of justice. But to abolish justice by identifying it with love is to abolish repentance and therefore the possibility of salvation...

The philosopher Immanuel Kant was much closer to the truth than Origen in this respect. He wrote: "Judicial punishment can never be used merely as a means to promote some other good for the criminal himself or for civil society, but instead it must in all cases be imposed on him only on the ground that he has committed a crime."²⁴⁶ In other words, if the guilty are not punished, justice is not done; crime is punished because that is *just*, not because it is therapeutic or useful. This is not an argument against mercy or clemency (or therapy). The argument is that mercy or clemency *make no sense* if the prior claims of justice are not recognized...

Another modern philosopher, C.S. Lewis, called the pedagogical view of justice "the Humanitarian theory", contrasting it with "the Retributive theory". He argued that the Humanitarian theory is not really about justice at all since it removes the crucial concept of "desert", that is, degree of guilt or innocence: "The Humanitarian theory removes from Punishment the concept of Desert. But the concept of Desert is the only connecting link between punishment and justice. It is only as deserved or undeserved that a sentence can be just or unjust. I do not here contend that the question 'Is it deserved?' is the only one we can reasonably ask about a punishment.

²⁴⁴ Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205.

²⁴⁵ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

²⁴⁶ Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*.

We may very properly ask whether it is likely to deter others and to reform the criminal. But neither of these two last questions is a question about justice. There is no sense in talking about a 'just deterrent' or a 'just cure'. We demand of a deterrent not whether it is just but whether it will deter. We demand of a cure not whether it is just but whether it succeeds. Thus when we cease to consider what the criminal deserves and consider only what will cure him or deter others, we have tacitly removed him from the sphere of justice altogether; instead of a person, we now have a mere object, a patient, a 'case'."²⁴⁷

Lewis goes on to make the important point that the application of the Humanitarian Theory may actually lead to much crueller and less humane results for the criminal than the old retributive theory. For on this view "the offender should, of course, be detained until he was cured. And of course the official straighteners are the only people who can say when that is. The first result of the Humanitarian theory is, therefore, to substitute for a definite sentence (reflecting to some extent the community's moral judgement on the degree of ill-desert involved) an indefinite sentence terminable only by the word of those experts – and they are not experts in moral theology or even in the Law of Nature – who inflict it. Which of us, if he stood in the dock, would not prefer to be tried by the old system?"²⁴⁸

Lewis continues his argument in an almost prophetic manner (he was writing in 1949) when we look at the ravages of Soviet psychiatry or the western "nanny state" in recent times. "It is, indeed, important to notice that my argument so far supposes no evil intentions on the part of the Humanitarian and considers only what is involved in the logic of his position. My contention is that good men (not bad men) consistently acting upon that position would act as cruelly and unjustly as the greatest tyrants. They might in some respects act even worse. Of all tyrannies a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. They may be more likely to go to Heaven yet at the same time likelier to make a Hell on earth. Their very kindness stings with intolerable insult. To be 'cured' against one's will and cured of states which we may not regard as disease is to be put on a level with those who have not yet reached the age of reason or those who never will; to be classed with infants, imbeciles, and domestic animals. But to be punished, however severely, because we have deserved it, because we 'ought to have known better', is to be treated as a human person made in God's image.

"In reality, however, we must face the possibility of bad rulers armed with a Humanitarian theory of punishment. A great many popular blue-prints for a Christian society are merely what the Elizabethans called 'eggs in moonshine' because they assume that the whole society is Christian or that the Christians are in control. This is not so in most contemporary States. Even if it were, our rulers would still be fallen men, and, therefore, neither very wise nor very good. As it is, they will usually be

²⁴⁷ Lewis, "The Humanitarian Theory of Justice", in *Compelling Reason*, London: Fount, 1987, p. 128.

²⁴⁸ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

unbelievers. And since wisdom and virtue are not the only or the commonest qualifications for a place in government, they will not often be even the best unbelievers. The practical problem of Christian politics is not that of drawing up schemes for a Christian society, but that of living as innocently as we can with unbelieving fellow-subjects under unbelieving rulers who will never be perfectly wise and good and who will sometimes be very wicked and very foolish. And when they are wicked the Humanitarian theory of punishment will put in their hands a finer instrument of tyranny than wickedness ever had before. For if crime and disease are to be regarded as the same thing, it follows that any state of mind which our masters choose to call 'disease' can be treated as crime, and compulsorily cured. It will be vain to please that states of mind which displease government need not always involve moral turpitude and do not therefore always deserve forfeiture of liberty. Our masters will not be using the concepts of Desert and Punishment but those of disease and cure. We know that one school of psychology already regards religion as a neurosis. When this particular neurosis becomes inconvenient to government, what is to hinder government from proceeding to 'cure' it? Such 'cure' will, of course, be compulsory; but under the Humanitarian theory it will not be called by the shocking name of Persecution. No one will blame us for being Christian, no one will hate us, no one will revile us. The new Nero will approach us with the silky manners of a doctor... And thus when the command is given, every prominent Christian in the land may vanish overnight into Institutions for the Treatment of the Ideologically Unsound, and it will rest with the expert gaolers to say when (if ever) they are to re-emerge. But it will not be persecution. Even if the treatment is painful, even if it is life-long, even if it is fatal, that will be only a regrettable accident; the intention was purely therapeutic..."²⁴⁹

Returning now to the Humanitarian or Pedagogical theory in relation to *God's* justice: to identify the concepts of "justice" and "love" is radically to distort the meaning of two of the most important words in the vocabulary of theology. Earlier we quoted St. John of the Ladder: "He is called *justice* as well as love."²⁵⁰ Now this statement would have no weight if "justice" and "love" were identical in God. It has weight because it tells us that there are in God two moral principles or energies that cannot be identified with each other, and of which the one cannot be reduced to the other.²⁵¹ God is always and in all things supremely just and righteous. He is also supremely merciful and loving. But His mercy does not contradict His justice. It only seems to – to those who do not understand the mystery of the Cross.

For on the Cross "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 84.10). That is to say, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

²⁴⁹ Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.

²⁵⁰ St. John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 24.23.

²⁵¹ The distinction between the two principles is particularly clear in this text from St. Ephraim the Syrian: "Weigh our repentance, that it may outbalance our crimes! But not in even balance, ascends either weight; for our crimes are heavy and manifold, and our repentance is light. He had commanded that we should be sold for our debt: His mercy became our advocate; principle and increase, we repaid with the farthing, which our repentance proffered. Ten thousand talents for that little payment, our debt He forgave us. He was bound to exact it, that He might appease His justice: He was constrained again to forgive, that He might make His grace to rejoice. Our tears for the twinkling of an eye we gave Him; He satisfied His justice, in exacting and taking a little; He made His grace to rejoice, when for a little He forgave much." (*The Nisibene Hymns*).

says, “while love for God ‘lifts the Son of man from the earth’ (John 12.32 and 34), love for man opens the embraces of the Son of God for the earthborn, these opposing strivings of love intersect, dissolve into each other, balance each other and make of themselves that wonderful heart of the Cross, on which forgiving ‘mercy’ and judging ‘truth meet together’, God’s ‘righteousness’ and man’s ‘peace kiss each other’, through which heavenly ‘truth is sprung up out of the earth, and righteousness’ no longer with a threatening eye ‘hath looked down from heaven. Yea, for the Lord will give goodness, and our land shall yield her fruit’ (Psalms 84.11-13).”²⁵²

On the Cross Christ *took on Himself* the whole burden of the just punishment of sinners, thereby making it possible for Him to have mercy on all and restore peace between God and man while satisfying the claims of justice. As a result, all those justly imprisoned in hades since the time of the fall were released and restored again to Paradise – if they believed in the preaching of the Cross. This was the triumph of love – but *in and through* the triumph of justice...

The element of truth in Ware’s argument is that in His Providence towards us God very often does mix punishment with therapy, justice with healing. In this way He gives men the opportunity and the time to repent, administering chastisements that bring sinners to see the error of their ways. Indeed, it is the true sons of God who receive the most “therapeutical punishment”: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Hebrews 12.5-6).

But the therapy succeeds only if the sinner comes to see that he is being *justly punished* for his sins. Moreover, the opportunity to repent through suffering is not offered forever; “for why should you continue to be struck, since you continue in lawlessness?” (Isaiah 1.5). The time for repentance is strictly limited to this earthly life; “for in death there is none that is mindful of Thee, and in hades who will confess Thee?” (Psalms 6.4). After death, we cannot be saved by our own repentance, but only by the prayers of the Church, which God does not allow to be offered for all men (Ezekiel 14.14; I John 5.16)... In any case, at the very end “there will be time (as we know it) no longer” (Revelation 10.6), and so there will also no longer be change. For time is the medium of change and therefore of repentance...

June 29 / July 12, 201; revised March 2/15, 2012.

²⁵² Metropolitan Philaret, “Sermon on Holy Friday (1816)”, *The Works of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna*, Moscow, 1994, pp. 107-108 ; translated in *Orthodox Life*, March-April, 1992, pp. 2-10.

11. ST. PHILARET OF NEW YORK AND THE HERESY OF ECUMENISM

When St. Philaret became Metropolitan of New York, he was hardly known outside China and Australia. And yet his career was already one of immense courage and holiness. In the 1940s he had suffered torture at the hands of the Japanese for refusing to bow to an idol in Harbin; in 1945 he was the only clergyman in the city who refused to accept a Soviet passport or commemorate the Soviet authorities that now took control of China; and in the 1950s he was subjected to torture by the Chinese communists, who unsuccessfully tried to blow him up but left him permanently injured.

Involuntarily, after 1945 he found himself in the Moscow Patriarchate. But this burdened his conscience greatly, and he continued to denounce the Soviet Antichrist. Finally he got his chance to escape the nets of the communists and Soviet church: in 1961 he was able to leave China.

“When, finally, with the help of God I managed to extract myself from red China, the first thing I did was turn to the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Anastasy, with a request that he consider me again to be in the jurisdiction of the Russian Church Abroad. Vladyka Metropolitan replied with mercy and love, and immediately blessed me to serve in Hong Kong already as a priest of the Synodal jurisdiction, and pointed out that every church server passing into this jurisdiction from the jurisdiction of Moscow must give a special penitential declaration to the effect that he is sorry about his (albeit involuntary) stay in the Moscow jurisdiction. I did this immediately.”

Soon Archimandrite Philaret flew to Sydney. The ruling Archbishop of Australia accepted him with joy and love, and already in the first weeks of Fr. Philaret’s stay in Australia began to speak about the possibility of ordaining him as a Bishop. In 1963 he was ordained Bishop of Brisbane, a vicariate of the Australian diocese.

On May 14/27, 1964, Metropolitan Anastasy of New York retired (he died in 1965). There were two candidates to succeed him: Archbishop John of San Francisco, the famous wonderworker, and Archbishop Nikon of Washington. Opinion was equally divided between the two candidates, and feelings were so strong that a schism loomed. But then it was suggested that the Council adjourn for three days of fasting and prayer. At the end of the three-day fast Archbishop John suggested the candidature of Bishop Philaret. Although St. Philaret was hardly known to anybody there, the suggestion was unanimously and joyfully accepted.

The new metropolitan faced a daunting task. For he had, on the one hand, to lead his Church in decisively denouncing the apostasy of World Orthodoxy, communion with which could no longer be tolerated. And on the other, he had to preserve unity among the members of his own Synod, some of whom were in spirit closer to “World Orthodoxy” than True Orthodoxy...

The Sorrowful Epistles

Already in his 1965 Epistle “to Orthodox Bishops and all who hold dear the Fate of the Russian Church”, St. Philaret gave clear signs that he was going to adopt a more uncompromising approach in relation to the MP than his predecessors. This Epistle was also significant for the much more prominent position attributed to the Catacomb Church than during the time of his predecessor, which was declared to be a “sister-Church” of the Russian Church Abroad. This prominence given to the Catacomb Church by Metropolitan Philaret was timely. The True Orthodox Christians inside the Soviet Union were going through a very difficult period. True bishops were exceedingly few: Schema-Bishop Peter (Ladygin) of Nizhegorod died in Glazov in 1957, leaving no successor, as did Bishop Barnabas (Belyaev) of Pechersk in Kiev in 1963 and Bishop Michael (Yershov) of Chistopol in the Mordovian camps in 1974. Catacomb priests served their widely scattered flocks in the greatest secrecy without any archpastoral support. Many now began to commemorate the first-hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad, who thereby became de facto the leaders of the whole of the Russian Church...

Another, very pressing task was to defend Orthodoxy against the heresy of ecumenism. Since the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948, the leader of the ecumenical movement on the Orthodox side had been the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. On January 5 and 6, 1964, he and Pope Paul VI met in Jerusalem and prayed together. This was a clear transgression of the canons concerning relations with heretics (Apostolic canon 45). On January 23 / February 5, 1964 a large number of Athonite monks, including the abbots of four monasteries, protested against this ecumenical activity: “the undersigned Fathers of the Holy Mountain, abbots, priest-monks and monks, learning of the recent machinations and plots against our blameless Orthodox Faith by the Papal insurrection and of the pro-uniatic actions and statements of the Ecumenical Patriarch and his co-workers, do proclaim with a stentorian voice that we denounce these uniatic tendencies and leanings, and remains steadfast and unshaken in our Orthodox Faith...”²⁵³

Unfortunately, however, this “stentorian voice” became more and more muted, until only the Monastery of Esphigmenou remained out of communion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate...

Further intense activity by Patriarch Athenagoras and Archbishop James of the American Archdiocese led, on December 7, 1965, to the “lifting of the anathemas” of 1054 between Orthodoxy and the Papacy. The announcement was made simultaneously in Rome and Constantinople. It included the following words: “Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I with his synod, in common agreement, declare that: a) They regret the offensive words, the reproaches without foundation, and the reprehensible gestures which, on both sides, have marked or accompanied the sad events of this period [viz. in the 11th century]. b) They likewise regret and remove both from memory and from the midst of the Church the sentences of excommunication

²⁵³ Proclamation of the Holy Mountain, in Alexander Kalomiros, *Against False Union*, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 2000, p. 101.

which followed these events, the memory of which has influenced actions up to our day and has hindered closer relations in charity; and they commit these excommunications to oblivion. We must recognize that the sentences were directed at particular persons and not at the Churches, and did not aim to break ecclesiastical communion between the sees of Rome and Constantinople.”²⁵⁴

“In short,” writes Peter Hebblethwaite in his biography of Paul VI, “1054 had been an accident, much ado about nothing very much, frozen into permanent schism only by later ‘non-theological’ events.”²⁵⁵

However, this was historically inaccurate: both sees recognized in 1054 that a break in ecclesiastical communion had taken place between them. Moreover, in saying that the schism of 1054 was based on “reproaches without foundation”, the Patriarch was in effect saying that the Papacy was not, or never had been, heretical – although the Papacy had renounced none of its heresies, and Pope Paul VI had reasserted papal infallibility as recently as Vatican II. Again, while relations with excommunicated individuals or Churches can be restored if those individuals or Churches repent, anathemas against heresies cannot be removed insofar as a heresy remains a heresy forever. And yet in December of 1968 Athenagoras announced that he had inserted Pope Paul VI’s name into the Diptychs, thereby signifying that the Pope was not a heretic and was in communion with the Orthodox Church. And he made the following formal renunciation of True Christianity: “We must pray and struggle that Jerusalem becomes a place of dialogue and peace. So that together we may prepare the way for the return of Jesus, the Mahdi of Islam, the Moshiach [Messiah] of Israel, our Lord”.

The Russian Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) had three observers at the Second Vatican Council who witnessed the ceremony of the “lifting of the anathemas”. One of them, Archimandrite Ambrose (Pogodin), after describing the ceremony with evident sympathy, wrote: “The Russian Church Abroad did not recognize the actions of Patriarch Athenagoras, considering that the patriarch was obliged to do this only with the agreement of all the Orthodox Churches, because the matter of the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches concerned all the Orthodox Churches – it was not only the personal relations between the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople. We, observers from the Russian Church Abroad, received by telephone the order from our ecclesiastical authorities not to be present at the ceremony of the mutual lifting of the anathemas between the Constantinopolitan and Roman Churches. But we, having taken counsel amongst ourselves, thought that such a demonstration would have been harmful for our Church, which we represented with dignity. However, our demonstration would have remained unnoticed: what would the absence of three people in a mass of tens of thousands of people signify?!”²⁵⁶

At this critical moment, on December 15, 1965, Metropolitan Philaret issued the first of a series of “Sorrowful Epistles” designed to warn the Orthodox against

²⁵⁴ Full text in *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. I, № 1, Spring, 1966, pp. 49-50.

²⁵⁵ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope*, 1993; in Fr. Alexey Young, *The Rush to Embrace*, Richfield Springs: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1996, p. 63.

²⁵⁶ Pogodin, “O Chine Priniatia v Pravoslavnuu Tserkov” (On the Rite of Reception into the Orthodox Church).

ecumenism.²⁵⁷ He wrote to Patriarch Athenagoras protesting against his action: “The organic belonging of the Orthodox to the union of the contemporary heretics does not sanctify the latter, while it tears away the Orthodox entering into it from Catholic Orthodox Unity... Your gesture puts a sign of equality between error and truth. For centuries all the Orthodox Churches believed with good reasons that it has violated no doctrine of the Holy Ecumenical Councils; whereas the Church of Rome has introduced a number of innovations in its dogmatic teaching. The more such innovations were introduced, the deeper was to become the separation between the East and the West. The doctrinal deviations of Rome in the eleventh century did not yet contain the errors that were added later. Therefore the cancellation of the mutual excommunication of 1054 could have been of meaning at that time, but now it is only evidence of indifference in regard to the most important errors, namely new doctrines foreign to the ancient Church, of which some, having been exposed by St. Mark of Ephesus, were the reason why the Church rejected the Union of Florence... No union of the Roman Church with us is possible until it renounces its new doctrines, and no communion in prayer can be restored with it without a decision of all the Churches, which, however, can hardly be possible before the liberation of the Church of Russia which at present has to live in the catacombs... A true dialogue implies an exchange of views with a possibility of persuading the participants to attain an agreement. As one can perceive from the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, Pope Paul VI understands the dialogue as a plan for our union with Rome with the help of some formula which would, however, leave unaltered its doctrines, and particularly its dogmatic doctrine about the position of the Pope in the Church. However, any compromise with error is foreign to the history of the Orthodox Church and to the essence of the Church. It could not bring a harmony in the confessions of the Faith, but only an illusory outward unity similar to the conciliation of dissident Protestant communities in the ecumenical movement.”²⁵⁸

Tatiana (now Nun Cassia) Senina writes: “Metropolitan Philaret sent a similar address to another leader of the ecumenical movement – the American Archbishop James. However, the apostate hierarchs paid no attention to his exhortations. The ecumenical movement continued to gather speed. The holy Hierarch Philaret looked with sorrow on the falling away from the faith of the once Orthodox Churches. And he called the epistles which he sent to all the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church just that – ‘Sorrowful Epistles’. In his first Epistle, written in 1969, St. Philaret says that he has decided to turn to all the hierarchs, ‘some of whom occupy the oldest and most glorious sees’, because, in the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, ‘the truth is betrayed by silence’, and it is impossible to keep silent when you see a deviation from the purity of Orthodoxy – after all, every bishop at his ordination gives a promise to keep the Faith and the canons of the holy fathers and defend Orthodoxy from heresies. Vladyka quotes various ecumenist declarations of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and clearly shows, on the basis of the patristic teaching and the canons, that the position of the WCC has nothing in common with Orthodoxy, and consequently

²⁵⁷ It was claimed by Matushka Anastasia Shatilova that the Sorrowful Epistles were in fact written by her father, Protopresbyter George (later Bishop Gregory) Grabbe. See Andrei Psarev, “The Development of Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia’s Attitude Toward Other Local Orthodox Churches”, http://www.sobor2006.com/printerfriendly2.php?id=119_0_3_0, p. 8.

²⁵⁸ Full text in Ivan Ostroumoff, *The History of the Council of Florence*, pp. 193-199.

the Orthodox Churches must not participate in the work of this council. The holy Hierarch Philaret also emphasises that the voice of the MP is not the voice of the True Russian Church, which in the homeland is persecuted and hides in the catacombs. Vladyka calls on all the Orthodox hierarchs to stand up in defence of the purity of Orthodoxy.

“Vladyka Philaret wrote his second ‘Sorrowful Epistle’ on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1972. In it he noted that although in the last two years hierarchs had made declarations about the heterodoxy of the ecumenical movement, not one Orthodox Church had declared that it was leaving the WCC. Vladyka placed as the aim of his Second Epistle ‘to show that abyss of heresy against the very concept of the Church into which all the participants in the ecumenical movement are being drawn’. He recalled the threatening prophecy of the Apostle Paul that to those who will not receive ‘the love of the truth for salvation’ the Lord will send ‘strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (II Thessalonians 2.10-12). St. Philaret’s third Epistle was devoted to the so-called ‘Thyateira Confession’ of Metropolitan Athenagoras [of Thyateira and Great Britain], the exarch of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate in Europe – a document written in a completely heretical spirit, but which did not elicit any reaction from the leaders of the ‘official churches’. Evidently Vladyka Philaret hoped at the beginning that at any rate one of the bishops of ‘World Orthodoxy’ might listen to his words, which is why he addressed them in his epistles as true Archpastors of the Church. Besides, attempts at exhortation corresponded to the apostolic command: ‘A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself’ (Titus 3. 10-11). It was fitting, before accepting an anathema against the apostates, to try and convert them from their error.

“Alas, no conversion took place, and the ecumenical impiety continued to pour out. Vladyka addressed his word not only to bishops, but also to their flock, untiringly explaining the danger of the new heresy. While telling about the zeal of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, who slapped the face of Arius when he blasphemed against the Son of God, Vladyka said: ‘O how often we do not have enough of such zeal when it is really necessary to speak for the insulted and trodden-on truth! I want to tell you about one incident that took place not long ago and which it would have been difficult even to imagine several years ago – and now we are going further and further downhill all the time. One man came from Paris and said that the following incident had taken place at a so-called “ecumenical meeting’. Of course, you know what ecumenism is; it is *the heresy of heresies*. It wants to completely wipe out the concept of the Orthodox Church as the guardian of the Truth, and to create some kind of new, strange church. And so there took place this ‘ecumenical meeting’. Present were a so-called Orthodox protopriest from the Paris Theological (more exactly, heretical) Institute, a Jewish rabbi, a pastor and a Catholic priest. At first they sort of prayed, and then began the speeches. And then (forgive me for saying such things from the holy ambon, but I want to show you what we have come to) the Jewish rabbi said that the Lord Jesus Christ was the illegitimate son of a dissolute woman...

“But that’s not the main horror. The Jewish people has opposed God for a long time... - so there’s nothing surprising in this. But the horror was that when he said this *everyone* was silent. Later, a man who had heard this terrible blasphemy asked the ‘Orthodox’ protopriest: ‘How could you keep silent?’ He replied: ‘I didn’t want to offend this Jew.’ It’s wrong to offend a Jew, but to insult the All-Pure Virgin Mary is permitted! Look at the state we have come to! How often does it happen to us all now that we do not have the zeal to stand up, when necessary, in defence of our holy things! The Orthodox cleric must zealously stand up against blasphemy, just as the holy Hierarch Nicholas stopped the mouth of the heretic... But now, unfortunately, we have become, as the saying goes, ‘shamefully indifferent to both the evil and the good’. And it is precisely in the soil of this indifference, of a kind of feeling of self-preservation, that the heresy of ecumenism has established itself – as also apostasy, that falling away which is becoming more and more evident... Let us remember, brethren, that Christian love embraces all in itself, is compassionate to all, wishes that all be saved and is sorry for, and merciful to, and love every creature of God; but where it sees a conscious assault on the truth it turns into fiery zeal which cannot bear any such blasphemy... And so must it always be, because every Orthodox Christian must always be zealous for God.”²⁵⁹

The Fall of the Serbian Church

Another pressing problem that faced St. Philaret was to define the relationship of ROCOR to the Serbian patriarchate. The relationship between ROCOR and the Serbs had traditionally been very close because of the hospitality extended by the Serbs to ROCOR in the inter-war years. However, important changes in the Serbian Church now necessitated a change in the relationship. For From the time of the election of Patriarch German in 1958, and with the exception of a very few clergy, the communists were in complete control of the Serbian Patriarchate. German himself was well-known as being a member of the communist party of Yugoslavia...

The Serbian theologian Archimandrite Justin Popovich wrote on the catastrophic situation of his Church at this time: “The Church is being gradually destroyed from within and without, ideologically and organisationally. All means are being used: known and unknown, open and secret, the most subtle and the most crude... And all this is skilfully dissolved, but in fact it is the most deadly of poisons with a sugar coating... The most elementary and rudimentary logic demonstrates and proves: cooperation with open atheists, the cursed enemies of Christ and the Orthodox Church of Christ, is illogical and anti-logical. We ask those who seek such cooperation, or already cooperate, or – terrible thought! – compel others to cooperate, with the words of Christ: ‘What communion can there be between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what is there in common between light and darkness? What agreement can there be between Christ and Belial?’ (II Corinthians 6.14-15). Do you not hear the Christ-bearing Apostle, who thunders: ‘If we, or an angel from heaven begins to preach to you that which we have not preached to you, let him be anathema!’ (Galatians 1.8). Or have you, in the frenzy of the atheist dictatorship, gone completely

²⁵⁹ Senina, “And his lot is among the saints...”, *Vertograd-Inform*, № 15, January, 2000, pp. 15-17.

deaf to the Divine truth and commandment of Christ: 'You cannot serve God and Mammon' (Matthew 6.24)?"²⁶⁰

The result of the subjection of the Serbian Church to the communists was predictable: "an alarming tendency on the part of the hierarchy of the 'Mother Church' to abandon true Orthodoxy and embrace heresy... the worst heresy that has ever assaulted the Orthodox Church - the heresy of 'ecumenism'."²⁶¹ In 1965 the Serbian Church entered the World Council of Churches. In September, 1966, two inter-Orthodox Commissions were established in Belgrade to negotiate with the Anglicans and the Old Catholics. In 1967 Patriarch German said to the Roman Catholic bishop of Mostar: "The times are such that our sister Churches have to lean on each other, to turn away from that which divided us and to concentrate on all that we have in common."²⁶² The next year he recognized Catholic marriages, and became one of the presidents of the WCC. In 1971 he signed the following WCC statement in Geneva: "The powerful Breath of renewal will blow into the mighty arena of the Church, as well as into each of her communities; for these are not simple administrative units, but they all constitute a part of the one great Christian Church." In 1985, at a nuns' conference, he welcomed two Catholic bishops "with special honour" into the sanctuary, and then all the conference members. German, a communist party member, established a tradition of Orthodox-Catholic ecumenism that has been followed by all his successors in the Serbian patriarchate.

Patriarch German liked to justify his ecumenism by quoting the Serbian proverb: Drvo se na drvo naslanja; a covek na coveka - "Tree leans on tree and man on man." But the Free Serbs had an answer to this. "We can also quote the proverbs of our people: S'kim si, onaki si. - 'You are like those with whom you associate.' If you find your fellowship with heretics, you begin to share their erroneous thinking and eventually become a heretic. As an American proverb goes: 'Birds of a feather flock together.'"²⁶³

Commenting on the decision of the Orthodox Churches to become "organic members" of the WCC, Fr. Justin wrote: "Every true Orthodox Christian, who is instructed under the guidance of the Holy Fathers, is overcome with shame when he reads that the Orthodox members of the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Conference in Geneva [in

²⁶⁰ Popovich, in *Vestnik Germanskoj Eparkhii Russkoj Tserkvi za Granitsei (Herald of the German Diocese of the Russian Church Abroad)*, № 3, 1992, pp. 15, 16.

²⁶¹ *A Time to Choose*, Libertyville, Ill., 1982, p. 43.

²⁶² Joachim Wertz has provided another possible motive for the Serbian Church's entry into the WCC. He considers that "the main 'practical' reason why the Serbian Orthodox Church joined the WCC was that that body would provide the Serbian Church with visibility in the West and thus forestall any liquidation of the Church by Tito. Also the WCC would contribute to the rebuilding of many of the churches destroyed by the Croatian Ustasha in WWII. The rebuilding of these Churches was very high on the agenda of the Serbian Church. The Croatians wanted to erase the presence of Orthodoxy. The Serbian Church felt it imperative to bring back that presence and VISIBILITY. Similarly the WCC, and individual Western protestant Churches contributed to the building of the new Theological Faculty in the Karaburma section of Belgrade. This can be viewed as a posthumous slap in the face of Tito, who forbade the construction of any church in that neighborhood. He wanted it to be an ideal progressive, socialist community of ugly high rise apartments with no trace of the Church." ("Re: [orthodox-synod] Strange letter", orthodox-synod@yahogroups.com, 26 February, 2003).

²⁶³ *A Time to Choose*, op. cit., p. 47.

June, 1968]... on the question of the participation of the Orthodox in the work of the World Council of Churches, considered it necessary 'to declare that the Orthodox Church considers itself to be an organic part of the World Council of Churches.'

"This assertion is apocalyptically horrifying in its un-orthodoxy and anti-orthodoxy. Was it necessary for the Orthodox Church, that most holy Body of the God-Man Christ, to become so debased to such a pitiful degree that its theological representatives - some of whom were Serbian bishops - have begun to beg for 'organic' participation and membership in the World Council of Churches, which will supposedly become a new 'Body' and a new 'Church', which will stand above all other churches, in which the Orthodox Churches and the non-orthodox churches will appear only as parts. God forbid! Never before has there been such a betrayal and abandonment of our holy Faith!

"We are renouncing the Orthodox Faith of the God-Man Christ, and organic ties with the God-Man and His Most Holy Body: we are repudiating the Orthodox Church of the holy apostles, the Fathers, and the Ecumenical Councils - and we wish to become 'organic members' of a heretical, humanistic, humanized and man-worshipping club, which consists of 263 heresies - every one of which is a spiritual death.

"As Orthodox Christians we are 'members of Christ.' 'Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?' (I Corinthians 6.15). We are doing this by our organic union with the World Council of Churches, which is nothing other than the rebirth of atheistic man, of pagan idolatry.

"The time has finally come for the patristic Orthodox Church of Saint Sabbas, the Church of the holy apostles and Fathers, of the holy confessors, martyrs and new-martyrs, to stop mingling ecclesiastically and hierarchically with the so-called 'World Council of Churches', and to cast off forever any participation in joint prayer or services, and to renounce general participation in any ecclesiastical dealings whatsoever, which are not self-contained and do not express the unique and unchangeable character of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church - the Orthodox Church - the only true Church that has ever existed."²⁶⁴

ROCOR's attitude towards the Serbian Church now began to change. Thus on September 14/27, 1967, Archbishop Averky of Jordanville wrote to Metropolitan Philaret: "With regard to the question of the Serbian Church, whose Patriarch German is a stooge of the communist Tito, as the Serbs themselves are convinced, calling him 'the red patriarch'. We have heard this from many clergy and laity who have fled from Serbia. How can we recognize, and have communion in prayer with, 'the red patriarch', who maintains the closest friendly relations with red Moscow? Cannot our Hierarchical Council make *erroneous* decisions? Do we in the Orthodox Church have a doctrine about the *infallibility of every Council of Bishops*?"

²⁶⁴ *A Time to Choose*, op. cit., p. 53.

Archbishop Averky's attitude to the Serbs was confirmed by the ROCOR Council of Bishops in 1967, which resolved to annul the resolution of the Council of Bishops in 1964 on the preservation of prayerful communion with the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church.²⁶⁵ And in 1970, St. Philaret announced to the Synod that since the Serbian Patriarch German had chosen to serve as Chairman of the World Council of Churches, ROCOR should avoid joint prayer and service with him, while at the same time not making a major demonstration of the fact...²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, communion with the Serbs continued. For many hierarchs and priests of ROCOR had been brought up in Serbia, and out of gratitude felt that the Serbs should not be condemned or excommunicated. To what extent this attitude was truly motivated by gratitude, and to what extent simply by fear of ROCOR's losing its last friends in "World Orthodoxy", is a moot point. In any case, it was contrary to the canons of the Church, which require the breaking of communion with all those in communion with heresy. Such an act would have been truly loving, for true love for the Serbs dictated that it should be pointed out into what an abyss their ecumenism was leading them, an exhortation which would have acquired greater weight by a full break in communion...

The Third All-Diaspora Council

In September, 1974 the Third All-Emigration Council of ROCOR took place in the monastery of the Holy Trinity in Jordanville, New York. There were fifteen bishops present, together with seventy delegates from the clergy and laity. Just as the First Council, held at Karlovtsy in 1921, had defined the relationship of ROCOR to the Bolshevik regime and the Romanov dynasty; and the Second Council, held in Belgrade in 1938 - her relationship to the Church inside Russia; so the Third Council tried to define her relationship to the ecumenical and dissident movements.

As St. Philaret, president of the Council, said in his keynote address: "First of all, the Council must declare not only for the Russian flock, but for the entire Church, its concept of the Church; to reveal the dogma of the Church... The Council must determine the place our Church Abroad holds within contemporary Orthodoxy, among the other 'so-called' churches. We say 'so-called' for though now they often speak of many 'churches', the Church of Christ is single and One."²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Psarev, *op. cit.*, p. 4. Bishop Agathangelus of Odessa writes: "Already on May 19 / June 1, 1967 the following resolution marked "Top Secret" was accepted by our Hierarchical Council in connection with [the Serbian Church's] ecumenical activity: 'In addition to the resolution of the present Council of Bishops on relations with the Serbian Orthodox church, the suggestion of his Eminence the First Hierarch and President of the Council of Bishops Metropolitan Philaret has been accepted and confirmed, that all the Reverend Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad should refrain from concelebration with the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church.' As far as I know, this resolution has never been repealed in a council." (August 21, 2007, <http://guest-2.livejournal.com/294723.html>).

²⁶⁶ Psarev, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

²⁶⁷ Third All-Diaspora Council, 1974, Protocol 1, August 26 / September 8, Synodal Archives, p. 2; quoted in Nun Vassa (Larin) "'Glory be to God, Who did not Abandon His Church', The Self-Awareness of ROCOR at the Third All-Diaspora Council of 1974", <http://www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws/01newstructure/pagesen/articles/svassasobor.htm>, p. 2.

There was much to discuss. In the last decade the apostatic influence of the ecumenical movement had broadened and deepened, and Metropolitan Philaret, had assumed a leading role in the struggle against it through his "Sorrowful Epistles". Under the influence of this leadership, many non-Russians, such as the Greek American Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Boston, had sought refuge in ROCOR, and this movement had been strengthened by the application of the two Greek Old Calendarist Synods to enter into communion with her. Bulgarian, Romanian, American, French and Dutch missions had also joined the Church. ROCOR was no longer an exclusively Russian jurisdiction in the make-up of her members, and she could no longer be seen as simply an outpost of Russian Orthodox anti-communism. She was a multi-ethnic, missionary Church fighting the main heresies of the age on a number of fronts throughout the world.

However, such a vision of ROCOR was not shared by all her hierarchs. Some saw the isolation of ROCOR from other local Churches as necessitated, not so much by the struggle against ecumenism, as by the need to preserve *Russianness* among the Russian émigrés. It was not that the preservation of Russianness as such was not an undoubted good: the problem arose when it hindered the missionary witness of the Church to non-Russian believers. Such phyletistic tendencies inevitably led to a loss of Church consciousness in relation to ecumenism, and to a feeling that ROCOR was closer to Russians of the MP, ecumenist though they might be, than to True Orthodox Christians of Greek or French or American origin.²⁶⁸

Another cause of division was the stricter attitude that ROCOR was now being forced to adopt towards "World Orthodoxy", the Local Orthodox Churches that participated in the ecumenical movement. Most of the hierarchs had passively acquiesced in Metropolitan Philaret's "Sorrowful Epistles", and in the union with the Greek Old Calendarists. But they began to stir when the consequences of this were spelled out by the "zealots" in ROCOR: no further communion with the new calendarists, the Serbs and Jerusalem. The unofficial leader of this group of bishops was Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, who was supported by Bishop Laurus of Manhattan, Archbishop Philotheus of Germany and Bishop Paul of Stuttgart.²⁶⁹ His main opponents were Metropolitan Philaret, Archbishops Anthony of Los Angeles and Averky of Syracuse, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe)²⁷⁰ and the Greek-American Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Boston.

Archbishop Anthony of Geneva was a powerful hierarch whom some suspected of having links with the communists because of his remaining in Yugoslavia after the war. According to one source: "In 1945, being in Serbia, he went over to the MP and

²⁶⁸ See Eugene Pavlenko, "The Heresy of Phyletism: History and the Present", *Vertograd-Inform*, № 13, November, 1999.

²⁶⁹ Nun Vassa, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁰ "In his report to Metropolitan Philaret on 7 December of 1972, Archpriest George Grabbe, who then headed the Synod's External Affairs Department, protested against Bishops Nikon and Laurus having united in prayer with Archbishop Iakovos during the visit of the relics of St. Nicholas to the Greek Church in Flushing, NY. His protest was motivated on the basis of determinations of the ROCOR Councils of Bishops of 1967 and 1971 that its clergy must by all means avoid prayerful communion with hierarchs who were ecumenists, and even more so because ROCOR had accepted clerics who had left these other churches for 'dogmatic reasons'." (Psarev, *op. cit.*, p. 4).

waited for a Soviet passport so as to go to the USSR, but the Soviet authorities took their time with the passport, bestowing on him in the meantime the rank of archimandrite [through Patriarch Alexis I]. But, fed up with waiting for permission to return, [in 1949] the future bishop left for Switzerland to his brother Bishop Leontius, where he was reunited with ROCOR, having received a penance for his joining the MP.”²⁷¹ According to another source, however, Archbishop Anthony, then an archimandrite, left Yugoslavia for Switzerland at the invitation of the Lesna monastery in France; and there is no reason to believe that he was ever an agent of the communists.

Be that as it may, and in spite of the fact that he repented of his membership of the MP, Archbishop Anthony proclaimed that the MP was a true Church and was hostile to those who thought otherwise.²⁷² Moreover, he concelebrated frequently with the heretics of “World Orthodoxy”, and even, in 1986, ordered his Paris clergy to concelebrate with the new calendarists in Greece, and not with the Old Calendarists. He was a thorn in the side of Metropolitan Philaret until the latter’s death in 1985...

In his address to the Council, entitled “Our Church in the Modern World”, Anthony of Geneva declared: “By the example of our First Hierarchs [Anthony and Anastasy] we must carefully preserve those fine threads which bind us with the Orthodox world. Under no circumstances must we isolate ourselves, seeing around us, often imagined, heretics and schismatics. Through gradual self-isolation we will fall into the extremism which our metropolitans wisely avoided, we will reject that middle, royal path which until now our Church has travelled... By isolating ourselves, we will embark upon the path of sectarianism, fearing everyone and everything, we will become possessed with paranoia.”²⁷³

This somewhat hysterical appeal not to separate from the World Orthodox at just the point when they were embarking upon “super-ecumenism” – that is, recognition not only of other Christian denominations, but also of other religions, including Judaism, Islam and various varieties of paganism now represented at the World Council of Churches- was criticised by Fr. George Grabbe: “The report does not mention to the degree necessary, maybe, that life goes on, and the sickness of ecumenism deepens and widens more and more. Condescension, *oikonomia*, must under different circumstances be applied differently, and to different degrees. In doses too great it can betray the Truth.” Then Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles

²⁷¹ Kirillov, May 15, 2006 <http://elmager.livejournal.com/66190.html?thread=283278>; Bernard le Caro, “A Short Biography of Archbishop Antony (Bartoshevich) of Geneva and Western Europe (+1993)”, http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/v1_antony_b.pdf.

²⁷² Witness of the present writer after conversations with the archbishop in October, 1976.

²⁷³ Archbishop Anthony particularly resented the influence of the Greek Old Calendarists and the Greeks within ROCOR. As he wrote to Protopresbyter George Grabbe after the Council: “To trail along behind the Greek Old Calendarists, taking Fr. Panteleimon for a prophet – this I cannot do. From my point, I am deeply convinced that this would be a betrayal of the Church. For you and me who used to have such universal teachers as Metropolitan Anthony and Archbishop Gavriil... Now even though we see the absurdities committed by the Greek Old Calendarists, we are still trying to accommodate and placate them, though we ourselves are slipping into a sect, cutting ourselves off from universal unity” (Psarev, *op. cit.*, p. 8).

recalled that “we have many Greek [Old Calendarist] parishes. Our concelebration with the new calendarists was very bitter for them.”²⁷⁴

The leader of one of the Greek Old Calendarist parishes within ROCOR, Fr. Panagiotes Carras, sent an appeal to the Synod on August 24, 1974 on behalf of all “non-Russian monasteries, parishes, and laity of ROCOR”, in which he called on the ecumenists to be labelled as heretics who had lost the Holy Spirit and who should be subjected to the canonical sanctions that apply to heretics and schismatics. There was no response to this at the time. But nine years later, in 1983, the ROCOR Council of Bishops did anathematize ecumenism in terms that were dictated, it appears, by the Greeks in ROCOR.²⁷⁵

Also discussed at the Council was the phenomenon known as “the dissident movement”. This arose in the second half of the 1960s, as détente developed between the Communist and Capitalist superpowers. It affected both the political sphere (the works of such figures as Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn) and the religious sphere (Solzhenitsyn again, Bishop Hermogenes of Kaluga, the priests Yeshliman, Yakunin and Dudko, the layman Boris Talantov).

Unknown at the time was the adoption of a new long-range global strategy by the Soviet leadership, in which the dissident movement was planned to play an important role. Thus in a memo to the CIA dated 1978 Anatoly Golitsyn wrote: “At the time of the adoption of the long-range strategy in the period 1958 to 1960, there was strong internal opposition to the Soviet régime from dissatisfied workers, collective farmers, intellectuals, clergy, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Jewish nationalists, etc. These oppositionists did not call themselves ‘dissidents’ and nor did the KGB call them ‘dissidents’.

“On the contrary, the KGB and the Party referred to them as ‘enemies of the régime’... The KGB was instructed to adopt new methods to deal with this opposition, based on the experience of the GPU (the Soviet political police) under Dzerzhinsky in the 1920s...

“This entailed the creation of a false opposition in the USSR and other countries... The current ‘dissident movement’ is just such a false opposition designed and created by the KGB...

“The main objectives which the Soviet rulers are trying to achieve through the ‘dissident movement’ are as follows:

“(a) To confuse, neutralise and dissolve the *true* internal political opposition in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

²⁷⁴ Protocol № 4 of the All-Diaspora Council, August 29 / September 11, 1974; Synodal Archives, p. 4; Nun Vassa, op. cit.

²⁷⁵ Psarev, op. cit., p. 8

“(b) To prevent the West from reaching the genuine internal opposition in the USSR by introducing to the West a false KGB-controlled opposition. This explains the easy access of the Western media to the alleged ‘dissidents’;

“(c) To influence the foreign policy of the United States through the ‘dissidents’ in the interests of the Communist long-term strategy and exploit this issue in the strategy’s final phase.”²⁷⁶

Golitsyn was talking mainly about political dissidents. Nevertheless, as Metropolitan Philaret himself suggested, it may be that some of the church dissidents, too, were, if not signed-up agents, at any rate naïve and unwitting tools in the hands of the enemies of the faith, who permitted all their contacts with the ROCOR because they foresaw the corrosive effect such contacts would have.

Two main streams were discernible in the movement, which may be called, recalling the debates of the nineteenth-century intelligentsia, the Westernisers and the Slavophiles.²⁷⁷ The Westernisers were mainly concerned to correct abuses within the Church, to re-establish freedom of conscience and freedom of expression. They sought and received much support in the West, and were in turn much influenced by modern western modes of thought, especially – and in this they departed from traditionally Orthodox modes of thought – Ecumenism. The Slavophiles were less well received and understood in the West. Their main emphasis was on the restoration of traditional Russianness – Russian religion, Russian art and architecture, Russian culture in all its forms, which Soviet culture had so damaged and distorted.

The two streams were not always sharply differentiated and could fuse together in the thought and activity of a single man. Thus Alexander Solzhenitsyn, though usually considered to be a Slavophile, nevertheless shared many of the characteristics of the westernizing dissidents, not only in his human rights activity, but also in his Ecumenism. And, purified of their heterodox elements, both streams could be said to tend (unconsciously as yet) towards the True Orthodox Church, which remained more radical and still more courageous in Her confession than the dissidents and more truly representative of the best of Old Russia than the Slavophiles.

The dissident movement within the Church began, among the clergy, with the 1965 open letter of the Priests Nicholas Yeshliman and Gleb Yakunin to President Podgorny, in which they protested against the subservience of the Church to the State, particularly in not resisting the Khrushchev persecution, in giving control of the parishes to the State-controlled *dvadsatsky*, in the handing over of lists of those baptized to the local authorities, in not letting children and adolescents under 18 participate in church life, and in ordaining only those candidates to the episcopate and

²⁷⁶ Golitsyn, *The Perestroika Deception*, London and New York: Edward Harle, 1995, p. 175.

²⁷⁷ See Roman Redlikh, "Rossia, Evropa i Real'nij Sotsializm" (Russia, Europe and Real Socialism), *Grani (Edges)*, 1986, pp. 265-289; Alexander Yanov, *The Russian Challenge*, Oxford: Blackwells, 1987, chs. 2-4; Victor Aksiuchits, "Zapadniki i Pochvenniki Segodnia" (Westernisers and Traditionalists Today), *Vestnik Khristianskogo Informatsionnogo Tsentra (Herald of the Christian Information Centre)*, № 30, September 22, 1989.

priesthood who were pleasing to the Council for Religious Affairs. This letter was ignored by the patriarchate, and in 1966 both priests were forbidden from serving.

Among the laity, the most significant dissident, as we have seen, was the philosopher Boris Talantov, who was imprisoned for exposing the activities of the Kirov Bishop John in the closing of churches and suppression of believers. He was slandered publicly on the BBC by Metropolitan Nicodemus of Leningrad (who also happened to be a KGB agent with the codename "Sviatoslav" and a secret bishop of the Catholic Church!), and was eventually sent to prison in Kirov, where he died in 1971. In an article entitled "Sergianism, or adaptation to atheism", which had the subtitle "The Leaven of Herod", Talantov denounced Metropolitan Sergius' 1927 declaration as a betrayal of the Church, and the MP as "a secret agent of worldwide antichristianity". Sergianism had not only not "saved" the Church, but, on the contrary, had assisted the loss of true ecclesiastical freedom and turned the Church administration into the obedient tool of the atheist authorities. "Metropolitan Sergius," he wrote, "by his adaptation and lies saved nobody and nothing except himself." And in another samizdat article entitled "The Secret Participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in the struggle of the CPSS against the Orthodox Christian Church" he wrote: "The Moscow Patriarchate and the majority of bishops participate in organized activities of the atheist authorities directed to the closing of churches, the limitation of the spreading of the faith and its undermining in our country... In truth the atheist leaders of the Russian people and the princes of the Church have gathered together against the Lord and His Christ".²⁷⁸

In 1972, Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote an open "Lenten Letter" to Patriarch Pimen, describing the patriarchate as being "ruled dictatorially by atheists - a sight never before seen in two millenia!" "The Russian Church," he wrote, "expresses its concern about any evil in distant Africa, while it never has anything at all to say about things which are wrong here at home." And he went on: "By what reasoning is it possible to convince oneself that the planned destruction of the spirit and body of the church under the guidance of atheists is the best way of preserving it? Preserving it for whom? Certainly not for Christ. Preserving it by what means? By falsehood? But after the falsehood by whose hands are the holy sacraments to be celebrated?"²⁷⁹

Solzhenitsyn's appeal "not to live by the lie" was seen by some to lead logically to the adoption of a catacomb existence for the Church. Thus Fr. Sergius Zheludkov replied: "What are we to do in such a situation? Should we say: all or nothing? Should we try to go underground, which in the present system is unthinkable? Or should we try somehow to accept the system and for the present use those opportunities that are permitted?"²⁸⁰ However, Solzhenitsyn himself neither belonged to the Catacomb Church nor even believed in Her existence. And this position eminently suited those hierarchs of ROCOR, such as Anthony of Geneva, whose attitude to events in Russia

²⁷⁸ Talantov, in "Tserkov' Katakombnaia na zemle Rossijskoj (III)" (The Catacomb Church in the Russian Land (III), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), № 12 (635), December, 2002, pp. 10-11.

²⁷⁹ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, London: Allen Croom, 1986, p. 304.

²⁸⁰ Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

was dictated as much by political as by spiritual or ecclesiological considerations.²⁸¹ They were sincere anti-communists and despised the kowtowing of the MP hierarchs to communism, but would not have dreamed of denying that the MP was a true Church. The position of these hierarchs was threatened by the anti-ecumenist zeal of Metropolitan Philaret, Archbishop Averky and the Boston monastery.

But the expulsion of Solzhenitsyn to the West in 1974 presented them with an opportunity. Archbishop Anthony promptly brought Solzhenitsyn to the Council in Jordanville, where he created a sensation by his rejection of the zealot view and scepticism about the existence of the Catacomb Church. However, Metropolitan Philaret, in his own words, continued “to act more than cautiously in relation to him, and I absolutely do not want to meet him. It seems to me that the affair with him may turn out to be a grandiose farce, with a tragi-comic (or perhaps simply a tragic) end...”²⁸²

Then Anthony himself read a report calling on ROCOR to support the dissidents, in spite of the fact that they were ecumenists and in the MP. He was countered by Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, who, while respecting the courage of the dissidents, objected to a recognition that would devalue the witness of the true catacomb confessors. Also, St. Philaret moved for an official statement that the MP was graceless. According to the witness of a seminarian present at the Council, the majority of bishops and delegates would have supported such a motion. However, at the last minute the metropolitan was persuaded not to proceed with the motion on the grounds that it would have caused a schism.²⁸³

Another important dissident was the Moscow priest Fr. Demetrius Dudko, who conducted open meetings in his church that attracted many and influenced many more. Unlike Solzhenitsyn, he knew of the Catacomb Church, and wrote of it in relatively flattering terms: “We all recognize Patriarch Tikhon and we look on Patriarch Sergius’ [acts] as a betrayal of the Church’s interests to please the authorities. The following (Patriarchs) – Alexis and the present Pimen – only go on the road already opened. We have no other hierarchy. The Catacomb Church would be good – but where is it? The True Orthodox Church – these are good people, morally steadfast; but they have almost no priesthood, and you simply can’t find them, while there are many who are thirsting. And one has to be ministered to by the hierarchy we do have. Immediately the question arises: are they ministering to us? Basically, they are the puppets of the atheists. And another question: at least, are they believers? Who will answer this question? I fear to answer...”²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Many West European members of ROCOR belonged to the NTS, a secret anti-communist political party which was infiltrated by both the KGB and the CIA.

²⁸² Metropolitan Philaret, letter to Protopresbyter George Grabbe, in Nun Cassia (Senina), *Stolp Ognennij: Mitropolit N’iu-Yorkskij i Vostochno-Amerikanskij Filaret (Voznesensky)* (A Fiery Pillar: Metropolitan Philaret of New York and Eastern America), St. Petersburg, 2007, pp. 170, 192.

²⁸³ Fr. Basil Yakimov, “Re: Fundamental Question”, orthodox-synod@yahoo.groups.com, 4 June, 2003.

²⁸⁴ *Posev*, July, 1979; translated in *The Orthodox Word*, September-October, 1979.

Such sentiments were close to the truth, and naturally elicited sympathy in ROCOR. Less well known – because edited out of his books as published in the West²⁸⁵ – was Fr. Demetrius' ecumenism. The right attitude to him would have been to applaud his courage and the correct opinions he expressed, while gently seeking to correct his liberalism and ecumenism. In no way was it right to treat him as if he were a true priest in the True Church, and an example to be followed that was no less praiseworthy than those of the true confessors in the catacombs.

But that is precisely what many in ROCOR now began to do. Thus the 1974 Council declared: “The boundary between preservation of the Church and seductive self-preservation was drawn by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, his lawful *locum tenens* Metropolitan Peter, Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd and the Solovki confessors headed by Archbishop Hilarion (Troitsky). In recent years, this boundary has again been clearly drawn by Archbishop Hermogenes, several priests, among them Nicholas Gainov and Demetrius Dudko, the laypeople of Vyatka led by Boris Talantov, the defenders of the Pochaev Lavra such as Theodosia Kuzminichna Varavva, and many others. This boundary has also been drawn by Solzhenitsyn in his appeal ‘Do not live by the lie!’ Not to live by the lie and to honour the memory of the holy martyrs and confessors of our Church – this is the boundary separating the true Tikhonites from ‘the sergianist leaven of Herod’, as wrote Boris Talantov, the rebukers of the present leaders of the patriarchate who died in prison. In our unceasing prayers for each other, in our love for the Lord Jesus, in our faithfulness to the ideal of the past and future Orthodox Russia, the faithful archpastors, pastors, monks and laymen on both sides of the iron curtain are united. Together they constitute the Holy Church of Russia, which is indivisible just as the seamless robe of Christ is indivisible.”²⁸⁶

This was a serious distortion: to place the confessors of the Catacomb Church on the same level as “dissident” sergianists. A case could be made for considering that Boris Talantov was a true martyr, since he denounced the MP in terms identical to those employed by the Catacomb Church and may well have died out of communion with the MP. But Dudko and Solzhenitsyn did not share the faith of the True Church, and did not join it even after the fall of communism.²⁸⁷ Fr. Seraphim Rose, the famous American theologian-ascetic, also criticized the position of Solzhenitsyn and the pro-MP party.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Personal communication from Monks of Monastery Press, Montreal, January, 1977.

²⁸⁶ *Poslanie Tret'ego Vsezarubezhnogo Sobora Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsei Pravoslavnomu russkomu narodu na rodine (Epistle of the Third All-Emigration Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to the Russian People in the Homeland)*, September 8/21, 1974.

²⁸⁷ In fact, before his death in 2004 Dudko became an open advocate of Stalinism and Putin's neo-Stalinism: “I hope so much for Vladimir Putin now. It seems to me that he is like Joseph Stalin. I treat Stalin with respect, and I think that he was a very wise leader. It is Stalin who established such a powerful country. Russia has never been that powerful since, and there was no tsar in Russia who was able to accomplish the things that Stalin did. He managed to overcome and sacrifice so much for the sake of the country's greatness. I hope that Putin will follow in Stalin's path...” (<http://english.pravda.ru/politics/2002/11/13/39433>; quoted by Nicholas Candela, “[paradosis] the wisdom of an MP priest”, orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com, January 22, 2004).

²⁸⁸ “Let us return to the belief of Solzhenitsyn and all the defenders of the Moscow Patriarchate that the betrayal of her hierarchs does not affect the Church's faithful. This view is based on *an entirely false view*

Voices were heard at the 1974 Council arguing for union not only between ROCOR and the MP dissidents, but also between ROCOR and the schismatic Paris and American Metropolia jurisdictions. Love, they said, should unite us, and we should not emphasize our differences. Metropolitan Philaret, however, quoting St. Maximus the Confessor, pointed out that love which does not wish to disturb our neighbour by pointing out his errors is not love but hatred!²⁸⁹

The metropolitan considered the Americans and Parisians to be schismatics in the full sense of the word. He thought that ROCOR's Epistle to them would not have any influence because it treated the schismatics as equals, without any word of rebuke: they should have been exhorted to return to the True Church.²⁹⁰ And when Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, at another Council, said that ROCOR and the Paris Exarchate had "one common flock", he objected strongly. "What 'common flock' can we have with the Parisians," he wrote to Abbess Magdalena Grabbe of Lesna, "when their head, Archbishop George, when passing by our memorial church in Brussels, spits towards us with the words, 'Ugh, Karlovtsian infection!'... This was seen and heard by my people who were present there... But the exarchate spits not only at our churches, but also at the church order and canons. There they perform marriages on Saturdays and in general whenever they like - so long as they are paid. There they buried an *unbaptized Jew*, as our ROCOR people told us with indignation... What 'common flock' can there be here, and what can we have in common with them? When I was serving in Brussels on a day of mourning, some woman was about to come up to the Chalice. I asked her: had she done confession? Her reply was: "No!" "You cannot have communion." Then she began to raise a tumult: "What's this? All I need is to have a pure conscience", etc... I did not enter into an argument with her, but only thought: "Ach, the Exarchate infection!" She was from the Parisians."²⁹¹

of the nature of the Church which artificially separates the hierarchs from the believing people and allows "church life as normal" to go on no matter what happens to the Church leaders. On the contrary, the whole history of the Church of Christ persuades us of the exact opposite. Who else was it but the Bishops of Rome who led the Church of the West into apostasy and schism and heresy? Is it the fault of ordinary believing Roman Catholics that they, the largest group of "Christians" in the world, are today *outside the Church of Christ*, and that in order to return to the true Church they must not only reject the false doctrines of Rome, but also completely reform their religious mentality and unlearn the false piety which has been transmitted to them precisely by their bishops? Today, it is true, the Moscow Patriarchate allows Roman Catholics to receive its Sacraments and implicitly already teaches the ecumenist doctrine that these Catholics too are "part of the Church". But this fact only shows how far the Moscow Patriarchate has departed from the universal Orthodox tradition of the Church into an erroneous ecclesiology, and how correct the True Orthodox Church is in refusing to have communion with an ecclesiastical body which not only allows its policies to be dictated by atheists, but openly preaches the modern heresies of ecumenism and chiliasm." ("The Catacomb Tikhonite Church 1974", *The Orthodox Word*, 1974, pp. 241-242).

²⁸⁹ See his letter to Fr. Victor Potapov published in Senina, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-52. St. Maximus the Confessor said in this connection: "I want and pray you to be wholly harsh and implacable with the heretics only in regard to cooperating with them or in any way whatever supporting their deranged belief. For I reckon it misanthropy and a departure from Divine love to lend support to error, that those previously seized by it might be even more greatly corrupted." (P.G. 91: 465C).

²⁹⁰ Senina, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

²⁹¹ Senina, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

The metropolitan's increasing isolation was expressed in a letter to Fr. George Grabbe: "I saw how truly alone I am among our hierarchs with my views on matters of principle (although on a personal level I am on good terms with everyone). And I am in earnest when I say that I am considering retiring. Of course, I won't leave all of a sudden, unexpectedly. But at the next Sobor I intend to point out that too many things that are taking place in our church life do not sit well with me. And if the majority of the episcopacy agrees with me than I will not raise the matter of retiring. But if I see that I am alone or see myself in the minority then I will announce that I am retiring. For I cannot head, nor, therefore bear the responsibility for that with which I am not in agreement in principle. In particular, I do not agree with our practice of halfway relations with the American and Parisian schismatics. The Holy Fathers insistently state that long and obdurately continuing schism is close to being heresy, and that it is necessary to relate to stubborn schismatics as to heretics, not allowing any communion with them whatsoever (how Vladyka Anthony's hair would stand on end at such a pronouncement! But I remain unyielding)..."²⁹²

The mid-70s were a critical period when ROCOR's confession of the faith rested in the balance. It was largely due to St. Philaret and the prayers of the Catacomb confessors inside Russia that ROCOR did not fall at this time...

[The Fall of the Dissidents](#)

In 1976 the ROCOR Synod issued an Epistle to the Russian people which, after declaring unity with the Catacomb Church, went on to say to dissident members of the MP: "We also kiss the cross that you have taken upon yourselves, O pastors who have found in yourselves the courage and strength of spirit to be open reproachers of the weakness of spirit of your hierarchs, who have surrendered before the atheists... We know of your exploit, we pray for you and ask your prayers for our flock that is in the diaspora. Christ is in our midst! He is and shall be!"²⁹³

"Christ is in our midst! He is and shall be!" are words that Orthodox priests exchange in the altar after the ordination of the Holy Gifts. Their use here implies the recognition of the dissidents as co-celebrants with ROCOR, members of the same Church. Clearly the influence of the dissidents was having a corrosive effect on the ecclesiology of ROCOR.

In February, 1976 the Matthewite Greek Old Calendarists broke communion with the Russians, claiming that the Russians had broken their promise to give them a written confession that the new calendarists were graceless²⁹⁴, and that Archbishop

²⁹² Senina, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

²⁹³ *Pravoslavnaia Rus' (Orthodox Russia)*, 1976, № 20.

²⁹⁴ The official statements of the ROCOR Synod were indeed weak. Thus on September 12/25, 1974 the Synod declared: "Concerning the question of the presence or absence of grace among the new calendarists the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad does not consider herself or any other Local Church to have the right to make a conclusive decision, since a categorical evaluation in this question can be undertaken only by a properly convened, competent Ecumenical Council, with the obligatory participation of the free Church of Russia." (This was quoted by Metropolitan Philaret in his letter to Archbishop Andreas dated October 5, 1974 (ref. no. 3/50/760)). Again on September 18 / October 1, 1974 the ROCOR Council of Bishops declared: "Manifesting good will [towards the Orthodox Greeks],

Anthony of Geneva was continuing to have communion with the new calendarists.²⁹⁵ This was true; and his ecumenist activities continued even after the break with the Matthewites. At Pascha, 1976, he asked permission for pastoral reasons to serve with the Paris Exarchate.²⁹⁶ In October he again with several heretics at the funeral of Archbishop Nicodemus of Great Britain (the senior priest of the Moscow Patriarchate in London, Fr. Michael Fortounatto, was singing in the choir!). And in May, 1977 he travelled to Birmingham, England to concelebrate with the local Serbs.

The Serbs, as we have seen, had joined the WCC in 1965. Their ecumenism extended to official acceptance of the canonicity of the Anglican Church,²⁹⁷ and they were as fully under the thumb of the communists as the MP.²⁹⁸ In spite of this, Archbishop Anthony, continued to serve with the Serbs, citing the pre-war hospitality of the Serbs to ROCOR in his justification.

In this connection Metropolitan Philaret wrote to him in November, 1977: "I consider it my duty to point out to you, Vladyka, that your assertion that we must thank the Serbian Church for her treatment of us, I fully accept, but only as regards her past – the glorious past of the Serbian Church. Yes, of course, we must keep the names of their Holinesses Patriarchs Demetrius and Barnabas in grateful memory for

the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has called and addressed separate groups of the Church of the Old Calendarists to find the path to make peace and attain fraternal unity. However, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has no canonical power over the Church jurisdictions in Greece and therefore cannot interfere in their life with decisions that would be obligatory in questions of their disagreements."

Although ROCOR officially refused to call the new calendarists graceless, there is evidence that Metropolitan Philaret's personal views were stricter and closer to those of the Greeks. Thus on September 20, 1975, he wrote to Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kition, the leader of the Old Calendarist Church of Cyprus, with whom he continued to have friendly relations even after the Matthewite Synod to which Epiphanius belonged had broken communion with ROCOR: "From the beginning our Russian Church has known that the calendar innovation was unacceptable, and has not dared to move this boundary set by patristic tradition, for the Ecclesiastical Calendar is a support of the life of the Church and as such is fortified by decrees of Holy Tradition.

"However, 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) and taking into account the wretched and self-evident fact of the schism and the frightful punishments, persecutions and blasphemies which those who have cleaved to the patristic piety of Holy Tradition have undergone.

"Thinking in this way, our Holy Synod has decreed that we 'flee' concelebrations with the new calendarist modernists. We do not concelebrate with them, nor do we give permission or a blessing to our clergy for such a concelebration. In order to assure you of the truth of what we say, we inform you that whenever a community in the diaspora is received into our Church, they are required to follow the patristic Calendar of the Orthodox Church..." (from the archives of the True Orthodox Church of Greece)

²⁹⁵ *Kyrix Gnision Orthodoxon (Herald of the True Orthodox Christians)*, February, 1976, pp. 5-12.

²⁹⁶ Psarev, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

²⁹⁷ Thus George Deretich writes: "In Waukegan, Illinois (Feb. 7, 1980),... the pro-Belgrade Bishop Firmilian stated openly in court under oath that Episcopalian clergy are canonical priests recognized by his Orthodox Church" (*Treacherous Unity*, Acel Officeworks, 1998, p. 68).

²⁹⁸ The present writer's father was a British diplomat in Belgrade in the 1950s, and he reported that it was generally accepted in the diplomatic community that Patriarch German of Serbia was a member of the Yugoslav communist party.

their precious support of the Church Abroad at that time when she had no place to lay her head.

“There is no denying that a certain honour is due the Serbian Church for her refusing to condemn our Church Abroad at the parasynagogue in Moscow in 1971, and also on later occasions when Moscow again raised the matter. But then, on the other hand, she did participate in the aforementioned parasynagogue, when it elected Pimen, and the Serbian hierarchs did not protest against this absolutely anti-canonical election, when he who had already been chosen and appointed by the God-hating regime was elected. Our Sobor of 1971 did not, and could not, recognize Pimen, whereas the Serbian Patriarchate recognized and does recognize him, addressing him as Patriarch, and is in full communion with him. And thus she opposes us directly, for we attempt at all times to explain to the “Free World” that the Soviet Patriarchate is not the genuine representative and head of the much-suffering Russian Church. But the Serbian Church recognizes her as such, and by so doing commits a grave sin against the Russian Church and the Russian Orthodox people.

“How can there be any talk here of a special gratitude to her? Oh, if the Serbian Church would, while recognizing our righteousness, likewise directly and openly, boldly recognize the unrighteousness of the Soviets! Well – then there would truly be something for us to thank her for! But now, as it is, while extending one hand to us, she extends her other hand to our opponents and the enemies of God and the Church. If it pleases you, having shut your eyes to this sad reality, to thank the Serbs for such “podvigs” of theirs, then that is your affair, but I am not a participant in this expression of gratitude.

“How dangerous are compromises in matters of principle! They render people powerless in defence of the Truth. Why is it that the Serbian Patriarchate cannot resolve to sever communion with the Soviet hierarchy? Because she herself is travelling along the same dark and dangerous path of compromise with the God-hating communists. True, she has not progressed along that path to the extent that the Soviet hierarchy has, and she attempts to preach and defend the faith, but if the shades and nuances here are quite different, yet, in principle, the matter stands on one and the same level”.²⁹⁹

Archbishop Anthony’s ecumenist actions caused several priests and parishes to leave him for the Matthewites, including those of Fr. Basile Sakkas in Switzerland and of Hieromonk Cassian (Braun) in France, and a parish in England. Metropolitan Philaret expressed disapproval of Archbishop Anthony’s canonical transgressions, and even obtained the removal of the British diocese from his jurisdiction. But he was not in sufficient control of his Synod to obtain his repentance.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Senina, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

³⁰⁰ As he told the present writer in January, 1977, *he had a gun at his head*. And while he obtained the removal of Archbishop Anthony from the British diocese, Anthony was able to place one of his own supporters, Archimandrite Alexis (Pobjoy), as administrator of the diocese. Pobjoy promptly called on the English Orthodox Parish of St. Michael in Guildford to repent to Anthony of their confession against his ecumenism, and anathematized them when they refused, forcing them to flee to the Greek Old Calendarists.

In 1976 the Brotherhood of St. Herman of Alaska in Platina, California began to turn away from its previously zealot course to a markedly softer line in relation to the MP and World Orthodoxy.³⁰¹ They were influenced in this direction partly by the “dissident fever” that was now raging through most of ROCOR, and partly by the “moderate” ecclesiology of the Greek Old Calendarist Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili. However, a still more important influence may have been a series of controversies – on evolution, on the soul after death, on Blessed Augustine of Hippo – conducted exclusively in the “convert” part of ROCOR between the Platina Brotherhood and the Greek-American monastery in Boston. In all these controversies, in the present writer’s opinion, Platina was right as against Boston. But the negative impression that the Platina monks formed of Boston as a result led them into error in the one area of controversy in which the Boston monastery was right – the canonical status of World Orthodoxy and the MP. Arguing that the Boston monastery’s “super-correctness” was leading them to abandon the “Royal Way” as regards the status of the World Orthodox, Platina came out strongly on the side of the liberal wing of ROCOR led by Archbishop Anthony and his idolisation of Fr. Demetrius and the other dissidents.

In 1979, in response to a series of protests by Fr. Demetrius against what he saw as excessive strictness on the part of ROCOR towards the MP, Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, breaking the rule imposed by Metropolitan Anastasy (and reasserted by Metropolitan Philaret) that ROCOR members should have no contact, “even of an everyday nature”, with Soviet church clergy, wrote to Dudko: “I hasten to console you that the part of the Russian Church which lives in freedom beyond the bounds of the homeland, has never officially considered the Moscow Patriarchate, which is recognised in the USSR, as graceless.... We have never dared to deny the grace-filled nature of the official church, for we believe that the sacraments carried out by her clergy are sacraments. Therefore our bishops received your clergy into the Church Abroad in their existing rank... On the other hand, the representatives of the Catacomb Church in Russia accuse us of not wanting to recognise the Moscow Patriarchate as graceless.”³⁰² However, in 1980, Fr. Demetrius was arrested, which was closely followed by the arrest of his disciples Victor Kapitanchuk and Lev Regelson. Then Dudko issued a recantation on Soviet television in which he confessed that his “so-called struggle with godlessness” was in fact “a struggle with Soviet power”. Kapitanchuk and Regelson confessed to having “criminal ties” with foreign

³⁰¹ See especially Fr. Seraphim Rose’s article, “The Royal Path” (*The Orthodox Word*, № 70, 1976), in which he wrote: “The Russian Church Outside of Russia has been placed, by God’s Providence, in a very favourable position for preserving the ‘royal path’ amidst the confusion of so much of 20th-century Orthodoxy. Living in exile and poverty in a world that has not understood the suffering of her people, she has focused her attention on preserving unchanged the faith which unites her people, she has focused her attention on preserving unchanged the faith which unites her people, and so quite naturally she finds herself a stranger to the whole ecumenical mentality, which is based on religious indifference and self-satisfaction, material affluence, and soulless internationalism. On the other hand, she has been preserved from falling into extremism on the ‘right side’ (such as might be a declaration that the Mysteries of the Moscow Patriarchate are without grace)... If there seems to be a ‘logical contradiction’ here... it is a problem only for rationalists; those who approach church questions with the heart as well as the head have no trouble accepting this position...”

³⁰² *Vestnik Zapadno-Evropeskoj Eparkhii (Herald of the Western European Diocese)*, 1979, № 14; *Posev (Sowing)*, 1979, № 12.

correspondents and of mixing religious activity with politics, while Kapitanchuk said that he had “inflicted damage on the Soviet state for which I am very sorry”. Both men implicated others in their “crimes”.

Metropolitan Philaret had been proved right – although many continued to justify Dudko and denounced those who “judged” him. But it was not a question of “judging”, but of the correct discerning of the boundaries of the Church and the correct attitude to those outside it. The metropolitan wrote that the tragedy had overtaken Dudko because his activity had taken place from within the MP – that is, “outside the True Church”. And he continued: “What is the ‘Soviet church’? Fr. Archimandrite Constantine has said often and insistently that the most terrible thing that the God-fighting authorities have done to Russia is the appearance of the ‘Soviet church’, which the Bolsheviks offered up to the people as the True Church, having driven the real Orthodox Church into the catacombs or the concentration camps. This false church has been twice anathematised. His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon and the All-Russian Church Council anathematised the communists and all their co-workers. This terrible anathema has not been lifted to this day and preserves its power, since it can be lifted only by an All-Russian Church Council, as being the canonically higher Church authority. And a terrible thing happened in 1927, when the leader of the Church, Metropolitan Sergius, by his shameful apostate declaration submitted the Russian Church to the Bolsheviks and declared that he was cooperating with them. In the most exact sense the expression of the prayer before confession was fulfilled: ‘fallen under his own anathema’! For in 1918 the Church anathematised all the co-workers of communism, and in 1927 she herself entered into the company of these co-workers and began to praise the red God-fighting authorities – to praise the red beast of which the Apocalypse speaks. And this is not all. When Metropolitan Sergius published his criminal declaration, the faithful children of the Church immediately separated from the Soviet church, and the Catacomb Church was created. And she in her turn anathematised the official church for her betrayal of Christ...

We receive clergymen from Moscow not as ones possessing grace, but as ones receiving it by the very act of union. But to recognize the church of the evil-doers as the bearer and repository of grace – that we, of course, cannot do. For outside of Orthodoxy there is *no* grace; and the Soviet church has deprived itself of grace.”³⁰³

³⁰³ Senina, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-198, 200. A few years earlier, on August 14/27, 1977, Metropolitan Philaret told the present writer: “I advise you, Vladimir, always to remain faithful to the anathema of the Catacomb Church against the Moscow Patriarchate.” And the following is an extract from Protocol № 3 of the ROCOR Sobor, dated October 8/21, 1974: “Bishop Gregory says that to the question of the existence (of grace) it is not always possible to give a final reply immediately. The loss of grace is the consequence of spiritual death, which sometimes does not come immediately. Thus plants sometimes die gradually. In relation to the loss of grace in the Moscow Patriarchate, it would be interesting to make the comparison with the position of the iconoclasts, although the sin of the Patriarchate is deeper. The President [Metropolitan Philaret] says that we cannot now issue a resolution on grace in the Moscow Patriarchate, but we can be certain that grace lives only in the true Church, but the Moscow hierarchs have gone directly against Christ and His work. How can there be grace among them? The metropolitan personally considers that the Moscow Patriarchate is graceless.” (*Tserkovnie Novosti* (*Church News*), № 4 (95), June-July, 2001, p. 9).

Looking at this tragedy from a psychological point of view, we can see that Dudko's vulnerability consisted, not so much in the fear of physical torture, as in the KGB's ability to induce in him a feeling of false guilt, guilt that he had objectively harmed the Soviet State. This tragedy exposed an inescapable dilemma facing all the dissidents: that action aimed to restore the freedom of the Church was necessarily anti-soviet, insofar as the Soviet State and the Orthodox Church represented incompatible aims and ideologies. Therefore every committed campaigner for Church freedom sooner or later had to admit that he was working against Soviet power – if not by physical, at any rate by spiritual, means, and that he had to work outside the political and ecclesiastical institutions of Soviet power. So the failure of the dissidents was the natural consequence of the refusal to obey the Apostle's command: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Corinthians 6.14). They refused to obey Patriarch Tikhon's adjuration to the faithful to have no communion at all with the communists, "the outcasts of humanity". They tried to do good from within an accursed evil - the pact between Metropolitan Sergius and the Communists which, in the words of a samizdat document dating from the early 1970s, "tied the Church hand and foot by imposing on her a loyalty not only to the State, *but mainly to the communist ideology.*"³⁰⁴

The Anathema against Ecumenism

Two ecumenical events combined to elicit a powerful response from ROCOR at this time. 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.³⁰⁵ 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 began with a pagan rite carried out by local Indians around a totem pole that was raised by several members of the Assembly, including Bishop Cyril (Gundyaev) of Vyborg, the present Patriarch of Moscow.³⁰⁶ The 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."

³⁰⁴ *Archives* 12/92, № 8926 March 29, 1972, in *Orthodox Life*, September-October, 1974.

³⁰⁵ See Archbishop Vitaly, "The 1983 Sobor of Bishops", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, August 20 / September 2, 1984, p. 4.

³⁰⁶ Senina, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

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 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..."³⁰⁷

The Synod of ROCOR, also meeting in Canada, 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, 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**."³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ "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.

³⁰⁸ 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*

The Anathema against Ecumenism was seized upon with delight by the True Orthodox not only in ROCOR, but also in Greece and on Mount Athos, and may be considered the single most important ecclesiastical act of the True Orthodox Church in the second half of the twentieth century. For many who had been worried that ROCOR was not being firm and clear enough in her dealings with the ecumenists, it put an end to their doubts and reaffirming their faith in her at a time when the Greek Old Calendarist Church was going through a very difficult period. However, the anathema did not spell out precisely which bodies fell under it and were therefore outside the True Church; and this weakness was exploited by those who, for one reason or another, did not want to see a clear and unambiguous frontier marked out between the Church of Christ and the Church of the Antichrist.³⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the implication of this anathema was clear: all Orthodox Churches that were fully participating members of the WCC fell under it. 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..."³¹⁰

ROCOR priest Alexander Lebedev attacked the validity of the anathema, calling the idea that the anathema strikes down all ecumenists "the heresy of universal jurisdiction". 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.

"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

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.

³⁰⁹ See "Epi Enos Anathematos" (On An Anathema), *Kirix Gnision Orthodoxon (Herald of the True Orthodox Christians)*, February, 1984, pp. 47-56.

³¹⁰ "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).

communion in other Local Churches. To this extent the anathema was only of local significance. It required the convening of the First Ecumenical Council before Arius was anathematized "universally" - and even then, the anathema was not universally received, as the history of the Church in the next fifty years demonstrates.

"It is a different matter when we consider an anathema sub specie aeternitatis, in its mystical, super-terrestrial significance. From that point of view, the anathematization of a heretic begins in the heavens. Thus even before Arius had been "locally" anathematized by St. Alexander of Alexandria, the Lord appeared to his predecessor, St. Peter, with a torn cloak, and in answer to St. Peter's question: "O Creator, who has torn Thy tunic?", replied: "The mindless Arius; he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood" (St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, November 25). So not only Arius, but all those who followed him, had been separated from the Church by the anathema of Her First Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ, years (or rather, aeons) before even the first "local" anathema had been uttered. All heresies and heretics are anathematized "from all eternity" by the eternal Lord, for just as every truth is approved by the Truth Himself from all eternity, so is every lie condemned by Him from all eternity, being condemned with "the father of lies" to the gehenna of fire (Revelation 22.15).

"The task of hierarchs on earth is to discern the decisions of the heavenly Church, and then apply these heavenly decisions on earth, in space and time. As St. Bede the Venerable (+735) writes: "The keys of the Kingdom designate the actual knowledge and power of discerning who are worthy to be received into the Kingdom, and who should be excluded from it as being unworthy" (Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, *P.L.* 94, col. 219). From this point of view, it matters not a jot whether a heretic is anathematized locally or universally, since he has already been anathematized by the heavenly Church. Or rather, it matters in this sense: that if the heretic has been anathematized locally, but this anathema is not accepted by the rest of the Church, then the rest of the Church is under the grave danger of falling under this same anathema. For the local anathema, if it is just, is the reflection of a heavenly anathema; and the anathema of the heavenly Church is universal....

"This explains why, when local Churches anathematized a heresy, they never qualified the anathema (as you, Fr. Alexander, would like to qualify 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 a local Synod of the Church of Rome under St. Celestine; the Monothelite heretics were first condemned by a local Synod, again, of the Church of Rome; and the Papist heretics were first condemned by a local Synod of the Church of Constantinople.

"Consider what St. Maximus said of the Monothelites: "In addition to having excommunicated themselves from the Church, they have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?" Note that the saint says that the heretics have excommunicated

themselves; for as the Apostle Paul writes, "he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself" (Titus 3.11). But the heretics' self-condemnation and self-exclusion from the Church as a mystical organism must be followed by their exclusion from the Church as an external organization, lest others be infected with their heresy. Hence the need for councils of bishops to anathematize them, following the rule: "A heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3.10), and: "If he refuses to listen to the Church, let him be unto you as a heathen and a publican" (Matthew 18.17). And clearly St. Maximus considered that the anathema of the local Church of Rome had validity throughout the Ecumenical Church.

"Administrative matters and moral falls are the business of local Churches and councils. However, heresies of their very nature are of universal significance, having the potential to infect the whole Church. That is why the appearance of a heresy in one local Church is not the business only of that local Church, but of all the local Churches - and every local Church can and must anathematize it.

"Even the anathema of 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..."³¹¹

One ROCOR hierarch rejected this decision - Archbishop Anthony of Geneva. Since 1974, as we have seen, he was the leader of the faction opposing any hardening of ROCOR's attitude towards "World Orthodoxy". Now he ordered the Paris Mission of ROCOR, led by Archimandrite Ambroise Frontier, to concelebrate with new calendarists, and not with Old Calendarists, when in Greece - which caused the whole

³¹¹ V. Moss, "Re: [paradosis] The Heresy of Universal Jurisdiction", orthodox-tradition@egroups.com, October 12, 2000.

mission to leave ROCOR and join the Greek Old Calendarists. He was even accused of giving communion to Roman Catholics.³¹² After the Paris mission left him, Archbishop Anthony began to distribute epistles and “explanations” written by him with the aim of justifying the concelebrations with clergy of the “official churches” that were taking place in his diocese. Unfortunately, the ROCOR Synod was by now too weak to check his harmful influence...

For the great rock of Orthodoxy who had restrained ROCOR from falling into sergianism and ecumenism, St. Philaret, has passed to a better world on November 8/21, 1985. And with his passing the defences against heresy crumbled... This is not surprising if we consider how isolated he was in his own Synod. Even his confidant and close assistant, the conservative Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), would not go so far as him in his condemnation of World Orthodoxy and the MP. As Bishop Gregory’s daughter, Matushka Anastasia Shatilova, recalls: “[St. 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...’³¹³

And yet the Anathema against Ecumenism was now in the Service of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, and thundered out every Orthodoxy Sunday. St. Philaret had done his job; and his incorrupt relics and the frequent miracles performed at his intercession testified that it was a job very well done. From now and to eternity the Anathema stands as a witness to the eternal truth that the Truth is One and the Church is One, and all those who reject it are outside that Truth and that Church...

January 12/25, 2012.

³¹² Thus Matushka Susanna Maklakov writes: “Although the majority of bishops in the Russian Synod in the 80s were *not* in favor of ecumenism and ecumenistic policies (such as giving communion to RCs), Vladyka Anthony of Geneva persisted in this practice and practically ordered his priests to do so also. Fr. Andrew Maklakov was one of them. He of course got on the phone with Metropolitan Philaret and Bishop Gregory Grabbe, who assured him that this position was not correct and that he did not have to obey Archbishop Anthony. So Fr. Andrew defied AB Anthony of Geneva and refused to communicate RCs who asked for Holy Communion in the parishes that Fr. Andrew served in (which were Rome, Baden-Baden, Munich and Copenhagen). We were in Europe from April 1984 until June 1986. During that time, Fr. Andrew never communicated RCs and I am proud of him for his traditionalist Orthodox stance on that issue. Vladyka Anthony of Geneva is an ecumenist. Period. During that time, he was known to concelebrate with certain uniate groups in Rome, allowing seminarians and monastics on the kliros and into the altar freely. I know this firsthand and no one can convince me otherwise...” (personal communication to Fr. Daniel, November 9, 2005).

³¹³ Quoted by Fr. Roman Pavlov.

12. TRUE ORTHODOXY AND THE VENERATION OF SAINTS

It is often said that the glorification of saints in Orthodoxy is different from the canonizations of the Roman Catholics in that Orthodoxy makes no claim to “make” saints. It is God, not man, Who sanctifies and glorifies those who have pleased Him. The Church simply recognizes the God-pleasers in an unbureaucratic manner, without the official process of Roman Catholic canonization requiring the papal seal on each of several different stages. In support of this thesis, the story is often quoted of St. Symeon the New Theologian’s open veneration of his elder, Symeon the Pious, without any official synodal approval. So the veneration of saints, it is argued, is an elemental, grass-roots phenomenon requiring no official approval on the part of the Church hierarchy.

This is true – up to a point. The holiness of the saints is certainly given them by God, not by man. No act of the Church hierarchy confers that holiness upon them. However, everything in the Church, as St. Paul says, must be done “in order”. And there is no part of Church life that is invulnerable to disorder and abuse, and therefore does not require regulation by the shepherds of the Church at some time or other. As regards the veneration of saints, there is one obvious reason why the Church hierarchy must be involved – if not in the complex and bureaucratic manner of the Roman Catholics, at any rate in the giving of a simple “yes” or “no” to their public veneration.

There are several criteria or signs of sanctity, but the first and most essential, without which no man can be counted a saint, is *Orthodoxy of faith*. Whatever other signs of holiness he may have – piety of life, miracles, incorruption of relics – these count for nothing if he died in obdurate heresy or schism. Thus, speaking of false prophets, the Lord said: “Many will say unto Me in that Day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out demons in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? And then I will say unto them: I never knew you, depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity” (Matthew 7.22-23).

Now if a false prophet begins to be venerated, the Church hierarchy clearly has a duty to step in and point out that this veneration is harmful because its object is alien to God. It is not simply that prayers to this so-called saint will not bring the desired results: they may well bring the undesired – nay, disastrous – result of being lured into the prelest’ or spiritual deception that he suffered from, or into the heretical or schismatic society he belonged to. Hence the need for official glorification or canonization – whatever we like to call it – as a safeguard against deception.

It is vitally important that we should get to know the true saints, imitate their example and pray to them. For, as St. Seraphim of Sarov put it with a touch of humour: we will feel pretty lonely if we come into the Kingdom of heaven and don’t know anybody there... Or, as Alexis Khomyakov put it more ominously: we fall away from salvation alone, but we are saved only together – that is, in full communion with all the saints who have been saved before us. Nor is this communion simply a by-product of our salvation, as it were. As Khomyakov says, it is like the lifeblood circulating round the body – and when the circulation stops, the body dies.

St. Symeon the New Theologian compares the communion of the saints to a golden chain stretching back down the ages: "Those who have become saints from one generation to the next through the fulfilment of the commandments take the place of the previous saints and are united to them. They are illumined and become like them through communion with the Grace of God, and they all become a golden chain, each individual being connected with the previous one through, faith, works and love."³¹⁴ This golden chain is not simply a symbol of the state of being saved. It is the *engine* or *mechanism*, as it were, of our salvation. For if the purpose of our life is to become holy as God is holy, how can we achieve this end if we do not attach ourselves to the golden chain, to those who have been holy before us and who can drag us as if by a chain into the Kingdom of the holy through their prayers?

The early Church did not canonize her saints in a formal manner. But from the earliest times every Autocephalous Church had lists of bishops, living and reposed, who were recognized by that Church as having died in the True Faith. These lists are known as diptychs, and constitute another way of confessing the faith; for here, instead of confessing the faith by *defining* it, the Church confesses it by *listing* those bishops who "rightly divide the word of truth". By looking at these lists, and seeing which bishops are included in them and which are excluded from them, we can immediately determine what the faith of that Church is.

The question of who is to be excluded in the diptychs becomes especially important in times of dogmatic controversy. Thus during the Arian controversy the Orthodox were those who commemorated St. Athanasius the Great in the diptychs, while the Arians did not. Again, after the death of St. John Chrysostom, the Church of Alexandria refused to place his name in the diptychs because of his opposition to the actions of Patriarch Theophilus. And although Theophilus' nephew and successor in the see, St. Cyril, was more Orthodox than his uncle, he continued to reject St. John. It was only when the Mother of God appeared to him together with St. John that he recognized his error and restored St. John's name to the diptychs...

In 1008 a Local Synod of the English Orthodox Church canonized St. Edward the Martyr (+979). This act not only testified to the manifest holiness of the young king. It also witnessed to the correctness of the king's struggle against the anti-monastic reaction that had taken place in his reign.

Again, in 1009 the Church of Constantinople dropped the name of Pope Sergius IV from the diptychs, thereby indicating that they did not accept that he was Orthodox (because he included the heretical Filioque in the Creed)...

Again, in 1368, only nine years after his death, St. Gregory Palamas was canonized by Patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, who also wrote his *Life* and composed the service in his honour. This canonization marked the final triumph of the Palamite

³¹⁴ St. Symeon, *Chapters* 3, 3-4.

teaching over the Barlaamite heresy in the Greek Orthodox Church, and incidentally showed that the practice of canonization is by no means alien to the Greek tradition.³¹⁵

Even many centuries after the death of a controversial bishop, the question whether he is truly a saint or not can be important. Thus when the Local Orthodox Churches came to an agreement with the Monophysite heretics at Chambésy in 1992, there was no agreement on whether the fifth-century Pope St. Leo the Great, on the Orthodox side, and Patriarch Dioscurus of Alexandria, on the Monophysite side, were truly saints or not. This shows that true communion in the *faith* is not possible without a simultaneous communion in the *saints*...

Sometimes the Orthodoxy or otherwise of individuals or groups could be determined simply from their attitude to a single prominent confessor. Such was St. Mark of Ephesus in the dying years of the Byzantine Empire, and St. John of Kronstadt in the dying years of the Russian Empire. Different attitudes to St. John continued to distinguish Russian Church jurisdictions until recent times. Thus St. Philaret of New York wrote in 1965: "Of course, our Church Abroad and the so-called American Metropolia cannot be simultaneously the *true* Church – especially after the latter refused to recognize Fr. John of Kronstadt as a saint. The Church is a single spiritual organism, and it is unthinkable that in it there should be such a phenomenon as that one part of it should recognize that which another part does not recognize – even a child can understand this. Consequently, if one of these churches is the True Church, then the other is not."³¹⁶

Although the early Church did not have a formal process of canonization, she did have rules or canons, that urged the veneration of true saints and punished the veneration of false saints. Thus the 20th canon of the Local Council of Gangra declares: "If anyone shall, from a presumptuous disposition, condemn and abhor the assembly [in honour of] the martyrs, or the services performed there, and the commemoration of them, let them be **anathema**...."

Again, Canon 34 of the Council of Laodicea decrees: "No Christian shall forsake the martyrs of Christ, and turn to false martyrs, that is, to those of the heretics, or those who formerly were heretics; for they are aliens from God. Let those, therefore, who go after them, be **anathema**." These canons show that the question of who is a true martyr is vitally important.

However, in our age of ecumenism, indifference to doctrinal truth is usually accompanied by indifference to the question which saints or martyrs are true or false. Thus in 2000 the Moscow Patriarchate "canonized" a long list of combined true and false martyrs. It canonized the true ones because their holiness in many cases could not be concealed even though they condemned the patriarchate and died outside it.

³¹⁵ Other recent saints martyred under the Turkish yoke and officially canonized by the Greek Church include: Philothea (+1589), Patriarch Gregory V (+1821), George of Yannina (Norman Russell, "Neomartyrs of the Greek Calendar", *Sobornost'*, 5:1, 1983, pp. 36-62)

³¹⁶ St. Philaret, in Nun Cassia (Tatiana Senina), *Stolp Ognennij: Mitropolit N'iu-Yorkskij i Vostochno-Amerikanskij Filaret (Voznesensky)* (A Fiery Pillar: Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) of New York and Eastern America), St. Petersburg, 2007, p. 157.

For example, Hieromartyr Victor of Glazov, whose relics are incorrupt and wonderworking, and who said that Metropolitan Sergius' betrayal was "worse than heresy" ... And it canonized the false ones because it had to pretend that you could be a Sergianist and a martyr. In this way the MP fulfilled a prophecy made several years ago by the ROCOR priest Fr. Oleg Oreshkin: "I think that some of those glorified will be from the sergianists so as to deceive the believers. 'Look,' they will say, 'he is a saint, a martyr, in the Heavenly Kingdom, and he recognized the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, so you must be reconciled with it and its fruits.' This will be done not in order to glorify martyrdom for Christ's sake, but in order to confirm the sergianist politics."³¹⁷

Of course, canonising true and false martyrs together has absurd consequences. For example, the KGB Patriarch Alexis of Moscow wrote: "I believe that our martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for us." So a martyr can be a martyr, and pray together with us, even if he died outside the truth! Then in another publication the same Patriarch Alexis stated that the Russian Church Abroad was a schismatic church, and added: "Equally uncanonical is the so-called 'Catacomb Church'." In other words, while rejecting the Catacomb Church, he recognized the martyrs of the Catacomb Church as true saints!³¹⁸

However, St. Paul said: "If a man strive for mastery, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (II Timothy 2.5). And "striving lawfully" means striving for the truth within the True Church. Otherwise, the very concept of martyrdom, which means "witnessing to the truth", would be meaningless. But that is precisely what the "canonizations" carried out by the Local Churches of World Orthodoxy have become - meaningless. For not only do they themselves not confess the truth: very often those whom they canonize very often did not confess the truth. And so the very concept of true sanctity and martyrdom as confessing the truth against falsehood has been lost.

However, there is a gift for True Orthodoxy in all this rigmarole. For here we see one more important criterion distinguishing True Orthodoxy from heretical World Orthodoxy: their attitude to the saints and their canonization or glorification. While the True Orthodox canonize only those whose confession is the same as theirs, the World Orthodox canonize not only their own false-believing heretics, but also those who confessed the truth *against* them in their lives and in their death, thereby witnessing against themselves that the witness of these truly Orthodox martyrs against them was correct and pleasing to God... In this they imitate the Scribes and Pharisees, of whom the Lord said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, that build the sepulchres of the prophets, and adorn the monuments of the just, and say: if we had been in the days of our Fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye are witnesses against yourselves, that you are the sons of those who killed the prophets..." (Matthew 23.29-31)

³¹⁷ "Ierei o. Oleg otvechajet na voprosy redaktsii", *Pravoslavnaja Rus'*, № 23 (1452), December 1/14, 1991, p. 7.

³¹⁸ Perekrestov, "Why Now?" *Orthodox Life*, vol. 44, № 6, November-December, 1994, p. 44.

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13. WHAT IS A TRUE MARRIAGE?

*May Christ the true Bridegroom seal your marriage in the truth of His love.
The Syrian rite of marriage.*

The current debate in England over whether same-sex civil relationships should be promoted to the status of “marriage” will elicit both disgust and astonishment in Orthodox Christians: disgust that men can so confuse light and darkness, good and evil, natural and unnatural, and astonishment that such a violent abuse of language (not to speak of morality) should be permitted in the interests of the gay lobby. However, it must be admitted that it is not only about same-sex relationships that contemporary man seems to be confused, but even about opposite-sex relationships, and in particular about what constitutes a true marriage as opposed to fornication.

The purpose of this article is to explore this distinction according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers...

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow’s *Expanded Christian Catechism* defines marriage thus: “Marriage is the mystery in which conjugal union is blessed, as the image of the spiritual union of Christ with the Church, and in which is asked the grace of a pure unity of soul, blessed child-bearing and the Christian upbringing of children.”

This is a somewhat paradoxical definition, because while every element in it is essential, it leaves out the definitive element according to the Gospel: the *union in one flesh*. For the Lord does not say of married couples: “they are no longer two, but one *spirit*”, but: “they are no longer two, but one *flesh*” (Matthew 19.5). This is by no means to demean the spiritual element in marriage: on the contrary, a *Christian* marriage must be a union in spirit as well as flesh.

Nevertheless, if we seek to define the difference between marriage and other unions between human beings, we are forced to return to that which the Gospel places, without any false shame, in the forefront: marriage is the union of two human beings of different sexes into one flesh, into one physical unit. “Join them in one mind; crown them into one flesh”, as the priest prays during the marriage service.

It is necessary to emphasize that marriage is defined in physical terms in order to preclude the view that would see in sexual union an at best unnecessary and at worse sinful element in the marriage bond. The conception of marriage as the physical union of a man and a woman “into one flesh” “was included,” as S.V. Troitsky writes, “into the official canonical collections of the East. The *Eclogue* of the year 740 defines marriage as the union of two people in one flesh, in one substance. Together with the *Eclogue*, this definition entered into the Slavonic *Kormchaia Kniga*. Balsamon defines marriage as ‘the union of husband and wife into one substance, into one man with [almost] one soul, but in two hypostases’³¹⁹

³¹⁹ Troitsky, *Filosofia khristianskogo braka*, Paris, p. 18.

The Permanence of Marriage

Having said that, it is obvious that not every one-flesh union between a man and a woman constitutes a marriage. St. Basil the Great says: "Fornication is neither marriage, nor even the beginning of marriage."³²⁰ Again, St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the words: "It is by the Lord that a man is matched with a woman" (Proverbs 19.14), writes: "He means that God made marriage, and not that it is He that joins together *every* man that comes to be with a woman. For we see many that come to be with one another for evil, even by the law of marriage, and this we should not ascribe to God".³²¹ Again, Archpriest Sergei Shukin writes: "Let us recall the words of the Savior to the Samaritan woman: 'Thou hast well said, 'I have no husband;' for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband' (John 4.17-18). This shows that from a spiritual viewpoint, not every marriage is a Christian marriage; it becomes Christian only when it has been entered into for the goals defined and established by God."³²²

The words of Fr. Sergei need to be qualified here: since the Samaritan woman was not, at the time of this conversation, a Christian, and did not even belong to the Old Testament People of God, the distinction made here by the Lord was not between Christian and non-Christian marriage, but between marriage and *fornication*. In other words, even among those who are not Christians, there is a real difference, recognized by God, between a lawful union in one flesh, which He calls marriage, and an unlawful union, which we call fornication.

In what does this difference consist? St. John Chrysostom writes: "When we speak of marriage we do not mean carnal union – on that basis, fornication would also be marriage. Marriage consists in the fact that the married woman contents herself with a single husband; this is what distinguishes the courtesan from the free and wise woman. When a woman contents herself during her life with a single husband, this union merits the name of marriage. But if she opens her house not to one man only, but to several bridegrooms, I do not dare to call this behaviour fornication, but I will say of this woman that she is very far behind the woman who has known only one husband. The latter has in effect heard the word of the Lord: 'For that a man will leave his father and his mother and will cleave to his wife, and they will be two in one flesh'; she has cleaved to her husband as if he was really her flesh and she has not forgotten the master who has been given her once and for all; the other woman has considered neither her first husband nor the second marriage as her own flesh; the first has been dispossessed by the second who is in his turn dispossessed by the first; she would not be able to preserve a faithful memory of her first husband while attaching herself after him to another; as for the second, she will not look at him with the appropriate tenderness, since a part of her thought is distributed in favour of the one who has gone. The consequence?... Both of them, the first as well as the second, are frustrated of the esteem and affection which a wife owes to her husband."³²³

³²⁰ St. Basil, *Canon* 26.

³²¹ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily* 23 on Romans, 1.

³²² Shukin, "On Marriages with the Heterodox", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 27, no. 2, March-April, 1977, p. 29.

³²³ St. John Chrysostom, *On Monogamy*, II, 2.

“Marriage consists in the fact that the married woman contents herself with a single husband”. Clearly this constancy is a necessary part of true marriage. But is it sufficient? Is it not possible for a man and a woman to live together permanently, “forsaking all other”, but outside lawful wedlock? Is not the *rite* of marriage, containing that *blessing* which Metropolitan Philaret mentions, also a necessary element? And if so, what kind of rite? What about the elements of consent of the marrying parties, consent of the parents or guardians, consent of the Church, the element of love?

Troitsky’s Thesis

One answer to this series of questions is provided by the canonist S.V. Troitsky, who concludes, on the basis of his study of Roman and Byzantine law, that no religious rite is necessary to conclude a true Christian marriage. As I shall argue later, such a conclusion does not take into account several important facts and is unacceptable from a Christian point of view. However, I shall first quote his answer at some length because of the important and relevant information it does contain:

“From the sovereign character of the family Roman law drew the conclusion that it was not the state that made a marriage a marriage, and not a religious organization, but exclusively the marrying parties themselves, their mutual love, their will, their agreement. Nuptiae solo affectu fiunt, nuptiae consensu contrahentium fiunt, consensus facit nuptias – such was the basic position of Roman and Byzantine, ecclesiastical and civil law in the first 8 centuries of Christian history. Moreover, in more ancient times the religious form of marriage, confarreatio, was necessary not to make marriage valid, but for manus, that is, for the acquisition by the husband of authority over the wife.

“But if marriage is concluded by the marrying parties themselves, then in what does the task of the State in relation to marriage consist? Only in verifying its existence for itself, only in registering the marriage, to the extent that this was necessary for the resolution of various questions of family and inheritance law. And Roman law left it to the will of the marrying parties to choose any form of marriage they liked, contenting itself with the minimum for its own verification.

“In ancient Rome there existed a view with regard to marriage that was the opposite of our own. We have a presumption that those living together are not married. In our time a married couple must itself prove with documents, witnesses, etc., that it is in lawful wedlock. In Rome, by contrast, the presumption was that those living together were married.

“Every permanent sexual relationship of a fully entitled man and woman was seen as a marriage. ‘We must see living together with a free woman as marriage, and not concubinage,’ writes the noted Roman jurist Modestinus. Therefore it was not the marrying parties that had to prove that they were in wedlock, but a third interested party had to prove that there existed some kind of impediment which did not allow one to see this living together as marriage. To put it more briefly, onus probandi lay not on the spouses, but on the third parties. Only when there was a basis for thinking

that it was in the family or property interests of the parties to present a temporary relationship as marriage was the question of the formal criteria of marriage raised. But even in this case Roman law contented itself with the minimum. For this it was sufficient, for example, to show that there had been de facto living together for a year, the testimonies of witnesses that the parties had indeed agreed to marry or to call each other Mr. and Mrs., that some kind of marital rite had been performed, the presentation of documents with regard to the dowry, etc. In a word, speaking in legal terms, in Rome the participation of the State in the conclusion of a marriage did not have a constitutive, but only a declarative character.

“Byzantine legislation adopted the same point of view until the end of the 9th century. The constitution of the Emperors Theodosius and Valentinian in 428 says that for the validity of marriage neither a wedding feast is necessary, nor documents on a dowry, nor any festivity, since no law hindered the marriage of fully entitled people. Marriage acquired validity by means of agreement and the testimony of witnesses. Although Justinian, in his novella 74 of December, 537, prescribed that middle-class people should go to church to conclude their marriage, this demand was based on considerations, not of a religious, but only of an economic character, which is indicated by the fact that the very separation of this class of people was in accordance with their property census. And indeed, Justinian demanded that middle-class people should go to church not in order to be crowned, but only in order to draw up a document on marriage in front of an ecclesiastical lawyer and three or four clergy as witnesses. But even this formality did not last long, and on December 11, 542, novella 117 (ch. 4) freed even middle-class people from this obligation. Only upper-class people (illustres et senatores), again for reasons having to do with property, had to write documents on the dowry, while the lower classes were not obliged to write any documents at all. In the same novella 74 (chapter 5), Justinian gave the significance of an optional form of marriage, not to crowning, but to the oath ‘to take as my wife’ while touching the Bible. Only in a legislative collection of the 8th century, more precisely: in the collection of 741 of the iconoclast emperors Leo the Isaurian and Constantine Copronymus known as the Eclogue, was a blessing as a juridical form of concluding a marriage mentioned for the first time. But even here a blessing is not an obligatory form for the conclusion of a marriage, but only one of four forms of marriage, the choice of which depends on external circumstances and the will of the marrying parties; in other words, here a Church blessing is only an optional form of marriage, and even then not always, but only in case of necessity, and it is precisely the Eclogue that prescribes that marriage must be concluded by means of the drawing up of a document of a definite form, and when, as a consequence of the poverty of the spouses, it is impossible to draw up the document, the marriage can be concluded either through the agreement of the parents, or through a Church blessing, or through the witness of friends (Eclogue, II, 1,3,8). It is exactly the same with crowning; it is an optional form of marriage, say also the later laws of the Byzantine emperors - the Prochiron of 878 (IV, 6,14,17,27), the Epanagoge of 886 (XVI, 1) and the collection known as Blastaris’ Syntagma of 1335 (G., 2, translation of Ilyinsky, p. 103). ‘Marriage,’ we read in Blastaris, ‘is concluded by means of a blessing, or crowning, or an agreement’.

“That is how the ancient Church, too, looked on the form of marriage. The basic source of the Church’s teaching on marriage, the Bible, does not say that the institution of marriage arose some time later as something established by the State or the Church. Here we find another teaching on marriage. Neither the Church nor the State is the source of marriage. On the contrary: marriage is the source of both the Church and the State. Marriage precedes all the social and religious organizations. It was established already in Paradise, it was established by God Himself. God brings the woman to Adam, and Adam himself proclaims his marital union independently of any earthly authority, even the authority of parents (Genesis 2.24; cf. Matthew 19.6). Thus the first marriage was concluded ‘by the mercy of God’. In the first marriage the husband and wife are the bearers of the highest earthly authority, they are sovereigns to whom the whole of the rest of the world is subject (Genesis 1.28). The family is the first form of the Church, it is the ‘little Church’, as Chrysostom calls it, and at the same time it is the source also of the State as an organization of power, since according to the Bible the basis of every authority of man over man is to be found in the words of God on the authority of the husband over the wife: ‘he will be your lord’ (Genesis 3.16). Thus the family is not only a little Church, but also a little State. And if that is so, then the relationship of the family with the Church and the State must have a character of equality, the character of international and inter-Church relations. Therefore the performers of marriage are considered in the sources of the Church’s teaching to be the spouses themselves, and the participation of a representative of authority, whether of the Church or of the State, is not an essential element of marriage, is not a condition of its validity. In the whole Bible, both in the Old and in the New Testaments, we do not find a single word on any kind of obligatory form of marriage, although here we do find many prescriptions of a ritual character. The relationship of the Church and the State to marriage is expressed not in its conclusion, but only in its verification, in its recognition as an already accomplished fact. Just as the recognition of authority in a State on the part of another State does not give this authority new rights, but is only the condition of normal relations between these States, so the participation of a representative of society, whether of the Church or of the State, is the condition of normal relations between them and the new family.

“Therefore the relationship of the Church to marriage was one of recognition. This idea is well expressed in the Gospel account of the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 1.1-11). Reference is sometimes made to this account as a proof of the teaching that the accomplisher of marriage is the priest. In fact, the Gospel account is not in agreement with this point of view. The Gospel makes no mention whatsoever of the participation of Christ in the rite of the conclusion of the marriage. Christ came with His apostles as a guest; he was invited to the wedding feast. But participation in the wedding feast was, generally speaking, an expression of the recognition of marriage on the part of society, and the presence of Christ and the apostles had the significance of a recognition of the Old Testament institution of marriage on the part of the new Church.

“This is also how the ancient Christian Church herself looked on the form of marriage. Her teaching on the form of marriage coincides with the teaching of the Bible and Roman law. Therefore the ancient Christians, who did not permit the slightest compromise with the State pagan religion and preferred a martyr’s death to

participation in the smallest pagan rite, entered into marriage in the time of the persecutions and later in exactly the same way as the other citizens of the Roman State. 'They, that is, the Christians, conclude marriage in the same way as everyone,' says an ancient Christian writer of the 2nd century in the *Epistle to Diognetus* (V, 6). 'Each of us recognizes as his wife the woman whom he took in accordance with the laws published by you (i.e. the pagans),' says Athenagoras in his *Apology* (33, P.G. 6:965) submitted to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (166-177). St. Ambrose of Milan says that Christians take wives 'in accordance with the tablets', that is, in accordance with the Roman laws of the 12 tablets (*On the Institution of Virginitiy*, 6; P.L. 16:316). Chrysostom says definitively: 'Marriage is concluded in no other way than by agreement according to the laws' (*Homily 56 on Genesis*, 29; P.G. 54:488). The first canon of the Council of Laodicea demands that marriage should be concluded only 'freely and lawfully', that is, in accordance with the Roman laws. The ancient Church completely assimilated the basic teaching of Roman marital law, that marriage is concluded by the spouses themselves, that *consensus facit nuptias*. This teaching is found among the most authoritative representatives of Church teaching both in the East and in the West, for example, in John Chrysostom, Balsamon, Ambrose of Milan, Blessed Augustine, Isidore, Pope Nicholas I, and others.

"Finally, we find the same teaching in the official collections of Byzantine law which have been adopted by the Orthodox Church."³²⁴

And yet for many centuries now, in both East and West, a marriage that has not been performed by a priest in Church is considered invalid by Christians. So why did the change take place, if it did indeed take place? Or perhaps Troitsky is overlooking certain points...

The Role of the Church

Let us return to the marriage in Cana. Troitsky asserts that Christ's presence there signified no more than His recognition of the validity of Old Testament marriage.³²⁵ And yet the tradition of the Church sees more in it than that: not a recognition merely, but a blessing, the addition of a Divine element that was not there before, the changing of the cold and watery element of pre-Christian marriage into the soberly intoxicating element of Christian marriage.

Moreover, it is going beyond the evidence to suppose that Christ was merely a passive spectator at the marriage. We are told that He and His apostles were "invited", which implies a certain desire for His presence on the part of the spouses, a desire which must have been the stronger in that the bridegroom was himself an apostle, St. Simon the Zealot. In response to this active desire on the part of man for the

³²⁴ Troitsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-181.

³²⁵ He quotes the following texts in his favour: (i) "He brings a gift in order to honour the work" (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 4 on Isaiah* 6.1; P.G. 56:246); (ii) "to confirm that He Himself established marriage (in Paradise)" St. Augustine, *On John*, 9.2); (iii) "He is present here as one invited to the wedding feast, which took place already after the celebration of the marriage, and by His presence He witnesses that marriage concluded in accordance with the laws and customs of the Hebrew people is a true, God-pleasing marriage." (Pavlov, *50-aia glava Kormchej Knigi*, Moscow, 1887, p. 58).

participation of God, is it likely that God would not respond, would refuse to play any active role Himself?

This was certainly not the view of, for example, St. Gregory the Theologian, who says to those preparing to be baptised: "Are you not yet married in the flesh? Fear not this consecration; you are pure even after marriage. I will take the risk of that. I will join you in marriage. I will lead in the bride. We do not dishonour marriage because we give a higher honour to virginity. I will imitate Christ, the pure Bridegroom and Leader of the Bride, as He both worked a miracle at a wedding, and honours marriage with His Presence."³²⁶ This passage, as well as attributing an active role to Christ as "Leader of the Bride", attributes an analogous role to the Christian priest. Just as God led Eve to Adam in Paradise, thereby making them man and wife, so did Christ at Cana and so does every Christian priest at every Christian marriage. That it is God Who is the initiator and consecrator of true marriage is confirmed by other patristic writings, some of which are quoted by Troitsky himself. Thus Tertullian writes: "Marriage takes place when God unites two into one flesh".³²⁷ And St. John Chrysostom writes: "God unites you with your wife".³²⁸ As it is expressed in a Novella of Emperor Alexis I, those being married "receive God", Who "walks amidst those being united".³²⁹ Again, Metropolitan Cyprian of Kiev (1376-1406) writes in his service book that "husband and wife are united by Thee [God]".

Troitsky asserts that the early Church did no more than recognize the validity of marriages performed according to Roman law. And yet the very earliest witness we have to the early Church's practice implies rather more than that. Thus St. Ignatius the Godbearer writes: "It is right for men and women who marry to be united with the knowledge of the bishop (μετα γνωμης του Επισκοπου), that the marriage may be according to the Lord and not according to lust (κατα Κυριον και μη κατ' επιθυμιαν)."³³⁰ This shows that "marriage as a sacramental action has an apostolic origin, or, as Stavrinou indicates, 'marriage from the beginning was sanctified by the Church, being accomplished by her prayers and blessing'".³³¹

It may be that in the early Christian centuries there was no specific rite of marriage carried out in the Church, and that Christians continued to be married according to the non-Christian procedures of the pagan Roman empire. But this is in no way implies that the Church was merely a passive spectator, any more than Christ was a passive spectator at Cana. If the marriage had to be "in the Lord", in the words of the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 7.39), and "with the knowledge of the bishop", as St. Ignatius says, then it is clear that some Episcopal screening was carried out beforehand to ensure that the marriage would not be contrary to the Church's ethical and canonical norms. Moreover, the Church then added her own seal and blessing to the marriage performed outside her walls, if only by communicating the married

³²⁶ St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on Holy Baptism*, 18.

³²⁷ Tertullian, *On Monogamy*, 9.

³²⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, 4; P.G. 62:135.

³²⁹ *Athenian Syntagma*, V, 286-291; quoted in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

³³⁰ St. Ignatius, *To Polycarp*, 5.

³³¹ Ioannis Kogkoulis, Khristos Oikonomos, Panagiotis Skaltstis, *O Gamos*, Thessalonica, 1996, p. 187 (in Greek).

couple *as* a couple in the Body and Blood of Christ. In a somewhat similar way, an emperor was proclaimed emperor for the first time outside the walls of the Church, but then received the blessing and anointing of the Church within them.³³²

Do the early sources betray any embryonic elements of a specifically Christian rite of marriage? Some have seen a marital blessing in the following remark of Clement of Alexandria: "On whom does the presbyter lay his hand? Whom does he bless? Not the woman decked out, but another's hair [i.e. a wig], and through it another head."³³³

Less ambiguous are the words of Tertullian: "[The happy marriage is the one that] the Church joins, which the offering [*oblatio*, i.e. the Eucharist] strengthens, which the blessing [*benedictio*] seals, which the angels proclaim and which the heavenly Father confirms".³³⁴ "Secret unions [*occultae conjunctiones*], that is, ones that have not been professed beforehand in the Church, are judged to be equivalent to fornication and adultery".³³⁵

As Troitsky himself points out, both the Byzantine Church and the State characterized secret marriages (*λαθρογαμια*) as fornication.³³⁶ This is enough to refute his suggestion (which agrees with Roman Catholic, but not Orthodox teaching) that marriage is concluded by the spouses themselves. For marriage is a public event with public consequences, and as such has to be sealed by society as a whole – which, for a Christian, must include the society of the Church. The Church in her wisdom did not reject the secular rite of the Roman state, but vetted who should participate in it beforehand and sealed it afterwards through her own grace-filled rites. This included, as a minimum, the Divine Liturgy insofar as the latter is, in the words of St. Symeon of Thessalonica, "the end of every rite and divine mystery".³³⁷

This fact becomes more and more indisputable as we turn from the pre-Nicene to the post-Nicene sources. Thus St. Basil the Great calls marriage "a yoke through a blessing".³³⁸ Again, St. Gregory the Theologian asks Olympiada to forgive him for not being present at her wedding, but says that in spirit he, as a priest, places the right hands of the couple on each other and both in the hand of God.³³⁹ Again, St. Timothy of Alexandria answers a question relating to a priest being invited to perform a wedding, which also involves celebrating the liturgy.³⁴⁰ Again, Synesius of Ptolemais,

³³² "It is not in vain," writes Pavel Kuzmenko, "that marriage crowning involves the laying of wreaths similar to royal crowns on the heads of the newly married. It symbolizes that the family is a small kingdom in the earthly sense and a small church in the spiritual sense" (*Nashi Traditsii: Kreschenie, Venchanie, Pogrebenie, Posty*, Moscow: Bukmen, 1996, p. 106 .) During the coronation of the Russian Tsars, the bystanders were showered with gold and silver, symbolizing the betrothal of the Tsar with the State. See Fr. Nikita Chakorov (ed.), *Tsarskie Koronatsii na Rusi*, Russian Orthodox Youth Committee, 1971, p. 22 .

³³³ Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, III, 11; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 188.

³³⁴ Tertullian, *To his Wife*, II, 9; P.L. 1:1302A; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 189.

³³⁵ Tertullian, *On Chastity*, 4; P.L. 2:1038-1039; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 189.

³³⁶ References in Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

³³⁷ St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Peri tou timiou nomimou gamou*, P.G.155: 512D.

³³⁸ St. Basil the Great, *On the Hexaemeron*, P.G. 29:160B; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.* p. 190.

³³⁹ St. Gregory the Theologian, *Letter 183*, P.G. 37:313; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.* p. 190.

³⁴⁰ St. Timothy, *Canon 11*.

a married bishop of the early 5th century, tells us that he took his wife from the hand of Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria.³⁴¹ Again, St. Augustine calls marriage, not simply a marital bond, but an “indissoluble sacrament”.³⁴²

From the above examples it is clear that “in the first years of Christianity the dominant position was held by political marriage with the thought that it was recognized by the Roman State, but the Church blessed the faithful newly weds *in parallel* with some form of priestly act.”³⁴³

Troitsky claims that the 38th, 40th and 42nd Canons of St. Basil the Great prove that “if the parties started to live together before marriage, their fornication is turned into marriage of itself, without any rite, immediately the external obstacles are removed”.³⁴⁴ However, a closer examination of the text of the canons proves only that a marriage has to be public and approved by parents or masters (in the case of slaves) in order to be valid. It says nothing about the presence or absence of a rite.

Troitsky appears to be on sounder ground when he says that second marriages, except in the case when the spouse’s first marriage was terminated through the adultery of his spouse, did not involve the participation of the Church at the beginning, being, in St. Theodore the Studite’s words, “civil”.³⁴⁵ However, insofar as the twice-married couple continued to be members of the Church and partake of the Eucharist, we cannot assert that the Church had no part to play even in those marriages; for, as we have seen above, admission of a couple to communion constitutes a seal on the marriage, its sanctification, and not simply a recognition that the couple are already married. Later, the Church introduced a rite for second marriages, though without crowning and with a penance of two years without communion.³⁴⁶

One way of looking at the matter is to see the civil marriage for Christians as not so much a marriage, as a betrothal, and the Christian rite (even if, at the beginning, that consisted in little more than the blessing of the bishop and participation in the Eucharist) as the marriage itself.

This is the approach adopted by P. Kuzmenko: "In Christianity marriage has been blessed since apostolic times. Tertullian, the church writer of the third century, says: 'How can we represent the happiness of Marriage, which is approved by the Church, sanctified by her prayers and blessed by God!'

³⁴¹ Synesius, *Letter 105*, P.G. 66:1485A; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.* p. 190.

³⁴² St. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, I, 10, 11; P.L. 44: 419; Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.* p. 191.

³⁴³ Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 192.

³⁴⁴ Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

³⁴⁵ Troitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

³⁴⁶ Does this penance indicate that the second marriage is sinful? No; for the Apostle Paul counselled younger widows to marry, and he would hardly have counselled them to commit a sin. Also, St. Xenia of St. Petersburg (January 24) once counselled a just-widowed man to marry again. And even some of the saints, such as Theodore of Yaroslavl (September 19), appear to have entered into blessed second marriages. However, the text of the service does point to a certain lack of temperance in the spouses that makes this second marriage necessary for them; and for this penitence is fitting.

"In antiquity the rite of marriage was preceded by betrothal, which was a civil act and was performed in accordance with local customs and decrees, insofar - it goes without saying - as this was possible for Christians. Betrothal was performed triumphantly in the presence of many witnesses who ratified the marriage agreement. The latter was an official document defining the property and legal relations of the spouses. Betrothal was accompanied by a rite of the joining together of the hands of the bride and bridegroom. Moreover, the bridegroom gave the bride a ring of iron, silver or gold, depending on his wealth. Clement, bishop of Alexandria, says: 'The man must give the woman a golden ring, not for her external adornment, but so as to place a seal on the household, which from this time passes into her control and is entrusted to her care.'...

"Towards the 10th and 11th centuries betrothal lost its civil significance, and this rite was performed in the church, accompanied by the corresponding prayers. But for a long time yet betrothal was performed separately from crowning and was united with the service of Mattins. Finally the rite of betrothal received its unique form towards the 17th century.

"In antiquity the rite of marriage crowning itself was performed by a special prayer, by the bishop's blessing and by the laying on of hands in the church during the Liturgy. A witness to the fact that marriage crowning was introduced in antiquity into the rite of the Liturgy is the presence of a series of corresponding elements in both contemporary rites: the opening exclamation, 'Blessed is the Kingdom...', the litany of peace, the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel, the extended litany, the exclamation: 'And vouchsafe us, O Master...', the singing of 'Our Father' and, finally the drinking from a common chalice. All these elements were evidently taken from the rite of the Liturgy and are similar to the Eucharist (the sacrament of Communion)."³⁴⁷

Concerning this rite of crowning, which became the most characteristic element of the rite of marriage, as opposed to betrothal, Fr. John Meyendorff writes: "Since the fourth century a specific solemnization of the sacrament is mentioned by Eastern Christian writers: a rite of 'crowning', performed during the Eucharistic Liturgy. According to St. John Chrysostom, the crowns symbolized victory over 'passions'... From a letter of St. Theodore the Studite (+826) we learn that crowing was accompanied by a brief prayer read 'before the whole people' at the Sunday Liturgy, by the bishop or the priest. The text of the prayer, given by St. Theodore, is the following: 'Thyself, O Master, send down Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling place and unite these Thy servant and Thy handmaid. And give to those whom Thou unitest harmony of minds; crown them into one flesh; make their marriage honourable; keep

³⁴⁷ Kuzmenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114. This was the situation in the Eastern Church. In the West in ancient times, writes D.S. Bailey, "the nuptials of the faithful continued to take place with the formalities customary at the time. The traditional ceremonies were not modified, save for the omission of non-essentials which were either unedifying in themselves or redolent of pagan superstition, and the substitution of the Eucharist and the benediction for the sacrifice and other accompanying religious observances. Hence the Church Orders contain no Christian marriage rite, nor is there any reference to one in the literature of the period, while the ancient sacramentaries merely give the prayers of the nuptial Mass and the blessing." (*The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought*, London: Longmans, 1957, pp. 74-75).

their bed undefiled; deign to make their common life blameless' (*Letters I, 22, P.G. 99, col. 973*). The liturgical books of the same period (such as the famous *Codex Barberini*) contain several short prayers similar to that quoted by St. Theodore. These prayers are all meant to be read during the Liturgy. ¹³⁴⁸

From around, the rite of crowning began to be separated from the Liturgy. The reason for this was that the Emperor Leo VI made it compulsory to be married in Church by crowning³⁴⁹, which created the problem of how Christians who for one reason or another were not considered worthy of receiving Communion were to be married. If marriage continued to be an integral part of the Liturgy and was sealed by Communion, such people could not be married and therefore might well fall into the sin of fornication. In order to avoid this, the Church separated marriage from the Liturgy, but introduced the common cup of wine into the rite as a reminder of the former link with the Liturgy, when the newly-weds would receive Communion. "From the 12th century, we have two cups, the eucharistic and the 'common', from which those who were unworthy to commune drank."³⁵⁰

In the 15th century St. Symeon of Thessalonica summed up the teaching of the Church on the nature of a true marriage: "And immediately (the priest) takes the holy chalice with the Presanctified Gifts and exclaims: 'The Presanctified Holy things for the Holy'. And all respond: 'One is Holy, One is Lord', because the Lord alone is the sanctification, the peace and the union of His servants who are being married. The priest then gives Communion to the bridal pair, if they are worthy. Indeed, they must be ready to receive Communion, so that their crowning be a worthy one and their marriage valid. For Holy Communion is the perfection of every sacrament and the seal of every mystery. And the Church is right in preparing the Divine Gifts for the redemption and blessing of the bridal pair; for Christ Himself, Who gave us these Gifts and Who is the Gifts, came to the marriage (in Cana of Galilee) to bring to it peaceful union and control. So that those who get married must be worthy of Holy Communion; they must be united before God in a church, which is the House of God, because they are children of God, in a church where God is sacramentally present in the Gifts, where He is being offered to us, and where He is seen in the midst of us.

"After that the priest also gives them to drink from the common cup, and the hymn 'I will take the cup of salvation' is sung because of the Most Holy Gifts and as a sign of the joy which comes from divine union, and because the joy of the bridal pair comes from the peace and concord which they have received.

"But to those who are not worthy of communion - for example, those who are being married for a second time, and others - the Divine Gifts are not given, but only the

³⁴⁸ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

³⁴⁹ *Novella 89* (893). Leo introduced this law because he himself wanted to marry a second time - but with crowning, which is forbidden for second marriages by the Church. So he made crowning compulsory by law for *all* kinds of marriages.

³⁵⁰ Kogkoulis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 48. The authors continue: "The common cup reminds [them] of the joy of the marriage in Cana and in general constitutes a symbolical act, so that the newly-weds should know that they are beginning their life with the prayer of the Church that they should live inseparably and should together share in all the good things and all the joys and sorrows which they will meet".

common cup, as a partial sanctification, as a sign of good fellowship and unity with God's blessing".³⁵¹

It follows that the idea that there can be Christian marriage outside the Church is mistaken. It is true that there can be marriage outside the Church – that is, a sexual union that is not counted as fornication. Even there, certain criteria must be met: the free consent of the spouses, conformity to the laws of the State, public recognition by parents or guardians.

But for a Christian more is required: the seal of the Church, which is conferred by, at a minimum, the blessing of the priest and the reception of Divine communion *as a couple* in the Body and Blood of Christ.

When the Bolsheviks introduced civil marriage with divorce-on-demand into Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church resisted this innovation fiercely, insisting that civil marriage was not enough for a Christian. The leader of the Russian Church at the time was New Hieromartyr Tikhon. Before he became Patriarch, when he was still Archbishop in America, he wrote: "In order to be acceptable in the eyes of God, marriage must be entered into 'only in the Lord' (I Corinthians 7.39), the blessing of the Church must be invoked upon it, through which it will become a sacrament, in which the married couple will be given grace that will make their bond holy and high, unto the likeness of the bond between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5.23-32), which will help them in the fulfilment of their mutual duties. Sometimes, as in this country, for instance, Church marriage is deemed unnecessary. But if without the help of God we can accomplish no perfect and true good (John 15.5), if all our satisfaction is from God (II Corinthians 3.5), if God produces in us good desires and acts (Philippians 2.14), then how is it that the grace of God is unnecessary for husband and wife in order to fulfil their lofty duties honourably? No, a true Orthodox Christian could not be satisfied with civil marriage alone, without the Church marriage. Such a marriage will remain without the supreme Christian sanction, as the grace of God is attracted only towards that marriage which was blessed by the Church, this treasury of grace. As to civil marriage, it places no creative religious and moral principles, no spiritual power of God's grace, at the basis of matrimony and for its safety, but merely legal liabilities, which are not sufficient for moral perfection."³⁵²

Remarriage and Divorce

Troitsky's thesis that the Church simply accepted the State's definition of marriage without more ado would appear to have stronger evidence in the case of second marriages, insofar as these did not involve the participation of the Church at the beginning, being, in St. Theodore the Studite's words, "civil".³⁵³ However, insofar as the twice-married couple was then admitted to the Eucharist, we cannot assert that the Church had no part to play in those marriages; for, as we have seen, admission of a couple to communion constitutes a seal on the marriage, its sanctification, and not

³⁵¹ St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Against the Heresies and on the Divine Temple*, 282, P.G. 155:512-3.

³⁵² Hieromartyr Tikhon, "An Address of the Right Reverend Tikhon", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 37, no. 4, July-August, 1987.

³⁵³ Troitsky, op. cit., p. 184.

simply a recognition that the couple are already married. Later, the Church introduced a rite for second marriages, though without crowning and with a penance of two years without communion.

Does this penance indicate that the second marriage is sinful? No; for the Apostle Paul counselled younger widows to marry, and he would hardly have counselled them to commit a sin. Also, St. Xenia of St. Petersburg (January 24) once counselled a just-widowed man to marry again. And even some of the saints, such as Theodore of Yaroslavl (September 19), appear to have entered into blessed second marriages. However, the text of the service does point to a certain lack of temperance in the spouses that makes this second marriage necessary for them; and for intemperance penitence is, of course, fitting.

Thus St. Epiphanius of Cyprus writes: "He who cannot keep continence after the death of his first wife, or who has separated from his wife for a valid motive, such as fornication, adultery, or another misdeed, if he takes another wife, or if the wife takes another husband, the divine word does not condemn him nor exclude him from the Church or the life; but she tolerates it rather on account of his weakness."³⁵⁴

As with marriage in general, so in relation to divorce and remarriage, the Church did not simply adopt the State's legislation without question, but modified and strengthened it. The State allowed divorce freely: the Church allowed it only in the case of adultery. The State allowed remarriage: the Church also allowed it, but emphasised the superiority of first marriage over second or third marriages³⁵⁵, and forbade fourth marriages³⁵⁶. Christ permits divorce for one reason only – adultery, because adultery destroys the one-flesh union that is marriage, creating another-flesh union not blessed by God. Correspondingly, "whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 19.9).

Although the Church has admitted other reasons besides adultery, they all relate to this primary reason in that they all make the one-flesh union *de facto* impossible³⁵⁷, or possible only in conditions that defile one of the spouses.³⁵⁸ Tertullian, however, went further, forbidding not only divorce, but also second marriages precisely

³⁵⁴ St. Epiphanius, *Against Heresies*, 69; P.G. 41:1024C-1025A; quoted in Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³⁵⁵ For second marriages a penance of one or two years without communion was applied (St. Basil the Great, *Canon 4*; St. Nicephorus the Confessor, *Canon 2*), and for third marriages – five years without communion (St. Nicephorus, *op. cit.*; *Tome of Union of Constantinople*, 920).

³⁵⁶ *Tome of Union of Constantinople*, 920.

³⁵⁷ Thus the Local Council of the Russian Church held in 1917-18 allowed ten other reasons for divorce, including apostasy, syphilis, madness and impotence. These were all, as Hieromonk Theodosius writes, "reasons that violated the sanctity of the marriage bond or that destroyed its moral or religious basis and, thus, effectively prevented the spouses from achieving the aim of marriage" ("Economy", *Living Orthodoxy*, #121, January-February, 2000, p. 28). The Greek Church has a similar list (see A.M. Allchin, "The Sacrament of Marriage in Eastern Christianity", in *Marriage, Divorce and the Church*, London: SPCK, 1971).

³⁵⁸ "Divorce is not forbidden," said Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, "in order to preserve the pure from the impure, and avert danger" (in Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), *Zhizn' i Deiatel'nost' Mitropolitan Filareta Moskovskogo* (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow), Tula, 1994, p. 317).

because, in his opinion, they violate the one-flesh union.³⁵⁹ The Church did not follow him in this, considering the death of the first spouse to constitute *ipso facto* the end of the one-flesh union with that spouse.³⁶⁰ While placing first marriages above second marriages, the Church followed the Apostle Paul in allowing second marriages (I Timothy 5.14; Romans 7.1-3), provided that they are “in the Lord” (I Corinthians 7.39), by which is meant, according to St. Basil the Great, that the spouses enter into them not for the sake of pleasure but in order to have each other’s spiritual help in passing through life.³⁶¹ Even the rigorist St. Ambrose of Milan admitted second marriages, while seeing them as impediments for the priesthood: “A man who has married again, though he commits no sin and is not polluted thereby, is disqualified for the prerogative of the episcopacy.”³⁶²

As regards the remarriage of divorcees, the Western Church tended to adopt a more rigorist approach than the Eastern, forbidding it even for the innocent party. But the Eastern Church, while forbidding the remarriage of the guilty party, was condescending in relation to the innocent party.³⁶³

The strict discipline of the Church in relation to remarriage and divorce by no means proceeds from the principle of hatred of the flesh, as modern liberal critics charge, but rather from its opposite: a profound understanding of the importance of the flesh in general, and of the sexual union of man and woman in particular. Axiomatic is the principle that sexual union is not simply a physiological act with no important moral consequences, but *the creation of an ontologically new human unit*. And if that unit is united with the Body of Christ, its significance, and the sinfulness of the destruction of that unit, is even greater.

The Lord forbade divorce, saying: “What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19.6), because it destroys this new unit, which was created, not by man, but by God. For marriage is indeed, not *procreation* only, but *creation*, the

³⁵⁹ Tertullian, *On Monogamy*, 4; P.L. 2:934.

³⁶⁰ See Bailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 88, 89-90, 90-92. Athenagoras, however, follows Tertullian in his rigorism. After calling a remarried divorcee an “adulteress”, he writes: “He who rids himself of his first wife, although she is dead, is an adulterer in a certain disguised manner” (*Apology of the Christians*, P.G. 6:968).

³⁶¹ St. Basil the Great, *On Virginity*; quoted in *The Rudder*, edited by D. Cummings, Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957, p. 821.

³⁶² St. Ambrose, *Epistle* 63, 63. The same saint considered a man could not be considered for the priesthood if his wife had been married twice, even if the first marriage was before her baptism: “And I have thought it well not to pass by this point, because many contend that having one wife is said of the time after Baptism; so that the fault whereby any obstacle would ensue would be washed away in baptism. And indeed all faults and sins are washed away; so that if anyone have polluted his body with very many whom he has bound to himself by no law of marriage, all the sins are forgiven him, but if any one have contracted a second marriage it is not done away; for sin, not law, is loosed by the laver, and as to baptism there is no sin but law. That then which has to do with the law is not remitted as though it were sin but is retained. And the Apostle has established a law, saying: ‘If any man be without reproach the husband of one wife.’ So then he who is blamelessly the husband of one wife comes within the rule for undertaking the priestly office; he, however who has married again has no guilt of pollution, but is disqualified for the priestly prerogative...” (Quoted by Bishop Tikhon in “Re: [paradosis] Re: Fornication and Adultery”, orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com, December 19, 2003).

³⁶³ Sixth Ecumenical Council, *Canon* 87.

creation of one new being out of two. For “they two shall be one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh’ (Matthew 19.6).

This important point is explained by Holy New Hieromartyr Gregory (Lebedev): “The people have ceased to exist separately even in the physical sense. They have become one physical body, ‘one flesh’. That is what the fulfilment of the will of God has done... It has not only completed and broadened their souls in a mutual intermingling, it has changed their physical nature and out of two physical existences it has made one whole existence. That is the mystery of marriage. Having explained it, the Lord concludes with a mild reproach to the Pharisees: ‘Well, what do you want? What are you asking about? How, after this, can a man leave his wife? That would be unnatural! In marriage we have a natural completion of life! But you want Me to approve of the destruction of this life?! And in marriage we have a creative act, an act of God, Who creates one life... How can you want Me to destroy life created by God? This is unnatural... Don’t think of encroaching on marriage! What God has joined together, let man not put asunder.’”³⁶⁴

Even in the Old Testament, divorce was allowed only “for the hardness of your heart”, as the Lord said - in order to protect the wife from worse consequences. But in Malachi we read: “The Lord has borne witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, whom thou has forsaken, and yet she was thy partner, and the wife of thy covenant. And did He not do well? [the Massoretic text reads: Did he not make one?] and there was the residue of His spirit. And ye said: What else except seed doth the Lord seek? But take ye heed to your spirit, and forsake not the wife of thy youth. But if thou shouldst hate thy wife and put her away, saith the Lord God of Israel, then ungodliness shall cover thy thoughts...” (2.14-16).

Not only sinning Israelites, but even New Testament kings, have wrongly sought only “seed”, offspring in a marriage. Thus when Grand Duke Basil of Moscow put away his wife, St. Solomonia, because she was barren, the Lord rebuked him through Patriarch Mark of Jerusalem. If you do this, said the patriarch, the offspring of your unlawful second marriage will be terrible – it turned out to be Ivan the Terrible...

Illustrative of this point also is the story of the peasant Ivan Borisov, who in 1845 asked for a divorce from his wife on the grounds that she could not have children. After a medical investigation that established that she was indeed incapable of child-bearing, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow ordered the marriage to be dissolved and blessed the peasant to marry again while the woman was to remain forever unmarried. However, the Holy Synod of the Russian Church did not agree with this decision of the metropolitan (a rare mistake by the holy man), and refused the request

³⁶⁴ Hieromartyr Gregory, *Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark*, Moscow, 1991, p. 106. As Blessed Theophylact says, “since they have become one flesh, joined together by means of marital relations and physical affection, just as it is accursed to cut one’s own flesh, so is it accursed to separate husband and wife” (*Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 162).

of the peasant because they had already had sexual intercourse.³⁶⁵ This illustrates not only that childbearing is *not* the chief function of marriage, but also that marriage is constituted by the sexual union that has been blessed by the Church.

Mixed Marriages

Marriage, as we have noted, existed before the coming of Christ, and not only among the Jews, but also among the pagan Gentiles. But in the Church of Christ it is raised to a higher level, not only than marriage in the Fall, but even than marriage in Paradise. Why? First, because marriage in the Church is, deliberately and explicitly, an imitation of the marriage between Christ and the Church (which it obviously could not be so intentionally before the Incarnation of Christ), and partakes of the grace of that higher and mystical marriage to the extent that this imitation is a true likeness. And secondly, because the Christian husband and wife, before becoming one flesh with each other, *are each already one flesh with Christ in the Eucharist*, so that the likeness of the lower mystery to the higher mystery is not a likeness between an archetype and type of different natures (as in icons of Christ and the saints), but of *the same nature*.

The body of a Christian is holy because it is united to the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore it cannot be united with a body that is not also Christ-bearing and Spirit-bearing. This fact increases the intimacy and depth of the union of the Christian husband and wife and makes a betrayal of that union through fornication or adultery a greater sin; for in committing fornication, a husband not only unites his and his wife's body with the body of another³⁶⁶, but unites the Body of *Christ* with the body of another. This point was made with particular force by the Apostle Paul: "Ye know that your bodies are members of Christ, do ye not? Having taken up then the members of Christ, shall I make them members of a harlot? May it not be! Or know ye not that he that is joined to the harlot is one body? For 'the two,' saith He, 'shall be into one flesh'. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin whatsoever a man might do is outside the body, but he who committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom ye have from God, and yet are not your own? For ye were bought with a price; glorify then God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6.15-20).

For, as Bishop Theophan writes: "He who should be one with Christ is torn away from Christ and becomes one with a harlot, and this is in accordance with the law of the original institution of marriage. Marriage is a Divine institution blessed by God, and those who cleave to each other in it become one body in Christ. But the harlot serves Satan, and therefore he who cleaves to her becomes one body with her in Satan. That fornication is the service of Satan is evident also from the fact that it darkens not only the body, but also the soul of the fornicator, drives away from his Angel Guardian

³⁶⁵ Snychev, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-322. In another, perhaps controversial decision, the metropolitan allowed a baptised Jew to marry for a fourth time on the grounds that his first two marriages were in Judaism, and were among the sins washed away by his baptism into the Orthodox Church.

³⁶⁶ St. John Chrysostom says: "When you see a harlot tempting you, say, 'My body is not mine, but my wife's'" (*Homily 19 on I Corinthians*, P.G. 124:160A (col. 648)).

and tears him away from the Lord, for it is impossible for a darkened and evil-smelling one to be united with the Lord.”³⁶⁷

It follows that Christians can only marry other Christians, and not schismatics or heretics (still less – atheists) who do not belong to the Body of Christ and do not possess the Holy Spirit. As the holy canons declare: “Let no Orthodox man be allowed to contract a marriage with a heretical woman, nor moreover let any Orthodox woman be married to a heretical man. But if it should be discovered that any such thing is done by any one of the Christians, no matter who, let the marriage be deemed void, and let the lawless marriage be dissolved.”³⁶⁸ And if this seems excessively harsh (especially by comparison with today’s excessively lenient practice), let us recall that even in the Old Testament the lawgiver Ezra, with the consent of the leaders of Israel, dissolved all marriages of Israelites with pagans (Ezra 10).

Similar reasoning underlies the prohibition on the faithful receiving communion in heretical churches. Since the Eucharist is a marital mystery, it is forbidden to the faithful to commune anywhere else than in the Church of Christ. Thus the Apostle Paul says: “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” (I Corinthians 10.21-22).

Jealousy is the natural response of a lover to his beloved’s adultery, and St. John the Almsgiver defined communing from heretics as adultery: “Another thing the blessed man taught and insisted upon with all was never on any occasion whatsoever to associate with heretics and, above all, never to take the Holy Communion with them, ‘even if’, the blessed man said, ‘you remain without communicating all your life, if through stress of circumstances you cannot find a community of the Catholic Church. For if, having legally married a wife in this world of the flesh, we are forbidden by God and by the laws to desert her and be united to another woman, even though we have to spend a long time separated from her in a distant country, and shall incur punishment if we violate our vows, how then shall we, who have been joined to God through the Orthodox Faith and the Catholic Church – as the apostle says: ‘I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ’ (II Corinthians 11.2) – how shall we escape from sharing in that punishment which in the world to come awaits heretics, if we defile the Orthodox and holy Faith by adulterous communion with heretics?”³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Bishop Theophan, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

³⁶⁸ Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 72. Cf. 14th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council; 10th and 31st Canons of the Council of Laodicea; 58th rule of the Nomocanon. According to the *Manual of Confession* of St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, St. Symeon of Thessalonica said that an Orthodox who marries a heretic cannot commune until he repents and is chrismated (*Responsa ad Gabriele Pentapolitum, Question 47, P.G. 155, 893A-893C*). Although Peter the Great pressured the Russian Church into allowing marriages with Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Presbyterians (but not Molokans, Baptists and Stundists), the Church in her ukases of August 18, 1821 and February 28, 1858 reminded the faithful that such unions could not be allowed until the sectarians accepted Orthodoxy. See Bishop Nathaniel of Vienna, “On Marriage with the Heterodox”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 44, № 3, May-June, 1994, pp. 42-45.

³⁶⁹ *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, in Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, London: Mowbrays, 1977, p. 251.

There are other weighty reasons for forbidding mixed marriages. In the first place, a couple who do not share the same faith are not united in that which is most important in life. They may be united in body and soul, but not in spirit. This will lead to quarrels and possibly the tearing away of the believing spouse from the true faith for the sake of peace with his unbelieving spouse. As St. Ambrose of Milan says: "There is hardly anything more deadly than being married to one who is a stranger to the faith, where the passions of lust and dissension and the evils of sacrilege are inflamed. Since the marriage ceremony ought to be sanctified by the priestly veiling and blessing, how can that be called a marriage ceremony where there is no agreement in faith?"³⁷⁰

Again, St. Ambrose compares mixed marriages to the disastrous marriage of Samson and Delilah. For "how can love be suited if faith be different? Therefore, beware, Christian, to give your daughter to a Gentile [i.e. a pagan] or to a Jew. Because, I say, the Gentile woman, the Jewess, the foreigner, viz. do not take a wife who is a heretic, or any stranger to your Faith. The grace of purity is the first faith of marriage. If she worships idols whose adulteries are proclaimed, if she denies Christ, Who is the Teacher and Rewarder of chastity, how can she love chastity? Even if she is a Christian, this does not suffice unless ye are both consecrated by the Sacrament of Baptism. Ye must rise together for worship, and God is to be entreated by joint prayers. Another sign of purity is added if ye believe that the marriage which has fallen to your lot was given to you by your God. Hence, Solomon, too, says, '*A wife is suited to a man by God*' (Proverbs 19.14)."³⁷¹

Tertullian lists all the disadvantages of being married to an unbelieving husband, especially the difficulty of avoiding taking part in pagan festivals.³⁷² And then he lists the joys of a marriage between believers: "Where can we find sufficient words to tell the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the offering confirms, and the blessing signs and seal, news of which the angels carry back [to heaven], which the Father takes as ratified? For even on earth children do not rightly and lawfully wed without their fathers' consent. What kind of yoke is that of two believers, partakers of one hope, one desire, one discipline, one and the same service? Both are brethren, both fellow-servants, there is no difference of spirit or flesh between them; they are truly 'two in one flesh'. Where the flesh is one, there is the spirit too. Together they pray, together prostrated, together fast; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. They are equally to be found in the Church of God, equally at the banquet of God, equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides anything from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. They freely visit the sick and relieve the needy. They give alms without fearing reprisals; they offer sacrifices without scruples; the sign of the cross is not made stealthily, greetings without trembling, blessings without muteness. They sing psalms and hymns together, and challenge each other who will chant better to the Lord. Such things Christ sees and hears with joy. To these He sends His own peace. Where two are, there is He Himself in their midst. Where He is, there the evil one is not."³⁷³

³⁷⁰ St. Ambrose, *To Vigilus*, Letter 19:7 (A.D. 385).

³⁷¹ St. Ambrose, *On Abraham*, 84.

³⁷² Tertullian, *To His Wife*, 5,6.

³⁷³ Tertullian, *To His Wife*, 8.

Mixed marriages were forbidden even in the Old Testament. The downfall of Samson and Solomon were attributed to their foreign wives. And Nehemiah said: "I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but the language of each people. And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, 'You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless foreign women made even him to sin. Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?" (Nehemiah 13.23-37).

The Apostle Paul allows an exception to this rule for couples who were married before becoming Christian. In such a case, when one of the spouses becomes Christian while the other remains outside the Church, the marriage is not dissolved. "For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. For do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or you, husband, do you know whether you will save your wife?" (I Corinthians 7.14-16). As Bishop Theophan comments, "in this union according to love and agreement, the purity of the Christian side is not destroyed; on the contrary, by its influence it can assist the conversion to Christianity of the pagan husband or pagan wife, and still more the children born in this marriage."³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ Bishop Theophan, op. cit., p. 154. St. John Chrysostom writes: "If 'he that is joined to an harlot is one body,' it is quite clear that the woman also who is joined to an idolater is one body. True: it is one body. However, she does not become unclean, but the cleanness of the wife overcomes the uncleanness of the husband; and again, the cleanness of the believing husband overcomes the uncleanness of the unbelieving wife.

"How then in this case is the uncleanness overcome, and therefore the intercourse allowed; while in the woman who prostitutes herself, the husband is not condemned in casting her out? Because here there is hope that the lost member may be saved through the marriage; but in the other case the marriage has already been dissolved; and there again both are corrupted; but here the fault is in one only of the two. I mean something like this: she that has been guilty of fornication is utterly abominable: if then 'he that is joined to an harlot is one body,' he also becomes abominable by having connection with an harlot; wherefore all the purity flits away. But in the case before us it is not so. But how? The idolater is unclean but the woman is not unclean. For if indeed she were a partner with him in that wherein he is unclean, I mean his impiety, she herself would also become unclean. But now the idolater is unclean in one way, and the wife holds communion with him in another wherein he is not unclean. For marriage and mixture of bodies is that wherein the communion consists.

"...Again, in that case, after the fornication the husband is not a husband: but here, although the wife be an idolatress, the husband's rights are not destroyed. However, he does not simply recommend cohabitation with the unbeliever, but with the qualification that he wills it. Wherefore he said, 'And he himself be content to dwell with her.' For, tell me, what harm is there when the duties of piety remain unimpaired and there are good hopes about the unbeliever, that those already joined should so abide and not bring in occasions of unnecessary warfare? For the question now is not about those who have never yet come together, but about those who are already joined. He did not say, If any one wish to

Polygamy, Fornication and Adultery

St. Anastasius of Sinai was asked: "Since in the law it often happened that men had two wives and were not condemned for it, is this allowed for Christians?" And the saint replied: "The Apostle says that the wife does not have power over her own body, but her husband; and similarly the husband does not have power over his own body, but his wife (I Corinthians 7.2). It is then evident that if a man were allowed to take another woman together with her [his wife], it would similarly be permitted to the woman to take another man together with him. And then they would not be two into one flesh, but into two or three or four. But those who wish to live according to the law fall away from the grace of Christ. For since those living under the law were extremely impious, and sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons, God did not ask any more from them than the worship of God and righteous judgement, as is known from all the Scriptures of the law. But we, who have been bought by the Blood of Christ, must display all chastity and philosophy. For the type of the whole of humanity were Adam and Eve; but to desire different women comes from wantonness and lack of the fear of God."³⁷⁵

Although polygamy was allowed in the Old Testament, adultery was not. "Under the Old Testament," writes St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, "it was a sin to commit adultery. It was a sin because it disgraced nature, it was a misuse of an important property of nature, it was an infraction of the natural law. This transgression was considered so grave, that those guilty of it were punished with the sentence of death.

"In the New Testament, this sin gained further gravity, since the human body had gained a new dignity. Humanity had become members of the body of Christ; therefore, those who destroyed purity heaped dishonour upon Christ and broke union with Him: 'the members of Christ' were transformed into 'members of a prostitute' (I Corinthians 6.15). Now, the adulterer is punished with death of the soul. The Holy Spirit leaves the person who has fallen into adultery; the person who has sinned in this way is considered to have fallen into *mortal* sin, into a sin that takes away salvation, into a sin whose wage is imminent perdition and eternal languishing in hell – if the sin is not healed in due season by repentance."³⁷⁶

"But why can't I sleep with her, if she agrees, and I love her?" Very many Orthodox Christian parents must have heard these or similar words from their children. It is easy to give a correct, albeit rather short, answer, "Because God says you can't", much

take an unbelieving wife, but, 'If any one hath an unbelieving wife.' Which means, If any after marrying or being married have received the word of godliness, and then the other party which had continued in unbelief still yearn for them to dwell together, let not the marriage be broken off. 'For,' he says, 'the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife.' So great is the superabundance of your purity." (*Homily 19 on I Corinthians*).

³⁷⁵ St. Anastasius of Sinai, *Odigos (Guide)*, Mount Athos, 1970, Question and Answer 99, p. 169.

³⁷⁶ Brianchaninov, "On Purity", in *Orthodox Life*, July-August, 1983, p. 30. The penance for adultery is the same as for sodomy and bestiality – fifteen years, while for fornication it is seven years (St. Basil the Great, *Canons* 58, 59, 62, 63)

harder to give an answer that will *convince* a young person exposed to the full blast of today's permissive society.

It is a truism to say that the temptation to commit fornication is more powerful than ever today. The very word "fornication" has almost disappeared from contemporary English, and not many people below a certain age now talk about "chastity". Adultery is still considered a sin by most – but for reasons that have nothing specifically to do with Christianity. Adultery is considered wrong because, if discovered, it causes mental anguish to the deceived third person – and pain is, of course, a negative value – in fact, *the only* negative value – in a strictly utilitarian morality. Even if not discovered, adultery is usually disapproved of because it is "cheating" – and some value is still attached to honesty and the keeping of promises. But there are signs that "cheating", too, is no longer abhorred as much as it used to be. .. However, if some opprobrium still attaches to adultery and divorce in more conservative circles, none at all, it would appear, attaches to straightforward fornication. Fornication is now healthy and normal at all times and for all people, even those destined to become the heads of Churches. Thus Prince Charles' sons live openly with their mistresses, and nobody, whether in Church or State, raises even a whimper of protest...

If we are to help our children acquire the strength to withstand the temptation of fornication, it is not sufficient to tell them that God disapproves, nor even that fornicators go to hell according to the Apostle (I Corinthians 6.9). They must be given at least some indication *why* God disapproves of it, and *why* it is such a serious sin that it leads to hell. There are two basic approaches to this problem: the approach from the point of view of sacramental theology, and the approach from the point of view of conventional morality.

Fr. Demetrius Kaplun gives a clear example of the moral approach: "There is an idea," he writes, "that marriage and fornication are in no way different from each other. 'Why go to church', 'why put a stamp in the passport' – that is how some irresponsible people reason. But even if we ignore the mystical aspect of the Church's sacrament of marriage, even a marriage recognised by society, marriage 'with a stamp', is different from fornication in exactly the same way as a serious and strong friendship is distinguished from companionship in some enterprise – by the degree of mutual obligations. When companions begin some enterprise, they act together only to the degree that they are useful to each other, but friendship presupposes moral obligations in addition. Just as bandits who get together only in order to carry out a crime more easily (one slips through the ventilation pane well, while another breaks the safe), so a couple living in fornication are only useful to each other for this or that reason. For example, the woman cooks well, the man has got money, they love each other – but take no responsibility upon themselves. If one 'companion' decides tomorrow to find himself another 'companion', there is nothing to keep them together and bind them any longer. When a man easily changes friends and retains no obligations, he is called a traitor. It is impossible to rely on such a man. Unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities, they are condemned by God and man.

"And so the first thing that is valued in marriage is faithfulness, holiness of mutual obligations. The bonds of marriage are holy: they truly bind and limit a man, place on

him the burden of service. On entering into marriage, a man can demonstrate his worthiness by the fact that he preserves his faithfulness, his honour in a holy manner. Just as for a soldier there is no greater shame than desertion, going under the flag of the other army, so for an honourable spouse there is no greater baseness than to defile the holiness of the marital bond. Spouses are to a definite degree like soldiers; they must preserve and guard the honour of the family for the shame of lust, falling, inconstancy, from the encroachment of sin.

“In ancient Rome brave and faithful soldiers were crowned with the wreath of a conqueror. Therefore the ecclesiastical sacrament of marriage, too, is called the Sacrament of Crowning. The spouses are crowned as a sign of the incorruption of their lives, as a sign of their faithfulness to each other, as a sign of the fact that they are acquiring a royal, masterly dignity in the circle of their descendants. During the Sacrament of Crowning rings are placed on the hands as a sign of their mutual agreement, and those being married are led three times around the analogy with the cross and the Gospel ‘in the form of a circle’, signifying the inviolability and eternity of the marital union, since the circle indicates eternity; the circle has no beginning or end. ‘What God has joined together, let no man put asunder’ (Matthew 19.6).”³⁷⁷

Now this approach is certainly valid and useful as far as it goes. But the suspicion remains that it does not go far enough, and fails to take into account the idealism of the emotion of falling in love, especially first love. For no young Romeo and Juliet will disagree with the idea that “unfaithfulness and inconstancy are bad qualities”. In fact, they couldn’t agree more, and often swear undying constancy towards each other. Nothing could be further from their minds than the thought that their love might die, and they might move on to other partners. In fact, it is precisely the strength and intensity of their love for each other that leads them, in many cases, to scorn the idea that this profound feeling needs to be bolstered by a mere legal contract, a “scrap of paper”. They feel that love is not love if it needs an external support in the form of an official ceremony.

Even if social, legal or moral considerations lead them to accept the desirability of marriage, these are unlikely to deter them from sleeping together before the marriage date. After all, they consider themselves already married in each other’s eyes. Moreover, the considerations that deterred lovelorn couples in earlier ages - the disapproval of parents and relatives, the shame of the bride going to the altar with a prominent bump in her stomach, the financial and legal disincentives - are all largely irrelevant today when parents are desperate to show that they are not “behind the times”, when brides sometimes go to the altar, not merely with a bump in the stomach, but with a whole bevy of already born children, and when the State goes out of its way, as in Britain today, not only to remove all stigmas attached to single mothers, but even to make the production of children out of wedlock a financially attractive proposition.

³⁷⁷ Kaplun, “Azbuka pravoslavnago khristianina” (The ABC of the Orthodox Christian), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’* (Orthodox Life). May, 2005, pp. 24-25.

There are some who argue that fornicating before marriage is actually a sensible way of testing whether a proposed marriage is likely to be lasting. After all, if a couple are about to commit themselves to lifelong unity and fidelity, it is only prudent to make sure beforehand that they are physically compatible with each other. If the experience proves to be a failure, then they can abort the marriage before it takes place, thereby saving two people a lifetime of misery and probable divorce. Of course, this argument is false: all the evidence indicates that couples who sleep together before marriage are less rather than more likely to be faithful to each other and remain together. Unfortunately, however, statistical arguments are a feeble rampart against fallen human nature stirred up by the spirits of evil...

So let us turn to the sacramental argument, as developed by the Holy Apostle Paul, who defines fornication for a Christian as uniting the Body of Christ – for the body of every Christian is a part of the Body of Christ – to a body that is not Christ's. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body [with her]? For two, saith He, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with Him]." (I Corinthians 6. 15-17).

This argument depends on the premise that there is a most intimate connection between two sacramental mysteries: the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and the sacrament of marriage. Both are mysteries of fleshly union, and in this sense both are marital mysteries. The mystery of the marital union of each believer with Christ in the Eucharist is the higher mystery of which the lower mystery of human marriage is the type and the icon. That is why, when the Apostle Paul is talking of the lower mystery of human marriage, his mind is immediately lifted to its archetype: "but I speak of Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5.32). Even earlier in the chapter he switches easily from the lower mystery – "so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies" (v. 28) – to the higher – "for we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (v. 30).

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich comments on this passage as follows: "It is a great mystery when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. The Apostle himself, who has been raised to the third heaven and beheld many heavenly mysteries, calls the marriage of natural man on earth a great mystery. It is the mystery of love and life... The only mystery that exceeds this [the mystery of human marriage] is the mystery of Christ's bond with His Church. Christ calls Himself the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride. Christ so loves the Church that He left His heavenly Father for her - though remaining equal with Him in unity of essence and divinity - and came down to earth and clave to his Church. He suffered for her sake that He might, by His Blood, cleanse her from sin and from all impurity and make her worthy to be called His Bride. He warms the Church with His love, feeds her with His Blood, and enlivens, enlightens and adorns her with His Holy Spirit."³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue of Ochrid*, vol. II, p. 238, May 29.

So, combining the teaching of the holy Apostle in I Corinthians and Ephesians, we can reconstruct his argument as follows: (1) Every act of sexual intercourse, whether inside or outside marriage, effects an ontological change, making two people one in the flesh. (2) Every Christian who has received the Body and Blood of Christ is united to Christ in a marital bond, becoming one with Him in flesh and in spirit. Therefore (3) every Christian who has sexual relations with a woman is uniting, not only his flesh with hers, but also her flesh with Christ's. But (4) Christ does not want to be united in the flesh with a person with whom He is not united in the spirit, through faith. Therefore (5) a Christian cannot be united in the flesh with a person who is not herself also united with Christ in spirit and in body, and whose union with the Christian has not been sanctified and raised to a true iconic resemblance to the marriage between Christ and the Church through the sacrament of marriage.

All fornication is adultery from God insofar as the soul and the body is married to God through the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. We shall have more to say on this in a later chapter. In the meantime let us consider the question: if fornication consists in uniting the Body of Christ with a body that is not Christ's, can there be fornication between Christians who both belong to the Body of Christ?

There can indeed, because while all acts of sexual intercourse create "one flesh", not all "one flesh" unions, even between Christians, are lawful unless they have first been sanctified by the prayers of the Church in the sacrament of marriage. Marriage, as we shall argue in detail in a later chapter, is not simply the public recognition of an already accomplished fact, but involves the bestowal of grace by God. And if a couple, even a Christian couple, seeks to unite without the grace of God, the grace of God will withdraw from that one-flesh union, making it a union not within, but outside the Body of Christ. So for a Christian the only permissible form of sexual union is that sanctified by the grace bestowed in the sacrament of marriage...

The Two Mysteries

According to St. Paul, the marriage between a man and a woman is an icon of the marriage between Christ and the Church. That is why, when talking of the lower mystery of human marriage, his mind is immediately lifted to its archetype: "but I speak of Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5.32). Even earlier in the chapter he switches easily from the lower mystery - "so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies" (v. 28) - to the higher - "for we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (v. 30).

The Holy Fathers take up the same theme and imagery. Thus St. Macarius the Great writes: "Let your soul have communion with Christ, as bride with bridegroom".³⁷⁹ And Blessed Theophylact writes: "He took human nature as His bride and united her to Himself, wedding her and cleaving to her, becoming One Flesh. Indeed, He did not make just one wedding, but many. For every day the Lord in heaven is wedded to the souls of the saints."³⁸⁰ For, writes St. Symeon the New Theologian, "it is truly a marriage which takes place, ineffable and divine: God unites Himself with each one -

³⁷⁹ St. Macarius the Great, *Homily* 38, 5.

³⁸⁰ Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel according to Luke*, 12.35.

yes, I repeat it, it is my delight – and each becomes one with the Master. If therefore, in your body, you have put on the total Christ, you will understand without blushing all that I am saying.”³⁸¹

Again, St. John of Kronstadt writes: “The Liturgy is the continually repeated solemnization of God’s love for mankind, and of His all-powerful mediation for the salvation of the whole world, and of every member separately: the marriage of the Lamb – marriage of the King’s Son, in which the bride of the Son of God is every faithful soul, and the giver of the Bride is the Holy Spirit.”³⁸²

“What human reckoning,” asks St. John Chrysostom. “will be able to grasp the nature of what takes place in marriage when one considers that the young wife, who has been nourished with her mother’s milk, and kept at home, and judged worthy of such careful upbringing, suddenly, in a single moment, when she comes to the hour of marriage, forgets her mother’s labor pains and all her other care, forgets her family life, the bonds of love, and, in a word, forgets everything, and gives over her whole will to that man whom she never saw before that night? Her life is so complete changed that thereafter that man is everything to her; she holds him to be her father, her mother, her husband, and every relative one could mention. No longer does she remember those who took care of her for so many years. So intimate is the union of these two that thereafter they are not two but one.

“Adam, the first-formed man, with prophetic eyes foresaw this very thing and said: ‘She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of her man. Wherefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.’ The same thing could be said of the husband, because he too has forgotten his parents and his father’s house to unite himself and cleave to the wife who on that night is joined to him. Furthermore, to point out the closeness of this union, the Holy

³⁸¹ St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns of Divine Love*, 15; *op. cit.*, p. 55. Cf. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk: “That which takes place between a bridegroom and bride takes place between Christ and the Christian soul. The bride is betrothed to the bridegroom – in the same way the human soul is betrothed by faith to Christ the Son of God and is washed in the bath of Baptism. The bride leaves her house and parents and cleaves to her only bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul, having been betrothed to Christ the Son of God, must leave the world and worldly lusts and cleave to her *only* Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, to which the Holy Spirit through the prophet exhorts her: ‘Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear, and forget thine own people and thy father’s house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty’ (Psalm 44. 9-10). The bride puts on a colourful dress and is adorned, so as to please her bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul must put on a fitting garment and adorn herself within, so as to please her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The garment of the soul is indicated by the Holy Spirit through the apostle: ‘Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering’ (Colossians 3.12). A good bride remains faithful to her bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul must be faithful to Jesus Christ until death, concerning which Christ Himself says to her: ‘Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life’ (Revelation 2.10). A good bride loves nobody as much, or more than, her bridegroom – in the same way the Christian soul must love nobody as much, or more than, her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.” (*Spiritual Treasure gathered from the world*, 22, Moscow, 2003, pp. 102-103).

³⁸² St. John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, quoted in *Orthodoxy America*, vol. XIX, № 6 (170), June, 2004, p. 1. “Why,” asks St. Gregory Palamas, “does the original not say that the King of Heaven made a marriage for His son, but used the words ‘nuptials’ in the plural? Because whenever Christ, the Bridegroom of pure souls, is mystically united with each soul, He gives the Father to rejoice over this as at a wedding” (*Homily* 41, 9).

Scripture did not say: 'He shall be united to a wife', but 'He shall cleave to his wife'. Nor was Holy Writ content with that, but added: 'And they two shall be one flesh'. For this reason Christ too brought forward this testimony and said: 'Therefore, now they are no longer two, but one flesh'. So intimate is this union and adherence that the two of them are one flesh. Tell me, what reckoning will be able to discover this, what power of reason will be able to understand what takes place? Was not that blessed teacher of the whole world correct in saying that it is a mystery? And he did not simply say 'a mystery', but: 'This is a great mystery'.³⁸³

In another place the same holy father expands on this idea: "The girl who has always been kept at home and has never seen the bridegroom, from the first day loves and cherishes him as her own body. Again, the husband, who has never seen her, never shared even the fellowship of speech with her, from the first day prefers her to everyone, to his friends, his relatives, even his parents. The parents in turn, if they are deprived of their money for another reason, will complain, grieve, and take the perpetrators to court. Yet they entrust to a man, whom often they have never even seen before..., both their own daughter and a large sum as dowry. They rejoice as they do this and they do not consider it a loss. As they see their daughter led away, they do not bring to mind their closeness, they do not grieve or complain, but instead they give thanks. They consider it an answer to their prayers when they see their daughter led away from their home taking a large sum of money with her. Paul had all this in mind: how the couple leave their parents and bind themselves to each other, and how the new relationship becomes more powerful than the long-established familiarity. He saw that this was not a human accomplishment. It is God Who sows these loves in men and women. He caused both those who give in marriage and those who are married to do this with joy. Therefore Paul said, 'This is a great mystery'.³⁸⁴

However, Paul goes on to say: "But I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (v. 32). The word "but" indicates that while the lower mystery of human marriage provides apt imagery for a description of the higher mystery, one must not think that they are *the same* mystery. This would amount to a pagan "sexualization of salvation" which is not the apostle's meaning. "Nevertheless," he immediately continues, "as for every one of you, let each love his wife as himself" (v. 33). In other words, they are not the same mystery, and the higher must not be reduced to the lower, but also the lower is not to be despised, being an imitation of the higher. As St. John Chrysostom writes: "The blessed Moses, - or rather, God - surely reveals in Genesis that for two to become one flesh is a great and wonderful mystery. Now Paul speaks of Christ as the greater mystery; for He left the Father and came down to us and married His Bride, the Church, and became one spirit with her: 'he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him' (I Corinthians 6.17). Paul says well, 'This is a great mystery', as if he were saying, 'Nevertheless the allegorical meaning does not invalidate married love'.³⁸⁵

³⁸³ St. John Chrysostom, *First Baptismal Instruction*, 3-13. New York: Paulist Press, 1963.

³⁸⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *Encomium to Maximus*, 3; P.G. 51:230; in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

³⁸⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*; in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Again, as St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "With this mystical, spiritual understanding by the Apostle of the command concerning marriage, one might come to the thought that in Christianity, according to the thought of the Apostle, marriage in the flesh is in itself unfitting. St. Paul replies to this: v. 33. 'Thus let each of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife respect her husband'. It is as if the Apostle says: 'I understood the words on marriage in a mystical sense. However, this does not repeal the law expressed literally here by which the relations of husband and wife are defined.'"³⁸⁶

St. Paul's words on the two mysteries come after he has outlined the different duties of husband and wife. The husband is exhorted to love his wife as Christ loves the Church, and the wife - to obey her husband as the Church obeys Christ (Ephesians 5.21-30). The husband is exhorted above all to love his wife because it was a failure of true love that caused Adam to neglect to protect his wife against the wiles of the serpent, although he himself was not deceived by him (I Timothy 2.14). And the wife is exhorted above all to obey her husband because it was disobedience that caused her to eat of the fruit without consulting with her husband, although she knew the command of God and her origin from her husband.³⁸⁷ Thus every Christian husband is exhorted to correct the fall of Adam by his love for his wife in imitation of the new Adam, just as every Christian wife is exhorted to correct the fall of Eve by her obedience to her husband in imitation of the new Eve. As the spouses come closer to this goal, the lower mystery partakes more and more fully of the grace of its archetype in such a way that, as St. Gregory the Theologian writes, "in every marriage, Christ is venerated in the husband and the Church in the wife".³⁸⁸

The difference in the roles of the sexes is described by St. John Chrysostom: "Why does Paul speak of the husband being joined to the wife, but not of the wife to the husband? Since he is describing the duties of love, he addresses the man. He speaks to the woman concerning respect, saying that the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church; but to the husband he speaks of love, and obliges him to love, and tells him how he should love, thus binding and cementing him to his

³⁸⁶ Bishop Theophan, *Tolkovanie na Poslania sv. Apostola Pavla*, pp. 469-470.

³⁸⁷ It should be noted, however, that the wife's obedience to her husband does not preclude her exhorting him on occasion. Thus St. Tikhon of Zadonsk writes: "The husband and wife must lay virtue, and not passion, as the foundation of their love, that is, when the husband sees any fault in his wife, he must nudge her meekly, and the wife must submit to her husband in this. Likewise when a wife sees some fault in her husband, she must exhort him, and he is obliged to hear her" (*Journey to Heaven*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, p. 117).

Again, Fr. Alexander Elchaninov writes: "The philosophy of family quarrels: they often result from the wife's reproaches, borne reluctantly by the husband even though they may be deserved (pride). It is necessary to discover the original cause of these reproaches. They often come from the wife's desire to see her husband better than he is in reality, from her asking too much, that is to say from a kind of idealization. On these occasions, the wife becomes her husband's conscience and he should accept her rebukes as such. A man tends, especially in marriage, to let things slip, to be content with empirical facts. The wife tears him away from this and expects something more from her husband. In this sense, family discords, strange as it may seem, are proof that the marriage has been fulfilled (not only planned): and in the new human being, in which two persons have merged, the wife plays the role of conscience." (*The Diary of a Russian Priest*, London: Faber & Faber, 1967; quoted in Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 90).

³⁸⁸ St. Gregory the Theologian, *Sermon on Matthew 19.1-13*, P.G. 36:292.

wife. If a man leaves his father for his wife's sake, and then abandons her for whose sake he left his father, what pardon can he deserve? Do you not see, husband, the great honor that God desires you to give your wife? He has taken you from your father and bound [literally 'nailed'] you to her. How can a believing husband say that he has no obligation if his spouse disobeys him? Paul is lenient only when an unbeliever wishes to separate: 'But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound' (I Corinthians 7.15). And when you hear Paul say 'fear' or 'respect', ask for the respect due from a free woman, not the fear you would demand from a slave. She is your body; if you do this, you dishonor yourself by dishonoring your own body. What does this 'respect' entail? She should not stubbornly contradict you, and not rebel against your authority as if she were the head of the house; this is enough. If you desire greater respect, you must love as you are commanded. Then there will be no need for fear; love itself will accomplish everything. The female sex is rather weak and needs a lot of support, a lot of condescension... Provide your wife with everything and endure troubles for her sake; you are obliged to do so. Here Paul does not think it appropriate to illustrate his point with outside sources, as he does in many other cases. The wisdom of Christ, so great and forceful, is sufficient, especially in the matter of the wife's subjection... The wife is a secondary authority, but nevertheless she possesses real authority and equality of dignity while the husband retains the role of headship; the welfare of the household is thus maintained. Paul uses the example of Christ to show that we should not only love but also govern, 'that she might be holy and without blemish'. The word 'flesh' and the word 'cling' both refer to love, and making her 'holy and without blemish' refer to headship. Do both these things, and everything else will follow. Seek the things which please God, and those which please men will follow soon enough. Instruct your wife, and your whole household will be in order and harmony. Listen to what Paul says: 'If there be anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home' (I Corinthians 14.35). If we regulate our households in this way, we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church. Therefore it is possible for us to surpass all others in virtue by becoming good husbands and wives."³⁸⁹

The commands given to Adam and Eve immediately after the fall are now repeated, but in a more family-oriented context and in a form that emphasises that if they are not obeyed, the result this time will be, not physical, but eternal death. Thus the husband, who was told in the Old Testament to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow is now told: "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5.8). And the wife, who was told in the Old Testament that she would bring forth children in pain, is now

³⁸⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*, translated in Roth & Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57. And in another place he says: "This is a true relationship, this is the duty of a husband, while not taking too much notice of his wife's words but making allowance for natural frailty, to make it his one concern to keep her free from anguish and tighten the bonds of peace and harmony. Let husbands take heed and imitate the just man's restraint in according their wives such great respect and regard and making allowances for them as the frailer vessel so that the bonds of harmony may be tightened. This, you see, is real wealth, this is the greatest prosperity, when a husband is not at odds with his wife but rather they are joined together like one body - 'the two will come to be one flesh', Scripture says. Such couples, be they even in poverty, be they in low estate, would be more blessed than all the rest, enjoying true delight and living in unbroken tranquillity" (*Homily 38 on Genesis*, 15).

told that she “will be saved through bearing children, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with sobriety” (I Timothy 2.15).

But if the penalties for quenching the redemptive grace given by Christ to marriage are great, so are the rewards of absorbing it. “You have a wife,” writes St. John Chrysostom, “you have children; what is equal to this pleasure?... Tell me, what is sweeter than children? Or what is more delightful than a wife for a man who desires to be chaste?... Nothing is sweeter than children and a wife, if you wish to live with reverence.”³⁹⁰

As we have seen, for the Holy Fathers the Eucharist is a marital mystery – more precisely, *the* marital mystery. Having sanctified the firstfruits, or root, of human nature by union with Himself in the Virgin’s womb, God in the sacrament of His Body and Blood extends this union from the root to the branches, from the firstfruits to every individual human being, by sending the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine and transforming them into His Body and Blood. Just as the Holy Virgin was both daughter and mother and bride of Christ at the Incarnation, so all Christians who partake of the Body and Blood of Christ become His children and brides, insofar as the mystery of the Eucharist is, as it were, a continuation of the mystery of the Incarnation.³⁹¹

Thus St. John Chrysostom writes: “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”.³⁹²

Georgios Mantzaridis writes, interpreting St. Gregory Palamas: “The union between God and man achieved in Christ far surpassed all human relationship and kinship. On assuming flesh and blood, the Logos of God became a brother to man; but

³⁹⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 38 on Matthew*, 6; P.G. 57: 428; quoted in Nellas, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

³⁹¹ St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: “since our generation in corruption came through the woman, Eve, so our spiritual generation and re-fashioning comes to be through the man, the second Adam, Who is God. Now, notice here that my words are exact: the seed of a man, mortal and corruptible, begets and gives birth through a woman to sons who are mortal and corruptible; the immortal and incorruptible Word of the immortal and incorruptible God, however, begets and gives birth to immortal and incorruptible children, after having first been born of the Virgin by the Holy Spirit.

“According to this reasoning, therefore, the mother of God is the lady and Queen and mistress and mother of all the saints. The saints are all both her servants, since she is the mother of God, and her sons, because they partake of the all-pure flesh of her Son – here is a word worthy of belief, since the flesh of the Lord is the flesh of the Theotokos – and by communing in this same deified flesh of the Lord, we both confess and believe that we partake of life everlasting...”

“So this is the mystery of the marriages which the Father arranged for His only-begotten Son” – the marriage first of all with the Virgin at the Incarnation, and then with every member of the Church in the Eucharist. (*First Ethical Discourse*, 10; *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60).

³⁹² St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, III, 18,19.

He became our friend as well, in that He ransomed us from slavery and made us participate in His sacraments. Indeed, Christ Himself said to His disciples that He does not call them servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing, but He calls them friends, because He has made known to them all that He heard from His Father. Christ is also men's father and mother, for He gives them new birth through baptism and nourishes them like children at the breast – not only with His blood instead of milk, but with His body and spirit. Joined in one flesh with the faithful through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Christ becomes, in addition, the bridegroom of mankind. The similarity between God's love towards humanity and conjugal love was familiar and widespread among the Old Testament writers, and particularly so among the mystical theologians of the Church. Palamas recognizes conjugal love as being the most exalted degree of worldly love, and he stresses the vastness of God's love towards men in contrast to it, especially as this finds expression in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. In marriage, he says, there is a cleaving 'in one flesh' but not 'in one spirit' [*Homily 56, 6*]. Through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, however, we not only cleave to the body of Christ, we intermingle with it, and we become not merely one body with Him, but one spirit: 'O many-sided and ineffable communion! Christ has become our brother for He has fellowship with us in flesh and blood.... He has made us His friends, bestowing on us by grace these His sacraments. He has bound us to Himself and united us, as the bridegroom unites the bride to himself, through the communion of His blood, becoming one flesh with us. He has also become our father through divine baptism in Himself, and He feeds us at His own breast, as a loving mother feeds her child' [*Homily 56, 7*].³⁹³

The younger contemporary of St. Gregory, Nicholas Cabasilas, takes up the same theme: "The sacred meal effects between Christ and us a closer union than that which was realized by our parents when they begat us. In truth He does not only share with us some particles of His flesh or some drops of His blood, but gives us both in all their fullness; He is not only a principle of life as are our parents, but in very truth Life Itself."³⁹⁴ "O wonder of wonders! That Christ's spirit is united to our spirit, His will is one with ours, His flesh becomes our flesh, His blood flows in our veins. What spirit is ours when it is possessed by His, our clay when set on fire by His flame!"³⁹⁵ "We are penetrated by Him and become one spirit with Him; body and soul and all the faculties are deified when there is union of soul with Soul, body with Body, blood with Blood".³⁹⁶ "The faithful are called saints because of the holy thing of which they partake, because of Him Whose Body and Blood they receive. Members of His Body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, as long as we remain united to Him and preserve our connection with Him, we live by holiness, drawing to ourselves, through the holy mysteries, the sanctity which comes from that Head and that Heart."³⁹⁷

We have established that we are indeed speaking about *two* mysteries here, one in the image of the other and in imitation of it. However, the relationship is more than iconic when the lower mystery takes place *between Christians, in the Church*. For an

³⁹³ Manzaridis, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

³⁹⁴ Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 612 C, D.

³⁹⁵ Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 585A.

³⁹⁶ Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 584D.

³⁹⁷ Nicolas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 36, London: S.P.C.K., 1966, p. 89.

ordinary icon does not have to be of the same substance as its archetype; but the two mysteries of marriage are consubstantial, as it were, if both the bride and the bridegroom in the lower mystery have been united with the Bridegroom, Christ Himself, in the higher mystery of the Church. This takes place, as we have seen, when each is washed in the water of Baptism as if in a kind of prenuptial bath, so as to be presented "without spot and wrinkle" to the Bridegroom, before entering into actual physical union with Him in His Most Holy Body and Blood. In this sense *the hour* of Christian marriage *was not yet come* at Cana, because the wine at the marriage had not yet been turned into the Blood of Christ shed on the Cross and communicated to every Christian in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which alone could change the one-flesh marriage of two fallen human beings into one strengthened and purified through the one-flesh marriage of each with the Divine Bridegroom.

The participation of the bride and bridegroom in the Body and Blood of Christ is both the foundation and the seal of their union. It is the foundation, because true unity between the spouses is impossible without the union of each individually with Christ. And it is the seal, because without the union of each with Christ their union with each other must eventually fall apart. That is why the rite of marriage in the early Church formed part of the Divine Liturgy, being sealed by the communion of both spouses in the Body and Blood of Christ; for, as St. Symeon of Thessalonica writes, "Holy Communion is... the end of every rite and the seal of every divine mystery".³⁹⁸ And so the lower mystery, that of the "little church", in St. John Chrysostom's words, comes into being in and through the higher mystery, that of the Great Church, the former being a building block of the latter.

Troitsky writes: "Just as a crystal does not splinter into amorphous, uncrystalline parts, but only into similarly shaped pieces that look like wholes, and the smallest part of the crystal is still a crystal, so the family is both a part of the Church and itself a Church. Clement of Alexandria calls the family, like the Church, the house of the Lord, and Chrysostom directly and precisely calls it a 'little Church'. The paradisaical family coincides with the Church, for at that time mankind had no other Church, and the Christian Church is the continuation of the paradisaical Church, the new Adam-Christ replacing the Old Adam in it (I Corinthians 15.22). This explains why the New Testament and the oldest Christian literature, the Holy Scriptures that refer to marriage, refer also the Church and vice-versa."³⁹⁹

A true Christian marriage is therefore an example of that true Christian unity in the image of the unity of the Holy Trinity spoken of by St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Christ, having taken as an example and image of that indivisible love, accord and unity which is conceivable only in unanimity, the unity of essence which the Father has with Him and which He, in turn, has with the Father, desires that we too should unite with each other; evidently in the same way as the Consubstantial, Holy Trinity is united so that the whole body of the Church is conceived as one, ascending in Christ through the fusion and union of two peoples into the composition of the new perfect whole. The

³⁹⁸ St. Symeon of Thessalonica, *Against the Heresies and on the Divine Temple*, P.G. 155:512D.

³⁹⁹ Troitsky, "Brak i Tserkov'" ("Marriage and the Church"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie (Russian Regeneration)*, 1986 (III), № 35, pp. 7-8.

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*".⁴⁰⁰

The physical, bodily element cannot be removed from the type without diminishing its typical, iconic quality. For God in His descent to, and union with, mankind did not merely use the woman as a channel, as it were. He actually *became* a man, *taking flesh* from a woman; *the Word was made flesh*. And the union between the Word and the flesh was permanent, "unconfused and yet undivided", according to the Chalcedonian formula, just as the union of man and woman in marriage is permanent, "unconfused and yet undivided". Thus the full reality of the Incarnation can be expressed in opposition to those various heretics who deny its fullness only through an image that is fully physical, that expresses full union, union *in the flesh*.

Hence the difference, and yet inseparability, of the sexes, both in the beginning, when God made them male and female, and in the last times, when "God sent forth His son, born of a woman" (Galatians 4.4).

And so "neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For just as the woman was from the man [Eve was from Adam], so was the man from the woman [Christ from the Virgin]; but all things from God [the Father]" (I Corinthians 11.11)...

The Purposes of Marriage

From the above it will be clear that marriage has two aspects: its mystical, iconic aspect, which relates both to the original marriage of Adam and Eve in Paradise and to that of Christ and the Church in eternity, and a more practical aspect relating to the struggle of the spouses to fulfil the commandments of God in the conditions of the fall.

If we consider marriage only from its more practical aspect, then its purposes can be stated as: the prevention of fornication and the procreation of children. Of these two purposes the first is the more important, as is explicitly stated by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 7, and reiterated by the apostle's most faithful interpreter, St. John Chrysostom, who writes: "As for the procreation of children, marriage does not absolutely enjoin it. That responds rather to this word of God in Genesis: 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth' (1.28). The proof of this is the large number of marriages which cannot have children. That is why the first reason for marriage is to regulate lust, and especially now that the human race has filled the whole earth."⁴⁰¹

However, chastity and procreation are the particular purposes of marriage *in the fall*: they do not exclude the higher purpose of marriage, which consists in the creation

⁴⁰⁰ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On John* 17.21; quoted in Archbishop Ilarion Troitsky, *Christianity or the Church?* Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1971, p. 9. Italics mine (V.M.).

⁴⁰¹ St. John Chrysostom, *First Discourse on Marriage*.

of a likeness of the love of Christ and the Church and, if a child is included in the type, of the Holy Trinity.

In fact, the chastity that marriage in its more practical aspect produces enables it to fulfill its nature in its mystical aspect, by “releasing”, as it were, the erotic power that is in man in his unfallen state and directing it towards its Archetype. For a love that is purely carnal, with no grace coming down from above and no striving upwards from below, loses its iconic properties. It is like a Catholic picture of the Madonna rather than an Orthodox icon of the Mother of God: what we see is a fallen, earthly woman rather than the Queen of heaven.

Marriage is both an end in itself in the same way that an icon is an end in itself – a thing of beauty mirroring Eternal Beauty, – and one of the paths whereby the spouses can attain to a closer union with Eternal Beauty Himself. We all know that no husband measures up to the infinite patience and self-sacrificial love of Christ for the Church, just as no wife measures up to the infinite humility and obedience of the Church towards Christ, as exemplified most perfectly in the All-holy Virgin Mary. But the grace of marriage and the struggles of the married life are a path whereby they can attain to truly Christian love.

This grace is therefore like a seed dropped in the fallen nature of man which, as it grows, drives out the works of the flesh, “which are... adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, heresies..., hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife”, and establishes in their place the fruits of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5.19,20,22-23). As St. Gregory the Theologian writes, the spouses in a true marriage are “*wholly united in the flesh, concordant in spirit, sharpening in each other by love a like spur to piety...*”⁴⁰²

So the purposes of marriage in the fall for each individual spouse are broader than simply the control of lust or the reproduction of the human race. By carrying out the laws of marriage as a whole, and not only those concerning sexual relations, the spouses both save themselves and spur each other on to salvation. And then, as each spouse comes closer to perfection in and through marriage, the higher purpose of marriage, which was ordained *before and independently* of the fall, is also fulfilled: the creation of a true icon of the love of Christ and the Church.

Married love can literally *save* a spouse. Thus the wife of Monk-Martyr Timothy of Esphigmenou had been abducted by a Moslem after apostasising from the Faith. “The good heart of Triantaphylos [the future Monk Timothy] was overcome by bitter sorrow on seeing the perdition of his wife who for the sake of temporary and ephemeral happiness was depriving herself of that which is eternal.

“Finding relief from his sorrow only in prayer, he began to pray ardently to the All-Highest Creator, beseeching Him to turn back the one who had perished to the light of true knowledge. But at the same time, he was afraid for his daughters lest the same

⁴⁰² St. Gregory the Theologian, *In Praise of Virginity*, 11.263-75, translated in *Orthodox Life*, November-December, 1981.

lot befall them as had their mother. For this reason he sent them to his relations, asking them to help these unfortunate ones.

“The grief over the loss of his beloved wife weighed heavily on poor Triantaphylos and he decided, come what may, to wrest her from the grasp of the devil. Besides sincere prayer, he secretly admonished her through others to abandon the Moslem faith, warning her of the eternal punishment her apostasy would bring. This sincere prayer, offered up from the fullness of his heart, was heard by the Heavenly Creator Who in His great mercy placed a good thought in the mind of the apostate woman so that she soon felt a repulsion towards Islam. Having come to her senses, she bitterly repented of her fall and resolved to accept the Christian faith again.

“But knowing that it would be difficult to escape by her own efforts from the clutches of her captor, she suggested to Triantaphylos that he pretend to accept the Moslem faith and then by legal process demand her back from her captor; it was impossible for her to be freed from the harem in any other way. Then, when she would be liberated, they would leave the world: he could become a monk on the Holy Mountain of Athos, where he could beseech God and ask forgiveness for his involuntary fall; she could go to a convent where, like him, she could heal her wounds through repentance.

“In order to regain his perishing wife, and upon hearing her request, Triantaphylos decided to fulfil her wish, imitating in this case the Apostle Paul who, for the sake of the salvation of the brethren, himself desired to be separated from Christ. Thus placing his hope in God, he went to the tribunal where he declared his desire to accept the Moslem religion, but only on condition that his wife be returned to him. Triantaphylos' wish was promptly granted. He was joined to the faith of the Moslems and, having received circumcision, was given back his wife. Thereafter, although Triantaphylos appeared to follow the Moslem law, with his wife he secretly confessed the Christian faith and fulfilled all the Church rituals. No matter how much they tried to keep this secret, the Turks nevertheless suspected them of betrayal and began to keep a very close watch on them. In the meantime, Triantaphylos realized that it would be impossible for them to remain among the Moslems any longer and entrusted his daughters to relatives. After bidding farewell to them, he secretly set off with his wife to the city of Enos, and from there to Cedonia where he left her in a convent. He himself went to the Holy Mountain”, from where he later set out on the feat of martyrdom for Christ...⁴⁰³

Now only a churlish person would wish to deny that the love of St. Timothy was both conjugal and of a very high spiritual order, of the kind of which the Lord said: “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15.13). Moreover, it was a love precisely in the image of Christ's love for the Church, as conjugal love is supposed to be: its goal was certainly no passing pleasure or joy, but the eternal salvation of the beloved. And the cost was the highest possible: the possible loss of his eternal soul. And if it be objected that the real significance of the

⁴⁰³ “The Life of St. Timothy of Esphigmenou”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 26, № 6, November-December, 1976, pp. 2-3.

story lies in the fact that St. Timothy was led by God's Providence out of the lower state of marriage to the higher state of monasticism and, eventually, martyrdom, we reply: "Yes indeed. But if God's Providence led St. Timothy from marriage to monasticism, was there nothing on his own side that led him in that direction? In fact, was it not precisely the exact fulfilment of the law of marriage that led him upwards and beyond marriage to monasticism and martyrdom?"

A similar example is provided by the *Lives* of the Right-believing Prince Peter, in monasticism David, and Prince Fevronia, in monasticism Euphrosyne, wonder-workers of Murom. As we read:

"The right-believing Prince Peter was the second son of Prince Yury Vladimirovich of Murom. He ascended the throne of Murom in 1203. Several years before this St. Peter fell ill with leprosy, from which nobody was able to heal him. In a dream vision it was revealed to the prince that the pious daughter of a bee-keeper, the virgin Fevronia, could heal him. She was a peasant woman of the village of Laskovaia in Ryazan region. St. Peter sent his men to the village.

"When the prince saw St. Fevronia, he so fell in love with her for her piety, wisdom and kindness that he gave a vow to marry her after he was healed. St. Febronia healed the prince. The grateful prince was united with her in marriage, although the Murom nobility opposed this. They said: 'Either let him dismiss his wife, who has insulted the noble women by her origin, or let him leave Murom.' The prince firmly remembered the words of the Lord: 'What God has put together, let not man put asunder. He who dismisses his wife and marries another is an adulterer.' For that reason, faithful to his duty as a Christian spouse, the prince agreed to renounce his principedom. They sailed away from his native city in a boat on the river Oka. The prince remained with few means of subsistence, and sorrowful thoughts involuntarily began to assail him. But the clever princess supported and comforted him: 'Sorrow not, prince, the merciful God will not abandon us in poverty.' In Murom quarrels and arguments quickly appeared, seekers of power took to their swords and many of the nobles were killed. The Murom boyars were forced to ask Prince Peter and Princess Fevronia to return to Murom. Thus did the prince, faithful to his duty, triumph over his enemies.

"In Murom Prince Peter's rule was righteous, but without severe strictness, merciful, but without weakness. The clever and pious princess helped her husband with counsels and works of charity. Both lived according to the commandments of the Lord, they loved everyone, but they did not love pride or unrighteous avarice, they gave refuge to strangers, relieved the lot of the unfortunate, venerated the monastic and priestly ranks, protecting them from need.

"Once while the princess was sailing along the river in a boat she ordered a nobleman, who had been captivated by her beauty and was looking at her with evil thoughts, to take up some water from each side of the boat and swallow it. When he had fulfilled her will, she asked: 'Do you find any difference between the one and the other water?' 'None,' replied the nobleman. The saint then said: 'The nature of women is exactly identical. In vain do you abandon your wife and think of another.'

“The holy spouses died at the same day and hour on June 25, 1228, having accepted the schema before that with the names David and Euphrosyne. The bodies of the saints, in accordance with their will, were placed in one grave.

“Sts. Peter and Fevronia are a model of Christian married life. By their prayers they bring heavenly blessings on those who are entering the married life.”⁴⁰⁴

March 3/16, 2012.

⁴⁰⁴ *Zhitia russkikh sviatykh (Lives of the Russian Saints)*, Tutaev, 2000, vol. I, pp. 694-695 .

14. THE DOGMA OF EGALITARIANISM

Introduction

“The idea of human equality,” writes Francis Fukuyama, “has deep roots; writers from Hegel to Tocqueville to Nietzsche have traced modern ideas of equality to the biblical idea of man made in the image of God. The expansion of the charmed circle of human beings accorded equal dignity was very slow, however, and only after the seventeenth century came eventually to include the lower social classes, women, racial, religious, and ethnic minorities, and the like.”⁴⁰⁵ Until the eighteenth century, it was generally accepted that men were unequal in both the higher (moral and spiritual) and the lower (physical, psychological and intellectual) spheres. Moreover, they accepted that these inequalities justified different treatments or rewards, that the talented should be rewarded differently from the untalented, the industrious from the lazy, the good from the evil.

It was in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 that the idea that all men are created equal was first proclaimed as part of a national ideology.

Egalitarianism is probably the most influential socio-moral-political idea of the modern world. It is also, with Darwinism, the most fundamental and axiomatic; for the Declaration of Independence, after declaring the “self-evident truth all men are created equal”, goes on immediately, in the same sentence, to assert “that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights...” In other words, the philosophy of human rights depends on the egalitarian dogma; the American Declaration of 1776 led naturally and ineluctably to the French Declaration of Human Rights in 1789, to the violent socialist revolutions of the twentieth century, and to the *madness* – this is not too strong a word – of the whole Human Rights agenda of the twenty-first century.

Most of the actions of modern politicians are justified on the basis of “human rights”, which in turn are justified on the basis of egalitarianism. Even after witnessing the vast upheavals and huge rivers of blood that have been poured out to force equality on the nations of the world since 1776, the world still loves the dogma, still worships it; some are even prepared to die for it. Moreover, recent advances in science have given an extra fillip to those who think they can iron out all differences leading to inequality, such as sexuality. Even many Christians, who should know better, regard it as an article of faith which they believe in with greater sincerity and passion than any other article, including the Holy Trinity or the Divinity of Christ.

The First Sceptics

When it was first proclaimed, however, the egalitarian dogma was greeted with a healthy dose of scepticism. Thus the British *Gentleman's Magazine* for September, 1776 ridiculed it: “‘We hold, they say, ‘these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal.’ In what are they created equal? Is it in size, strength, understanding, figure, civil or moral accomplishments, or situation of life?”

⁴⁰⁵ Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 445.

The answer to these questions is self-evident: in all these spheres, men are profoundly and persistently *unequal*...

In 1843 the philosopher Jeremy Bentham declared that the authors of the French Declaration of Human Rights were sowing “the seeds of anarchy” and that the rights doctrine was “execrable trash... nonsense upon stilts”. As for Rousseau’s analogous idea that all men were born free, on the contrary, said Bentham, “all men... are born in subjection, and the most absolute subjection – the subjection of a helpless child to the parents upon whom he depends every moment of his existence... All men born free? Absurd and miserable nonsense!”

“This was the case,” writes Joanna Bourke, interpreting Bentham’s thought, “when you looked at the relationship of apprentices to their masters, or of wives to their husbands. Indeed, ‘without subjection and inequality’ the institution of marriage could not exist, ‘for of two contradictory wills, both cannot take effect at the same time’. Bentham ridiculed the idea that rights belonged to ‘all human creatures’. In his words, this would mean that women would have to be included, as well as ‘children – children of every age’, because, his sarcastic analysis continued, ‘if women and children are not part of the nation, what are they? Cattle?’ For him, this was nothing more than ‘smack-smooth equality, which rolls so glibly out of the lips of the rhetorician.’”⁴⁰⁶

Equality is especially difficult to discern in the higher, spiritual spheres, which alone could provide a basis for certain “human rights”. For, as C.S. Lewis writes, “equality is a purely social conception. It applies to man as a political and economic animal. It has no place in the world of the mind. Beauty is not democratic; she reveals herself more to the few than to the many, more to the persistent and disciplined seekers than to the careless. Virtue is not democratic; she is achieved by those who pursue her more hotly than most men. Truth is not democratic; she demands special talents and special industry in those to whom she gives her favours. Political democracy is doomed if it tries to extend its demand for equality into these higher spheres. Ethical, intellectual, or aesthetic democracy is death...”⁴⁰⁷

Human rightists see inequality, especially in social life, as a scandal. But the “scandal” for our ancestors was not so much in the obvious and inescapable fact of inequality in every sphere of life, as in the fact that life so often does not seem to distribute rewards in accordance with natural inequality: “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the learned, nor favour to the skilful” (Ecclesiastes 9.11). So life is unjust, not so much because it contains inequalities, as because the natural order of inequality is not rewarded as it should be...

⁴⁰⁶ Bentham, “Anarchical Fallacies; Being an Examination of the Declaration of Rights Issued During the French Revolution”; Bourke, *What it Means to be Human*, London: Virago, 2011, p. 115.

⁴⁰⁷ Lewis, “Democratic Education”, in *Compelling Reason*, London: Fount, 1987, p. 41.

However, the injustice of life was not a scandal to most religious people because they believed in “the God of justice” (Malachi 2.17) Who would put all injustices to right at the Last Judgement and reward all men according to their deeds. And this means *unequal* rewards for *unequal* men; for apart from the fact that some men will be sent to heaven and others to hell, even among those who are saved there are different rewards. For, as the Apostle Paul says, “there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another in glory” (I Corinthians 15.41).

In the meantime, if we wish to shine with any kind of true glory in the age to come, we have to accept the natural order or inequality or hierarchy of being, what Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida* called “degree”:

*Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows! Each thing melts
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe;
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead;
Force should be right; or, rather, right and wrong –
Between whose endless jar justice resides –
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.*

But the humanrightists of the eighteenth century no longer believed in the age to come or in any kind of “degree” except the inequality between knowledge and ignorance, between enlightened people like themselves and the unenlightened traditionalists. They were intolerant of the idea that God creates the inequalities between men in accordance with a benevolent plan that is inaccessible to us mortals. They thought that they could take the place of the Creator and remove inequality by changing nature and nations through education and “benign intervention”. For after all, they reasoned, people are what they are because of heredity and environment, and if the former cannot be changed at the present time, it may be fixable in the future, while the latter is fixable already... As for the traditionalists, with their scare-stories about an unchangeable “natural order” or hierarchy of Being, their real motivation was simply to perpetuate inequality and keep their place in the sun...

Actually, there was a grain of truth in this last comment. In all ages, privileged individuals, classes and nations have sought to justify and perpetuate their privileges on the basis of natural inequality, their supposed innate superiority to those less privileged. Even the founders of the American Constitution, such as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, did not go so far as to think that “self-evident equality” extended to the Indians or their black slaves ...

So there was hypocrisy on both sides in the egalitarian versus anti-egalitarian debate... But the hypocrisy of a philosopher does not in itself invalidate his philosophy. There have been many unchristian Christians, but that fact does not invalidate the truth of Christianity – although it makes it less persuasive for those who

base the truth of an opinion on the moral worthiness of the man who expresses it... So let us abandon ad hominem arguments and examine the case for the egalitarian dogma as objectively as possible. For in spite of what has been just said about the ubiquity of inequality, it remains true that most of us – Christians as well as humanrightists – still feel that there is some important sense in which all men *are* equal. But in what way? And on what basis?

Equality in Adam and Christ

God said in the beginning: “Let us create man in our image and after our likeness” (Genesis 1.26). Insofar as only man is said to be made in the image of God, he is not equal to the animals, but superior to them. Man has many animal-like characteristics, but there is a “quintessence of humanity” that sets him apart from them. Now the Holy Fathers interpret this quintessence of humanity or image of God in various ways, but it is generally agreed to refer to freewill and rationality, and hence the ability to make moral choices, something that is beyond the capacity of even the most intelligent of animals. It is the equal capacity of every man made in the image of God to exercise moral choice and thereby attain, with God’s help, the likeness of God that constitutes the only real basis for the dogma of equality.

So Nietzsche was right when he claimed that it is belief in God that is the main basis for the belief in equality. But he was wrong, of course, in his atheism: “The masses blink and say: ‘Man is but man, before God we are all equal. Before God! But now this God is dead.’”⁴⁰⁸

The Darwinian theory of evolution is a direct challenge to the concept of man as the image of God. If man came into being, not through a special creation of God and not in the image and likeness of God, but by chance evolution from the apes, then there is no reason to think of him as any different in essence from the apes. Moreover, Darwinism undermines any reasoning for treating each other equally or justly. Hence the doctrine of Social Darwinism, which is anything but egalitarian. For it may be defined, according to Norman Davies, as the idea that “human affairs are a jungle in which only the fittest of nations, classes, or individuals will survive”.⁴⁰⁹

As G.K. Chesterton writes: “The Declaration of Independence dogmatically bases all rights on the fact that God created all men equal; and it is right; for if they were not created equal, they were certainly evolved unequal. There is no basis for democracy except in a dogma about the divine origin of man.”

Our common origin in Adam, “the son of God” (Luke 3.38), is the reason, according to the Prophet Malachi, why we should see each other as brothers and therefore treat each other with love: “Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why then doth every one of us despise his brother, violating the covenant of our fathers?” (Malachi 2.10). Therefore Christian morality is based on Christian anthropology; we

⁴⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, IV, 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Davies, *Europe*, London: Pimlico, 1997, p. 794.

must love each other because we are all brothers in one Father, of one kith and kin with each other.

A still stronger reason than brotherhood in Adam for treating each other equally is our brotherhood in the New Adam, Christ. In His Divinity is decidedly *not* equal to us; but in the womb of the Virgin He lowered Himself to make Himself in a sense equal to all of us in His humanity. And in dying on the Cross for each one of us equally He reinforced our equality between ourselves, since we are all equally redeemed by the Blood of our one Creator and God.

This was beautifully expressed in the seventh century by St. John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria: "If by chance the blessed man heard of anybody being harsh and cruel to his slaves and given to striking them, he would first send for him and then admonish him very gently, saying: 'Son, it is come to my sinful ears that by the prompting of our enemy you behave somewhat too harshly towards your household slaves. Now, I beseech you, do not give place to anger, for God has not given them to us to strike, but to be our servants, and perhaps not even for that, but rather for them to be supported by us from the riches God has bestowed on us. What price, tell me, must a man pay to purchase one who has been honoured by creation in the likeness and similitude of God? Or do you, the slave's master, possess anything more in your own body than he does? Say, a hand, or foot, or hearing, or a soul? Is he not in all things like unto you? Listen to what the great light, Paul, says: 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus'. *If then we are equal before Christ, let us become equal in our relations with another; for Christ took upon himself the form of a servant thereby teaching us not to treat our fellow-servants with disdain. For there is one Master of all Who dwells in heaven and yet regards the things of low degree; it does not say 'the rich things' but 'things of low degree'. We give so much gold in order to make a slave for ourselves of a man honoured and together with us bought by the blood of our God and Master. For him is the heaven, for him the earth, for him the stars, for him the sun, for him the sea and all that is in it; at times the angels serve him. For him Christ washed the feet of slaves, for him He was crucified and for him endured all His other sufferings. Yet you dishonour him who is honoured of God and you beat him mercilessly as if he were not of the same nature as yourself.*"⁴¹⁰

Love is the great equalizer; it does not remove the natural inequalities between men, but in a sense makes them irrelevant. For while it is of course true that men are not equal "in size, strength, understanding, figure, civil or moral accomplishments, or situation of life", as the *Gentleman's Magazine* put it, this should not alter our love for them, if our love is truly Christian. We should not love a man more or less, or treat him more or less as a brother, because he is more or less tall, or fat, or strong, or wise, or beautiful, or powerful, or rich. Differences in "moral accomplishments" are a different matter, to which we shall return later. But differences caused by genes or environment are morally neutral or irrelevant in the sense that our attitude to their

⁴¹⁰ *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, 33; in Elizabeth Dawes & Norman H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, London: Mowbrays, 1977, pp. 243-244.

bearers as people should not be influenced by them. Nevertheless, they are real differences, and, as we shall argue later, they cannot and should not be ignored as if they did not exist, still less subjected to processes of social or (as is becoming increasingly possible) genetic engineering in order to bring the human race back to a supposed condition of “original equality”.

The Origins of Inequality

So were not men equal in the beginning – that is, before the Fall? They were indeed: in the beginning there existed a man and a woman who were as similar and equal to each other as any man and woman – or perhaps any two human beings – in history. After all, Eve derived her whole nature from Adam, without any other parent, and their environments were virtually identical.

And yet even in Paradise there was not *complete* equality in the sense of *identity* of nature. For there was this difference: that Adam was a man, and Eve was a woman. But the difference was so small that the words for the two sexes are almost the same in Hebrew (“*isha*” as opposed to “*ish*”), a similarity that, among modern languages, is mirrored only in English (“*woman*” as opposed to “*man*”). Moreover, it is not recorded in what that difference consisted in the prelapsarian state. We cannot assume that then, as now, after the fall, it consisted in the difference between “*XX*” and “*XY*” chromosomes. All we know is that she was created to be “a helper like him” (Genesis 2.18), not the other way round – that is, she was meant to be a follower rather than a leader.

But it was precisely this very small difference – a difference in role rather than nature – which Satan exploited to widen the gap and lead to a difference also in nature. First, the sins that Adam and Eve committed were subtly different. For “Adam was not seduced; but the woman being seduced, was in the transgression” (I Timothy 2.14). So in spite of their commonality of nature, which made them equal from a natural point of view, Eve was deceived, but Adam was not. Adam sinned also, of course, but in a different way: instead of following God and leading his wife, he allowed her to lead him into disobeying God. Then God gave the couple “garments of skins” (Genesis 3.21), which, according to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers, signify the opaque, coarse nature of our present, postlapsarian bodies, together with the fallen passions that are associated with such bodies: gluttony, lust and anger. Their bodies were now more different from each other than they had been in Paradise because of the new demands placed on them in order to survive both as individuals and as a species. In particular, the man’s body was modified in order to carry out hard agricultural work and in order to beget children, while the woman’s body was modified in order to give birth to and raise children. Moreover, the difference in their roles was sharpened. The woman, instead of being simply a “helper” to the man, was placed in definite subjection to him: “thou shalt be under thy husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over thee” (Genesis 3.16).

Since the original sin of Adam, together with its consequences in death and corruption, extended to all subsequent generations, the differences and inequalities between men have multiplied – that is, political, social and economic inequalities. But

the most fundamental inequality was revealed already in the first generation after Adam, in his sons Cain and Abel. This was the *moral* inequality between those men who love God and those who love only themselves. Now this inequality is not a difference in *nature*; men are not *made* good and evil, saints and sinners, in the sense that they cannot help belonging to this or that category (that is the error of the Calvinists). True, evil is mixed with our nature from our conception – “I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me” (Psalm 50.5). But all men still retain in themselves that image of God – freewill and rationality – that enables them to choose good over evil. The image has been darkened, and our freewill has been weakened (“the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26.41)). But by exercising the good that still remains in our nature, we can, with the help of God, overcome the evil that flows from the original sin of Adam and Eve. So the first, most fundamental inequality between men is the *moral* or *spiritual* inequality that is expressed in the different ways in which they freely direct the nature they have received from their parents – towards God or towards the devil.

From this first, *moral* inequality flow all the others; for none of these would exist if sin had not entered the world and the whole world did not lie in sin. These less fundamental inequalities can be divided into those that are based, on the one hand, on the entrance of death into men’s genetic inheritance, causing the degeneration of the gene-pool and the appearance of destructive mutations that are passed down the generations, so that some are born as geniuses and with various talents and abilities while others are born with crushing physical and mental disabilities; and on the other hand, on inequalities in environment and social station, so that some people are born in crushing poverty or slavery, while others are born with all the advantages of wealth and education. The very struggle to survive in a fallen world creates man-made inequalities, the hierarchical structures of families, tribes and states that institutionalize inequality. For without some such distinctions and inequalities society as a whole could not defend itself against invaders from without or criminals from within. Again, the need to survive and reproduce and prosper, both individually and collectively, explains why strength and beauty and intelligence are rewarded, while the lack of these attributes is penalized.

So we are *not* equal by nature, and the nature of the fallen world is such that there is no way in which these inequalities can be ironed out. But this has not stopped all modern societies from trying to do just that – that is, re-engineer human nature and society through the elimination of all inequalities of every kind, returning it to some golden age. Not that modern societies believe in Paradise. On the contrary, the socialist experiment (for that is what this striving for unnatural equality is) rejects all such “religious myths”; it sees the subjection of man to God as the first and worst of all inequalities generating all subsequent inequalities, such as the divine right of kings to rule over their subjects. Thus the most thorough-going and famous socialist experiment, that of the Soviet Union, began its attempt to wipe out the natural inequalities of human nature and society by killing the Tsar and all belief in God – and ended up creating the most hideously unequal society in world history...

Inequality and Socialism

However, what has been said so far will be unlikely to convince die-hard egalitarians, and especially those with a Christian background who believe in the “Social Gospel” – that is, that it is God’s command that we help the poor by ironing out differences in wealth, power and privilege through democratization, redistribution and social engineering. Such people will not be deterred by the example of the Soviet Union, a “mistake” that could have been avoided, in their opinion, if the Soviets had followed the path of German welfare socialism rather than Marxist revolutionary socialism. They fail to draw the deeper lessons from the collapse of communism in 1989-91, which is probably why there has been so little comment on, or study of, that epochal event in the last twenty years.⁴¹¹

Let us put the argument for Socialist Christianity in a different way: “Since the radical inequalities that exist between men are consequences of the fall, is it not right that we should seek to reverse these consequences as far as we can?” This argument rests on the assumption that the consequences of the fall, in the form of social, political and economic inequalities, are evil *in themselves*. But this assumption is false. In fact these inequalities are like bad-tasting medicine administered to us by the Providence of God for the sake of our moral health. For “all things work together for those who love God” (Romans 8.28); and so *if we love God*, all the crushing inequalities that follow from the fall – poverty, illness, slavery – can, if borne with patience and gratitude, contribute to our ultimate goal, which is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. It is this goal, rather than the abolition of inequality, that constitutes the true reversal of the fall. For the evils of this present fallen world are inflicted on us in order to humble us, to subdue our passions, and thereby to make us fit vessels for the reception of God’s Grace, the same Grace that Adam and Eve lost when they refused the light burden of obedience God placed upon them.

“So are you saying,” objects the Socialist, “that it is good that the rich should continue to oppress the poor?!” Of course not! – the point is that economic inequality is allowed by Divine Providence as a challenge and a means of healing for both the rich and the poor. If the rich man stops worrying about his own well-being and opens his heart to help the poor, then he tramples upon avarice and comes closer to God. And if the poor man bears his poverty with patience, and prays for his rich benefactors, then he, too, comes closer to God. Thus inequality can help both rich and poor towards the Kingdom.

For, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich wrote, “it is God’s desire that men be *unequal* in externals: riches, power, status, learning, position and so forth. But he does not recommend any sort of competitiveness in this. God desires that men compete in the multiplying of the inner virtues.”⁴¹²

Again, St. John Chrysostom writes: “Should we look to kings and princes to put right the inequalities between rich and poor? Should we require soldiers to come and seize the rich person’s gold and distribute it among his destitute neighbours? Should

⁴¹¹ Janet Daley, “The Lessons of 1989 have still not been learnt”, *The Sunday Telegraph* (London), February 5, 2012, p. 24.

⁴¹² Velimirovich, *Homilies*, book 2. Italics mine (V.M.).

we beg the emperor to impose a tax on the rich so great that it reduces them to the level of the poor and then to share the proceeds of that tax among everyone? Equality imposed by force would achieve nothing, and do much harm. Those who combined both cruel hearts and sharp minds would soon find ways of making themselves rich again. Worse still, the rich whose gold was taken away would feel bitter and resentful; while the poor who received the gold from the hands of soldiers would feel no gratitude, because no generosity would have prompted the gift. Far from bringing moral benefit to society, it would actually do moral harm. Material justice cannot be accomplished by compulsion, a change of heart will not follow. The only way to achieve true justice is to change people's hearts first – and then they will joyfully share their wealth."⁴¹³

In another place, St. Chrysostom says that God did not make all men equal, because then there would be no place for love. But love covers the gap. You are rich, for example, and your neighbour is poor: love him, and fill up his need...

When Mary poured the oil of spikenard over the head of Christ, Judas complained that the oil could have been sold for a lot of money and the money given to the poor. But "this he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box, and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always'" (John 12.6-8).

This story illustrates several things. First, it shows that those who seek to eliminate poverty and inequality, like Judas, are in fact the enemies of the poor and traitors to Christ. Judas can be seen as the first egalitarian reformer, the first preacher of "the Social Gospel".

Secondly, the motive in almsgiving is all important. The call to help the poor may proceed, not from compassion towards the poor, but from greed and envy towards the rich. In almost all socialist revolutions, the poor end up much poorer than before, while the revolutionaries end up by destroying, not only economic inequality, but every kind of superiority of one man over another.

For, as C.S. Lewis writes, "the demand for equality has two sources; one of them is among the noblest, the other is the basest, of human emotions... There is in all men a tendency (only corrigible by good training from without and persistent moral effort from within) to resent the existence of what is stronger, subtler or better than themselves. In uncorrected and brutal men this hardens into an implacable hatred for every kind of excellence..."⁴¹⁴

Inequality, Slavery and Monarchy

Let us look a little more closely at one kind of social inequality whose supposed abolition the liberals and socialists point to as an undoubted achievement and triumph

⁴¹³ St. John Chrysostom on the poor, from *On Living Simply* XLIII.

⁴¹⁴ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

of Christian morality – the abolition of slavery. Now Christianity has never endorsed slavery, and has always considered the emancipation of a slave by his master as a laudable act of charity. But on the other hand it has always called on slaves to obey their masters, and has not endorsed violent wars to destroy the institution.

Thus St. Paul is profoundly conservative in his social teaching: “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s free man. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called” (I Corinthians 7.20-24).

As Archbishop Averky of Jordanville writes: “The epistle [of the holy Apostle Paul] to Philemon vividly witnesses to the fact that the Church of Christ, in liberating man from sin, does not at the same time produce a forcible rupture in the established inter-relationships of people, and does not encroach on the civil and state order, waiting patiently for an improvement in the social order, under the influence of Christian ideas. Not only from this epistle, but also from others..., it is evident that the Church, while unable, of course, to sympathize with slavery, at the same time did not abolish it, and even told slaves to obey their masters. Therefore here the conversion of Onesimus to Christianity, which made him free from sin and a son of the Kingdom of God, did not, however, liberate him, as a slave, from the authority of his master. Onesimus had to return to [his master] Philemon, in spite of the fact that the Apostle loved him as a son, and needed his services, since he was in prison in Rome. The Apostle’s respect for civil rights tells also in the fact that he could order Philemon to forgive Onesimus [for fleeing from him], but, recognizing Philemon’s right as master, begs him to forgive his guilty and penitent slave. The words of the Apostle: ‘Without your agreement I want to do nothing’ clearly indicate that Christianity really leads mankind to personal perfection and the improvement of the social legal order on the basis of fraternity, equality and freedom, but *not by way of violent actions and revolutions*, but by the way of peaceful persuasion and moral influence.”⁴¹⁵

Thus Christianity is morally radical, but socially conservative. The result, paradoxically, was the profoundest revolution in human history. For the world changed more profoundly and more permanently when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire than as a result of any modern revolution.

“That is all very well,” say the socialist. “But this conservatism applies to individuals, not states. States *must* be occupied with abolishing inequality through social reform and redistribution. It is a scandal that there should be poor people in our modern societies when the State can easily abolish poverty through legislation.”

⁴¹⁵ Archbishop Averky (Taushev), *Rukovodstvo k izucheniu Sviaschennago Pisanija Novago Zaveta (Guide to the Study of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, vol. II, pp. 354-355. Italics mine (V. M.).

It is true: rulers can, unlike private citizens, occupy themselves with a certain degree of social restructuring and redistribution. Nevertheless, even the most radical such measures in Orthodox lands never went so far as to seek to abolish classes or the very existence of poverty. For example, in 1861 Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom in Russia, freeing 22 million serfs from their noble landowner masters in the greatest single act of social reform in world history. And yet poverty and inequality were not thereby abolished; nor was that the aim. The peasants remained peasants, and the nobles remained nobles, even if their relationship in law had changed.

Moreover, because people are people, and there are losers as well as winners in every social reform, the results even of this great act were by no means unambiguous. Emancipation changed the relationship both between the state and the landowners, and between the landowners and the peasants. As the nobles began to lose their feeling of duty and obedience to the state, the peasants, correspondingly, began to see their obedience to the nobles as a burden that was not justified, as in the past, by the defence of the land. As such, the formal structure probably had to change in view of the change in its spiritual content. But the change in formal structure from patriarchal to civil meant that the sanctifying bonds of obedience broke down still faster than they would have done otherwise. To that extent, the reform, though rational from a politico-economic point of view, was harmful from a moral one. As Schema-Monk Boris of Optina said: "The old order was better, even though I would really catch it from the nobleman... Now it's gotten bad, because there's no authority; anyone can live however he wants."⁴¹⁶ Indeed, so self-willed had emancipation made the peasants that the sons and grandsons of those liberated by the Tsar set about murdering him and his successors and enslaving the whole population in their new communist paradise - all in the name of freedom and equality!

Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: "Later critics of the reform also justly point out that it suffered from an excessive 'slant' in one direction, being inspired most of all by the idea of the immediate emancipation of the serfs from *the landowners*, but without paying due attention to the question how and with what to substitute the guiding, restraining and, finally, educating function of 'the lords' (the landowners) for the peasants. Indeed, delivered as it were in one moment to themselves, to their own self-administration (after 100 years of the *habit* of being guided by the lord), could the Russian peasants immediately undertake their self-administration wisely and truly, to their own good and that of the Fatherland? That is the question nobody wanted to think about at the beginning, being sometimes ruled by the *illusion* of the 'innateness' of the people's wisdom!..."

"They began to think about this, as often happens with us, 'in hindsight', after they had encountered disturbances and ferment among the peasantry. All the indicated mistakes in the reform of 1861 led to the peasantry as a whole being *dissatisfied* in various respects. Rumours spread among them that 'the lords' had again deceived them, that the Tsar had given them *not that* kind of freedom, that the real 'will of the

⁴¹⁶ Victor Afanasyev, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2000, pp. 216, 217. The old family retainer in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* also believed that the rot set in with "Freedom".

Tsar' had been hidden from them, while a false one had been imposed upon them. This was immediately used by the 'enlighteners' and revolutionaries of all kinds. The peasants gradually began to listen not to the state official and the former lord, but to *the student*, who promised 'real' freedom and abundant land, attracting the peasant with the idea of 'the axe', by which they themselves would win all this from the deceiver-lords...

"But in spite of inadequacies and major mistakes, the reform of 1861, of course, exploded and transfigured the life of Great Russia. A huge mass of the population (about 22 million people) found themselves a free and self-governing estate (class), juridically *equal* to the other estates. This immediately elicited the need to build its life and activity on *new* foundations..."⁴¹⁷

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln emancipated the American black slaves. He imposed it at a cost of 600,000 lives. And the result? Poverty for the newly emancipated, and bitterness between whites and blacks, North and South, that lasted for generations...

J.M. Roberts compares the Russian and American emancipations as follows: "In retrospect [the emancipation of the Russian serfs] seems a massive achievement. A few years later the United States would emancipate its Negro slaves. There were far fewer of them than there were Russian peasants and they lived in a country of much greater economic opportunity, yet the effect of throwing them on the labour market, exposed to the pure theory of *laissez-faire* economic liberalism, was to exacerbate a problem with whose ultimate consequences the United State is still grappling. In Russia the largest measure of social engineering in recorded history down to this time was carried out without comparable dislocation and it opened the way to modernization for what was potentially one of the strongest powers on earth..."⁴¹⁸

It is ironic and instructive that the most successful social transformations have been carried out, not by secular socialists fighting for equality, but by traditionalist Christians who believed in the natural order and hierarchy of being. Thus Tsar Nicholas II as an individual was one of the most charitable rulers in history. Even as a child he would give his shoes to the poor, and throughout his life he was secretly giving alms to the people, not to mention the huge benefits, spiritual and material, that he gave to the nation as a whole, including the reform of Church-State relations, an agrarian policy that released millions of peasants from poverty and a system of labour legislation that was hailed by American President Robert Taft as the most enlightened of its time. The result was that Tsarist Russia was not only the fastest-developing nation in the world, but on the way to becoming one of the most just.

But even Tsar Nicholas did not attempt to destroy the class system in Russia or radically overturn the foundations of society. For he understood that inequality is built into human society by God Himself, and that the ruler's task is not to revolutionize society, but to mitigate, as far as possible, those evil consequences introduced into it by evil men. Too late did the Russian people who overthrew the tsar

⁴¹⁷ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 342-343.

⁴¹⁸ Roberts, *History of the World*, London: Helicon, 1992, p. 612.

understand that, in the words of C.S. Lewis, "the old authority in kings, priests, husbands, or fathers, and the old obedience in subjects, laymen, wives, and sons, was [not] in itself a degrading or evil thing at all."⁴¹⁹

Besides, even in fallen men there is a secret desire to look up and admire, even if the object is not admirable: "where men are forbidden to honour a king they honour millionaires, athletes, or film-stars instead: even famous prostitutes or gangsters."⁴²⁰ Since inequality is so deeply ingrained in human nature and society at every level, simply destroying an institution or even a state that embodies it solves nothing. Deep in their hearts, men know that they are *not* equal; and if their hearts are not filled with greed and envy, they delight in the honour given to their superiors; which is why monarchy survives and prospers even in such a liberal and socialist society as contemporary England. Even such a convinced democrat as C.S. Lewis could write of the monarchy as "the channel through which all the vital elements of citizenship - loyalty, the consecration of secular life, the hierarchical principle, splendour, ceremony, continuity - still trickle down to irrigate the dustbowl of modern economic Statecraft".⁴²¹ Even today, hysteria can seize the nation on the death of a princess, for little other reason than that she was a princess...

Roger Scruton has spoken of the English monarchy as "the light above politics, which shines down on the human bustle from a calmer and more exalted sphere. Not being elected by popular vote, the monarch cannot be understood as representing the views only of the present generation. He or she is born into the position, and also passes it on to a legally defined successor. The monarch is in a real sense the voice of history, and the very accidental [*sic*] way in which the office is acquired emphasises the grounds of the monarch's legitimacy, in the history of a place and a culture. This is not to say that kings and queens cannot be mad, irrational, self-interested or unwise. It is to say, rather, that they owe their authority and their influence precisely to the fact that they speak for something other than the present desires of present voters, something vital to the continuity and community which the act of voting assumes. Hence, if they are heard at all, they are heard as limiting the democratic process, in just the way that it must be limited if it is to issue in reasonable legislation. It was in such a way that the English conceived their Queen, in the sunset days of Queen Victoria. The sovereign was an ordinary person, transfigured by a peculiar enchantment which represented not political power but the mysterious authority of an ancient 'law of the land'."⁴²²

Monarchy represents the summit of inequality among men. As such, it is an image of the infinitely greater distance separating all men from God, the King of kings. So veneration of the monarch facilitates the worship of God, and vice-versa; which is why its destruction inevitably leads to that falling away from God that we see in all the nations that have killed their kings...

⁴¹⁹ Lewis, "Equality", *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴²⁰ Lewis, "Equality", *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴²¹ Lewis, "Myth became Fact", *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology*, Fount Paperbacks, 1979, p. 64.

⁴²² Scruton, *England: An Elegy*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2000, p. 188.

Inequality and Gender

The 1960s were, as is well-known, a period of moral degradation when all kinds of sexual sins condemned by most civilized societies throughout history, became permitted in law. The most notorious of these was homosexuality, and it became obligatory for all “progressive” people to defend this most unnatural of vices. Traditional old-style socialism in the West now began to metamorphose into what is often called Cultural Marxism. The obsession of this movement was still the abolition of inequality, but the kinds of inequality now warred against were more varied and more profound: not just differences in income level or education between classes, or discrimination against non-white races or women in the workplace, but the biological differences between the sexes (or “gender”). By the 1990s the Cultural Marxists had moved from attacking discrimination against homosexuals to attacking all defenders of traditional marriage and Christian morality; not only was “gay marriage” permitted, but any criticism of this “life-style” was a “hate-crime”.

However, this was only a prelude to the truly unprecedented attempt to abolish gender differences altogether that we find now, in the twenty-first century... “The enemy on this particular battleground,” writes Melanie Phillips, “is anyone who maintains that there are men and there are women, and that the difference between them is fundamental.

“The ‘binary’ distinction is accepted as a given by the vast majority of the human race. No matter. It is now being categorised as a form of bigotry.”⁴²³

This revolution has been made possible – supposedly - by the invention of new sex-change technologies enabling men to become women and women to become men. “Trans-gender” now occupies the favoured place in the ideology of Cultural Marxism that homosexuality had in the previous generation. And anyone – even the famous feminist ideologue Germaine Greer – who claims that transgender men who become women after medical treatment are still men are subjected to attack.

“The Commons Women and Equalities Select Committee has produced a report saying transgender people are being failed. The issue is not just whether they really do change their sex. The crime being committed by society is to insist on any objective evidence for this at all. According to the committee, people should be able to change their gender at will merely by filling in a form. Instead of requiring evidence of sex-change treatment, Britain should adopt the ‘self-declaration’ model now used in Ireland, Malta, Argentina and Denmark. To paraphrase Descartes, ‘I think I am a man/woman/of now sex, therefore I am.’

“The committee’s chairwoman, the Tory MP Maria Miller, says there’s no need for gender categories on passports, drivers’ licences or other official forms because gender is irrelevant. ‘We should be looking at ways of trying to strip back talking about gender’, she says. But it’s people like her and her committee who have made it a frontline issue.

⁴²³ Phillips, “In Defence of Gender”, *The Spectator*, 30 January, 2016, p. 12.

“In 2004, Parliament passed the Gender Recognition Act’ in 2010, the Equality Act made gender reassignment a protected characteristic; in 2011, the government published its ‘Advancing transgender equality’ action plan.

“The NHS has a National Clinical Reference Group for Gender Identity Services. The National Police Chiefs’ Council has a National Policing Lead on Transgender. Last November, the Department for Education flew the transgender flag to mark the Transgender Day of Remembrance...”⁴²⁴

Phillips continues: “Gender politics is all about subjective feeling. It has nothing to do with fairness or equality. It embodies instead an extreme egalitarianism which holds that any evidence of difference is a form of prejudice.

“If people want to identify with either gender or none, no one is allowed to gainsay it. Objective reality crumbles under the supremacy of subjective feeling. Those who demur are damned as heartless.

“In fact, gender fluidity creates victims. Professor Paul McHugh is the former chief psychiatrist at John Hopkins hospital in the US. In the 1960s this pioneered sex-reassignment surgery – but subsequently abandoned it because of the problems it left in its wake. Most young boys and girls who seek sex reassignment, McHugh has written have psychosocial issues and presume that such treatment will resolve them. ‘The grim fact is that most of these youngsters do not find therapists willing to assess and guide in ways that permit them to work out their conflicts and correct their assumptions. Rather they and their families find only ‘gender counsellors’ who encourage them in their sexual misassumptions.’

“In two states, any doctor who looked into the psychological history of a ‘transgendered boy or girl in search of a resolvable problem could lose his or her licence to practise medicine.

“In line with such suppression of medical freedom, Miller’s committee also wants to dump McHugh’s ‘medicalised approach’. The MPs claim it ‘pathologises trans identities’ and runs ‘contrary to the dignity and personal autonomy’ of trans people. They note that a UK survey found about half of young and a third of adult transgender people said they had attempted suicide. The committee does not suggest this is most likely because of the unbearable mental conflict over their sexual identity. Instead, it blames ‘transphobia’ for driving them to this despair...”⁴²⁵

So the egalitarians are going to have to rewrite the Biblical account of creation to eliminate the differences, not only between man and the animals, but also between men and women: not only the phrase about being created in the image of God, but also the phrase “male and female created He them” will have to go. This is a “recreation” of human nature by totalitarian decree... As Phillips concludes, “Gender

⁴²⁴ Phillips, *op. cit.*

⁴²⁵ Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 13.

cannot be at real risk because it is anchored in an immutable reality. What *is* on the cards is oppression, socially engineered dysfunction and the loss of individual freedom. Conservative politicians who are helping wave the red flag of revolution..."⁴²⁶

Conclusion

'God is not equality, but love,' said St. Nikolai Velimirovich. There is a Hierarchy of Being, and it extends all the way from God at the peak to the lowest unit of inorganic life. By the very nature of hierarchy, it encompasses and preserves a vast variety of distinctions, differences and inequalities. But all these inequalities are harmonized and reconciled by the One Who created the whole and Whose infinite superiority to all the lower levels of the hierarchy is incontestable – God. Many injustices in human history may have been justified on the basis of inequality, but it remains a fact of life. And so true justice can only be attained when everybody knows, and is reconciled with, his true place in the Hierarchy...

It was Satan who first whispered the egalitarian dogma – or rather, heresy – into the minds of our first parents, saying: "You shall be as gods". His motivation was *envy* – "Long ago the crafty serpent envied my honour", "Of old the enemy who hates mankind envied me the life of happiness that I had in Paradise".⁴²⁷ By offering the bait of equality with God, he wanted to separate man from God and bring him into equality with himself – an accursed equality on the bottom rung of the Hierarchy of Being, filled with unutterable pain, bitterness and shame.

Such is, and always will be, the motivation of those who dangle the unattainable mirage of equality with God before suffering mankind. Their goal is in the literal sense of the word satanic, being the goal of Satan himself when he was cast from heaven: "How are thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cast to the ground, who didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; *I will be like the Most High*. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit..." (Isaiah 15.12-15).

And yet the paradox is that God *does* want us to be "as gods", "partakers of the Divine nature" (II Peter 1.4). "God became man", as St. Athanasius said, "that men should become gods". His will is that when He comes again at His Second Coming "we shall be like Him" (I John 3.2), having transformed the fallen, muddied image of God in us into a true and radiant likeness, wholly suffused by Grace.

However, the key to this exaltation of human nature is that we follow the example He gave at His First Coming. Then, "being in the form of God, He did not consider it robbery to be equal to God, but emptied Himself, and took upon Himself the form of a slave, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2.6-7). Thus God the Son, although fully equal to God the Father by nature, renounced, as it were, this lofty

⁴²⁶ Phillips, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴²⁷ *Triodion*, Sunday of Forgiveness, Mattins, Canon, Canticle 3, troparion, Canticle 5, troparion,.

equality, and made Himself equal instead to the infinitely lower nature of man. And, moreover, “being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross...” (v. 8) So equality of a Divine, paradoxical kind is attainable, and exaltation to unimaginable heights is possible – but only through voluntary self-humiliation to the depths of the created hierarchy, and the patient acceptance of all the inequalities – physical, psychological, social, political, economic, and above all moral and spiritual – that exist in the real, fallen world.

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15. THE DAY TRUE ORTHODOXY SAVED THE WORLD

One of the great confessors of the Catacomb Church was Bishop Michael (Yershov) of Kazan. Stories about him began to seep out to the West towards the end of his life and after his death in 1974. But it was not until a full (739-page) biography of him appeared recently that his full stature and importance became apparent.

Michael Vasilyevich Yershov was born in 1911 into a poor family. His father became a Bolshevik and persecuted and beat his son, but was later converted by him and repented. In 1931, at the age of twenty, Michael was imprisoned for the first time for his rejection of the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate. Apart from a short period in the early 1940s, he remained in the camps for the rest of his life, being transported from one end of the GULAG to the other and dying, still in prison, on June 4, 1974. He presented an astounding image of patience and suffering that converted many to the Faith. He was a wonderworker and had the gifts of healing and prophecy. But perhaps his most astounding miracle was worked in the Mordovian camps in 1962, together with his fellow inmate and secret bishop, Basil Vasilyevich Kalinin (+1995).

“It was August, 1962. The Cuban crisis! The attention of the world was glued to it, and it affected even the special section hidden in the Mordovian forests. ‘It has to be...! Khrushchev has penetrated into the bosom of the Americans!’ That was how the zeks [criminal inmates] interpreted it. People living beyond the barbed wire admitted the possibility that in time of war the local authorities would annihilate them, as the most dangerous politicals, first of all.” “At the special section the zeks insisted that Moscow had issued an order that in time of war the politicals and recidivists would be annihilated first of all. The Cuban crisis was soon resolved, and our camp calmed down. Many years later I heard that the fears of the zeks in 1962 had not been without foundation. They had really been threatened with annihilation at that time.” “In 1964, soon after the fall of Khrushchev, a colonel from the Georgian KGB came to our camp. And he said, among other things: ‘Khrushchev adopted the policy of the complete physical annihilation of the politicals, and first of all the recidivists. During the Cuban crisis everything was prepared for your shooting – even a pit was dug.’” [Bishop] Basil Vasilyevich Kalinin remembered that the holy hierarch [Michael] once unexpectedly aroused him from sleep with the words: “Six minutes are remaining. Get up, Basil, and pray! The world is in danger!” And then he learned that this was the critical moment in the Cuban crisis...⁴²⁸

Truly, “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5.16). For “when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched” (Numbers 11.2), and when Elijah prayed to the Lord the heavens were closed and again opened (James 5.17). And when the two True Orthodox bishops Michael and Basil prayed to the Lord, the world was saved from nuclear holocaust...

“Let the world mock us,” wrote Bishop Michael, “but we, poor people, must give all our strength and desire in prayer to God”. “We must strictly watch over ourselves, that we do not fall under the condemnation and wrath of God. We must pour out the balsam of our strength and purity of heart whatever happens, our simple, true and holy prayer to God, which is bound

⁴²⁸ I.V. Ilichev, *Voin Khristov Vernij i Istinnij: Tajnij Episkop IPTs Mikhail (Yershov)* (Faithful and True Warrior of Christ: Secret Bishop Michael (Yershov), Moscow: Bratonezh, 2011, pp. 499-500.

by nothing except simplicity and belief in our eternal inheritance. For the Lord looks on the righteous and on their holy appeals, so that the prayer offered may be the earnest of our strength and the balsam of purification, by which the world might be preserved and the catastrophe which cannot even be expressed in words – God forbid! – might be averted.”

“You yourselves know that a city is preserved if a righteous man is praying in it. Once the righteous man has left the city, the elements rule in the city. And so, dear ones, remember this one thing, that now is not that day on which the universe was created, and everything was brought into being, but now is the day on which danger menaces the creation...”⁴²⁹

Besides this pure, simple, burning prayer of a righteous man, Bishop Michael insisted on the pure confession of the True Orthodox Faith.

“Between the Church of the Tikhonite orientation [the True Orthodox Church] and the legal church [the Moscow Patriarchate] there is the following difference. The Church of the Tikhonite orientation zealously fulfils all the laws and rules that are prescribed by the Holy Fathers, while the legal church tolerates atheism, does not struggle against iniquity, but is reconciled with it. I recognize the One Apostolic Church. The legal church recognizes Lenin and Stalin, and serves Soviet power and carries out the orders of the atheist antichrists.”⁴³⁰

“Do not believe any sects: this is a cunning contemporary politics that has come out from the West. There are even some that are like the Orthodox faith. But you, my brothers and dear ones, must not go anywhere – may the Lord keep you! There are also many enemies of our Orthodox Christian faith, we have many enemies. The first is Catholicism, our most cunning and evil enemy, and the Lutherans, and all the sects, which came out of America and now, like dirt, have spread through the whole earth. It is difficult for us poor people now, we have no defence from men, everyone wants to offend us. But we are faithful. We are the most true patriots of our Mother, the Holy Orthodox Christian Eastern Apostolic Church. We are patriots of Holy Rus’ and we know the tricks of all kinds of people, and we will not deviate in any direction: for Holy Rus’ is sanctified by the sufferings of her own people. Every foot is creeping into Russia and wanting to defile her. No, Russia will preserve all the holy mysteries, even if through small, simple people, but she will show the whole world light, and strength, and greatness. Dear ones, the Orthodox Church will conquer the whole universe. Fear not, my dear ones, the Lord will conquer evil. Amen.”⁴³¹

Bishop Michael was a simple, uneducated man. But he attained the spiritual heights. *“In my lifetime I have not studied the sciences, but I have come to know the keys of the universe and have reached the depths of the abyss. It is hard and difficult without the Supreme Creator. With the Creator and His Life-giving Spirit and the righteousness of Christ I have passed through the arena of an indescribable life...”⁴³²*

July 20 / August 2, 2012.

[16. FAITH, SCIENCE AND DOUBTING THOMAS](#)

⁴²⁹ Ilichev, *op. cit.*, p. 506.

⁴³⁰ Ilichev, *op. cit.*, p. 410.

⁴³¹ Ilichev, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

⁴³² Ilichev, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

The Apostle Thomas would not believe in the Resurrection of Christ until he had seen and touched Him. A very modern, scientific attitude... And not a bad one, even if not the best. After all, while Christ urged him to cease doubting and believe, He did not reject his request for evidence, but gave him His hands and side to touch. He did not scorn the scientific attitude, but expanded it, as it were, leading it on to the recognition of the greatest of all truths, the rock on which the Church, "the pillar and ground of the Truth" (I Timothy 3.15), is itself grounded (Matthew 16.18), the truth that Christ is "my Lord and my God" (John 20.28).

Does this mean that faith is grounded in science and is therefore in some sense dependent on it? No, it doesn't. As we shall see, the reverse is the case: science is grounded in faith. But faith and science have this in common: they are both evidentially based, and they both seek to proclaim the credible, not indulge the credulous. Thomas refused to be credulous – that is to say, gullible – in matters of the faith, and eventually attained to the supremely credible by means of a very simple, quasi-scientific test involving the senses of sight, hearing and touch. Hence he could have said, with John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and *our hands have handled*, concerning the Word of life..." (I John 1.1).

Indeed, the Lord provided us with "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1.3) of the Resurrection; for, as the Apostle Paul says, "if Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain" (I Corinthians 15.17). Thus Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "A new tomb, sealed, a heavy stone across the entrance, a guard kept over it – what does all this mean? These were all careful measures, in the wisdom of God's providence, so that, by them, the mouths of all unbelievers who attempt to prove that Christ either did not die, or did not rise, or that His body was stolen, should be stopped. Were Joseph not to have begged the dead body from Pilate; were the captain of the guard not to have given official confirmation of Christ's death; were the body not to have been buried and sealed in the presence of Christ's friends and enemies, it could have been said that Christ had, in fact, not died, but was only in a coma and then regained consciousness (as, more recently, Schleiermacher and other Protestants have asserted). Had the tomb not been closed by a heavy stone, had it not been sealed, had it not been guarded by watchmen, it could have been said that it was true that Christ had died and been buried, but that He had been stolen from the tomb by His disciples. Had it not been a completely new tomb, it could have been said that it was not Christ who had risen but some other dead man, who had been buried earlier. And so all the careful measures that the Jews took to smother the truth served, by God's providence, to endorse it."⁴³³

The third-century Church writer Tertullian once famously wrote: "I believe because it is absurd". How absurd! Evidently Tertullian (who became a heretic) was no follower of the Apostle Thomas! If he had said: "I believe in spite of the fact that you (stupid unbelievers) consider my faith absurd", we would have no quarrel with him. But to believe *because of* the supposed absurdity of faith is a kind of nihilism, and the undermining of all true faith and rational discourse.

⁴³³ Velimirovich, "Homily on Second Sunday after Easter", *Homilies*, vol. 1, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1996, p. 231.

For faith is rational – not *rationalist*, which is a narrowing and undermining of true rationality – but fully in accord with reason. After all, the Gospel for the Resurrection begins with the words: “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1.1), where “Word”, Logos in Greek, could equally be translated “Reason”. “Logic” or “Meaning”. The Church does not scorn reason, but welcomes it with open arms, for we know that the God Whom we worship is Supreme Reason and Meaning and the Creator of all that is rational and logical and meaningful. Indeed, our very capacity to reason and find logic and meaning in things is based on our being created in the image of God’s Reason. The universe makes sense because it was created by a God Who is Reason and Who implanted the capacity to reason in our minds and hearts... “Minds *and hearts*” because the rationality in question is not simply *thinking* or *cogitation*, but *a vision of the heart*. But again we must qualify ourselves. We are not talking about “heart” in the sense of *emotional capacity*. The vision of the heart that is *faith* is a vision that is supra-intellectual and supra-emotional. It proceeds from the spiritual centre of our being, the point where we enter into communion with God, where our reason encounters Reason Itself, and radiates out to embrace both our thoughts and our emotions, ordering and transfiguring and exalting them.

But why, then, are faith and science so often opposed, as if the one were incompatible with the other? For, as Melanie Phillips writes, “In the post-Christian West, it is an article of secular faith that religion and reason repel each other like magnetic poles. Religion, it is said, is not rational and reason cannot embrace anything that lies outside materialist explanation.”⁴³⁴

The crucial word here is “materialist”. Faith, according to St. Paul, is “the evidence of things *not* seen, the proof of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11.1), where “things hoped for” are by definition things also *not* seen (yet). So faith very consciously goes beyond what we see with our material senses. But this by no means that it goes beyond *reason*, in some kind of “blind leap”; for it is precisely reason, the reason of faith, that tells us that there exists something beyond matter that we can see, not with our material, but with our “noetic” senses. Faith has “evidence” of this; it even has “proof” – “many infallible proofs” – words that are certainly parts of the language of reason.

But faith goes beyond reason, because, even when faced with the Truth itself, demonstrated to be such by many infallible proofs, man can still refuse to believe and turn away from the truth, saying with Pilate: “What is truth?” (John 18.38). It is in his capacity to believe or not to believe *in spite of* the opinion of the materialists that lies man’s freewill, a freewill that can incline towards reason or irrationality. Faith is in accordance with reason, but it is still a gift of God (Ephesians 2.9), and is given only to those who love the truth more than the lie, who prefer reason to irrationality.

True faith and true science are fully compatible because they both describe truth, whose one source is God. Incompatibilities and contradictions arise when we are dealing either with false faith or false science. Thus Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: “Even though revealed knowledge is higher than natural knowledge, still we know that there

⁴³⁴ Phillips, “How the West Took Leave of its Senses”, *Standpoint*, May, 2010, p. 42.

can be no conflict between *true* revelation and *true* natural knowledge. But there *can* be conflict between revelation and *human philosophy*, which is often in error. There is thus no conflict between the knowledge of creation contained in Genesis, as interpreted for us by the Holy Fathers, and the *true* knowledge of creatures which modern science has acquired by observation; but there most certainly is an irreconcilable conflict between the knowledge contained in Genesis and the *vain philosophical speculation of modern scientists, unenlightened by faith, about the state of the world in the Six Days of Creation.*"⁴³⁵

Let us take the conflict between the Pope and Galileo. This was a conflict between false faith and true science. The Pope took it as Divinely revealed – that is, as a tenet of the faith – that the earth was flat. But there was and is no such Divine revelation – in fact, the prophet speaks about “the circle of the earth” (Isaiah 40.22). Since then, atheist or agnostic scientists have taken it as an article of their faith that whenever faith and science seem to be in conflict, faith is wrong. But this is, of course, a false inference. When true science confronts false faith, it does the truth a service by exposing a superstition. But there are scientific superstitions, too...

“But science is constantly progressing,” you will say. “Therefore we have to accept its latest discoveries. Otherwise we will be like the Pope who rejected Galileo. After all, the Pope had a false faith, and Galileo was right in believing that the world is round.” But what if we have the true faith, and the scientists in question are not as acute as Galileo? As Orthodox we are by no means obliged to reject Galileo – although we are obliged to reject Darwin and Dawkins.

For our faith is not some airy-fairy metaphysical system which is compatible with just about any concrete historical event or scientific hypothesis. On the contrary: like a tree, it is concretely rooted in the earth of historical events, even if its branches reach far above the earth and the sky into the heavens. And it matters not whether you cut down the tree higher up the trunk, in the realm of pure theology, or at the roots, in the realm of historical fact and scientific hypothesis. Thus we are equally renouncing the faith if we accept the theological heresy of the Filioque, or false scientific hypotheses, such as evolutionism, or the idea of the physicists that we can in theory go backwards in time and kill our own fathers, or the idea that we believe in God out of unconscious desires for a father figure, or that Christ did not die but awoke out of a coma and pushed the stone away from the tomb. The result is the same: the faith is in ruins.

When confronted with such false scientific hypotheses, we have to make a choice: do we believe our faith or “science so-called”, as St. Paul calls it (I Timothy 6.20)? If we believe that the source of our faith is God Himself, Who cannot lie but has proved Himself to be the Truth through His resurrection from the dead, and that we belong to the Church of God, which is “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy 3.15), then we must reject these scientific hypotheses, even if we cannot immediately see the flaw in their argumentation. This may take some courage (until the evidence refuting the false scientific hypotheses emerges), but it is actually a very rational decision, and not just a product of what unbelievers like to call “blind” faith.

⁴³⁵ Rose, “The Orthodox Patristic Understanding of Genesis”, ch. 5, *The Orthodox Word*, № 171, 1993.

For our faith, being based on true reason, satisfies both the mind and the heart. It knits everything together in a coherent system which is self-reinforcing at every point. No other system satisfies in this way; all other religio-philosophical systems invented by man, including those that put science at the head of the corner, are in the end self-contradictory. Therefore even if some “facts” emerge which appear to contradict our faith, it is much more logical to hold on to our faith while subjecting the new “facts” to sceptical criticism. In relation to such “facts”, we must be like doubting Thomas and really check them out using all the resources of faith and reason. And if we cannot immediately refute them, we must still believe, for “blessed are those who have *not* seen [the scientific or logical proofs] and yet have believed” (John 20.29). For if we were to reject our faith, all the problems, intellectual, philosophical and moral, which are no problems for us now, as believers, again become problems for us. And very serious problems, problems that make the whole history of the universe, as Macbeth put it, “a tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing...” “At all events,” said St. Basil the Great, “let us prefer the simplicity of faith to the demonstrations of ‘reason’.”⁴³⁶

In any case, is not science the product of fallen men with fallen minds, who are as subject to demonic delusion as anyone? We have every reason to be skeptical of the reasonings of such men. They may stumble on the truth sometimes, but they also – very frequently – take a lie for the truth, as the long history of rejected and discredited scientific hypotheses proves. Why should we take the reasoning of the atheist Dawkins above the words of Him Who is “the Beginning of every beginning” (I Chronicles 29.12)?

Of course, the discovery of electricity, and bacteria, and super-novas, constitutes knowledge of a sort and progress of a kind. But the denial of God the Creator, and of the existence of the immortal human soul, and of the freewill of man, constitute extreme REGRESSION, which places most modern scientists at a much lower level when it comes to real, important knowledge than their predecessors in the sixteenth century. It seems as if the progress of science in small things is accompanied by its regression in big things, in its mega-theories, in its TOEs...

So let us not be ashamed of the Gospel, as St. Basil says. We can respect the achievements of science. But we must firmly reject the pseudo-science that attempts to undermine our faith. For faith is certainty inspired by the infallible Truth Himself, whereas science is fallible hypothesis at best, and at worst – demonic delusion.

*May 8/21, 2013.
Holy Apostle John the Theologian.*

17. GOD, SPACE-TIME, THE CHURCH, THE CROSS AND LIGHT

The Orthodox Church instructs her children largely through the use of symbolism and analogy. Physical substances such as fire, air, water, earth, bread, wine, oil, salt

⁴³⁶ St. Basil, Homily 1 on the *Hexaemeron*.

and yeast symbolize various spiritual realities. For, as St. Anthony the Great told the philosophers, nature is a book in which we read the thoughts of God...

Astronomical objects also have symbolical meanings. For example, the sun symbolizes God, the moon – the Church (for she, like the moon, borrows her light from the sun, God, and waxes and wanes in time), and the stars – the Orthodox bishops. Thus when we read in Revelation (12.4) that a third of the stars were cast to the earth, some interpreters understand this to mean that a third of the bishops fell away from Orthodoxy...

What about space and time? Modern physics has overturned our notions of space, time, matter and energy. Do these new ideas on material reality reveal any spiritual lessons for us when we probe their possible symbolical meanings?

“Is space the warp and weft of reality?” asks the physicist Anil Ananthaswamy. “Or time? Or both, or neither?”⁴³⁷ It would be instructive to attempt to define ecclesiastical reality in analogous terms. Is the Church defined spatially, in terms of the number and geographical extent of its members and communities? Or temporally, in terms of its historical origins? Or both, or neither?

The difference between Orthodox and Roman Catholic ecclesiology is largely a difference between spatial and temporal definitions. Catholicism is the sum of those individuals and communities that are in canonical obedience to the bishop of Rome, who, uniquely throughout the earth, is guaranteed to be Catholic forever. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, knows no geographical centre, and no spatial point of infallibility, but is defined by its continuity and consistency in time. To be Orthodox is to be linked through faith and apostolic succession to the apostles, and through them to the founder of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, Orthodoxy does have a spatial dimension: we are linked in the One Church to every other Orthodox individual and community in every other part of the world, and the Saviour of the Church has promised that the Church will have some spatial extension even to the end of time. However, the temporal dimension is more fundamental, because if we ask the question: how or why are we linked to each other? then the answer must be: because we all share the faith of the apostles, being faithful to Holy Tradition as passed down without change from the time of the apostles to the present day. If an Orthodox of our own time does not have this same relationship to the faith and Tradition as had the previous generations of the truly Orthodox, then we know that he is not really Orthodox, even if he belongs to an organization calling itself “Orthodox”, but is a heretic or schismatic. For “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13.8).

Thus our connectedness with other Orthodox in space is dependent on, and the consequence of, our common connectedness in time with the Orthodox of all previous generations going back to the apostles. For the Orthodox Church is built in the shape of the Cross with its two arms symbolizing space and time. It is the vertical shaft,

⁴³⁷ Ananthaswamy, “Space against Time”, *New Scientist*, 15 June, 2013, p. 35.

signifying the growth of the Church in time, that upholds the horizontal arm, signifying the present-day extension of the Church in space.

Now the Catholics also talk about apostolic succession. But in fact they have no continuity in faith with the apostles, and therefore no apostolic succession in the real sense. For every successive pope has the power to redefine the faith, and therefore in effect *recreate* the teaching of Christ and the Church in his own image through the issuing of *ex cathedra* redefinitions of the faith – Jesus Christ, for the popes, is *not* the same from one papal reign to another. Thus the Roman Church of the Apostle Peter and Pope Gregory I is not the Roman Church of Gregory VII, still less that of Francis I. Holy Tradition, the mystical continuity and consubstantiality of the Church in time, is honoured in theory, but violated and broken in practice. For the contemporary Catholic, what is important is not the conformity of his faith with that of any previous apostle or pope, but his obedience only to the present incumbent, Pope Francis I.

In this context, it is interesting to compare the situation in contemporary physics. “‘There are attributes of physical systems which don’t refer to space, but which change in time,’ says Abhay Ashtekar of Pennsylvania State University. ‘One could say that for those attributes, time is more fundamental than space...’”⁴³⁸ For the Church, on the other hand, time is more fundamental than space for precisely the opposite reason: that its most important attributes – faith, Tradition – do *not* change in time.

As for Protestantism, it cast aside the spatial anchor of Rome without restoring the temporal continuity with the Early Church. Indeed, it broke with Tradition even more decisively than Catholicism, and cast aside the concept of apostolic succession completely. Since every individual Protestant can interpret the Scriptures as he wants, he is essentially, as Archbishop Hilarion Troitsky pointed out⁴³⁹, a mini-pope who can recreate the faith without reference to the Church or Tradition or anything outside himself. He is therefore a kind of windowless monad with no real connection either in space or time with the rest of the Church. Of course, the social community of his parish is important to him, but it is important to him *psychologically* rather than *spiritually* or *dogmatically*. Belief in the Church is not part of his Creed; it is neither One, Holy, Catholic nor Apostolic, but simply an insubstantial “invisible church of all believers”, having neither matter nor energy. For how can an object that is defined neither temporally nor spatially be said to exist in any substantial sense?

Let us pursue our cosmological analogies one step further, to the mysterious substance that is *light*...

It is an axiom of Einstein’s theory of relativity that nothing can travel through space-time faster than light. Modern physicists are exploring the inter-relationship between space, time and light. Thus for Polchinski the constant speed of light “provides a reference of both space and time. A light ray always moves at one unit of space per unit of time – a constant diagonal on any graph of space against time. ‘The direction that light rays travel is in neither space nor time; we call it “null”. It’s on the

⁴³⁸ Ananthaswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 36

⁴³⁹ Troitsky, *Christianity or the Church?*, 1917.

edge between space and time,' says Polchinski. 'A lot of people have this intuition that in some sense the existence of these null directions might be more fundamental than space or time.'"⁴⁴⁰

Now light is a very important symbol in Orthodox theology. It is the very first creation of God (Genesis 1.3). But more than that: the Creator Himself "dwells in unapproachable Light" (I Timothy 6.16), and at His Transfiguration revealed Himself *to be* Light in His Divine, Uncreated Energies. Christ said: "I am the Light of the world"; He is "Light of Light, true God of true God". And "in Thy Light shall we see Light" - in the Light of the Holy Spirit we see the Light that is Christ.

In ecclesiastical symbolism, as in physics, light can be seen as "more fundamental than space or time" and "on the edge between space and time". For the Light of God is that Uncreated Energy that creates and builds up the Church in both its vertical (temporal) and horizontal (spatial) arms. Consider what happens when one man joins the Church through Holy Baptism. A ray of the Light of God descends upon the water of the font, and the man rises from it purified and enlightened. Through grace, one more unit (member) has been added to both the vertical and the horizontal structure of the Church; for "a light ray always moves at one unit of space per unit of time".

But if the Light of God's grace is withdrawn from a man, then he becomes, in the terrifying words of the Apostle Jude, "a wandering star for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever" (v. 13). And if a whole Local Church loses grace, then the result is still more terrifying, being analogous to the explosion of a super-nova (the Crab super-nova appeared in the heavens in July, 1054, precisely the date of the fall of the Western Church) and the creation of a monstrous black hole that sucks light-bearing objects (baptized Christians) into its maw but cannot emit any light itself. The Church is diminished in a sense by such an event, being one or more units shorter and narrower. And yet her basic shape is unchanged, and the power and beauty of the Light that emanates from her remains undiminished. For in the spiritual heavens, as in the earthly, Light is the one constant that never changes, being beyond and above both space and time.

June 4/17, 2013.

⁴⁴⁰ Ananthaswamy, op. cit., p. 37.

18. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

The Gospel for the great feast of Pentecost begins with the words: **In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7.37-38).** What is this feast that is here referred to? We should expect that it would be the Jewish feast of Pentecost, of which the Christian feast of Pentecost is the fulfilment. But no: the feast referred to is the feast of *Tabernacles*, the third of the great feasts of the Jewish year. The question, therefore, arises: why, on the Christian feast of Pentecost, should our attention be drawn in this way to the Jewish feast of Tabernacles? There is nothing accidental in the Holy Scriptures, and certainly not in the Gospel readings for the great feasts. So there must be some lesson for us here...

In the Old Testament the Lord commanded the Jews to go up to the Temple to worship three times in the year: at the spring feast of Unleavened Bread (Pascha), at the early summer feast of Weeks, also known as the feast of Harvest, and at the autumn feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), also known as the feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23.14-17; Deuteronomy 16.16). The first two feasts are, of course, well known to us in their Christian fulfilment as the feasts of Pascha and Pentecost, during which we commemorate the most important events of our salvation – the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. But much less is known and written about the third and final great feast of the Jewish year, the feast of Tabernacles...

Since the first two great feasts have received their Christian fulfilment, and since the feast of Tabernacles was on a par with these feasts, are we entitled to expect a Christian fulfilment of Tabernacles also? For, as Jean Daniélou writes, "although the Jewish feast of Tabernacles has not been carried on into the Christian liturgy of today, this feast was seen by the Fathers of the Church as a figure of Christian realities."⁴⁴¹ If so, what is this fulfilment likely to be? Since the patristic references to this feast are few and short, we cannot answer these questions with certainty. Nevertheless, it will be worth gathering what information we have from the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers, and offering a very tentative hypothesis as to the feast's meaning.

In Leviticus (23.26-43; cf. Numbers 29.7-38), the climax of the Jewish church year begins with the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishri – approximately, September-October), when the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is celebrated. **And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God.... It shall be a Sabbath of Sabbaths for you, and you shall humble your souls.** Then, five days later, begins the feast of Tabernacles: **On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast to the Lord for seven days; on the first day there shall be a rest, and on the eighth day a rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the ripe fruit of a tree, leaves of palm trees, the branches of leafy trees, and the pure willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.**

⁴⁴¹ Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966, p. 333.

You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be an ordinance forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.

The feast of Tabernacles lasted for eight days, longer than any other feast. The eighth, **last and great day of the feast** (John 7.37), was the "crowning feast of all the feasts of the year," in the words of Philo the Alexandrian.⁴⁴² It means "the completion and fulfilment of all the feasts", according to St. Gregory Palamas.⁴⁴³

The eighth day, of course, is suggestive of the Lord's Day, the day of the resurrection; and Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ohrid develops this as follows: "The feast of the tabernacles suggests to us the resurrection, when the fruits of our deeds are gathered for spiritual harvest, and the tabernacles of our bodies – dissolved at death into their constituent elements – are reconstructed."⁴⁴⁴

In agreement with this are the words of St. Methodius of Olympus, who writes: "Only those who have celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles will enter into the holy land. Leaving their tabernacles, they hasten to arrive in the Temple and the City of God, that is to say, to a joy more great and more heavenly, as it took place among the Jews in the figures of these things. In the same way, indeed, as, having come out of the borders of Egypt, they, by journeying, came to tabernacles and, from there, having advanced still further, they reached the Promised land, so is it with us. I also, having started on the journey, I come out of the Egypt of this life, I come first to the Resurrection, to the true Scenopegia [feast of Tabernacles]. There, having built my beautiful tent on the first day of the feast, that of the judgement, I celebrate the feast with Christ during the millenium of rest, called the seven days, the true Sabbaths. Then, following Jesus Who has crossed the heavens, I start on my journey again, as they, after the rest of the Feast of Tabernacles, journeyed toward the land of promise, the heavens, not waiting any longer in tabernacles, that is to say, my tabernacle not remaining any longer the same, but, after the millenium, having passed from a corruptible human form to an angelic grandeur and beauty. Then, going out from the place of tabernacles, having celebrated the feast of the Resurrection, we shall go towards better things, ascending to the house that is above the heavens."⁴⁴⁵

So the basic spiritual theme of the feast of Tabernacles is *resurrection*, the renewal of our earthly bodies, or tabernacles, at the General Resurrection. And this gives us our first clue as to the link between the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles. For it is

⁴⁴² David Baron, *Commentary on Zechariah*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1918, 1988, p. 527.

⁴⁴³ St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 17*, 12. Christopher Veniamin writes: "It is in fact the Feast of Tabernacles that refers to 'the eighth day' as the exodion – lit. *The time of going out or departure*, and thus a commemoration of Exodus (*The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, Canaan, Penn.: St. Tychon's Seminary Press, vol. 1, 2002, p. 313).

⁴⁴⁴ *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to John by Blessed Theophylact*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2007, p. 118,

⁴⁴⁵ St. Methodius, *The Banquet*, IX, 5:120.

the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that makes possible the resurrection both of the soul and of the body; Pentecost looks forward to Tabernacles as its final fulfilment, the last day of the feast, as it were, when the Spirit, being no longer simply an “earnest” of our salvation, as St. Paul says, brings forth Its final fruit in the resurrection of the dead.

However, there is reason to believe that this explanation does not exhaust the full meaning of the feast. The Jewish feasts of Pascha and Pentecost were fulfilled *in time*, and in time for the Church to institute liturgical services in order to commemorate the temporal events commemorated in them. Should we not expect the same of the feast of Tabernacles? But the resurrection of the dead is an event that will take place at the end of time, bringing time to an end. So could it not be that the Christian fulfilment of the feast of Tabernacles, in addition to celebrating the imminent General Resurrection, will also commemorate some other resurrection taking place in time and before the General Resurrection?

This hypothesis is greatly strengthened by the fact that, according to the Holy Scriptures, the Christian fulfilment of the feast of Tabernacles will indeed be celebrated in time, and throughout the world. Thus in the Prophet Zechariah we read: **And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the feast of Tabernacles (14.16-19).**

Now it is evident that the prophet is here speaking, not of the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, but of its future, worldwide fulfilment in Christ. It is also evident that this fulfilment will take place in time, *before* the General Resurrection. So what clues do we have as to what the temporal event it commemorates could be?

Since this prophecy comes in the prophecy of Zechariah, we might expect the clue to lie in the previous chapters of that prophecy. So let us look at it more closely, and especially at its last three chapters, which describe a series of very important events taking place first of all in Israel, and then on a worldwide scale, in the last days. It is tempting to allegorize these events as referring to events, not in the physical land of Israel, but in the Church, in accordance with the exegetical principle that “Israel” refers to “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6.16) – that is, the Church.⁴⁴⁶ But, useful and convincing as such an allegorical interpretation is in other passages from the prophets,

⁴⁴⁶ A useful rule of interpretation in this context has been provided by Bishop Ignatius (Brianchaninov), who writes: "The people of Israel are called both Jacob and Israel after the name of their forefather, who was named Jacob at birth and renamed Israel after he had been counted worthy of the vision of God; [but] in the spiritual sense Christians who have made significant spiritual progress are called Israel" ("On the Judgements of God", in the *Collected Works* (in Russian)).

it is much less convincing here, where the details appear to be far too concrete to allow it.

Although much is unclear, this much is evident: that there will be a formidable coalition of nations against Israel, which will be destroyed. At this time, whether during or after the war, the Jews will repent profoundly of their apostasy from Christ, the True Messiah and King of Israel. **I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and compassion; and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced** [this is the Hebrew quoted in John 19.37; the Greek is: **because they have mocked Me**], **and they shall make lamentation for Him, as for a beloved Friend, and they shall grieve intensely, as for a First-Born Son** (12.10). The false prophets and shepherds will be cast out. Nevertheless, two out of three in the land will die (13.8). As for the city itself, **it will be taken, the houses plundered, the women defiled, and half of the city will go forth into exile; but the rest of My people will not be utterly cut off from the city.** (14.2) But of the third of the population that comes through the fiery trial, the Lord will say: **He shall call upon My name, and I will hear him, and I will say, 'This is My people', and they will say, 'The Lord is my God'.** (13.9) **And on that day His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives** (14.4), which will be split in two. There will be an earthquake as in the time of King Uzziah, **and the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with Him** (14.6). In that day there will be no light, **but towards evening there will be light** (14.7). **And the Lord shall be King of all the earth** (14.9), **and He will strike all the nations, as many as made war against Jerusalem. Their flesh shall be eaten away as they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall pour out of their sockets, and their tongue shall melt away in their mouth** (14.12). **And then everyone that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, there will be no rain upon them. And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them shall come the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles...** (14.16-17).

Apocalyptic although these events undoubtedly are, they clearly are not describing the end of the world or the general resurrection, but rather a terrible war (the melting of the eyes in the soldiers' sockets suggests a nuclear war) followed by a great revival of the faith after the war. For even after the appearance of Christ on the Mount of Olives, there is no mention of any general judgement or resurrection, still less of entrance into a Heavenly Kingdom, but rather of the continuation of life on this corruptible earth. In particular, we see the celebration on earth of a new feast by most, but not all of the nations on the earth.

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So what could this Christianized Feast of Tabernacles be celebrating? First of all, we suggest, the "ingathering" of the Jews into the Church that was prophesied by St. Paul in Romans 9 to 11, and which he called **life from the dead** (Romans 11.15). Secondly, it refers also the ingathering of **the fullness of the Gentiles** (Romans 11.25). Thus the Feast of Tabernacles will indeed be the feast of the "ingathering" of the whole

Church, when the fullness both of the Gentiles and of the penitent Jews, will enter the Church. After the horrors of Armageddon and world war, the people of God will be granted a period of rest and joy, in which they will celebrate the feast in preparation for the final battle against the Antichrist and in anticipation of the more complete victory that will take place at the Second Coming of Christ and the General Resurrection.

The Lord may have been referring to this joyful event when He said to the impenitent Jews: **Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord** (Matthew 23.38-39). For **Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord** is the verse sung at the climax of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is as if the Lord were saying: "You will not see Me with the eyes of faith until you are converted and participate with the whole of the New Testament Church in the Christian fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles."

St. John of Kronstadt has the same interpretation. The verses Matthew 23.38-39, he says, "mean: I will cease to be your Messiah until you recognize Me as such. In the meantime I will reveal My Face to the Gentiles, who have not heard about Me. The holy Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans (11.25) announces that **the hardening has taken place in Israel in part until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in**. And this, as is evident from the Revelation of St. John the Theologian, will take place in the sixth period of the last ages, when terrible times will come accompanied by great astronomical signs and unusual physical phenomena. Then the whole of the true Israel, in the number determined in the Apocalypse, will be saved, that is, will believe in Christ as their Messiah and God. The remaining Jews will become still more hardened and will recognize the Antichrist, as their messiah, king and god."⁴⁴⁷

Thus the Feast of Tabernacles celebrates a kind of "resurrection before the Resurrection", an ingathering of the last good fruits of both the Jews and the Gentiles, a period of rest for the Church before her last battle with the Antichrist, her crossing the river of the Last Judgement, and her ascent to the Heavenly Jerusalem, where she puts on the tabernacle of the Resurrection Body.

Daniélou points out that the liturgy of the feast of Tabernacles is similar to the liturgy of Palm Sunday [notably in the use of the verse, **Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord**], which is a similar "resurrection before the Resurrection" and - to the liturgical rites described in the Apocalypse. "The whole liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles serves St. John in the Apocalypse to describe the procession of the elect around the heavenly altar. It is, in fact, the liturgy of this Feast which we are to recognize in the passage of the Apocalypse (7.9-17) describing the **great crowd** which stands before the throne of the Lamb. Many details are connected with the Feast: the palm-branches ('phoiniches') in their hands, the white robes, which recall the garments of Christ at the Transfiguration (7.9), the tabernacle in which the Lord dwells in the midst of the elect ('scenosei') (7.15), the springs of living water where they

⁴⁴⁷ St. John, *Nachalo i konets nashogo zemnogo mira* (The Beginning and End of our Earthly World), Moscow, 1901, 2004 p. 48.

quench their thirst (7.17). We have here, on the second level of eschatology, the projection of the first fulfillment which was, on the level of the Gospel, the episode of Palm Sunday...⁴⁴⁸

The liturgical links between the Feast of Tabernacles and Palm Sunday reflect a profound prophetic parallelism; for as on Palm Sunday, so on the future Feast of the Tabernacles, the Jews acclaim Christ as the Messiah and their true king - temporarily. But just as Palm Sunday was followed by Great Friday and the Crucifixion of Christ, when the Jews who had hailed Christ five days before called for His death, saying "Crucify Him!", so the same race of the Jews, after turning to Christ after the World War and joining the Church in fulfilment of the prophecies (Romans 11), and after participating with the Christian Gentiles in the Christian Feast of Tabernacles, will turn against Him again to worship the Antichrist, in fulfilment of many other prophecies. For it is of this, the Jewish worship of the Antichrist at the end of time, that the Lord says: **I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive** (John 5.43).

There are several other Old Testament prophecies that refer to the conversion of the Jews towards the end of the world, **the turning again of the heart of the fathers to the sons** (Malachi 4.5). They all involve a return of the Jews from exile in other lands to the land of Israel, followed by their conversion to Christ. Perhaps not coincidentally, when the Jews under Zerubbabel and Joshua returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, and started to rebuild the temple, the first great feast they celebrated was the Feast of Tabernacles (I Ezra 5.50); for it is the feast of return and conversion...

The earliest such prophecy we find in Deuteronomy: **When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. The Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey the Lord and follow all his commands I am giving you today.** (30.1-8).

One of the clearest of these prophecies is in Ezekiel, where, after describing how the Jews will spend seven months clearing up after the destruction of Gog and Magog, the prophet continues: **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**

⁴⁴⁸ Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, p. 342.

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). 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 uncleannesses... And you shall be My people, and I will be your God (Ezekiel 36.24-25, 28).

Again, in Jeremiah we read: 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 (3.16-18).

Again, in Zephaniah we read: 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. (3.10-13,18-20).

And so all Israel (i.e. Christian Jews and Gentiles together) will be saved; as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob (Romans 11.26; Isaiah 59.20).

One more point should be made with regard to the Feast of Tabernacles: its close relationship to the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Both Tabernacles and the Exaltation last for eight days; both take place around September-October. Both celebrate the triumph of Christianity on an ecumenical scale: the Feast of Exaltation – the triumph of St. Constantine over paganism throughout the Roman Empire, the oikoumene, or “inhabited earth” of the time, and the Feast of Tabernacles – the triumph of the faith over all heresies and apostasies throughout the world.

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Day of the Holy Spirit.*

19. ORTHODOXY AND THE DEATH PENALTY

The abolition of the death penalty occupies a very important place in contemporary liberalism. One of the major signs of a civilized society, according to the liberals, besides democracy, free trade and the abolition of slavery, is the abolition of the death penalty. Many Orthodox priests and intellectuals are also against capital punishment. But the question is: can this opinion be justified by Orthodox Tradition?

The first person to introduce the death penalty was God. He sentenced Adam and Eve, and all their descendants, to death for their sin in Paradise. Moreover, His very first commandment to Noah as he emerged from the ark to make a new beginning for the human race was: "From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9.5-6). The Law of Moses instituted the death penalty for many offences, and the Lord never showed any desire to revise this part of the Law - which of course owed its origin to Him. When the Pharisees urged that the death penalty should be applied to the woman taken in adultery, in accordance with the Law, He did not demur, but simply said: "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone" (John 8.7). The point here was not that the law was unjust, but that those who were urging its execution were hypocrites - they themselves were adulterers. True justice requires that the executors of the law should be innocent of the crimes that they punish.

If anyone doubts whether the Lord was at all squeamish about the application of the death penalty, then we need only cite His words on crimes against children: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18.8).

The rest of the New Testament gives no support to opponents of the death penalty. St. Paul speaks about those who, "knowing the righteous judgement of God, that those who practice such things [a whole series of sins] are deserving of death..." (Romans 1.32) And later in the same epistle he explicitly states that the Roman emperor "does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Romans 13.4). In Acts chapter 5, we read how the Apostle Peter more or less executed Ananias and Sapphira. And in Eusebius' *Church History* we read how the Apostles Peter and Paul prayed in the Coliseum that Simon Magus' demonically-inspired flying displays should be terminated - and he fell crashing to the ground.

In the *Lives of the Saints* there are many more such examples. Thus St. Patrick destroyed the Irish pagan high-priest by his prayers... A particularly striking case comes from the *life* of St. Leo, bishop of Catania (February 20). The Catania diocese had been plagued by a sorcerer, Hermogenes, who was able to fly from Sicily to Constantinople and in this way was drawing many away from the faith. St. Leo exhorted him to mend his ways, but he refused. Then the saint ordered a bonfire to be built and set alight. Taking his omophorion off, he put it around the neck of the sorcerer, thereby nullifying his strength. Then he went together with the bound

Hermogenes into the blazing fire. Hermogenes burned to death, but the saint was untouched by the flames...

Almost all Orthodox states, including the Byzantine and Russian empires, had the death penalty on their books for various crimes, including blasphemy and sorcery. Although, to the present writer's knowledge, there was never any dispute over whether murderers and similar criminals should be executed, there was a dispute, in early sixteenth-century Russia, over whether the death penalty should be applied to the Judaizing heretics who almost seized control of the Russian State. St. Nilus of Sora argued against the death penalty, and St. Joseph of Volokolamsk – for it. In his work *The Enlightener*, St. Joseph argued with extensive quotations from the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers, that while heresy as such was never punished with death in the Orthodox tradition, those who persistently and stubbornly tried to spread their heretical views and impose them on others were in a different category. St. Joseph's views prevailed, and about three leading Judaizers were executed...

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, Russian practice was beginning to be influenced by the ideas of the liberals. The burning issue was how to deal with revolutionaries. While educated society, steeped in liberal ideas, regarded them as victims of the regime and even, sometimes, as martyrs for the truth, most Orthodox, including the tsarist authorities, thought that they merited the death penalty. Even Tsar Nicholas II, an extremely merciful and soft-hearted man by nature, made no moves to abolish the death penalty. Although he often exercised his right to commute a sentence of death to something more lenient, he recognized that for the most impenitent criminals the death penalty was appropriate.

After the abortive revolution of 1905, the restoration of order in Russia was accomplished largely through the efforts of one of the great servants of the tsarist regime, the Interior Minister and later Prime Minister Peter Arkadyevich Stolypin, who was himself later killed by a Jewish terrorist. In the Duma his military field tribunals, which decreed capital punishment for the revolutionaries, were often criticized. But he replied to one such critic: "Learn to distinguish the blood on the hands of a doctor from the blood on the hands of an executioner..."⁴⁴⁹

Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov noted that during the revolution of 1905, Leo Tolstoy, "who has preached non-resistance and the destructions of any sort of structured state, when it came down to a practical denial of the right of private property,.. was not satisfied with the common governmental protection and was forced to organise a whole cavalry division of his own to drive off by force brigands in the woods".⁴⁵⁰

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There are three main arguments against the death penalty. The first claims that it is wrong because we are commanded: "Thou shalt not kill". But the same Lawgiver Who

⁴⁴⁹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Wiliams, "Na Putiakh k Svobode", in *Petr Stolypin*, Moscow, 1998, p. 221.

⁴⁵⁰ Khrapovitsky, *The Christian Faith and War*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 2005, p. 13.

said: "Thou shalt not kill" also instituted the death penalty for various crimes. So there is a contradiction here. But the contradiction is easily resolved: "Thou shalt not kill" means "Thou shalt not commit murder", which is very different from the carrying out of the death sentence in accordance with the law. As St. Athanasius the Great wrote: "In the various occurrences of life we find differences which exist according to different situations, for example: it is not lawful to kill, but to kill an enemy in battle is legal and praiseworthy. Thus those who excel in battle are worthy of great honors, and pillars are raised to proclaim their excellent deeds."⁴⁵¹ Again, St. Basil the Great declares: "Our fathers did not consider killing on the field of battle murder, pardoning, as it seems to me, defenders of chastity and piety".⁴⁵²

The second argument is that man has a right to life. However, as all Christians know, since the fall of Adam and Eve, man has *no* right to life – in fact, he is under the sentence of death. And God carries out that sentence on each one of us sooner or later. Moreover, as we have seen, He has given the right to carry out the death sentence on murderers to men – not all men, of course, but to those who are given authority in and by the State.

The third argument derives from the undeniable fact that miscarriages of justice sometimes take place. So it is better, it is argued, not to execute criminals at all. However, if the God of justice *commands* that murderers be executed, how can justice be served by disobeying His command?! Of course, every precaution must be taken to avoid injustice, and when, in spite of all precautions, injustice is done, it should be recognized, repented of, and lessons learned for the future. But almost every thing worth doing in life involves risk. Drivers risk their and other lives every time they go on the roads – but nobody seriously argues that all mechanized transport should be banned (as opposed to introducing speed limits and penalties for careless driving). Surgeons run the risk of killing their patients every time they undertake a major operation – but nobody seriously suggests that surgery should be banned. Fishing on the high seas can still be a dangerous activity – but nobody suggests that we should be content only with the fish caught in fresh-water rivers and lakes. Life is fraught with the risk of mistakes, injustices and accidental death, and no amount of human ingenuity will remove such dangers completely.

In any case, the removal of the death penalty invariably entrains different, but no less great injustices. The newly-converted St. Vladimir of Kiev was minded to remove the death penalty because he thought that was the Christian and merciful thing to do. But his Greek bishops pointed out that the death penalty acts as a deterrent – not for all criminals, but for a significant proportion of them, – and that since his abolition of the death penalty crime was on the increase in his kingdom. So he submitted to their counsel... Not that New Testament rulers are *obliged* to introduce the death penalty. The point is that it is not against Orthodoxy...

Moreover, by being "merciful" to a criminal without having reformed him, you increase the likelihood that he will commit the same crime again. The British

⁴⁵¹ St. Athanasius, *Letter to Ammun*. See Khrapovitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴⁵² St. Basil, canon 13, confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils. See Khrapovitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

newspapers today are full of stories of murderers who are released, and then commit the same crime again – and again. These further murders must be at least partially on the conscience of those who decided to be “merciful” but in fact proved themselves to be unmerciful to the later victims.

Not only does the death penalty deter some criminals, and make impossible the commitment of further murders by impenitent murderers: it also significantly aids the process of repentance. In religious times, many people, when faced with death on the gallows, reviewed their lives and repented of their evil deeds – Dostoyevsky is a famous example. This is much rarer in our irreligious times. But the possibility still exists. What is indisputable is that long prison sentences with the promise of early release for (often hypocritically) “good behaviour” rarely lead to repentance, but much more often to re-offending.

Even for a man who has been unjustly sentenced, the death penalty may provide a vital spiritual opportunity. If he is honest with himself, he may come to the conclusion that, while he is not guilty of this particular crime, he has committed other, hardly less serious sins. And by accepting an unjust death as the just reward for his general spiritual state, like the good thief, he may receive the salvation of his soul...

The supreme fact, which almost all opponents of the death penalty ignore, is that *death is not the end* and that every man faces another, far more terrifying and final verdict on his deeds immediately after his death (Hebrews 9.27). At that absolutely impartial judgement-seat, there will be true justice for all. For those who have been unjustly executed will be rewarded for their patient endurance of injustice, those who have been justly executed and have accepted the justice of the verdict with true repentance will be forgiven and rewarded, and those who have been justly executed but have not repented will experience an eternal continuation of their punishment...

In the last analysis, all of us have to recognize that we have been justly sentenced to death for our sins, and that the execution of that sentence will come to each one of us at precisely the time and in precisely the manner that God, and not man, decrees. As for the judgement *after* death, the only way we will escape the penalty of *eternal* death is to receive the judgement of *temporal* death with courage and without complaining, saying, as the good thief said to the bad one at the Cross of Christ: “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds...” (Luke 23.40-41).

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20. ECUMENISM AND NATIONALISM

False love versus Real Hatred

The Orthodox Church today is afflicted by two spiritual diseases that are opposite and equal to each other, ecumenism and nationalism. These are the Scylla and Charybdis of contemporary Orthodoxy. Like Nestorianism and Monophysitism in the fifth century, they represent two apparently opposite heresies, but each leading as surely as the other to alienation from Orthodoxy and the abyss of hell. They have grown in tandem in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, spreading from Western Europe (France and Germany) to Central and Eastern Europe (Poland and the Balkans), and from Europe throughout the world. It may seem strange at first that such opposite movements should develop together; but we often find similar phenomena in history, one exaggerated and one-sided view eliciting the reaction of another, equally exaggerated and one-sided view. Orthodoxy lies, not in some compromise between the two extremes, but in a higher point of view that sees the dangers and falsehood of both. The tragedy is that many who have escaped the one disease fall into the other one, and few indeed are those who have escaped both and remained spiritually healthy.

The origins of ecumenism lie in the eighteenth-century English and French Enlightenment. The philosophers of the Enlightenment, when they did not deny religion altogether, regarded it as outdated and unimportant. On this basis, it was a short step to the creation of a new religion, ecumenism, which accepts completely contradictory beliefs but considers these contradictions unimportant, since the only important thing is "love" – not love for the truth, it goes without saying, but love for a false peace in which there are no arguments over matters of the faith, so that people can concentrate together on the things that supposedly really matter – the improvement of the material conditions of all through the exercise of reason unhindered by superstition and ignorance.

The origins of nationalism could be said to lie much deeper in history, perhaps in the Greek exaltation of themselves above all "barbarians", or in the first-century Jewish rebellion against Roman power. But in modern times, the cult of the nation began in the French revolution – which, not coincidentally, also marked the beginning of the liberation of the Jews from the power of the Gentile nations. The Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789 saw the nation as the supreme value, placing it above all other values as their arbiter.

However, the French revolution contained an inner tension between the universal, internationalist values that it inherited from the Enlightenment – freedom, equality and brotherhood – and the Rousseauist cult of the nation. So on the one hand, it sought the freedom and equality of *all* nations and *all* human beings. But on the other hand, it exalted France as "the great nation" par excellence that had the right, through Napoleon, to impose her power and world-view on the rest of the world. So the internationalist phase of the revolution quickly metamorphosed into a nationalist phase... This metamorphosis was aided by the German war of liberation from Napoleon's yoke in 1813-15, which gave a still sharper and more egotistical edge to the cult of the nation. German nationalism was based on the German Counter-

Enlightenment, which consciously rejected the universalism of the French Enlightenment, favouring the cult of the particular as opposed to the universal, and the emotional as opposed to the rational. It was this German-led transition from nationalism as the cult of *the nation in general* to the cult of *my nation in particular* that would prove to be so fatal to the peace of the world.

From a Christian point of view, neither is acceptable; for in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew (Colossians 3.7); neither the nation in general nor any nation in particular is to be worshipped. Nevertheless, Christianity does not condemn a healthy love of one's country, or patriotism, that is not pitched consciously and aggressively against other patriotisms, nor seeks to place the good of the nation above the good of the Church and the universalist commandments of the Gospel. Christ loved His earthly homeland, and wept over its fall. But He also praised the Roman centurion for having a faith greater than any in Israel; He similarly praised the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman; and He converted the Samaritan woman and portrayed Himself in the role of the Good Samaritan. Most importantly, He refused to join in or approve of the Jewish nationalist rebellion against Roman power, which was the real reason why the Jews killed Him: Christ was killed by the nationalists because He refused to be a nationalist...

Both ecumenism and nationalism are essentially political movements aiming at earthly good things - peace and prosperity in the case of ecumenism, power and prestige in the case of nationalism. But they clothe themselves in a religious covering in order to make themselves more attractive. Ecumenism clothes its rejection of dogmatic religion in a cloak of "love" - "God is love", they say, "there are many ways to God and God accepts all of them", "tolerance is the highest form of virtue", "love and do what you will". Its attractiveness lies in its removal of all conflict over questions of truth and all moral struggle against fallen passion. Nationalism rejects this wishy-washy approach to truth and reintroduces the element of struggle. But its "truth", while clear and uncompromising, is self-evidently false: my nation is always *essentially* in the right and always the innocent victim of other nations, whatever minor mistakes she may make and whatever rational arguments you may produce to prove that she is wrong. As for the reintroduction of struggle, this is only apparent; for in fact the struggle for superiority over neighbouring nations is conducted through a full-scale *surrender* to the most evil of passions - pride and hatred. For, as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) writes: "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."⁴⁵³ Thus if ecumenism is the religion of false, sentimental love, nationalism is the religion of all-too-genuine hatred...

Although they appear to be opposites, there is in fact a close kinship between ecumenism and nationalism. This kinship was elucidated by the Russian diplomat and publicist Constantine Leontiev, who, though an ardent philhellene, was strongly critical of the nationalism of the Greek revolution. He thought that the Serbian and

⁴⁵³ Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) of New York, *Besedy s sobstvennym serdtsem* (Conversations with my own heart), Jordanville, 1998, p. 33.

Bulgarian nationalisms that motivated the other Balkan revolutions were very similar in their aims and psychology to the Greek – that is, sadly lacking in that "universalist nationalism" that he called *Byzantinism*. These petty nationalisms, argued Leontiev, were closely related to liberalism. They were all rooted in the French revolution: just as liberalism insisted on the essential equality of all men and their "human rights", so these nationalisms insisted on the essential equality of all nations and their "national rights". But this common striving for "national rights" made the nations very similar in their essential egoism.⁴⁵⁴ It replaced *individuality* with *individualism*, *hierarchy* with *egalitarianism*, *right faith* with *indifferentism* (ecumenism)⁴⁵⁵.

Leontiev believed, as Andrzej Walicki writes, that "nations were a creative force only when they represented a specific culture: 'naked' or purely 'tribal' nationalism was a corrosive force destroying both culture and the state, a leveling process that was, in the last resort, cosmopolitan; in fact, nationalism was only a mask for liberal and egalitarian tendencies, a specific metamorphosis of the universal process of disintegration".⁴⁵⁶ According to Leontiev, the nations' striving to be independent 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*". Therefore nationalism, freed from the universalist idea of Christianity, leads in the end to a soulless, secular cosmopolitanism. "In the whole of Europe the purely national, that is, *ethnic* principle, once released from its *religious fetters*, will at its triumph give fruits that are by no means national, but, on the contrary, in the highest degree cosmopolitan, or, more precisely, *revolutionary*".⁴⁵⁷ The revolution consisted in the fact that state nationalism would lead to the internationalist *abolition* or *merging* of states. "A grouping of states according to pure nationalities will lead European man very quickly to the dominion of internationalism"⁴⁵⁸ - a European Union or even a Global United Nations. "A state grouping *according to tribes and nations* is... nothing other than the preparation - striking in its force and vividness - for the transition to a cosmopolitan state, first a pan-European one, and then, perhaps, a global one, too!..."⁴⁵⁹

In 1872 the Ecumenical Patriarchate anathematized the particular, ecclesiastical form of nationalism known as "phyletism". But this did not prevent inter-Orthodox nationalism between Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians and Romanians reaching a crescendo of hatred and violence in the next four-and-a-half decades. Nor did nationalist passions truly abate thereafter: in the years 1918-41, Italian and German fascism elicited considerable sympathy in Eastern Europe, especially in Romania and Croatia.

⁴⁵⁴ "The Greeks have 'the Byzantine empire', 'the Great Hellenic Idea'; while the Bulgars have 'Great Bulgaria'. Is it not all the same?" ("Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh - IV" (Letters on Eastern Matters - IV), *Vostok, Rossia i Slaviansstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 363.

⁴⁵⁵ "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 demagoguery!" ("Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenij" (The Fruits of the National Movements), *op. cit.*, p. 560).

⁴⁵⁶ Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, p. 303.

⁴⁵⁷ Leontiev, *Letter of a Hermit*.

⁴⁵⁸ Leontiev, "On Political and Cultural Nationalism", letter 3, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

⁴⁵⁹ Leontiev, "Tribal Politics as a Weapon of Global Revolution", letter 2, in Constantine Leontiev, *Izbrannye Sochinenia* (Selected Works), edited by I.N. Smirnov, Moscow, 1993, p. 314.

From 1945 the communist conquest of most of the region served to dampen nationalist passions for a time. But after the fall of communism in 1989-91, nationalist wars broke out again in many parts of the former Soviet Union and especially in the former Yugoslavia.

As for ecumenism, since it was not heralded by open wars and the shedding of blood, it developed in a much more insidious manner that escaped the condemnation of church authorities for a long time. It was not until 1983 that the first formal anathematization of ecumenism took place, by the Russian Church Abroad under St. Philaret of New York. As in the case of the condemnation of phyletism, this did not have an immediate effect; and to this day the great majority of those who call themselves Orthodox Christians remain immersed in the "heresy of heresies" through their participation in the World Council of Churches and the wider ecumenical movement.

In our time, ecumenism has become *interwoven* with nationalism. Just as several of the communist leaders of Eastern Europe held onto power by transforming themselves into nationalist (and sometimes, democratic) leaders, so the waning attraction of ecumenism has been recharged by association with nationalist passion. Or rather: the feeling of guilt engendered by the involvement of the Orthodox with the western heresies through the ecumenical movement has been suppressed or compensated for by a fierce wave of anti-western (especially anti-American) nationalism.

Let us examine this psychological stratagem a little more closely...

The first and most fundamental fact is that although the ecumenist Orthodox have now been immersed in the heresy of ecumenism for many decades, increasing numbers of them *know* that this is wrong. They know that this is a betrayal of the faith of their fathers, and they know, albeit obscurely, that they are no longer worthy to be called their sons. This applies more to many thinking clergy and laity, and less to the hierarchs, whose consciences are scarred and appear no longer capable of repentance. The present writer remembers a meeting of dissident clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate in Moscow late in 1989 at which there was universal condemnation of the hierarchs and a determination to escape the heresy of ecumenism. In the end, pressure was applied from above, and only one of the priests at the meeting joined the True Church; but the meeting demonstrated real and sincere feeling – a feeling that is probably no less widespread today.

However, the failure to act in accordance with church truth over a longish period creates a condition of psychological and spiritual tension, of *guilt*, that demands resolution. Repentance is the only real way of resolving this tension. But, failing that, one of the ways seemingly to resolve the tension and justify one's remaining in the false church is to endow the latter with the status of a national institution, a treasure that must be preserved and honoured for cultural and national reasons, if not strictly spiritual ones.

Terminology plays an important role here. The false church is called simply “the Russian Church” or “the Serbian Church”, as if there were no other with a greater claim to the title. If repeated over time, the idea is inculcated that this is the one and only Church, to leave which would amount to individual and collective apostasy...

Nationalism has here come to the rescue of ecumenism. “You cannot leave the ecumenist church,” goes the thought, “because she is the church of *the nation*. So by leaving her you will be betraying *the nation*. As for those zealots of Orthodoxy who leave the official church, they are proud, placing their own need for ‘correctness’ above their duty to the nation. By dividing the flock they weaken the nation, which can only go forward if it is united under its present leaders.”

This is a false argument because the exaltation of the nation above the truth leads, not to true national greatness, but to moral and spiritual downfall. The Lord said that he who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me (Matthew 10.37), and he who loves his fatherland more than the Lord is similarly unworthy of Him. For it is a form of idolatry. As Fr. John Vostorgov, one of the first martyrs of the Bolshevik revolution, pointed out, true patriotism can only be founded on true faith and morality. “Where the faith has fallen,” he said, “and where morality has fallen, there can be no place for patriotism, there is nothing for it to hold on to, for everything that is the most precious in the homeland then ceases to be precious.”⁴⁶⁰

Both ecumenism and nationalism appeal to unity as the supreme value – in the case of ecumenism, a mythical unity of all men of good will and sense, and in the case of nationalism, a hardly less mythical unity of all men of the same blood and/or culture. Those who refuse to join these unities are categorized as mad or traitors or both. But Orthodoxy values above all unity with *the truth*, with God Who is the truth, and with the One True Church, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3.15). He who is in unity with the truth may find himself in disunity with almost all those around him, as did many of the holy confessors. But this is not to be wondered at; for, as St. Paul says, “let God be true and every man a liar” (Romans 3.4). Indeed, “when the Son of Man comes,” said the Lord, “will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18.8).

August 6/19, 2013.

The Transfiguration of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

⁴⁶⁰ Vostorgov, in Fomin S. & Fomina T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming) Moscow, 1994, p. 400.

21. THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN HOLOCAUST

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

Revelation 6.9-10.

By 1922 the Russian Empire had been destroyed, but the Russian Revolution had not yet been completed. Although in that year the official name of the country was changed from "Russia" to "The Soviet Union", there were still many institutions, such as the Orthodox Church, which were not yet Sovietized, and whole swathes of the population, including most of the peasantry, that remained Russian and Orthodox at heart. The task of Sovietizing Russia fell to Stalin, who, after the death of Lenin in 1924, quickly gained complete control of the party and the country.

There followed the most violent transformation of one country into another that the world has yet seen. By 1928 the official Orthodox Church, the Moscow Patriarchate, had been transformed into an obedient mouthpiece of Soviet propaganda – although its senior leadership and hundreds of thousands of believers fled into the catacombs to form the True Orthodox Church of Russia, which survives to this day. Then came the collectivization of the countryside and a break-neck programme of industrialization. All this was achieved at the cost of millions of lives and a terrible destruction of the spiritual and material heritage of the land. Even the Communist Party and the Red Army did not escape, being decimated during Stalin's purges in 1937-38.

In 1941 there began the titanic civil war between Stalin's International Socialism and Hitler's Nationalist Socialism, those "terrible twins" of totalitarian terror. Stalin's triumph in 1945 sealed the fate, not only of Russia, but also of Eastern Europe and large parts of Asia, for generations to come. And while the Soviet Union died in 1991, it is now, under KGB Colonel Putin, being resurrected in a new, more modernized and more nationalist form.

Let us summarize the fruits of the fall of the Russian Empire and its replacement by the Soviet Union... "In October 1917," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "a satanic sect came to power in Russia that formed a secret conspiracy within the communist party (of the Bolsheviks). The threads leading to the centre of this sect's administration went far beyond the ocean... At the base of this organization there lay the Masonic principle of many-levelled initiation. Thus ordinary communists knew absolutely nothing about the real aims of their leaders, while those, in their turn, did not know the aims of the 'high-ups'... Thus the RCP(B)-CPSU was a party-werewolf from the beginning: it was one thing in its words, its slogans, its declarations and its official teaching of Marxism-Leninism, but in fact it was completely the opposite. This party created a state-werewolf in its image and likeness: according to the constitution, the law and its official decrees it was one thing, but in essence, in spirit and in its works it was something completely different!

“There has never been any such thing in the history of humanity! There have been cruel, unjust or lying rulers, whose works did not accord with their words. But never have there been rulers, or governments, which set as their aim the annihilation of a people and a people’s economy that came into their possession! But this is precisely what they began to do in Russia.

“There are now various estimates of the victims of the Bolshevik regime (higher and lower). It goes without saying that it is impossible to establish exact figures. We have tried to take a middle course. And according to such middling estimates, from 1917 to 1945 in one way or another (through shooting, camps and prisons, the two famines of the beginning of the 1920s and 1930s, the deliberately ‘Pyrrhic’ victories in the Second World War) up to 80 million Great Russians only were annihilated (not counting Ukrainians, Belorussians and other nationalities of the former Russian empire). In all, up to 100 million. From 1917 to 1926 20 million were simply shot. We must think that from 1927 to 1937 not less than 10 million. Under ‘collectivization’ 4 million were immediately shot. So that out of the 80 million who perished by 1945 about 30-40 million were simply executed. These figures could not have been made up of political enemies, representatives of the ‘former ones’ (landowners and capitalists), nor of ‘their own’, that is, those communists who for some reason or other became unsuitable. All these together constituted only a small percentage of those who perished. The main mass – tens of millions – were the ‘simple’ Russian People, that is, all the firmly believing Orthodox people who, even if they did not oppose the new power, could not be re-educated and re-persuaded... These were simple peasants and town-dwellers, who in spite of everything kept the Orthodox faith. And these were the overwhelming majority of the Russian People. Among them, of course, there perished the overwhelming majority of the clergy and monastics (by 1941 100,000 clergy and 205 bishops had been annihilated.

“At the same time, from 1917 to 1945, from the offspring of the off-scourings of the people, but also from unfortunate fellow-travellers for whom self-preservation was higher than all truths and principles, a new people grew up – the ‘Soviet’ people, or ‘Sovki’, as we now call ourselves. From 1918 children in schools no longer learned the Law of God, but learned atheist filthy thinking (and it is like that to the present day). After 1945 it was mainly this new, ‘Soviet’ people that remained alive. Individual representatives of the former Russian, that is, Orthodox People who survived by chance constituted such a tiny number that one could ignore them, since they could no longer become the basis of the regeneration of the true, real Rus’...”⁴⁶¹

One can quarrel with some details of this analysis. Thus Lebedev’s figures for those killed count among the higher rather than the middling estimates. Official figures for those condemned for counter-revolution and other serious political crimes between 1921 and 1953 come to only a little more than four million, of whom only about 800,000 were shot.⁴⁶² This, of course, excludes those killed in the Civil War and other armed

⁴⁶¹ Lebedev, “Sovmestimost’ Khrista i Veliara – k 70-letiu ‘sergianstva’”, *Russkij Pastyr’*, 28-29, 1997, pp. 174-175.

⁴⁶² GARF, *Kollektsia dokumentov*; Popov, V.P. *Gosudarstvennij terror v sovietsoj Rossii. 1923-1953 gg.; istochniki i ikh interpretatsia, Otechestvennie arkhivy*, 1992, № 2. p. 28. For commentaries on these figures,

uprisings, and in the great famines in Ukraine and elsewhere. Again, already in the 1920s and 1930s a larger proportion of the population was probably genuinely Soviet and anti-Orthodox than Lebedev admits, while more genuinely Russian and Orthodox people survived into the post-war period than he admits.

Nevertheless, his words have been quoted here because their *main* message about the Russian revolution is *true*. Too often commentators in both East and West have tried to push the Russian revolution into the frame of “ordinary” history, grossly underestimating the unprecedented scale of the tragedy and equally grossly overestimating the continuity of the Russian revolution with “the true, real Rus” that preceded it. The fact is that the Russian revolution brought to an end the Christian period of history, characterized by mainly monarchical governments ruling – or, at any rate, claiming to rule – by Christian principles, and ushered in the Age of the Antichrist...

The terms “Antichrist” and “The Age of the Antichrist” need to be defined. St. John of Damascus writes: “Everyone who confesses not that the Son of God came in the flesh and is perfect God, and became perfect man after being God, is Antichrist (I John 2.18, 22; 4.3). But in a peculiar and special sense he who comes at the consummation of the age is called Antichrist. First, then, it is requisite that the Gospel should be preached among all nations, as the Lord said (Matthew 24.14), and then he will come to refute the impious Jews.”⁴⁶³

Archimandrite Justin (Popovich) writes: “The Antichrist will be, as it were, an incarnation of the devil, for Christ is the incarnation of God. The Antichrist will be the personification of evil, hatred, lying, pride and unrighteousness, for Christ is the personification of goodness, love, truth, humility and righteousness. Such will be the chief Antichrist, who will appear before the Second Coming of the Lord Christ, and will stand in the place of God and proclaim himself to be God (whom He will destroy at His glorious Second Coming with the breath of His mouth (II Thessalonians 2.4)). But before him there will be forerunners, innumerable antichrists. For an antichrist is every one who wishes to take the place of Christ; an antichrist is every one who wishes, in place of the truth of Christ, to place his own truth, in place of the righteousness of Christ – his own righteousness, in place of the love of Christ – his own love, in place of the Goodness of Christ – his own goodness, in place of the Gospel of Christ – his own gospel...

“In what does his main lie consist? In the rejection of the God-Man Christ, in the affirmation that Jesus is not God, not the Messiah=Christ, not the Saviour. Therefore this is the work of the Antichrist. The main deceiver in the world is the devil, and with him – the Antichrist. It goes without saying that a deceiver is every one who in anyway rejects that Jesus is God, the Messiah, the Saviour. This is the main lie in the world, and all the rest either proceeds from it, or is on the way to it.”⁴⁶⁴

see

<http://mitr.livejournal.com/227089.html>;

http://community.livejournal.com/idu_shagayu/2052449.html.

⁴⁶³ St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 26.

⁴⁶⁴ Popovich, *Interpretation of the Epistles of St. John the Theologian*, Munich, 2000, pp. 36, 38.

So anyone who rejects the Divinity of Christ is an antichrist, while the Antichrist, or the chief Antichrist, will appear as an evil world-ruler towards the end of the world. In the first sense, of course, there have been multitudes of antichrists long before 1917. As the Holy Apostle John said already in the first century: "Children, it is the last times, and as you have heard that the Antichrist will come, so even now there are many antichrists" (I John 2.18). As for the Antichrist, he has not appeared yet. So in what sense could the Antichrist be said to have appeared in the period surveyed in this book?

In order to answer this question we need to turn to a prophecy of the Holy Apostle Paul concerning the Antichrist: "You know what is restraining his appearance in his time. The mystery of iniquity is already at work: only he who restrains will continue to restrain until he is removed from the midst. And then the lawless one will be revealed" (II Thessalonians 2.6-8). Now the unanimous teaching of the Early Church, as of more recent commentators such as St. Theophan the Recluse, is that "he who restrains" is *the Roman emperor*, or, more generally, *all legitimate State power on the Roman model*. In the pre-revolutionary period this legitimate State power was incarnated especially in the Russian Tsar, the last Orthodox Christian Emperor, whose empire was known as "the Third Rome". Thus his "removal from the midst" would be followed, according to the prophecy, by the appearance of the Antichrist.

Now in 1905 the Tsar's October Manifesto, which significantly limited his autocratic power and therefore his ability to restrain "the mystery of iniquity", or the revolution, was followed *immediately* by the appearance of the St. Petersburg Soviet led by Lev Trotsky. In 1917, when the Tsar abdicated, the Soviets again appeared, and in October won supreme power in the country. The Church had existed without a Christian Emperor in the first centuries of her existence, and she would continue to do so after 1917. Nevertheless, "from the day of his abdication," as St. John Maximovich writes, "everything began to collapse. It could not have been otherwise. The one who united everything, who stood guard for the truth, was overthrown."⁴⁶⁵ So if we expect the Antichrist to appear after the removal of "him who restrains", the Orthodox emperor, then the significance of the appearance of Soviet power under the leadership of Lenin immediately after the removal of the tsar is obvious.

Of course, it is also obvious that neither Lenin nor Stalin was *the* Antichrist for the simple reason that the Antichrist, according to all the prophecies, will be a Jewish king who claims to be the Messiah and God, whereas Lenin was not only not mainly Jewish (although most of his leading followers were Jewish), but also an atheist and an enemy of all religions, including the Jewish one. Moreover, the Soviet Antichrist was not the only Beast in this period. Whether in imitation of him, or in reaction to him, but using essentially the same methods, a number of Antichrist tyrants appeared around the world. This phenomenon has been called "totalitarianism", a term that has received criticism but which seems to us to be a more or less accurate characterization. For what all these Antichrists had in common was a desire to possess *the totality* of man. For those living under one of the totalitarian dictators of the twentieth century there was

⁴⁶⁵ St. John Maximovich, "Homily before a Memorial Service for the Tsar-Martyr", in *Man of God: Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco*, Redding, Ca., 1994, p. 133.

no private space they could retreat to in order to get away from the pressure of public politics. *Everything* – politics, religion, science, art, even personal relationships – came under the scrutiny of the totalitarianism in question, and was subject to its extremely harsh judgement.

If we define totalitarianism as a form of political power that seeks to abolish (i) private property, (ii) the family and (iii) religion (except the cult of the god-king or vozhd or Führer himself), then Ancient Egypt and Babylon were totalitarian regimes, as Igor Shafarevich has demonstrated.⁴⁶⁶ But since the rise of Christianity with its characteristic distinction between the things of God and the things of Caesar, truly totalitarian regimes have been rare and short-lived. Perhaps the only significant exception is the Papacy – hence the link which Dostoyevsky traced between the Papacy and the revolution.

It is only with the triumph of Soviet power in 1917 that we find totalitarianism established for more or less lengthy periods over very large populations and territories – by 1945 from Berlin to Vladivostok. The Chinese revolution of 1949 brought the world's most populous nation into the net; and the power of totalitarianism continued to spread throughout the world for the next forty years. In all these lands, moreover, we find the characteristic traits of Soviet Communism: terror, atheism and mass murder.

It is sometimes argued that totalitarianism came to an end in 1991 with the triumph of democracy over Soviet Communism. However, totalitarian regimes still flourish in China, North Korea, Burma, Cuba and parts of Africa and the Middle East. Moreover, the democracies of North America, the European Union and the neo-Soviet Russian Federation are steadily increasing their control over their citizens in a more subtle, less violent, but essentially no less totalitarian way.

The major powers that escaped totalitarianism in 1945, such as the United States, Britain and France, were both more tolerant of traditional religion and less inclined to mix religion with politics. But in the second half of the twentieth century the democracies have carried on the antichristian revolution with hardly less success than the anti-democratic totalitarian regimes of the first half, albeit in less violent ways. The critical transitional year was 1953, when, on the one hand, the violent, masculine phase of the revolution passed its peak with Stalin's death, and on the other hand the seductive, feminine phase began with the discovery of the contraceptive pill...

Thus the Nihilist dreams of Nechaev and Nietzsche, which became nightmarish reality in the era of Stalin and Hitler, have given way to more peaceful visions of life without God (at least in any form recognizable to traditional monotheism) but with education and clean water, human rights and computer games.

⁴⁶⁶ Shafarevich, "Sotsializm", in Solzhenitsyn, A. (ed.) *Iz-pod Glyb* (From Under the Rubble), Paris: YMCA Press, 1974; *Sotsializm kak yavlenie mirovoj istorii* (Socialism as a Phenomenon of World History), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977.

The aim of this continuation of the revolution by non-violent means – the “positive”, “creative” phase of the revolution, as opposed to its “negative”, “destructive” phase up to 1945 – is the same as before: to reconcile a renewed mankind to a completely this-worldly faith and hope. The first, violent, nihilist phase of the revolution was necessary in order to root out the old, other-worldly faith. In Lenin’s famous phrase, “you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs.” But now mankind can proceed to a new age of universal prosperity and happiness from which all sorrow and pain will have fled away and in which, consequently, the “opium” of traditional religion will no longer be necessary, being replaced by more this-worldly (but still “spiritual”) opiates...

“The new age,” wrote Fr. Seraphim Rose in the 1960s, “which many call a ‘post-Christian’ age, is at the same time the age ‘beyond Nihilism’ – a phrase that expresses at once a fact and a hope. The fact this phrase expresses is that Nihilism, being negative in essence even if positive in aspiration, owing its whole energy to its passion to destroy Christian Truth, comes to the end of its program in the production of a mechanized ‘new earth’ and a dehumanized ‘new man’: Christian influence over man and over society having been effectively obliterated, Nihilism must retire and give way to another, more ‘constructive’ movement capable of acting from autonomous and positive motives. This movement... takes up the Revolution at the point where Nihilism leaves off and attempts to bring the movement which Nihilism began to its logical conclusion.”⁴⁶⁷

Again, he wrote: “The Nihilism of Hitler was too pure, too unbalanced, to have more than a negative, preliminary role to play in the whole Nihilist program. Its role, like the role of the purely negative first phase of Bolshevism, is now finished, and the next stage belongs to a power possessing a more complete view of the whole Revolution, the Soviet power upon which Hitler bestowed, in effect, his inheritance in the words, ‘the future belongs solely to the stronger Eastern nation.’...”⁴⁶⁸

Until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Nihilist and post-Nihilist phases of the revolution coexisted in a state of cold war. Finally, the Homeland of the Revolution, defeated in the race for economic and military predominance, accepted that she was no longer in the vanguard of History, but a step behind. The Communists retired hurt, the Masons moved back into Russia⁴⁶⁹, and Jewish oligarchs returned to control of the means of production...⁴⁷⁰ To the architects of the new age, it looked as

⁴⁶⁷ Rose, *Nihilism*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2001, p. 88.

⁴⁶⁸ Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁶⁹ It was as New Hieroconfessor Theodore (Rafanovsky, +1975) had prophesied: “The communists have been hurled at the Church like a crazy dog. Their Soviet emblem - the hammer and sickle - corresponds to their mission. With the hammer they beat people over the head, and with the sickle they mow down the churches. But then the Masons will remove the communists and take control of Russia.” In January, 1992 the first of several affiliates of the Grand Lodge Nationale Française was founded in Moscow (Richard Rhoda, “Russian Freemasonry: A New Dawn”, paper read at Orient Lodge № 15 on June 29, 1996, <http://members.aol.com/houltonme/rus.htm>). Boris Yeltsin became a Mason in 1992. Vladimir Putin became one in Germany.

⁴⁷⁰ Jews continued to occupy prominent positions in post-war Communist Eastern Europe, especially in Poland and Romania (see Michael Hoffman, “Pope John Paul II: The Judas Iscariot of Our Time”, *The Hoffman Wire*, April 4, 2005, revisionisthistory.org). However, their influence began to wane in the

if the Soviet Union, so necessary in the first, violent phase of the revolution, but so cumbersome and obstructive now, was to be consigned to the dustbin of history. Russia was about to join “the international community” of free nations “capable of acting from autonomous and positive motives”...

The Yeltsin era (1991-2000) produced important gains. The most important of these was freedom of religion: open opposition to the Moscow Patriarchate was permitted, the Russian Church Abroad was permitted to open parishes in Russia, and the remnants of the Catacomb Christians poured into it. The horrific scale of the crimes of the Stalin era became public knowledge, the MP hierarchs were exposed as KGB agents who had served the God-hating communist state for generations, and even the Communist Party was put on trial (but acquitted). However, repentance for the Soviet past was intermittent and superficial; the KGB, though humbled, was not destroyed; many of the worst aspects of Western Capitalism were allowed to develop unchecked; and the official church, after an initial fright, regained the initiative. “Sergianism” was justified as a “wise” move, and the most serious fruit of Sergianism – the MP’s participation in the heretical ecumenical movement – intensified.

As the liberal era of the 1990s came to an end, a kind of pseudo-Russian patriotism came to the fore. However, as Protopriest Lev Lebedev wrote, “fatherland”, “Russia”, “the State” had become idols, more important than the true Faith, without which they are worthless: “The ideological idol under the name of ‘fatherland’ (‘Russia’, ‘the state’) has been completely preserved. We have already many times noted that these concepts are, in essence, pagan ideological idols not because they are in themselves bad, but because they have been *torn out* from the trinitarian *unity* of co-subjected concepts: Faith, Tsar, Fatherland (Orthodoxy, Autocracy, People)...

“Everything that one might wish to be recognized and positive, even the regeneration of the faith, is done under the slogan of ‘the regeneration of the Fatherland (Russia)’! But nothing is being regenerated. Even among the monarchists the regeneration of the Orthodox Autocratic Monarchy is mainly represented as no more than the means for the regeneration of the Fatherland. We may note that if any of the constituent parts of the triad – Orthodoxy, Autocracy, People – is torn away from the others and becomes the only one, it loses its power. Only *together* and in the indicated hierarchical order did they constitute, and do they constitute now, the spiritual (and all the other) strength and significance of Great Russia. But for the time being it is the ideological idol ‘fatherland’ that holds sway...”⁴⁷¹

This spirit, which seeks to justify and even glorify the Soviet past, was illustrated by an article entitled “The Religion of Victory” in which a new Russian religio-political bloc, “For Victory!” presented its programme. The victory in question was that of the Soviet forces over Germany in 1945. Their blood was considered to have “a mystical, sacred meaning”, being “the main emblem of the Russian historical consciousness”.⁴⁷²

Soviet Union, and by the 1970s it was more strongly felt in the anti-Soviet dissident movement, which looked to the West.

⁴⁷¹ Lebedev, *Veliokorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 655.

⁴⁷² V. Chikin, A. Prokhanov, “Religia Pobedy: Beseda” (The Religion of Victory: A Conversation), *Zavtra* (Tomorrow), № 32 (297), 1999, p. 2. Cf. Egor Kholmogorov, “Dve Pobedy” (Two Victories), *Spetsnaz Rossii*

Similarly, an article on an MP website produced this astonishing blasphemy: "The 'atheist' USSR, trampling down death by death, resurrected and saved the world. Only because 'godly' and 'ungodly' soldiers died in their millions do we live today and the whole population of the world, the whole of humanity, is alive. It would be no exaggeration to think that that terrible and great war and great Victory in that Great war caused the first sociologically large-scale micro-resurrection, a reproduction by the peoples of the USSR of the exploit of Christ. May 9, 1945 became the most convincing witness of the fact that 2000 years ago Christ was resurrected. Therefore our Great Victory is the feast of feasts, it is Pascha..."⁴⁷³

This extraordinary mixture of Orthodoxy, Nationalism and Communism - or "Ecclesiastical Stalinism", as it is known - was the most horrific sign of the lack of repentance of the MP even now that it was free from Soviet oppression. It was linked with, for example, the movement to canonize Tsar Ivan the Terrible, and supported by, among others, the former idol of ROCOR's liberals, Fr. Demetrius Dudko. "Now the time has come," he wrote, "to rehabilitate Stalin. And yet not him himself, but the concept of statehood. Today we can see for ourselves what a crime non-statehood is and what a blessing statehood is! No matter how many cry that in Soviet times many perished in the camps - how many are perishing now, without trials or investigations... If Stalin were here, there would be no such collapse.... Stalin, an atheist from the external point of view, was actually a believer... It is not without reason that in the Russian Orthodox Church, when he died, 'eternal memory' was sung to him... The main thing is that Stalin looked after people in a fatherly manner. Stalin legitimately stands next to Suvorov!"⁴⁷⁴

On January 1, 2000 KGB Colonel Putin came to power... He moved extraordinarily quickly to demonstrate that he was moving the state back to the former USSR's obsession with military power. Thus, as Masha Gessen writes, only his second decree "established a new Russian military doctrine, abandoning the old no-first-strike policy regarding nuclear weapons and emphasizing a right to use them against aggressors 'if other means of conflict resolution have been exhausted or deemed ineffective'. Soon another decree re-established mandatory training exercises for reservists (all Russian able-bodied men were considered reservists) - something that had been abolished, to the relief of Russian wives and mothers, after the country withdrew from Afghanistan. Two of the decree's six paragraphs were classified as secret, suggesting they might shed light on whether reservists should expect to be sent to Chechnya. A few days later, Putin issued an order granting forty government ministers and other officials to classify information as secret, in direct violation of the constitution. He also re-established mandatory military training in secondary schools, both public and private; this subject, which for boys involved taking apart, cleaning, and putting back together a Kalashnikov, had been abolished during perestroika. In all, six of the eleven decrees Putin issued in his first two months as acting president concerning the military. On

(Russia's Special Forces), № 5 (44), May, 2000, and my reply: "Imperia ili Anti-Imperia", [http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/articles/316/imperia-i-anti-imperia-\(-russian\)](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/articles/316/imperia-i-anti-imperia-(-russian)).

⁴⁷³ Yuri Krupnov, "The Victory is Pascha", <http://pravaya.ru/look/7580?print=1>.

⁴⁷⁴ Dudko, "Mysli sviaschennika" (The Thoughts of a Priest), <http://patriotica.narod.ru/history/dudko>.

January 27 [Prime Minister] Kasyanov announced that defense spending would be increased by 50 percent – this in a country that was still failing to meet its international debt obligations and was seeing most of its population sink further and further into poverty...”⁴⁷⁵

With Putin the Russian revolution has entered what may be its culminating phase. His regime, with its mix of governmental symbols (double-head eagle, red flag for the army, tricolour flag, Soviet national anthem), claims to be the successor both of the RSFSR and the USSR and even of the pre-revolutionary Russian State. It may be described as neo-Soviet without Marxism but with “Orthodoxy” – and all under the control of the KGB/FSB. It draws support from a heady mixture of conflicting constituencies: nationalists and democrats and monarchists, conservative Orthodox and pagan mystics and atheists, westerners and capitalists and Slavophiles. Putin aims to find a place for all the Russias of the last century. Only one condition is attached: that Putin’s regime is accepted as the lawful successor of all previous Russian regimes...

Putin was indeed resembling a Chinese emperor more than a democratic politician, not only in his despotic political style, but also in his fabulous personal wealth...⁴⁷⁶

“For those who claim,” writes Professor Olga Ackerly, “that the ‘CIS is different from the USSR’ and Putin is a ‘practising Orthodox Christian’, here are some sobering facts. The first days and months Putin’s presidency were highlighted by the reestablishment of a memorial plaque on Kutuzovsky Prospect where Andropov used to live. The plaque was a symbol of communist despotism missing since the 1991 putsch, bearing Andropov’s name – a former head of the KGB, especially known for his viciousness in the use of force and psychiatric clinics for dissidents. On May 9, 2000, Putin proposed a toast to the ‘genius commander’ Iosif Stalin and promoted many former KGB officers to the highest state positions...

“Important to note is that the Eurasian movement, with ties to occultism, ecumenism, etc. was recently revived by Putin, and a Congress entitled ‘The All-Russian Political Social Movement’, held in Moscow in April of 2001, was ‘created on the basis of the Eurasist ideology and *inter-confessional* [sic!] harmony in support of the reforms of President Vladimir Putin.’ The movement is led by Alexander Dugin, a sexual mystic, National Bolshevik Party member, son of a Cheka cadre, personally familiar with the so-called ‘Black International’, advisor to the State Duma, and participant in Putin’s ‘Unity’ movement.”⁴⁷⁷

From 2003 Putin moved to reverse the main gains of the liberal 1990s – religious freedom, and a more open and honest attitude to the Soviet past. Churches were seized from True Orthodox Christians and their websites hacked; elections were

⁴⁷⁵ Gessen, *The Man without a Face. The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin*, London: Granta Books, 2013, pp. 153-154.

⁴⁷⁶ Putin’s wealth was estimated in 2007 at about \$40 billion. See Luke Harding, “Putin, the Kremlin power struggle and the \$40bn fortune”, *The Guardian*, December 21, 2007, pp. 1-2. More recent estimates give much higher figures.

⁴⁷⁷ Ackerly, “High Treason in ROCOR: The Rapprochement with Moscow”, pp. 21, 25.

rigged, independent journalists were killed, and independent businessmen imprisoned on trumped-up charges; and new history books justifying Stalinism were introduced into the classrooms. The red flag and hammer and sickle were restored to the armed services, as well as the melody (if not the words) of the Soviet national anthem. Youth organizations similar to the Hitler Youth were created.⁴⁷⁸ And in general Putin's Russia began to resemble Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

Banking on the high price of Russian oil, Putin began to rebuild Russia's economic and military might – but the corruption and imbalances within the Russian economy have hindered the diversification of the economy that he needs. State- and privately-organized crime has flourished under his patronage. Putin is now the “godfather” of criminal state in the sense that it is a state run by and for a criminal gang. According to a 2005 survey, 42% of the Russian people, and 60% of those over sixty, wanted the return of “a leader like Stalin.”⁴⁷⁹ Their wish had been granted. By that year, Russia was a democratic country in name only...

The MP has shown complete loyalty to Putinism, and takes an enthusiastic part in the criminal economy, as is illustrated by the activities of the recently elected patriarch, Cyril Gundiaev, who imports tobacco and alcohol duty-free and is now one of the richest men in Russia.⁴⁸⁰ In 2007, Putin brokered a union between the majority of the Russian Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate, which owed more than a little to the resurgent influence of the KGB/FSB.⁴⁸¹ This is the most serious blow to the True Church and Holy Russia since the official Church under Metropolitan Sergius submitted to Stalin in 1927-28. Even in the darkest days of Stalinism the voice of the Russian Church Abroad told the truth about Russia; but now that voice is much weaker, surviving only in the Russian True Orthodox Church under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia...

However, as the poet Fyodor Tiutchev said many years ago, you cannot measure Russia by a conventional yardstick. Great reversals, as took place in 1612, are possible in her as in no other nation; at the time of writing, dissatisfaction with Putin's regime seems to be on the increase. And many of the holy prophets and elders of Russia prophesied that the Russian people will repent, the revolution will be destroyed and Holy Russia resurrected through the prayers of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors.

In one of those prophecies, the Holy Nun-Martyr and Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna declared: “If we look deep into the life of every human being, we discover that it is full of miracles. You will say, 'Of terror and death, as well.' Yes, that also. But

⁴⁷⁸ Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War*, London: Bloomsbury, 2008, p. 102.

⁴⁷⁹ Orlando Figes, “Vlad the Great”, *New Statesman*, 3 December, 2007, p. 34.

⁴⁸⁰ “After the fall of the Soviet Union, the church received official privileges including the right to import duty-free alcohol and tobacco. In 1995, the Nikolo-Ugreshky Monastery, which is directly subordinated to the patriarchate, earned \$350 million from the sale of alcohol. The patriarchate's department of foreign church relations, which Kirill ran, earned \$75 million from the sale of tobacco. But the patriarchate reported an annual budget in 1995-1996 of only \$2 million. Kirill's personal wealth was estimated in *Moscow News* in 2006 to be \$4 billion.” (<http://news-nftu.blogspot.com>, February, 2009).

⁴⁸¹ Konstantin Preobrazhensky, *KGB/FSB's New Trojan Horse: Americans of Russian Descent*, North Billerica, MA: Gerard Group Publishing, 2008.

we do not clearly see why the blood of these victims must flow. There, in the heavens, they understand everything and, no doubt, have found calm and the True Homeland - a Heavenly Homeland. We on this earth must look to that Heavenly Homeland with understanding and say with resignation, 'Thy will be done.' Great Russia is completely destroyed, but Holy Russia and the Orthodox Church, which 'the gates of hell cannot overcome', exists and exists more than ever. And those who believe and who do not doubt for one moment will see 'the inner sun' which enlightens the darkness during the thundering storm... I am only convinced that the Lord Who punishes is also the same Lord Who loves...

"Even though all the powers of hell may be set loose, Holy Russia and the Orthodox Church will remain unconquered. Some day, in this ghastly struggle, Virtue will triumph over Evil. Those who keep their faith will see the Powers of Light vanquish the powers of darkness. God both punishes and pardons..."⁴⁸²

This is confirmed by another saint who died in 1918, Elder Aristocles of Moscow and Mount Athos. In 1911 he said: "An evil will shortly take Russia, and wherever this evil goes, rivers of blood will flow. It is not the Russian soul, but an imposition on the Russian soul. It is not an ideology, nor a philosophy, but a spirit from hell. In the last days Germany will be divided. France will be just nothing. Italy will be judged by natural disasters. Britain will lose her empire and all her colonies and will come to almost total ruin, but will be saved by praying enthroned women. America will feed the world, but will finally collapse. Russia and China will destroy each other. Finally, Russia will be free and from her believers will go forth and turn many from the nations to God."⁴⁸³

"Now we are undergoing the times before the Antichrist. But Russia will yet be delivered. There will be much suffering, much torture. The whole of Russia will become a prison, and one must greatly entreat the Lord for forgiveness. One must repent of one's sins and fear to do even the least sin, but strive to do good, even the smallest. For even the wing of a fly has weight, and God's scales are exact. And when even the smallest of good in the cup tips the balance, then will God reveal His mercy upon Russia."

"The end will come through China. There will be an extraordinary outburst and a miracle of God will be manifested. And there will be an entirely different life, but all this will not be for long."

"God will remove all leaders, so that Russian people should look only at Him. Everyone will reject Russia, other states will renounce her, delivering her to herself - this is so that Russian people should hope on the help of the Lord. You will hear that in other countries disorders have begun similar to those in Russia. You will hear of war, and there will be wars. But wait until the Germans take up arms, for they are

⁴⁸² Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1993, pp. 200-201; Yusupov, *Memuary* (Memoirs), Moscow, 1998, p. 230.

⁴⁸³ Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), personal communication. Fr. Epiphany obtained the exact text of this prophecy from Abbess Barbara of St. Mary Magdalene monastery, Jerusalem, who received from her elder in 1911.

chosen as God's weapon to punish Russia – but also as a weapon of deliverance later. The Cross of Christ will shine over the whole world and our Homeland will be magnified and will become as a lighthouse in the darkness for all."⁴⁸⁴

*September 21 / October 4, 2013.
Apodosis of the Exaltation of the Cross.*

⁴⁸⁴ Elder Aristocles, in Rose, "The Future of Russia", *op. cit.*; Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 435; "To the Memory of Abbess Barbara", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 33, no. 4, July-August, 1983, and I.K. Sursky, *Father John of Kronstadt*, Belgrade, 1941, p. 325. St. John of Kronstadt also prophesied that the deliverance of Russia would come from the East (Sursky, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 24), as did the Elder Theodosius of Minvody (Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), *The Catacomb Church in the Russian Land* (typescript, Mayford, 1980).

22. SCIENCE, ART AND THE TURIN SHROUD

*Unimaginable beauty and comeliness surpassing nature in beauty are truly visible to them
that desire to see them.*

Menaion, August 16, Transfer of the Holy Mandylyon, Mattins, ode 9.

A recent book on the Turin Shroud, the most detailed and comprehensive yet⁴⁸⁵, raises again the question: how should we, as Orthodox Christians, evaluate and react to this extraordinary object? In the 1970s the ROCOR Deacon (now OCA “Archbishop”) Lev Puhalo wrote several articles against it, labelling it a medieval forgery. And in this judgement he has been followed by many people, including many scientists. However, nobody has yet been able to give us even a remotely plausible answer to the question: if it is a forgery, *how was it made?* And until somebody answers this question, the central question: is it the authentic burial shroud of Christ? must remain open...

This is not simply a scientific matter. For many, including the present writer, the most powerful argument for the Shroud’s authenticity is its quite extraordinary *beauty*, a beauty of an altogether higher nature than that of any merely human artefact. Now many may retort: beauty is in the eye of the beholder, its perception is a purely subjective matter. But this is not true. When the envoys of St. Vladimir came back to Kiev from Constantinople, recommending that their prince adopt the Orthodox Faith on account of the extraordinary *beauty* of the services, they were not being frivolous or naive.

Beauty – transcendent, spiritual beauty – is an argument, and a powerful one. For we all instinctively understand that truth must be beautiful, otherwise it is not truth. The foremost book of Orthodox spirituality, the *Philokalia*, means “the love of beauty”. True beauty is precisely a vision of truth, of the reality of things in and through created matter. God is discerned in the beauty of holiness.

Of course, there is a sensual, deceptive beauty which leads away from the truth rather than towards it. This is what the Russians call *prelest’*, which may be translated into English as “charm” – a word with connotations of superficiality, cheapness, deceptiveness and even magic... But nobody could describe the extraordinarily peaceful, humble and majestic figure that is imprinted on the Shroud as having *that* kind of beauty.

And if somebody retorts that this is simply my personal opinion, an aesthetic judgement having no objective scientific basis in fact, but rather the product of my religious faith, I would reply in two ways. First, many people have come to the Shroud with no faith, and even with a strong predisposition to reject it as they rejected any suggestion of the miraculous, and yet have come away with a strong faith – and not a vague kind of “spirituality”, but a precise belief that Jesus Christ died on the Cross and was resurrected from the dead. Such a person is Ian Wilson, the author of the book referred to above, an historian and stubborn sceptic who became a Christian on

⁴⁸⁵ Ian Wilson, *The Shroud: the 2000-Year-Old Mystery Solved*, London: Bantam Press, 2010.

seeing the Shroud in the 1970s and has spent the rest of his life defending its authenticity.

Secondly, anybody who has done serious work in science will know that it is a myth to consider that science is a completely objective form of knowledge. Not only is science radically fallible, consisting in the constant refinement and rejection of one hypothesis after another. Even the most famous of scientists can differ radically and fundamentally when it comes to the most important scientific hypotheses. Thus one scientist will consider it obvious, almost a dogmatic truth, that man derives from the apes and the whole universe from a tiny quantity of superheated matter that exploded fourteen billion years ago. Another scientist, equally intelligent and qualified, will reject this as obvious nonsense, being contradicted by a vast mass of verifiable facts.

The truth is that both science and art depend on faith. It requires faith even to believe that what I am seeing now in front of my eyes is objective reality and not a dream, or that objects continue to exist when I am not looking at them. It takes faith to believe that the sun will rise tomorrow, or that Japan exists, or that life exists on other planets, or that there is such a thing as true love... Faith, or the lack of it, informs our whole approach to reality, material and psychological as well as spiritual. And faith tells us that the truth is beautiful...

*

"That is all very well", says the sceptic, "but the Shroud is a 'holy' object owned, not by the Orthodox Church but by the Pope, of which there is no record in the Orthodox East, and which has been proven by carbon-14 to have been created in the fourteenth century. The onus is on you to prove that it is in fact Orthodox in provenance and dates to the first century. Or do you deny that you could be in prelest'?"

No, I do not deny that possibility, and therefore accept the challenge, relying mainly on the facts and arguments put forward in Ian Wilson's excellent book. I shall summarise the points he makes on both the scientific and historical issues. Of course, a summary cannot do justice to the detail and thoroughness of his argumentation, so those who remain unconvinced will need to read his book...

The issue of carbon-14 can be dealt with quite quickly. Carbon-14 is a notoriously unreliable method of dating. Its accuracy depends very heavily on the degree to which the sample tested has been contaminated by the environment, and the degree to which that contamination is allowed for in determining the date. That is why archaeologists often come up with obviously wrong, "rogue dates", which are then quietly dismissed... In 1988, using a new method of carbon-14 testing and without consulting any archaeologist, a team of scientists came up with a date of 1290-1360 for the Shroud. But the dating laboratories carried out only routine pre-treatment procedures to eliminate contamination, taking no account of the contamination that had been forced into the Shroud's permanent structure, that is, the molecular structure of its flax fibres. This "permanent" contamination could have been quantified only by chemical analysis - but no such analysis was done. Now it is known that even if the Shroud is

only 600-700, and not 2000 years old, it has undergone massive contamination from fires, smoke, oil, wax, incense, water, tears, micro-organisms in the atmosphere and on hands and lips, etc. In the opinion of experts, much of this penetrated the molecular structure of the Shroud over time. As one senior Harwell scientist, P.J. Anderson, said: "The history of the Shroud does not encourage one to put a great deal of reliance upon the validity of my carbon-14 dating."⁴⁸⁶

But even supposing that the 1988 dating procedures were impeccable, and the Shroud a forgery made in the Middle Ages, how was it done?

This question has not yet received an answer because of several facts:-

1. The Shroud image could not have been created by the usual method of medieval forgery, painting. Much excitement was caused by the discovery, in the 1970s, of some traces of pigment on the Shroud. But these traces were randomly distributed and were clearly *not* used in the formation of the image. It is now generally recognized that the forgery was not created by painting.

2. Attempts to reproduce the image by stretching a linen sheet over a body have produced absurd, macabre results with distortion of perspective, etc.

3. The famous image is not visible to the naked eye, which sees just very faint, yellowish marks similar to a scorch stain such as one might find on an ironing board. The full, astonishingly detailed and beautiful image of the Man on the Shroud is visible only in a *photographic negative*. The only conclusion must be that the forger, if there was one, not only knew the art of photography at least 500 years before the technology became known in the 1840, but also was able to hide his photograph under the cover of the very faint image that is visible to the naked eye.

4. There is another property of the image which no known forger, ancient or modern, can reproduce: when placed under a VP-8 Image Analyzer, the image is revealed *in three dimensions*. The Analyzer's inventor, Peter Schumacher, "has recalled his emotions on seeing the Shroud's full-body image on his system's TV monitor for the very first time: 'A true "true three-dimensional image" appeared on the monitor... The nose ramped in relief. The facial features were contoured properly. Body shapes of the arms, legs and chest and the basic human form... I had never heard of the Shroud of Turin before that moment. I had no idea what I was looking at. However, the results are unlike anything I have processed through the VP-8 Analyzer, before or since. Only the Shroud of Turin has [ever] produced these results from a VP-8 Image Analyzer.' With regard to the idea of some unknown medieval artist-forgery producing such an image, Schumacher had this to say: 'One must consider how and why an artist would embed three-dimensional information in the "grey" shading of an image [when] no means of viewing this property of the image would be available for at least 650 years after this was done. One would have to ask why is this result not obtained in the analysis of other works?...'"⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁶ Anderson, in Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁴⁸⁷ Schumacher, in Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

5. "From an art-historical point of view," writes art historian Thomas de Wesselow, "the idea that the Shroud's body-image was painted shortly before 1356, the approximate date of its first display in Lirey, is untenable. The Shroud's image is quite unlike any painting of the period - or, indeed, of any period. In the words of Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Shroud of Turin is unique in art. It doesn't fall into any artistic category.'... The Shroud is inconceivable as a medieval work of art."⁴⁸⁸

In any case, the artist would have had to have had extraordinary ability, the ability of a great master. That is why some have suggested that Leonardo da Vinci painted it. But his dates do not fit the carbon-14 results...

6. The forger must have possessed greater anatomical and medical knowledge than was possible for a medieval Catholic. The image's anatomical details and blood marks (the blood has been tested and shown to be real, of the AB group) are completely consistent with it being the image of the incorrupt body of a crucified dead Jew aged between 30 and 35 with a crown of thorns on his head, a spear wound in his side with blood and serum around the wound, and nails through his wrists and ankles. One telling detail: the nails went through the wrists of the hands, not the palms, which we now know to have been standard practice with the Romans (because otherwise the nails could not have held up the weight of the body), but which was *not* known to medieval artists, who always portrayed Christ with the nails going through the palms. Another detail indicating expert knowledge: the image of the body shows marks of wounds corresponding in shape exactly to what we would expect to see as the result of scourging by the *flagrum*, the standard-issue Roman army instrument of torture of the time. In general, there can be little doubt that the image is of a man who was scourged and crucified in the Roman fashion – a practice that was discontinued with the coming of St. Constantine in the fourth century. Stephen Jones writes: "Atheist and Shroud critic Steven Schafersman agrees that because of these many specific matches between the Gospels' account of Jesus' passion and the image on the Shroud, "the odds [are] 1 in 83 million that the man on the shroud is not Jesus" and therefore "If the shroud is authentic" (i.e. not a forgery), "the image is that of Jesus" (my emphasis)".⁴⁸⁹

7. The forger must also have had expert archaeological knowledge. For the Shroud's weave is a complex three-to-one herringbone twill with a type of "invisible seam" for which there are no parallels in the medieval period, but which has been recovered from sites in Israel dating to the first century.

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Let us now turn from science to history. One of the main arguments of the sceptics – especially Orthodox sceptics – is that if the Shroud were genuine, we should expect to have references to it in Orthodox Church literature of the first millennium, or at any rate in other literature of antiquity or the early Middle Ages – that is, *before* the first

⁴⁸⁸ De Wesselow, *The Sign*, London: Viking, 2012, pp. 135, 167.

⁴⁸⁹ Jones, "The Shroud of Turin is the Burial sheet of Jesus!", <http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.co.uk/2009/12/shroud-of-turin-is-burial-sheet-of.html>.

certain historical references to the Shroud in the *late* medieval West. And there are no such references, they say.

But this is not true. Thomas de Wesselow writes: “The Sindon [i.e. the Shroud] is first mentioned... in a letter of encouragement sent by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennitus to his troops in 958. The emperor says that he is sending them some holy water consecrated by contact with various relics of the Passion in the Pharos Chapel, including the *theophoron sindonos* – the ‘God-worn linen sheet’...

“Again, the chronicler William of Tyre records the Sindon among various relics shown to King Amaury of Jerusalem and his entourage in 1171.”⁴⁹⁰

Again, Bishop Jacob Barclay of Jerusalem cites “a letter dated 1 August 1205, written by Theodore Angelos aka Theodore Komnenos Doukas, who was cousin of two former Byzantine emperors and second uncle of former emperor Alexios IV Angelos (the one who had enticed the Crusaders to seize Constantinople), and addressed to Pope Innocent III: ‘Theodore Angelus wishes long life for Innocent [III], Lord and Pope at old Rome, in the name of Michael, Lord of Epirus and in his own name. In April of last year a crusading army, having falsely set out to liberate the Holy Land, instead laid waste the city of Constantine. During the sack, troops of Venice and France looted even the holy sanctuaries. The Venetians partitioned the treasures of gold, silver, and ivory while the French did the same with the relics of the saints and the most sacred of all, the linen in which our Lord Jesus Christ was wrapped after his death and before the resurrection. We know that the sacred objects are preserved by their predators in Venice, in France, and in other places, the sacred linen in Athens . . . Rome, Kalends of August, 1205.’”⁴⁹¹

Athens at this time was controlled by the de la Roche family, which was related by marriage and membership of the Templar order to the de Charny family, which, as we know for certain, came into possession of the Shroud sometime in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Wilson provides extensive further evidence that the Templars possessed the Shroud and kept and venerated it in secret, which we shall not go into here. The important point is that here we have definite evidence, not only that the Shroud existed in pre-1204 Constantinople, but that it was stolen from there by the Crusaders and brought, first to Athens, and then to France.

But this is not the only evidence that the Shroud *was* venerated in the Orthodox East as the burial sheet of Christ. “In the earliest years of the thirteenth century, we find Nicholas Mesarites, custodian of the Pharos Chapel relic collection, referring to what is undoubtedly Jesus’s burial shroud (whether imprinted or not imprinted). First, he described this as proof of Jesus’s resurrection: ‘In this chapel Christ rises again, and the *sindon* [the Greek word used in the Synoptic Gospels to describe the burial shroud] with the burial linens is the clear proof.’ Then, in his second reference to this same shroud, he remarked intriguingly, ‘The burial *sindon* of Christ: this is of

⁴⁹⁰ De Wesselow, *op. cit.*, p. 177. Perhaps “God-bearing” would be a better translation of *theophoron*.

⁴⁹¹ Barclay, personal communication, May, 2012. Part of this letter is also quoted by Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 211. It is considered genuine by Vatican archivist and specialist on the Templars, Dr. Barbara Frale. See her book, *The Templars: The Secret History Revealed*, Dunboyne: Maverick, 2009, p. 116.

linen, of cheap and easily obtainable material, still smelling of myrrh, defying decay, because it wrapped the mysterious, naked dead body after the Passion.”⁴⁹²

A little later, during the siege of Constantinople by the Crusaders, the Shroud was moved to the church of the Mother of God of Blachernae, where regular presentations for the veneration of the whole people were staged every Friday. This is the witness of an ordinary crusader, Robert de Clari: “There was another church which was called My Lady St Mary of Blachernae, where there was the *sydoine* [old French for *shroud*] in which our Lord had been wrapped, which every Friday stood upright, so that one could see the figure of our Lord on it.”⁴⁹³

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Now let us turn to Wilson’s hypothesis, which was first put forward in his first book on the subject in 1978, and whose evidential basis has now been considerably strengthened. The hypothesis is that the Shroud is identical with the Holy Mandylion, or Image not made with hands, whose feast is celebrated on August 16 in the Orthodox Church, and to which there are many references in ancient and early medieval literature. The Mandylion appears to have disappeared from the historical record at about the time of the sacking of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204; so the hypothesis asserts that it was captured by the Crusaders as part of their very extensive loot and then reappeared some years later as the Shroud...

Let us begin by returning to the witness of the crusader, Robert de Clari: “There was another church which was called My Lady St Mary of Blachernae, where there was the *sydoine* [old French for *shroud*] in which our Lord had been wrapped, which every Friday stood upright, so that one could see the figure of our Lord on it.”

This description of the Shroud as “standing upright” immediately raises the question: how could the Shroud, a fourteen-foot long relic with the imprint of the *whole* body of the Lord, front and back, on it, be confused with the Mandylion, which shows only the head of Christ? In order to answer this question, we have to examine the Holy Mandylion itself. But we are not able to do this, because it disappeared at the same time in the same sack of Constantinople in 1204 – coincidentally, at the same time as the Shroud...

We must turn, then, to the literary tradition concerning the appearance of the Mandylion. According to our earliest source, the fourth-century Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, “[King] Abgar V of Edessa, then suffering from an incurable disease, heard of the miracles Jesus was performing and sent to Jerusalem a messenger bearing a letter addressed to Jesus, asking him to come to his city to heal him. Jesus declined, saying he needed to stay in Jerusalem to await his fate, but he blessed Abgar for his show of faith and promised that after being ‘taken up’ he would send one of his disciples to Edessa to cure him and bring him the Christian message.”⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

⁴⁹³ De Clari, in Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

⁴⁹⁴ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

That disciple was Addai, or Thaddeus in the Greco-Roman form of the name. According to the tenth-century *Story of the Image of Edessa*, Addai went to the king shortly after the Resurrection of Christ, bringing with him a cloth on which the Lord had imprinted an image of His face. Addai “placed the Image on his own forehead and went in thus to Abgar. The king... seemed to see a light shining out of his face, too bright to look at, sent forth by the Image that was covering him.”⁴⁹⁵ The king was healed and became a Christian, and Edessa became perhaps the first Christian city in the world...

The *Story* goes on to explain how the king “ordered the image of a pagan god that had been over his city’s gate to be taken down and replaced by the Image of Jesus. After his death, when Abgar’s second son reverted to paganism, the son ordered the pagan image to be restored, and that of Christ destroyed. However, Edessa’s bishop of that time managed to pre-empt this. In the words of the tenth-century writer, ‘Given that the place where the Image was kept was shaped like a cylindrical semi-circle, he [the bishop] showed great foresight and lit a lamp in front of the Image and put a tile on top of it. He then sealed the surface off with gypsum and baked bricks, finishing the wall off on the same level.’”⁴⁹⁶

Nothing further is known about the Image for a long time, until 544. In that year the Parthian King Chosroes appeared before the walls of Edessa. He brought a huge timber mound up to the walls and seemed about to conquer the city. But then, according to the tenth-century *Story*, someone appeared in a vision to Bishop Eulalios, informed him where the Image was stored (the bishop did not know that it even existed any longer), and told him to parade it in a procession. Eulalios found the Image with the lamp in front of it still burning, and then processed around the walls holding it in his arms. As the contemporary sixth-century writer Evagrius described it, the Edessans “brought the divinely created Image, which human hands had not made [*acheiropoietos*], the one that Christ God sent to Abgar when he yearned to see him. Then, when they brought the all-holy Image into the channel they had created and sprinkled it with water, they applied some to the pyre and the timbers. And at once the divine power made a visitation to the faith of those who had done this, and accomplished what had previously been impossible for them: for at once the timbers caught fire and, being reduced to ashes quicker than word, they imparted it to what was above as the fire took over everywhere.”⁴⁹⁷

Two intriguing things happened after the rediscovery of the Image that support the idea that it is closely linked with the Shroud. First, the iconography of Christ undergoes a sudden and dramatic change throughout the Orthodox world. “Until at least the end of the fifth century,” writes Wilson, “the portrayals of Jesus lacked any authority, most representations depicting him as beardless. As evidenced by St. Augustine’s remarks, there was a general lack of any awareness of what he looked like. But in the art of the sixth century there occurred a remarkable transformation in

⁴⁹⁵ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁴⁹⁶ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

⁴⁹⁷ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.

the way Jesus was depicted." He was now depicted in a very similar way to the face on the Shroud "before any discovery of the hidden photographic negative": "the same frontality, the same long hair, long nose, beard, etc." A series of such icons of Christ, of the "Pantocrator" type, appear in various parts of the Orthodox world, from Rome to Syria to Georgia, in the sixth and seventh centuries. ⁴⁹⁸

Of particular interest is one such icon from St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai, which "features one highly important extra detail: on the forehead between the eyebrows there is a starkly geometrical shape resembling a topless square. Artistically it does not seem to make much sense. If it was intended to be a furrowed brow, it is depicted most unnaturally in comparison with the rest of the face. But if we look at the equivalent point on the Shroud face we find exactly the same feature, equally as geometric and equally as unnatural, probably just a flaw in the weave. The only possible deduction is that fourteen centuries ago an artist saw this feature on the cloth that he knew as the Image of Edessa and applied it to his Christ Pantocrator portrait of Jesus. In so doing he provided a tell-tale clue that the likeness of Jesus from which he was working was that on the cloth we today know as the Shroud.

"Seven decades ago Frenchman Paul Vignon identified another fourteen such oddities frequently occurring in Byzantine Christ portraits, likewise seemingly deriving from the Shroud. Among these is a distinctive triangle immediately below the topless square. But like a Man Friday footprint of the Shroud's existence six centuries before the date given to it by carbon dating, the topless square alone is enough..."⁴⁹⁹

A second intriguing fact about the Image that emerges after its rediscovery is that it was much larger than the simple rectangular head-and-shoulders image that we are familiar with from countless iconographic reproductions. Thus the *Acts of Thaddaeus*, dating either to the sixth or early seventh century, describes "the cloth on which the Image was imprinted as *tetradiplon* - 'doubled in four'. It is a very unusual word, in all Byzantine literature pertaining only to the Image of Edessa, and therefore coming to indicate some unusual way in which the Edessa cloth was folded.

"So what happens if we try doubling the Shroud in four? If we take a full-length photographic print of the Shroud, double it, then double it twice again, we find the Shroud in eight (or two times four) segments, an arrangement seeming to correspond to what is intended by the sixth-century description. And the quite startling finding from folding the Shroud in this way is that its face appears disembodied on a landscape-aspect cloth exactly corresponding to the later 'direct' copies of the Image of Edessa.

"In the *Story of the Image of Edessa*, the Image is specifically described as mounted on a board. So a folding for presentation purposes in this 'doubled in four' way actually makes a great deal of sense. It reduces the Shroud's extremely awkward

⁴⁹⁸ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 135. A document discovered in 1975 has revealed that "icon-evangelist-artists", including a monk called Theodosius who was "keeper of the Image of Edessa", went out from Edessa to bring knowledge of the likeness of Christ to Georgia in particular.

⁴⁹⁹ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

fourteen-foot length into a manageable and presentable twenty-one inches by forty-five inches, and displays by far the most meaningful section of the cloth, the face. And if we think of the face as seen in this way in the dim lighting conditions of a church interior – conditions in which, as we know from surgeon Dr. Pierre Barbet, the different colour of the bloodstains does not show up – it is easy to understand how the face might have been supposed to be of a watery origination, exactly as envisaged in the sixth-century *Acts of Thaddaeus* account [which explains the creation of the Image as by Jesus washing himself].⁵⁰⁰

But “if the Shroud and the Image of Edessa are identical, why”, the sceptic will ask, “did that not become obvious to its owners and to the Orthodox world in general? It seems implausible to suppose that the Image was never taken out of its container and opened up to reveal that it was in fact a fourteen-foot burial shroud.”

However, there *is* evidence that the secret of the hidden Shroud did in fact become known, if not to everyone (for reasons we will discuss shortly), at any rate to some. Thus in the *Life of St. Columba* by St. Adamnan of Iona, we read that in the 680s Bishop Arculf of Perigueux was shipwrecked off the Scottish island of Iona and told the abbot, St. Adomnan, that while on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he had seen “the *sudarium* of our Lord which was placed over his head in the tomb”. He said that the relic had just come to Jerusalem, which is quite possible, since in 679 there had been an earthquake in Edessa that damaged the cathedral of Hagia Sophia in which the Image was stored, which may have necessitated its temporary removal during rebuilding. Although Bishop Arculf does not seem to have seen the *sudarium* (another word for the Shroud, used in St. John’s Gospel) unfolded, he was evidently told a different story about its origins by the Image’s keepers – not that it was formed through Christ washing His face in it, but that it was the Burial Shroud of Christ that was placed over His head in the tomb...

That is not all. On August 16, 944, during the reign of Emperor Romanos Lecapenus, the Holy Mandyllion was transferred from Edessa to Constantinople and placed in the Pharos chapel amidst great ceremonial. This event is the origin of the feast of the Holy Mandyllion that is in the Orthodox Menaion for August 16. “Amid so much ceremony and self-evident excitement it is difficult to determine when and where, if at any point at all, anyone meaningfully saw the Image removed from its casket in a way that could enable proper study. Nevertheless, that this actually happened is confirmed by an independent contemporary account, not part of the *Story of the Image of Edessa*. According to this, ‘A few days beforehand, when they [the imperial party] were all looking at the marvellous features of the Son of God on the holy imprint, the Emperor’s sons [i.e. Stephen and Constantine] declared that they could see only the face, while Constantine his son-in-law said he could see the eyes and the ears.

“Given the extraordinary efforts that had been made to obtain the Image, several historians have expressed puzzlement that it should have appeared so indistinct to the few who were allowed to view it directly. As the eminent Cambridge historian Sir

⁵⁰⁰ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

Steven Runciman remarked, 'It is possible that the young Lecapeni [i.e. Emperor Romanos's two sons Stephen and Constantine] were drunk, though in that case it is curious that Constantine [i.e. the rightful emperor], who was notoriously fond of stimulants, should have missed the opportunity for drinking too.'

"If the Image of Edessa was genuinely one and the same object as today's Shroud of Turin, no such explanation is of course necessary. The Shroud's watery-looking impression and its uncertainty of detail would readily explain Romanos's sons' perception difficulties. Although we might question how Constantine Porphyrogennetos, even with his strong artistic interests, saw 'eyes' on the imprint, this perception corresponded to the then universal idea that the Image had been created by Jesus in life. The idea was notably shared by several of the artist copyists of the Shroud during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, despite their full awareness - almost certainly not yet shared by Constantine - that they were looking at the imprint of a dead body. It is almost entirely thanks to the discovery of the photographic negative that we know the eyes to have been closed in death."⁵⁰¹

Constantine Porphyrogennetos succeeded to the throne of Byzantium, and immediately proceeded to produce a new series of gold solidus coins that exhibit a remarkable change from their predecessors: "nothing other than what appears to have been a deliberate attempt to reproduce in the Christ face features quite uncannily close to the exact imprint that appears on the Turin Shroud.

"This characteristic, which first occurred less than a year after the Image of Edessa's arrival in Constantinople, was actually noted over twenty years ago by a Hungarian-born Oxford scholar with a very strong interest in Byzantine coins, Dr Eugene Csocsán de Várallja. As Csocsán de Várallja remarked of Constantine Porphyrogennetos's coin issues, 'Just following the arrival of the Edessa [Image in]... 944... a completely new image of Christ appeared on the bezants. On these coins Christ's nose became as elongated as on the Shroud, the angle of his eyebrows changed to match the Shroud eyebrows, and the slightly differing angle of each moustache seems to mirror that on the Shroud. In addition the Christ image took on just as impressionistic a character as on the Shroud.'

"Two decades on there is one further feature that can be added to these observations: the very distinctive mark running down from the hairline to immediately above Christ's (spectator's) right eyebrow, just to the right of the nose. It appears too deliberate to be some random blemish, and is in fact repeated on later coins. On the Shroud, in this identical location is the reverse '3'-shaped blood flow that runs from hairline to eyebrow."⁵⁰²

The official story of how the Image came into being, the *Story of the Image of Edessa*, does not change after its transfer to Constantinople. However, the *Story's* author, considering that "it would not be at all strange if confusion has arisen in the story over such a long time", puts forward two versions of the story. The first is that Christ, in

⁵⁰¹ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

⁵⁰² Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

response to King Abgar's request, washed His face in the cloth. The second version is that during His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ "took this piece of cloth, which can still be seen, from one of His disciples, and wiped off the streams of sweat on it". Nevertheless, in spite of this uncertainty about how and when the Image was formed, in both versions it is said that Christ's *face* was imprinted on the cloth, with no mention of the whole body, as we see on the Shroud.⁵⁰³

"Yet not very long after 945," continues Wilson, "some subtle hints begin to emerge that all about the Image may not have been quite as plain and above-board as many had assumed. As noted by Marc Guscini during his extensive browsing among the early manuscripts preserved in the monasteries at Mount Athos, in several of the Synaxarion manuscripts, at the very beginning of the entry for 16 August – that is, the celebration of the Feast of the Image of Edessa – there occurs the following verse:

In life you exuded your likeness on to a *sindon*.
In death you entered the final *sindon*.

"Although this did not exactly seem much to go on, Guscini also noticed in some of these same Mount Athos manuscripts a change in the request of King Abgar. He was represented as instructing his messenger to bring back to him details not only of Jesus's face and hair, but also of his 'whole bodily appearance'. As further noticed by Guscini, a late tenth- or eleventh-century manuscript of the sixth-century *Acts of Thaddaeus*, one of only two of this composition to have arrived to our time, differs from its partner in precisely this same piece of information, merely using different Greek words for this purpose.

"Supplementing and expanding on this, back in the early 1990s Rome-based scholar Gino Zaninotto had brought to attention a manuscript preserved at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, the Codex Vossianus, in which Jesus, in his letter to Abgar, was represented as saying, quite illogically but reflecting a changed understanding that the image was of the full body, not just the face, 'If you really want to see what my face looks like, I am sending you this linen cloth, on which you will be able to see not only the form of my face *but the divinely transformed state of my whole body* [my italics]. When you have seen it you will be able to soothe your burning desire. May you fare well for all time in the wisdom of my Father.'

"Because of its Carolingian-style handwriting, the Vossianus manuscript cannot date much later than the end of the tenth century. Furthermore, little more than a century later it finds support from another Latin source, the *History of the Church* written by English monk Ordericus Vitalis in 1130, in which Ordericus recorded that 'Abgar the ruler reigned at Edessa, the Lord Jesus sent him a sacred letter and a beautiful linen cloth he had wiped the sweat from his face with. The image of the Saviour was miraculously imprinted on to it and shines out, *displaying the form and size of the Lord's body* [my italics] to all who look on it.'"⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁵⁰⁴ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177.

We know from the words of a visitor to Constantinople in about 1090 that “when all the other palace relics are shown to the faithful at certain times, this linen cloth on which the face of our redeemer is depicted is not shown to anyone and is not opened up for anyone except the emperor of Constantinople” and visiting royal dignitaries.⁵⁰⁵ Could it be that this measure was elicited, not only by the exceptional holiness of the relic, but also because the palace wished to conceal something about it – that it was not all that it seemed to be, but was in fact a full-length Image of the whole of Christ’s body in death, back and front? Perhaps revealing the full truth might have caused scandal in the highly conservative society of Byzantium...

Be that as it may, Professor Kurt Weizmann has shown that “from the eleventh century on what had been a mummy-style mode of depicting Jesus’s entombment gradually gave way to a new concept of how Jesus was buried. The Byzantine Greeks called this new mode the *Threnos*, or Lamentation, its main feature being that Jesus is wrapped in a large cloth readily comparable with today’s Turin Shroud.”⁵⁰⁶ These representations often contain other details consistent with very close copying of the Image on the Shroud: the double body length cloth, the hands crossed over the loins with only four fingers and no thumb visible, and the reverse ‘3’-shaped stain of the forehead of Christ.⁵⁰⁷

But then something unexpected happens. In 1125 an English pilgrim reports the presence in Constantinople of *both* the Image of Edessa (“the holy handcloth”) *and* the Shroud (“the linen cloth and *sudarium* of the entombment”). And this *duality* of relics is again reported by an Icelandic abbot, Nicholas Soemundarson, in 1157.⁵⁰⁸

Our explanation of this duality is as follows. By the twelfth century, rumours of the existence of the full-body-length Shroud had leaked out and could no longer be denied – as we have seen, it is openly admitted by Nicholas Mesarites, keeper of the Pharos chapel, just before the Fourth Crusade. But that this was the same object as the Image of Edessa could not be admitted: it would confuse and scandalize the faithful. So it was said that there were two objects, one of which, the Image, disappeared after 1204, leaving only the Shroud...

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Whether or not we finally accept Wilson’s hypothesis, the facts he assembles do seem to put paid to the theory that the Shroud is a late medieval fake, an idea that was in any case incredible. At a minimum the Shroud must be six hundred years older than the carbon-14 dating, as is indicated by several facts: that the lignin of the Shroud has lost almost all its vanillin, which is inconsistent with a medieval date⁵⁰⁹; that the weave appears to date from the first century; that the image must have imprinted in some way from the real corpse of a crucified man, although crucifixion was not practised in the Mediterranean world after the fourth century.

⁵⁰⁵ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁵⁰⁶ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁵⁰⁷ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-184.

⁵⁰⁸ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 184.

⁵⁰⁹ De Wesselow, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

Mark Guscini, in his work on the Oviato sudarium, another relic dating to the seventh century which has been believed to have had contact with the face of Christ, has reduced the forgery hypothesis to absurdity, writing: "Let us suppose for a while that the results obtained from the carbon dating of both the sudarium and the Shroud are accurate, and neither cloth ever touched the body of Jesus. In that case, the following story would have to be true. Sometime in the seventh century, in Palestine, after reading the Gospel of John, a well-known forger of religious relics saw the opportunity of putting a new product on the market - a cloth that had been over the face of the dead body of Jesus.

"This forger was also an expert in medicine, who knew that a crucified person died from asphyxiation, and that when this happened, special liquids fill the lungs of the dead body, and can come out through the nose if the body is moved.

"The only way he could get this effect on the cloth was by re-enacting the process, so this is exactly what he did. He crucified a volunteer, eliminating those candidates who did not fulfil the right conditions - swollen nose and cheeks, forked beard to stain the cloth, etc. When the body was taken down from the cross, he shook it around a bit with the help of a few friends, holding the folded cloth to the dead volunteer's nose so that future generations would be able to see the outline of his fingers.

"He even stuck a few thorns in the back of the dead man's neck, knowing that relic hunters would be looking for the bloodstains from the crown of thorns.

"Being an eloquent man, he convinced people that this otherwise worthless piece of cloth was stained with nothing less than the blood and pleural liquid of Christ, and so it was guarded in Jerusalem with other relics, and considered so genuine and spiritually valuable that it was worth saving first from the invading Persians and later from the Arabs.

"A few hundred years later, some time between 1260 and 1390, another professional forger, a specialist in religious relics too, decided that the time was ripe for something new, something really convincing. There were numerous relics from various saints in circulation all round Europe, bones, skulls, capes, but no, he wanted something really original. Various possibilities ran through his mind, the crown of thorns, the nails from the crucifixion, the table cloth from the last supper, and then suddenly he had it - the funeral shroud of Jesus! And not only that, but he would also put an image on the Shroud, the image of the man whom the Shroud had wrapped!

"The first step was difficult. Being an expert in textile weaves, (one of his many specialities, the others being pollen, Middle East blood groups, numismatics of the years of Tiberius, photography, Roman whips, and electronic microscopes) he needed linen of a special kind, typical of the Middle East in the first century.

"Once this had been specially ordered and made, he folded it up before starting his work, as a neighbour had suggested that such a cloth would have been folded up and

hidden in a wall in Edessa for a few hundred years, so the image would be discontinuous on some of the fold marks.

"Leaving the cloth folded up, he travelled to Oviedo in the north of Spain, where he knew that a forerunner in his trade had left a cloth with Jesus' blood stains.

"On obtaining permission to analyse the sudarium, he first checked the blood group - AB of course, common in the Middle East and relatively scarce in Europe - then made an exact plan of the blood stains (carefully omitting those which would have already clotted when the sudarium was used) so that his stains would coincide exactly.

"After his trip to Oviedo, he went on a tour of what is now Turkey, forming a composite portrait of Jesus from all the icons, coins and images he could find. After all, he needed people to think that his Shroud had been around for over a thousand years, and that artists had used it as their inspiration for painting Christ. He didn't really understand what some of the marks were, the square box between the eyes, the line across the throat, but he thought he'd better put them on anyway. He didn't want to be accused of negligence, because he was an internationally famous forger and had a reputation to maintain.

"Once he was back home, he somehow obtained some blood (AB, naturally) and decided to begin his work of art with the blood stains, before even making the body image.

"Unfortunately, he miscalculated the proportions, and the nail stains appeared on the wrist instead of on the palms of the hands, where everyone in the fourteenth century knew that they had been. 'Well', he thought, 'it's just a question of a few inches, nobody will notice.'

"Now, even the omniscient author is forbidden to enter in the secret room where the forger 'paints' the image of Christ, a perfect three dimensional negative, without paint or direction. His method was so secret that it went to the tomb with him.

"After a few hours, he opened the door, and called his wife, who was busy preparing dinner in the kitchen. 'What do you think?' 'Not bad. But you've forgotten the thumbs.' 'No, I haven't. Don't you know that if a nail destroys the nerves in the wrist, the thumbs bend in towards the palm of the hand, so you wouldn't be able to see them?'

"'But didn't the nails go through the palms?' 'Well, yes, but I put the blood on first, and didn't quite get the distance right'

"'Oh, in that case ... and what about the pollen?' 'What pollen?' 'Well, if this Shroud has been in Palestine, Edessa, and let's suppose it's been in Constantinople too, it's going to need pollen from all those places.' Our forger loved the idea, got the pollen

from all the places his wife had indicated, and delicately put it all over his Shroud.⁵¹⁰

“And then, the final touch. Two coins from the time of Christ, minted under the emperor Tiberius, to put over the man's eyes. Our man had a sense of humour too - he decided that the coins would be included in the image in such a way that they would only be visible under an electronic microscope.⁵¹¹

“Such a story, even without the embellishments, is more incredible than the Shroud's authenticity.”⁵¹²

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Perhaps no object in history has been the subject of such intense scientific examination, aesthetic wonder and religious awe as the Shroud of Turin. As such, if it is indeed the authentic burial shroud of Christ, as we believe, it is also important as demonstrating *the essential unity of all knowledge, scientific, artistic and religious* in the Person of Jesus Christ, crucified, buried and risen from the dead. Although truth and beauty are instinctively felt to be at one with goodness, this holy trinity of values has tended to be blown apart by unbelieving science and meretricious art, enabling the latter to be used by the devil against the only good, which is God. Thus the Shroud restores the original unity of the world! Through it, that is, “through the flesh, as in a glass, [God] has shone upon the world, descending even unto hell”⁵¹³, that is, the blind hearts of unbelieving scientists who cannot see beyond the ends of their noses (or microscopes). Through it He has “changed the beauty of created things”⁵¹⁴, making sensual aesthetes ascend from carnal charms to the eternal Beauty not subject to change or corruption. The Shroud of Turin is the Image not-made-by-hands, by which that other image not-made-by-hands, mankind, can see beyond the Humanity of the Image to the Divinity of the Archetype, the Lord Jesus Christ.

October 27 / November 9, 2013; revised October 23 / November 5, 2014.

23. THE LIVING TEMPLE OF GOD

The mystery of Christianity is the mystery of God's indwelling in us – “the Kingdom of God is within you”. All religions express the desire for union with God, or that which is thought to be God, to a greater or lesser extent. But only in Christ is the mystery of union with the True God achieved in fact.

In order to prepare mankind for the reception of this mystery, God instituted the symbolism of the Temple, the dwelling-place of God. First, this temple was a simple tabernacle, or box, called the ark of the covenant, which was carried by the Levites,

⁵¹⁰ In the 1970s a Swiss botanist discovered traces of pollen on the Shroud which could only have come from the Middle East, including Israel. (V.M.)

⁵¹¹ X rays of the Shroud revealed the presence of two coins dating from the time of Tiberius on the eyes of the Lord. (V.M.)

⁵¹² Guscini, M., *The Oviedo Cloth*, Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1998, pp.84-88.

⁵¹³ *Octoechos*, Tone 5, Saturday Vespers, “Lord, I have cried”, troparion.

⁵¹⁴ *Octoechos*, Tone 2, Saturday Vespers, Apostikha, troparion.

the priestly tribe of the Old Testament, wherever the people of God went. Under King David a permanent dwelling for the ark was found in Jerusalem. Then under King Solomon a Temple was built and the ark was transferred into the Holy of Holies. But the Temple was destroyed, and the ark disappeared...

During the period of the First Temple, it was forbidden for the Jews to worship or sacrifice anywhere except in the Temple in Jerusalem. This was to teach us that there is no true worship except in the true Temple of God, which is Christ, the only mediator between God and man. After the death of King Solomon, there was a rebellion against his son Rehoboam by ten of the twelve tribes under Jeroboam, who erected rival places of worship in Bethel and Dan. A man of God from Judah came to Bethel and cursed the altar there (III Kings 13). Bethel and Dan and the later cultic centre of Samaria were all considered to be unholy by the people of God, as having been set up in schism from the One True Church centred in Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit descended visibly onto the tabernacle in the time of Moses, and onto the Holy of Holies in the time of Solomon (III Kings 8.10-11). But we do not read of any such descent when the Second Temple was built, after the return of the Jews from their 70-year exile in Babylon. The reason for this was that the Second Temple, according to the plan of God, was to be sanctified in a different way – by the entrance into it of the Mother of God. As the kontakion for the feast of the Entrance says, “on this day she is brought into the House of the Lord, bringing with her the grace that is in the Holy Spirit.” “The pure ewe-lamb of God, the undefiled turtle-dove, the tabernacle containing God, the sanctuary of glory, hath chosen to dwell within the holy tabernacle” (Mattins canon, ode 3).

Of course, not only the Mother of God, but Christ Himself entered the Second Temple, sanctifying it by His presence. That is why the Prophet Haggai said of the Second Temple: “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord” (Haggai 2.9). Indeed, Christ Himself is the Temple of God. For “in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2.9). As He said Himself, speaking of His Body: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2.19).

So the Body of Christ is the Temple, housing His Divinity. And the Mother of God is the Temple, housing Christ. And the Second Temple is the Temple that housed the Mother of God after her Entry.

Finally, each Christian who receives in himself the Body and Blood of Christ becomes thereby a living temple of God. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you?” (I Corinthians 6.19)... St. Seraphim had his famous conversation with Motovilov on the acquisition of the Holy Spirit during the feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple. This could hardly have been a coincidence. The aim of the Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit and become temples of God in imitation of the Mother of God, preserving that temple undefiled until the Coming of the Lord.

November 21 / December 4, 2013.

Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple.

24. EVOLUTION AND THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

The Holy Apostle Peter says that no Holy Scripture can be interpreted privately, but only in accordance with the public interpretation of the Holy Church (II Peter 1.4). The question then arises: where are we to find the Church's interpretation of Scripture? And the answer is: in Holy Tradition, which encompasses the writings of the Holy Fathers, the dogmatic and canonical definitions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils, the iconography of the Church, and especially the Church's liturgical services.

From the point of view of Scriptural interpretation, two of the most important liturgical services of the Church are those for the two Sundays just before Christmas – the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, and the Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ. These teach us three important dogmatic truths: first, that there was a “Church of the Gentiles” before that of the Jews; secondly, that Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and all the early patriarchs were real historical figures; and thirdly, that the origins of the human race go back some thousands, but certainly not millions of years. This witness of the Church's liturgical tradition to the traditional Orthodox understanding of human origins is particularly important for us in view of the contemporary attack on it posed by the atheist theory of evolution and its supposedly Christian variety, “theological evolutionism”.

It is usually agreed, even by sceptics, that Abraham was a historical figure. It is a different matter with Noah and the earlier patriarchs. However, the genealogy of Christ in the Gospel of Luke traces an uninterrupted line back from Abraham to Noah a few generations before, and from him back to Adam; the Lord Himself refers to Noah, as does the Apostle Peter; while Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Seth and Enoch are mentioned by the Lord and the Apostles John, Paul and Jude. There can be no doubt that these early patriarchs were real, living people for the holy apostles and for Him Who is Truth incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone who believes, following “science falsely so-called” (I Timothy 6.20), that the Lord somehow “got it wrong”, or was ignorant of what Darwin and our clever modern scientists know, evidently does not believe that He is *God Himself*, “in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2.3).

The Orthodox Church has been slow to condemn the heresy of evolutionism. This is not because the saints have failed to say anything. On the contrary: already in the nineteenth century such saints as Nectarios of Aegina and Barsanuphius of Optina condemned Darwin's teaching in no uncertain terms. More recently, Fr. Seraphim Rose has brilliantly exposed how it contradicts the teaching of the Holy Fathers. But to the knowledge of the present writer, no Council of Orthodox Fathers has yet condemned evolutionism – although it is condemned by implication (under the anathema against belief in chance) in the liturgical service for the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

We can speculate about the reason for this surprising gap in the Church's armoury against heresy. Perhaps there has simply not been time to fill it, in view of more pressing concerns about other heresies such as ecumenism and sergianism. Perhaps

the twentieth-century hierarchs have modestly felt themselves to be not competent to discuss the matter in view of their lack of education in biological science – although, as we shall see, the heresy can and should be refuted on purely theological grounds. Perhaps they have sensed that very many laypeople, and even priests, actually believe in the heresy, and therefore any attempt to condemn it in a conciliar manner would open up a Pandora’s box of controversy and perhaps create a schism in the Church. Finally, the present writer has heard the following argument: that to condemn evolutionism would be place ourselves into the camp of the creationist scientists and thereby taint ourselves with Protestantism, because these scientists are Protestants.

Let us look more closely at this last argument...

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The first point that needs to be made is that there is no such thing as Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant science. There is only true science and false science (or “half-science”, as Dostoyevsky calls it) – that is, science that follows empirical method, not rejecting relevant data and not straying beyond the bounds of verifiability, and false science which errs against one or the other of these criteria. Darwinian science is false science according to both criteria, because it both ignores a vast amount of data that contradicts its theories, and makes unverifiable hypotheses about in principle unobservable things – such as the creation of the world. This has been pointed out by scientists and philosophers of all religious persuasions and none. Most creationist scientists are Protestants, true; but there are plenty who are Catholic, Orthodox, agnostic and atheist. Creationist science stands or falls on whether it satisfies purely scientific criteria, not on the private religious beliefs of the scientists themselves. Newton was also a Protestant, albeit an extremely unorthodox one who did not believe in the Holy Trinity; but nobody would reject his scientific achievement on those grounds...

Secondly, even saints have not scorned to use “heterodox” science for apologetic purposes. Thus St. Nektary said to one of his disciples: "Once a man came to me who simply couldn't believe that there had been a flood. Then I told him that on very high mountains in the sand are found shells and other remains from the ocean floor, and how geology testifies to the flood, and he came to believe. You see how necessary learning is at times."⁵¹⁵

“Geology testifies to the flood...” Yes, but in our day, when so many “scoffers”, as St. Peter described them, have appeared on the summits of educational power, we would have to qualify this as follows: “Creationist geology testifies to the flood, but evolutionist geology rejects this testimony. For in order to promote its own theory that the order in which the fossils have been laid down testifies to evolution, it rejects the vast mass of data testifying to the flood, including the fact, cited here by St. Nektary, that fossils have been found on the tops of mountains. Creationist science, however, convincingly explains the order in which the fossils are laid down as what we would expect as the result of a universal flood.

⁵¹⁵ *Zhitia Prepodobnykh Startsev Optinoj Pustyni*, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1992.

Thirdly, creationist science should not be treated as gospel, because, like all science, it is the product of fallen minds. However, it has this enormous advantage over evolutionist science, that in addition to taking account of many, many mundane facts that the evolutionists ignore, it is consistent with the facts adduced by Divine Revelation. Such, for example, is Vance Ferrell's vast compendium of creationist science, *Science vs. Evolution*, whose details almost certainly will have to be corrected or supplemented in the course of time, but whose general line of argument, being consistent with the Word of God, is likely to remain without need of serious correction.

If we believe in Divine Revelation, we cannot treat the facts it adduces as irrelevant to science. If Christ God, the Truth incarnate, says that Noah and the ark existed (Matthew 24.38), then they existed. If St. Peter says that the whole world was engulfed by water (II Peter 3.6), then there was a universal flood. And if this means that the whole science of human origins and the origins of the universe will have to be rewritten, then so be it. Fortunately, there are already thousands of scientists in the United States alone who reject evolutionism, and are quite prepared to take on this huge task of scientific *perestroika*, even at the cost of being no longer deemed to be card-carrying "real" scientists... If we confess the truth of the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition, then we stand within the Holy Church upon the rock of truth without being in any danger of being crushed by it. If, on the other hand, we are ashamed to confess that truth, or try and combine the truth with a lie, like the 'theological evolutionists', then we shall find ourselves not on, but under the rock, and shall be crushed by it (Matthew 21.44).

One of the reasons why so many Orthodox believe in evolution in spite of the fact that it contradicts both Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition is a kind of intellectual vanity, a fear of being seen to be an uneducated hillbilly. Related to this is the fear of being labeled "fundamentalist" - the fear, once again, of Protestant contamination. However, it is important to realize that when it comes to Scriptural "fundamentalism", some of the most famous and highly educated of the Holy Fathers must be categorized as "fundamentalists". Thus St. Basil the Great writes: "Plainly it is a falling away from faith and an offence chargeable to pride, either to reject anything that is in Scripture, or to introduce anything that is not in Scripture".⁵¹⁶ Again, St. Gregory the Theologian writes: "We who extend the accuracy of the Spirit to every letter and serif [of Scripture] will never admit, for it were impious to do so, that even the smallest matters were recorded in a careless and hasty manner by those who wrote them down."⁵¹⁷

The usual method employed by "theological evolutionists" who want to reconcile evolution and Divine Revelation is allegory. But while allegory has an honoured place in Biblical interpretation, it operates within strict limits of unallegorized, stubborn, hard, historical fact. Once those limits have been breached, - and they have been breached in quite fantastical ways in the interpretation of the early chapters of

⁵¹⁶ St. Basil, *On the Faith*, P.G. 31, col. 677.

⁵¹⁷ St. Gregory, *In Defence of his Flight to Pontus*, 2, 105.

Genesis, - then not only does allegory cease to be a credible tool of Biblical interpretation: faith in Divine Revelation is fatally undermined. And so every honest, consistent thinker will agree with Ferrell that “when it is accepted, evolutionary theory eliminates belief in Genesis 1 to 11.”⁵¹⁸ More than that, it eliminates belief in Christ as the Truth; for, as we have seen, it implies that Darwin knew better than Christ what really happened at the creation of the world...

Instead of trying to reinterpret or allegorize the Word of God in order to make it conform to godless science, we should heed the words of St. Basil the Great in his commentary on Genesis 1: “I know the laws of allegory, though less by myself than from the works of others. There are those truly who do not admit the common sense of the Scriptures, for whom water is not water, but some other nature, who see in a plant, in a fish, what their fancy wishes, who change the nature of reptiles and of wild beasts to suit their allegories, like the interpreters of dreams who explain visions in sleep to make them serve their own ends. For me grass is grass; plant, fish, wild beast, domestic animal, I take all in a literal sense. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel... Shall I then prefer foolish wisdom to the oracles of the Holy Spirit? Shall I not rather exalt Him Who, not wishing to fill our minds with these vanities, has regulated all the economy of Scripture in view of the edification and the making perfect of our souls? It is this that those seem to me not to have understood, who, giving themselves up to the distorted meaning of allegory, have undertaken to give a majesty of their own invention to Scripture. It is to believe themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and to bring forth their own ideas under a pretext of exegesis. Let us hear Scripture as it has been written...”⁵¹⁹

Nor should we worry that if we “hear Scripture as it has been written” without giving ourselves up “to the distorted meaning of allegory”, we shall find ourselves living a kind of schizophrenic existence, believing Scripture in one half of our lives and science in the other. For, as Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: “Even though revealed knowledge is higher than natural knowledge, still we know that there can be no conflict between *true* revelation and *true* natural knowledge. But there *can* be conflict between revelation and *human philosophy*, which is often in error. There is thus no conflict between the knowledge of creation contained in Genesis, as interpreted for us by the Holy Fathers, and the *true* knowledge of creatures which modern science has acquired by observation; but there most certainly is an irreconcilable conflict between the knowledge contained in Genesis and the *vain philosophical speculation of modern scientists, unenlightened by faith, about the state of the world in the Six Days of Creation.*”⁵²⁰

A more sophisticated attempt at “theological evolutionism” is provided by the famous new calendarist heretic, Fr. John Romanides. He argues, astoundingly, that *the Holy Scriptures are not the Word of God, but only words about God*. The true Word of God is only that which is heard in the wordless ecstasy of deification, theosis; the words of Scripture are created, and therefore at one remove from the uncreated and true Word of God.

⁵¹⁸ Ferrell, *Evolution vs. Science*, Altamont, TN: Evolution Facts, 2006, p. 984.

⁵¹⁹ St. Basil the Great, *Homily 9 on the Hexaemeron*.

⁵²⁰ Rose, “The Orthodox Patristic Understanding of Genesis”, ch. 5, *The Orthodox Word*, no. 171, 1993.

Romanides continues: "Today Protestants and Roman Catholics are under the impression that *God* gave Holy Scripture to the Church. This idea has so greatly influenced modern Orthodox thought that the Orthodox even agree with Protestants and Roman Catholics on this point...

"But now the Orthodox Church has to face a certain paradox. When you read the Old Testament, the New Testament, and even writings from Tradition, you will run across opinions that science proved to be false at least 150 years ago, especially on account of the breakthroughs in research made in the exact sciences. Naturally, this creates a serious problem for someone who does not fully grasp what the Fathers mean when they speak about divine inspiration. This problem mainly applies to the study of the Bible."⁵²¹

So the Bible is not the Word of God, according to Romanides, because it is contradicted by certain supposed findings of science...

What are these sciences that we can trust, supposedly, more than the Holy Scriptures? First of all, palaeontology. "For we now know that there exist human bones which are proved to have existed for three and a half million years..."⁵²²

A detailed refutation of Romanides is pointless. On the one hand, he believes that the Word of God in Scripture is not the infallible, God-inspired Word of God but created and fallible words – which contradicts the teaching of SS. Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, as we have seen above. On the other hand, he *is* prepared to give the status of infallibility to scientific theories that last for a generation or two and are then cast out into the dustbin of history... As for his idea that only those in a state of deification can speak the Word of God, it should be pointed out that, according to the Holy Fathers, Moses was in precisely such a state when given the words of Genesis. Not in vain is he called "prophet and God-seer" by the Orthodox Church.

The third of the three holy hierarchs, St. John Chrysostom, confirms this. As Fr. Seraphim writes: "St. John Chrysostom in his *Homilies on Genesis* comes back again and again to the statement that every word of the Scripture is Divinely inspired and has a profound meaning - that it is not Moses' words, but God's: 'Let us see now what we are taught by the blessed Moses, who speaks not of himself but by the inspiration of the grace of the Spirit.'

"He then has a fascinating description of how Moses does this. We know that the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. In the Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), St. John the Theologian prophesied about the events of the end of the world and the future of the Church. How did they know what was going to happen? Obviously, God revealed it to them. St. John Chrysostom says that, just as

⁵²¹ Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, The Dalles, Oregon: Uncut Mountain Press, 2008, p. 111.

⁵²² Romanides, in Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos), *Empeiriki Dogmatiki tis Orthodoxou Katholikes Ekklesias kata tis Proforikes Paradoxeis tou p. Ioannou Romanidi* (The Empirical Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church according to the Oral Traditions of Fr. John Romanides), Levadeia: Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos, 2011, volume 1, p. 294.

St. John the Theologian was a prophet of things of the future, Moses was a prophet of things of the past. He says the following: 'All the other prophets spoke either of what was to occur after a long time or of what was about to happen then; but he, the blessed (Moses), who lived many generations after (the creation of the world), was vouchsafed by the guidance of the right hand of the Most High to utter what had been done by the Lord before his own birth. It is for this reason that he begins to speak thus: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," as if calling out to us all with a loud voice: it is not by the instruction of men that I say this; He Who called them (heaven and earth) out of non-being into being - it is He Who has roused my tongue to relate of them. And therefore I entreat you, let us pay heed to these words as if we heard not Moses but the very Lord of the universe Who speaks through the tongue of Moses, and let us take leave for good of our own opinions.'

"Thus, we should approach the early chapters of Genesis as we would a book of prophecy, knowing that it is actual events being described, but knowing also that - because of their remoteness to us and because of their very nature as the very first events in the history of the world - we will be able to understand them only imperfectly, even as we have a very imperfect understanding of the events at the very end of the world as set forth in the Apocalypse and other New Testament Scriptures. St. John Chrysostom himself warns us not to think we understand too much about the creation: 'With great gratitude let us accept what is related (by Moses), not stepping out of our own limitations, and not testing what is above us as the enemies of the truth did when, wishing to comprehend everything with their minds, they did not realize that human nature cannot comprehend the creation of God.'

"Let us then try to enter the world of the Holy Fathers and their understanding of the Divinely inspired text of Genesis. Let us love and respect their writings, which in our confused times are a beacon of clarity which shines most clearly on the inspired text itself. Let us not be quick to think we 'know better' than they, and if we think we have some understanding they did not see, let us be humble and hesitant about offering it, knowing the poverty and fallibility of our own minds..."⁵²³

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Finally, let us look at some quotations from the services to the Holy Forefathers and Ancestors of Christ, that they may seal in us the Church's true interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis:-

"Let us honour the first Adam, who was honored by the hand of the Creator, and who is the forefather of us all and resteth with all the elect in the mansions of heaven".

"Let us bless Enoch with sacred utterances, for, having been well-pleasing unto the Lord, he was translated in glory, being shown to be greater than death, as it hath been written, since he had been a most earnest servant of God."

⁵²³ Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, <http://startingontheroyalpath.blogspot.com/2009/09/genesis-creation-and-early-man.html>.

“With hymns let us piously bless Noah, who preserved the Law of God intact; who alone among all his generation, was found to be righteous, and of old saved the species of the animals with an ark of gopher wood at the command of Him that accomplisheth all things.”

“Rejoicing today, Adam is adorned with the glory of divine communion, as the foundation and confirmation of the wise forefathers, and with him Abel doth leap for joy and Enoch is glad, and Seth danceth together with Noah; the all-praised Abraham doth chant with the patriarchs, and from on high Melchizedek doth behold a birth wherein a father had no part. Wherefore, celebrating the divine memory of the forefathers of Christ, we beseech Him that our souls be saved.”

*December 17/30, 2013.
Holy Prophet Daniel.*

25. ON FAITH AND WORKS

The Orthodox teaching on faith and works is simple and clear. At the same time it contains hidden subtleties and depths which it may be profitable for us to explore... In essence, the teaching is as follows. Faith is the very beginning of all good things, and the very condition of all that is truly good. For "what is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14.23). However, "faith by itself, without works, is dead" (James 2.17). "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for *good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2.10). Without works, faith does not *work* (for salvation). It does not show itself for what it is, the all-powerful mover of mountains, both physical and spiritual. Rather, it shows itself to be pitifully powerless. For, as St. Savva of Serbia said: "Neither can our striving to live a good life without the right faith in God be of any avail to us, nor can the right faith without good works make us worthy of seeing the face of the Lord. So let them go together in order to make us perfect without any blemish. Faith can save us only if it is united with and expressed in good works, inspired by the love of God."

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Now let us look a little more closely at this teaching...

"What shall we do," asked the people of Christ, "that we may work the works of God?" And Christ answered them: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He sent" (John 6.28-29). But this is puzzling. Is there, then, no difference between faith and works? If faith is "the work of God", then is it sufficient only to believe, as the Protestants claim?

However, the context shows that Christ was speaking to unbelievers. To them it was no use speaking of the good works that strengthen and manifest faith, because they did not have faith in the first place. Not only that: without faith it is impossible to understand what a good work is.

The word "faith" in the writings of the Evangelists, Apostles and Holy Fathers often denotes not only the mustard seed that is "faith alone" but also the tree that grows out of the seed, just as the word "tree" often signifies not only the wood of the trunk and branches, but also the leaves and the flowers on the leaves.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

First, the Lord told the sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears and anointed them with myrrh: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7.50). Again, we may wonder: why does the Lord say that the woman's *faith* has saved her, when it is her active *work* of love that strikes us most (and annoys Simon the Pharisee)? The Lord Himself provided the answer a little earlier when He said: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much". So it is her work of love that has saved her; only it is seen as so inextricably linked with her faith in Him that it is called "faith".

Blessed Theophylact in his commentary on this passage makes the same linkage, almost equivalence, between faith and love: “Her sins are forgiven because she loved much, meaning, ‘because she showed great faith’.”⁵²⁴

It follows that faith without love cannot be the faith that saves. St. James makes the same point when he points out that “even the demons believe – and tremble” (James 2.19). The demons have a very strong belief in the existence and omnipotence of God – acquired, no doubt, through their brief sojourn in heaven and consequent expulsion from it. But this bare faith is without love: in fact, it is nourished, not by love, but by hatred. Therefore it is not “faith” in the sense used by the Lord in speaking to the sinful woman: it is not the faith that saves.

Let us now turn to our second example from the Gospel, that of the good thief on the cross. The good thief was saved by faith alone, without any works. For, as St. Ambrose of Milan writes, “Paradise received the thief in the same hour it received Christ. Faith alone won the thief this honour”.⁵²⁵

And yet there must be something special about this “faith alone” if it allowed the thief to be the very first man to enter Paradise. St. John Maximovich explains why it was so special: the thief believed that Christ was a King, moreover a King over a spiritual Kingdom beyond and above death – as he said, “Remember me, O Lord, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom” (Luke 23.42) – when He looked anything but a King, when it was most difficult, from a human point of view, to believe in Him as anything but the most wretched of mortals. To believe in Christ as King and as God at the very moment of His maximum humiliation, when He was not working miracles or risen from the dead, when even His closest disciples had deserted him and the whole world had rejected Him – that was truly a *podvig*, a spiritual feat of the highest quality.

But to speak of a feat is surely to speak of a *work*... Yes, the thief’s confession of faith in Christ the King was truly a good work, a quite exceptionally good work. But are we not then saying that the good thief *deserved* salvation as a *reward* for his exceptionally, astonishingly good work?

No, we do not receive salvation as a reward, as if we deserved it. For salvation is given gratis, for free, as a gift of *grace*. “By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing – it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2.9; cf. I Corinthians 12.9). “And again, O Saviour, save me by Thy grace, I pray Thee. For if Thou shouldst save me for my works, this would not be grace or a gift, but rather a duty.”⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St Luke*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1997, p. 81.

⁵²⁵ St. Ambrose, *On Luke*, 2.

⁵²⁶ Morning Prayers in the Russian *Horologion*, Prayer VIII.

But then why do we praise the thief? For whether we call his feat faith or works, the fact is that it is the product of God's grace, not of human effort, "lest any man should boast". But then, if it is all God's doing and God's gift, what is so exceptional or astonishing or praiseworthy about it?

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At this point we touch upon the mystery of the *synergy* between God and man, a mystery denied by the Protestant Reformers with catastrophic results for Western Christianity.

The first point that needs to be made is that faith has *degrees*. Since all knowledge of the truth is from God, it would be hard to deny that even the faith of the demons, the faith that makes them tremble, is given by God. But this faith serves only for their condemnation, since they do not develop it or act in accordance with it. It is a *minimal* faith, a last surviving relic from the demons' previous state of blessedness, which only serves to increase their spiritual torment in this life and in the age to come. For the torments of fallen men and angels in gehenna will be immeasurably increased by their consciousness - a consciousness that will not go away precisely because it is sustained by their undying faith in God - that they have unjustly and irreparably offended His Goodness.

At the other extreme, we have the faith of the greatest of the saints and martyrs. The supreme paradigm of this *maximal* faith described in the Scriptures is the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called', concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11.17-19).

Abraham's faith had several aspects that, taken together, increased its value a hundredfold. First, he lived at a time when the whole world, following the destruction of the Tower of Babel, was plunged in paganism. As far as we know, he did not have the support of a priesthood, or a large body of believers, but sustained his spiritual life through a direct, one-to-one relationship with God alone.

Secondly, he believed the promises God had made to him, that he would become the father of many nations, even when God told him to sacrifice his beloved son, without whom those promises could not be fulfilled. The temptation to disbelieve the promises as if they did not come from God, but were a product of his imagination, must have been enormous. Still greater must have been the temptation to reject God's command to kill his son as prelest'. After all, was not child-sacrifice the practice of the surrounding Canaanite nations, who sacrificed to the pagan gods of Baal, Ishtar and Moloch? Not only natural paternal affection, but also plain common-sense, must have conspired to tempt him to disobey.

But Abraham knew with absolute certainty that it was the one true God Who had spoken to him. He refused to put natural affection above the Love of God, or common-

sense above the Wisdom of God, or conventional morality above the Goodness of God. And if believing in God's promises while doing such violence to the heart and reasoning of the natural man meant that he was required also to believe in the resurrection from the dead, then so be it - Abraham was up to it!

Therefore Abraham's faith was truly maximal, conforming exactly to St. Symeon the Theologian's maximalist definition of faith as "readiness to die for Christ's sake, for His commandments, in the conviction that such death brings life."

Since faith can be minimal and maximal and every degree in between, it cannot be the all-or-nothing concept of the Reformers. We do not either have faith or not have it: we have it *to a certain degree*; it can be weaker or stronger. Our faith is invariably weaker than it can and should be, so we are obliged to pray with the Apostles: "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17.5).

The second point is that God does not give the gift of faith *arbitrarily*. This was another issue that tormented and divided the Reformers. For the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, in which "faith" was understood in the most restricted, almost minimalist sense that overlapped in no way with any of the "good works" that corrupt Catholicism had so discredited in the eyes of Protestants, seemed to imply that God distributed faith to some and not to others - and therefore salvation to some and not to others - *for no reason whatsoever*. For if good works are quite distinct from faith, and therefore irrelevant to salvation, it becomes meaningless - or rather, quite false - to make even such unremarkable statements as: "Abraham was given great faith because he was a good man", or "Judas was given little faith because he was a bad man". If Abraham was good, and Judas bad, this had nothing to do with the fact that the one was given great faith and the other little, nor with the fact that the one is now in Paradise (which is called "the bosom of Abraham" in his honour) and the other in hell. God just decided it that way, predestining the one to salvation and the other to damnation. And there was nothing either could have done to avoid their fate...

The terrifying arbitrariness of salvation and damnation in the Reformers' (especially Calvin's) theology of predestination, which followed logically from their doctrine of salvation by faith alone, was so repulsive to the moral sense of Western man that gradually, in the course of the last five centuries, it has evolved into *precisely the opposite* doctrine that we find so much in vogue today: that a man's faith is irrelevant to his salvation, that what is important is only his works, that all you need is "love" understood in the most superficial, sentimental and ecumenical way. Some old-fashioned, unecumenical Protestants still believe that we are saved by faith alone. But this "faith", too, is understood in such a superficial way - in one moment, perhaps during an evangelical meeting, without any kind of catechism, an unbeliever is transformed into a believer through a "baptism of the Spirit" and is therefore "saved" forever - as to make ecumenism almost plausible by contrast...

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Let us now try and reconstruct the doctrine of faith and works in an Orthodox manner, avoiding the pitfalls and extremes of Western theology.

Salvation is indeed a gift of God, a gift of grace. This gift is given, in the first place, in and through the correct, heart-felt belief in, and open confession of, *the Orthodox faith*. "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10.10). So the confession of faith that the catechumen makes just before his baptism is at the same time his first *work of faith* and his first step on the path to salvation. It is faith at work, faith that *works* for salvation.

The correct confession *works* for our salvation, and it is *necessary* for our salvation. But it is not *sufficient* for our salvation. If our works of faith consist only of the confession of the Orthodox faith, then we are by no means guaranteed salvation. For the demons believe and tremble – and could probably write much better treatises on the Nicene Creed than we! Even a correct dogmatic faith combined with a practical faith springing from dogmatic faith that is strong enough to move mountains is not sufficient for salvation. For St. Paul says: "though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have no love, I am nothing" (I Corinthians 13.2). But this gives us the clue to the kind and intensity of faith that *is* sufficient for salvation; it is "that faith which worketh through love" (Galatians 5.6).

The "faith which worketh through love" – that is the clue to a correct understanding of the doctrine of faith and works. True, it is faith alone that saves. But by "faith" is here meant the "faith that worketh through love". And the faith that worketh through love is manifested in *good works*. It is the faith that saves, not the works. But at the same time it is the presence of the works that demonstrates the presence of the faith.

That is why, according to the Holy Scriptures, we are judged in accordance with our *works*. "God shall bring every *work* into judgement, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12.14). "They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their *works*" (Titus 1.16). "I know your *works*: you have the name of being alive, but you are dead. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your *works* perfect in the sight of My God" (Revelation 3.1-2). "'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labours, for their *works* follow them.'" (Revelation 14.13). "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My reward, to repay everyone according to his *works*" (Revelation 22.12).

So we are saved by our faith, but we are judged by our works. We are saved by the faith that worketh through love, and we are judged according to the love (or lack thereof) that our works manifest. The sinful woman was saved by her faith, which was manifested in works of love towards Christ. The thief on the cross was also saved by faith, which was manifested in another work of love: in rebuking his fellow-thief for slandering Him, and in recognizing that, in contrast to himself and his fellow thief, Christ had done nothing worthy of His punishment. For "we indeed [suffer] justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23.41).

In addition to the good works that are the fruit of faith and the grace received in baptism, there are the “fruits worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3.8). This phrase was coined by St. John the Baptist when he saw the Pharisees coming to his baptism and rebuked them for their hypocrisy. For it was no use this “brood of vipers” coming to his “baptism of repentance” if they had no intention of repenting.

This concept provides us with the clue to understanding why God’s choice of who is to receive the grace of faith is not arbitrary. For there are those who act in such a way as to prepare the ground for faith, and those who do not. The Roman centurion whose servant Christ healed prepared the ground for faith – and in great measure, for the Lord had not found “such great faith, no, not in Israel” (Matthew 8.10) – by his helping the Jews to build a synagogue. Similarly, the Roman centurion Cornelius prepared the ground for receiving the preaching of the faith by St. Peter through his prayers and almsgiving, which were “remembered in the sight of God” (Acts 10.31). Even the Apostle Paul, whose persecution of the Christians before his conversion could hardly be called a work of repentance, nevertheless through his zeal for the truth, however mistakenly conceived, together with his profound repentance after the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus, prepared the ground for receiving enlightenment in Holy Baptism at the hands of the Apostle Ananias.

So we may speak about two kinds of good works: the “fruits worthy of repentance” that we accomplish *before* baptism and full enlightenment in the faith, and those good works that we accomplish *after* baptism, which are the fruit precisely of that faith. The good works accomplished before faith are like the farmer’s ploughing of his field in preparation for sowing. The reception of faith and enlightenment in baptism are the sowing of the seed itself. And the good works accomplished after enlightenment are the germination and flowering of the seed. Neither the works that go before, nor the works that come after, *justify* us in the sense of giving us salvation: only pure faith in the salvation that Christ has accomplished for us saves. But the works that go before make us in a sense worthy to receive the gift of faith, while the works that come after show that that faith is genuine and deep ...

So the Lord wishes that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2.4) by receiving the faith that works through love. But only those who prepare the ground for the reception of that faith – and keep the ground well tilled thereafter, so as not to lose the faith again – will in fact be saved. There is therefore no arbitrariness here, but the justice of “the Father Who without partiality judges according to each man’s work” (I Peter 1.17).

*December 20 / January 2, 2013 /2014.
St. Ignatius the Godbearer.
St. John of Kronstadt.*

26. HOMOSEXUALITY, EVOLUTION AND THE NATURAL ORDER

One of the greatest problems for the theory of evolution has always been sexuality. Why should nature change from the comparatively simple process of asexual reproduction to the far more complex one of sexual reproduction? And how is it

possible for one sexually reproducing species to evolve into another, given (a) that both the male and the female of the new, emergent species have to have changed in many, precisely complementary ways if they are to produce offspring, and (b) that these changes must all take place, not over millions of years (time – loads of it – is the usual savior of evolutionary theories), but *in a single generation* (otherwise sexual reproduction will fail and the species will die out)?

If normal, heterosexual reproduction is hard enough for evolutionism to explain, then to do so for the phenomenon of homosexuality is virtually impossible, as psychologist Robert Kunzig admits: “If there is one thing that has always seemed obvious about homosexuality, it's that it just doesn't make sense. Evolution favors traits that aid reproduction, and being gay clearly doesn't do that. The existence of homosexuality amounts to a profound evolutionary mystery, since failing to pass on your genes means that your genetic fitness is a resounding zero. ‘Homosexuality is effectively like sterilization,’ says psychobiologist Qazi Rahman of Queen Mary College in London. ‘You'd think evolution would get rid of it.’ Yet as far as historians can tell, homosexuality has always been with us. So the question remains: If it's such a disadvantage in the evolutionary rat race, why was it not selected into oblivion millennia ago?”⁵²⁷

A good question; and the obvious response would be to look for an explanation *outside* evolution – or abandon evolutionism altogether. But evolutionists are not so quickly discouraged. Since evolutionism is for them more of a philosophy of life in general than a particular scientific hypothesis, they *must* attempt to force *every* living phenomenon onto this conceptual crustacean bed, whether or not it fits. And so they duly think up theories of how homosexuals come to constitute (according to them) between 2 and 6 percent of the human population. Such theories need not concern believers: they testify to the extraordinary ingenuity and fertility of the human mind when it is in straits, but not to the truth about God's creation...

However, there is an important reason why we cannot leave the matter there. If evolution were true, and if it were possible to find a convincing evolutionary explanation for the existence of homosexuality, then we would be forced to admit that homosexuals cannot help being such, that there is nothing wrong (morally or in any other sense) with being homosexual, and even that we should encourage homosexuality because it serves an evolutionary function. And this, of course, is what politicians and human rightists, scientists and publicists of all kinds are proclaiming.

Thus in sharp contrast to twentieth-century psychiatry from Freud onwards, which saw homosexuality as a disease to be cured, our modern wise men see it as a completely normal phenomenon. More than that: homosexuals now are called “gay”, an acronym for “Good As You”; for not only have they nothing to be ashamed of: they are *proud* of their disease, and insist that everybody else must think the same.⁵²⁸ So if

⁵²⁷ Kunzig, “Finding the Switch”, *Psychology Today*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200804/finding-the-switch>.

⁵²⁸ As C.S. Lewis writes: “Male homosexuals (I don't know about women) are rather apt, the moment they find you don't treat them with horror and content, to rush to the opposite pole and start implying

we are to defend traditional, Christian morality on this point – and indeed, morality in general, insofar as evolutionism undermines the very possibility of saying that anything existent is good or bad (for if it survives, it must serve an evolutionary purpose and therefore be “good”) – we need to say a little more about what homosexuality is from a Christian point of view.

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We need to distinguish between three meanings of the word “nature”. There is “nature” as God created it before the fall; there is “nature” as adapted by God to survival in the conditions of the fall; and there is “nature” which goes against “nature” in both the previous senses, being “unnatural” even in fallen creatures. Human nature before the fall was already divided into the male and female sexes; but our bodies were not opaque or subject to pain or corruption, and so were not capable of sexual intercourse and reproduction as we know them. After the fall, however, we received “garments of skin”, our present coarse and corrupt nature, which is capable of sexual intercourse and reproduction – but only, of course, in a heterosexual manner. And then there is the “unnatural nature” that violates even fallen nature as God adapted it. It is a question whether this “unnatural nature” exists at all in any real sense – that is, whether it is not in fact a demonic imposition on human nature, being “subhumanism”, in Fr. Seraphim Rose’s phrase, rather than human nature in either its pre-fall or fallen state.

Even some leading gay activists admit that homosexuality is unnatural. Thus Lesbian activist Camille Paglia writes: “Homosexuality is not normal. On the contrary, it is a challenge to the norm. Nature exists whether academics like it or not. Procreation is the single relentless rule. That is the norm. Our sexual bodies were designed for reproduction. No one is born gay. The idea is ridiculous. Homosexuality is an adaptation, not an inborn trait.”⁵²⁹

The distinction between what is natural and what is unnatural is fundamental to all morality. The Apostle Paul condemned Sodomy, “going after strange flesh” (Jude 7), because it went against “the natural use” of sexuality. And he identified its ultimate cause in the pagan worship of the creature instead of the Creator, of which modern naturalism and evolutionism can be seen to be another form: “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And

that they are somehow superior to the normal type” (*Yours, Jack: The Inspirational Letters of C.S. Lewis*, London, Harper, 2008, p. 242).

⁵²⁹ <http://liberallogic101.com/?p=6651>.

likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet..." (Romans 1.21-26).

St. John Chrysostom comments on this passage: "Here he sets the pleasure according to nature, which they would have enjoyed with more sense of security and greater joy, and so have been far removed from shameful deeds. But they would not; which is why they are quite beyond the pale of pardon, and have insulted nature itself. And still more disgraceful than these is the women seeking these couplings, for they ought to have more sense of shame than men.... Then, having reproached the women first, he goes on to the men also, and says, 'And likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman'. This is clear proof of the ultimate degree of corruption, when both sexes are abandoned. Both he who was called to be the instructor of the woman and she who was told to become a help like the man now behave as enemies to one another. Notice how deliberately Paul measures his words. For he does not say that they loved and desired each other but that 'they burned in their lust for one another'! You see that the whole of desire comes from an excess which cannot contain itself within its proper limits. For everything which transgresses God's appointed laws lusts after monstrous things which are not normal. For just as many often abandon the desire for food and come to feed on earth and small stones, and others, possessed by excessive thirst, often long even for mire, so these also charged into this explosion of lawless love. But if you ask, where did this intensity of lust come from? [I answer:] it was from being abandoned by God. And why were they abandoned by God? Because of their lawlessness in abandoning Him: 'men with men working that which is unseemly'. Do not, he means, because you have heard that they burned, suppose that the evil was only in desire. For the greater part of it came from their luxuriousness, which also kindled their lust into flame.... And he called it not lust, but that which is unseemly, and that rightly. For they both dishonoured nature, and trampled on the laws. And see the great confusion which fell out on both sides. For not only was the head turned downwards but the feet too were turned upwards, and they became enemies to themselves and to one another....

"It was meet that the two should be one, I mean the woman and the man. For 'the two,' it says, 'shall be one flesh'. But this was effected by the desire for intercourse, which united the sexes to one another. This desire the devil first took away and then, and having changed its direction, thereby divided the sexes from one another, and made the one to become two in opposition to the law of God. For it says, 'the two shall be one flesh'; but he divided the one flesh into two: here then is one war. Again, these same two parts he provoked to war both against themselves and against one another. For even women again abused women, and not men only. And the men stood against one another, and against the female sex, as happens in a battle by night. So you see a second and third war, and a fourth and fifth. And there is also another, for beside what has been mentioned they also behaved lawlessly against nature itself. For when the devil saw that it is this desire that, principally, draws the sexes together, he was bent on cutting through the tie, so as to destroy the race, not only by their not

copulating lawfully, but also by their being stirred up to war, and in sedition against one another."⁵³⁰

Fr. Thomas Hopko writes: "An interpretation of this passage that claims the apostle was right in forbidding acts 'contrary to nature', but was ignorant of the fact that many people are 'by nature' homosexual and therefore should act according to their God-given homosexuality, is unacceptable to Orthodox Christian faith. No one in Orthodox Christian tradition has ever interpreted this text in this way, nor can anyone do so, according to Orthodoxy, when they read the Bible as a whole. On the contrary, the biblical teaching is rather this: The fact that many people have sexual feelings and desires for persons of their own sex is among the most powerful proofs that human beings and life have been distorted by sin..."⁵³¹

Clearly, then, there is a difference in kind between natural heterosexual desire, fallen though it is, and unnatural homosexual desire. The one was implanted in nature by God (according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, innocent sexual attraction was already present between Adam and Eve in paradise): the other is unnatural, and is incited by demonic forces outside human nature to which sinners give access through their idolatrous worship of creation. Like the demonic lust of "the sons of God" for the daughters of men in Genesis 6, homosexuality is a demonically inspired undermining of the natural order.

This is proved by the many cases in which people who have been led to think that they are homosexual return quickly and joyfully to the natural order once they have been freed from the unnatural power that controlled them. Thus Robert Epstein writes: "In a landmark study published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in October 2003, [Robert L.] Spitzer interviewed 200 men and women who once considered themselves homosexuals but who had lived their lives as heterosexuals for at least five years. Most of the participants had undergone some form of reorientation therapy. In addition to determining whether such therapy actually worked, Spitzer wanted to know just how dramatically people could alter their orientation. To his surprise, most of his subjects not only reported living long-term (more than 10 years) as heterosexuals, they also declared that they had experienced 'changes in sexual attraction, fantasy and desire' consistent with heterosexuality. The changes were clear for both sexes..."⁵³²

A vivid example of such a "conversion" is the following true story related by the present writer's wife, Mrs. Olga Moss. (The names of the people in the story have been changed.) "This took place some years after the war, after I had graduated from Amsterdam university, had married and was living in England with my first husband. I had a schoolfriend who was a real macho man, good at sport and so on. He had a younger brother called Pieter who was quite the opposite: tall and slim, with a sensitive nature, studying history in Leiden. Because of the sharp contrast with his brother, many of his student friends started to suggest to Pieter that he was a

⁵³⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 4 on Romans*.

⁵³¹ Hopko, *Christian Faith and Same-Sex Attraction*, Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 2006, p. 57.

⁵³² Robert Epstein, "Do Gays have a Choice?", *Scientific American Mind*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2009, pp. 66-67.

homosexual. And when he listened to them talking about falling in love, and how their pulses would race, and their heart would beat, at the sight of certain girls, Pieter, who had never experienced what they were describing, thought: 'Maybe I am a homosexual'. As a result, he made himself vulnerable to the advances of other men, and entered into a relationship. He then wrote me a letter from Holland telling me his story, and said: 'Maybe you don't want to know me any more.' I replied: 'Of course I want to know you. But this is against the Law of God [Pieter was a believer], it is an abomination in His sight, and you must fight against it. We all suffer from various temptations and sins. But we must not give in to them, but must control them. We must not say: "Because I'm made that way, I can act that way." For example, if we are kleptomaniacs, we cannot just give in to the temptation to steal. And if we have a violent temper, we cannot just give in to our temper and be violent.' Pieter fell into a depression, and went to his parents' town to throw himself off a bridge near his parents' home. But by Divine Providence, his father decided to go for a walk in that area, something he never normally did. Approaching the bridge, he recognized his son standing on the edge, as if he was about to throw himself in. He called out: 'Pieter!', Pieter stopped, and turning to his father, put his arms around him and sobbed: 'I was about to commit suicide because I'm a homosexual.' His father was deeply shocked; he took him home, but didn't want to speak to his son again. Some time later, Pieter's father was dying. Pieter was the only one of his three sons who was in Holland. He sat next to his bed in hospital, keeping watch. He fell asleep and had an extraordinary vision. He saw a great and evil angel trying to throw him onto the ground. Pieter struggled to free himself, knowing that it was essential that he did not fall. But this angel was far stronger than him. Suddenly, however, the angel let go. Pieter woke up and felt himself completely cured of his homosexuality. He bent over to his father to tell him the news, but his father had died...

"A little later, Pieter went to Ireland for his Ph.D. studies in history, and met a Spanish student called Pilar who was also working for her Ph.D. They fell in love. Returning to Holland via London airport, Pieter phoned me up at 5 in the morning to tell me excitedly: 'Olga, Olga, I've fallen in love. My pulse is racing, my heart is fluttering. She's beautiful, has lovely eyes and voice,' etc., etc. I was very sleepy and could hardly take it all in. But I was very happy for him. A little later Pilar came to Holland - they were going to get engaged there and then get married in Spain. She was going to leave the Roman Catholic church, and he the Protestant church in order to join the Orthodox Church to which I belong. Then followed the happiest weeks of his life preparing for the engagement and wedding. She came over before Pascha, but unknown to us was carrying the Legionnaires' disease, which she had caught in Spain. He was infected, and fell very ill on Great Friday. 24 hours later he was dead. The death was so rapid that an autopsy was ordered. It revealed that Pieter had been deficient in a certain sexual hormone. Pilar went back to Spain, and Pieter was buried next to his father..."

Although this story constitutes no more than anecdotal evidence, it strongly suggests three things: (1) that a low level of normal libido may make a man vulnerable to homosexuality even when he is in fact heterosexual; (2) that environmental influences - the suggestions of schoolfriends and peers - may also dispose a man to

the sin if he does not actively resist it; but that (3) the main agent of homosexuality is *demonic*, the demon of homosexuality.

The idea that homosexuality has a biological base in human nature has been based mainly on the hypothesis that there is a "gay gene". However, "no one has yet identified a particular gay gene," writes Kunzig.⁵³³ Linda Bowles puts it more bluntly: "The truth is this: There is no "gay" gene. The scientific search for a biological basis for homosexuality has been a complete failure. Highly touted studies, including the study of the brains of 35 male cadavers by Simon LeVay (1991) and the heralded study of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers by Dean Hamer (1993), have not stood up to rigorous scientific scrutiny.

"The widely respected Dr. Joel Gelertner of Yale University in an article in *Science* made this observation about various studies trying to link genes with complex human behavior. 'All were announced with great fanfare; all were greeted unskeptically in the popular press; all are now in disrepute.'

"Studies of identical twins are especially revealing. Identical twins, unlike fraternal twins, have precisely the same genetic makeup. If same-sex orientation were genetically determined, one could expect identical twins to always have the same sexual orientation. Dozens of studies prove they do not. Almost all scientists who have studied human development agree that environmental influences and life experiences play a significant role in essentially all complex human behaviors, including sexual mindsets.

"The bottom line is this: No child is born to be a homosexual. Homosexuals are made, and they can be unmade. This is the truth that more psychiatrists and psychologists need to acknowledge. This is the truth that the American people need to know, parents of young children need to heed, and politicians need to understand."⁵³⁴

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"By their fruits ye shall know them": that homosexuality is evil and unnatural is proved by its destructive fruits. Thus it is destructive from a *medical* point of view (because it spreads AIDS), from a *psychological* point of view (because it creates no stable, satisfying bonds), from a *social* point of view (because it is divisive, dividing "straights" against "gays" and men against women), and from a *political* point of view (because it undermines the foundation of the State, which is the family).

Let us look first at some of the psychological and social effects.

"In their book *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop*, David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison found that of the 156 couples they studied, 75 percent of the

⁵³³ Kunzig, *op. cit.*

⁵³⁴ Bowles, "New Study Shows Homosexuals can Change", in *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509).

partners learned within five years that for the relationship to survive, cheating had to be tolerated, as long as one or the other did not become emotionally involved with the other sex partner. In her book *The Mendola Report*, lesbian Mary Mendola conducted a nationwide survey of approximately 400 homosexual couples. She, too, found that homosexuals distinguish between sexual and emotional exclusivity. Indeed, just 26 percent of homosexuals believe commitment is paramount in a marriage-type relationship. This translates to an almost unfathomable degree of sleeping around. A recent Amsterdam study found that men in homosexual relationships cheat with an average of eight partners a year. Others have found that the average homosexual has between 100 and 500 sexual partners over his or her lifetime. One study showed that 28 percent have had 1,000 or more sex partners, with another study placing the percentage between 10 and 16 percent. While adultery is certainly a factor in traditional marriages, it is comparatively rare. In fact, studies on matrimony place the male fidelity rate between 75 and 80 percent and that of females between 85 and 90 percent. The reason is simple: Unlike homosexual relationships, emotional and sexual fidelity within matrimony are inexorably linked and always have been by definition. To extend the concept of marriage to a situation wherein fidelity is not the norm would not only cheapen the institution, but it would have disastrous consequences for children. Simply put, a marriage is not a marriage without total exclusivity."⁵³⁵

Finally, let us look briefly at the *political* effects of homosexuality. A permissive attitude towards Sodomy is not only a mortal sin in the eyes of God and has profoundly evil consequences for private and public morality and happiness: it is also incompatible with any understanding of *the State* that is based on the natural order. This is because the State is based on the family, and is designed to protect the family and its continuation and multiplication down the generations, whereas homosexuality, for obvious reasons, cuts short the timespan of the single-sex "family" to one generation. Therefore the State that legalizes homosexuality and discourages or downgrades natural, heterosexual marriage and childbirth will first undergo a process of rapid aging (this is already happening in many western societies), and then will eventually simply die out - unless it adopts unnatural, artificial (and often immoral) methods of acquiring children, such as kidnapping, accelerated immigration, genetic experimentation and surrogate motherhood.

That the State is based on the family was attested by the greatest thinkers of antiquity. Thus Aristotle wrote: "The king is in the same relationship with his subjects as the head of a family with his children". The State is, as it were, the family writ large. The family, writes St. Augustine, is "the beginning, or rather a small component part of the city, and every beginning is directed to some end of its own kind, and every component part contributes to the completeness of the whole of which it forms a part. The implication is that domestic peace contributes to the peace of the city, for an ordered harmony of those who live together in a house contributes to the ordered harmony concerning authority and obedience obtaining among citizens."⁵³⁶

⁵³⁵ *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509). C.S. Lewis writes (*op. cit.*, p. 242): Jealousy (this another homosexual admitted to me) is far more rampant and deadly among them than among us".

⁵³⁶ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XIX, 16.

Again, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow says: “The family is older than the State. Man, husband, wife, father, son, mother, daughter and the obligations and virtues inherent in these names existed before the family grew into the nation and the State was formed. That is why family life in relation to State life can be figuratively depicted as the root of the tree. In order that the tree should bear leaves and flowers and fruit, it is necessary that the root should be strong and bring pure juice to the tree. In order that State life should develop strongly and correctly, flourish with education, and bring forth the fruit of public prosperity, it is necessary that family life should be strong with the blessed love of the spouses, the sacred authority of the parents, and the reverence and obedience of the children, and that as a consequence of this, from the pure elements of family there should arise similarly pure principles of State life, so that with veneration for one’s father veneration for the tsar should be born and grow, and that the love of children for their mother should be a preparation of love for the fatherland, and the simple-hearted obedience of domestics should prepare and direct the way to self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness in obedience to the laws and sacred authority of the autocrat.”⁵³⁷

Again, Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov writes: “In blessed Russia, in accordance with the spirit of the pious people, the Tsar and the fatherland constitute one whole, just as in a family the parents and their children constitute one whole.”⁵³⁸ So the king’s rule in the State is a reflection of the father’s rule in the family, which in turn reflects the rule of God “the Father, from Whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3.15).

The advent of democracy undermined the authority of fathers of all kinds, both the Heavenly Father and the head of the earthly family and the head of the state. This has led not only to the break-up of families, but also to the rapid atomization of society as a whole, making it “the lonely crowd”, in sociologist David Riesman’s famous phrase. It has also prepared the ground for totalitarianism, for nature denied still speaks out, and those denied natural fathers who naturally love and protect them will seek to venerate and obey unnatural ones who despise and destroy them. These forces leading to the destruction of fatherhood and the family are accelerated by the glorification of homosexuality, the most unnatural of sins. So let us not “be deceived. Neither fornicators, not idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites... will inherit the Kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 6.9-10).

January 1/14, 2014; revised January 14/27, 2014 and September 2/15, 2014.

Saint Andrew the Fool for Christ and the Homosexual Eunuch

As he sat on the ground in front of the gateway there came a young eunuch who was the chamberlain of one of the nobles. His face was like a rose, the skin of his body white as snow, he was well shaped, fair-haired, possessing an unusual softness, and

⁵³⁷ Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia (Works)*, 1848 edition, volume 2, p. 169.

⁵³⁸ Bishop Ignaty, *Sobranie Pisem (Collected Letters)*, Moscow, 2000, p. 781.

smelling of musk from afar. As Epiphanius had been brought up together with him and was his friend they loved each other dearly.

Now this eunuch carried with him dates, about thirty in number. When he saw the naked body of the holy man he was alarmed and asked Epiphanius, "My dearest and beloved Epiphanius, who is this man and why does he go naked, although it is winter and unbearably cold, being like those who have been shipwrecked at sea?"

Epiphanius answered, "My dearest brother, I do not know what I shall say about his appearance, since his mind has been taken prisoner by the Evil One and he wanders about like one possessed and confused. All such people tear their clothes and run about without feeling anything." This he said because he did not want to reveal the holy man's virtue.

When the eunuch heard this he fell silent and, having pity on the blessed man as one of the poor, gave him all his dates. "Take these just for now," he said, "for I have nothing else with me."

But the holy man, who with the eyes of his spirit already knew the works of his soul, looked at him sternly and said, "Fools do not eat a gift of colophonia."

The eunuch, who did not understand what he said, replied, "You truly crazy man, when you see dates, do you think they are fruit from Colophon?"*

The blessed man said to him, "You deceiver, go into your master's bed-chamber and perform with him the sick practice of the sodomites, that he may give you other dates too. You wretch, you do not see the rays of the kingdom of heaven, who do not know the cruelty and bitterness of hell, do you not even feel shame before the angel who accompanies you as a Christian? What should be done with you, impure that you are, because you frequent the corners and do what should not be done, things which neither dogs nor swine, nor reptiles nor serpents do? You accursed fellow, why do you do this? Woe to your youth, which Satan has wounded and thrown down headlong into the terrible depth of hell and vehemence and boundless vigor! See that you do not go further, lest the Godhead treat you as you deserve, here burning you whole with flashes of lightning, there with the hell of fire."

When the eunuch heard this he trembled with fear, his face turned red like fire and his shame was great.

Epiphanius said, "Sir, what happened to you? Why were you ashamed? Did I not tell you that he is crazy and says whatever occurs to him? However, my dear friend in the Lord, if you are aware that you are guilty of something of what he said to you, go at once and reform yourself and do not be angry at him for his words! You are young,

dear friend, and Satan is wicked, deceiving us to commit sin for no other reason than to have us too for a consolation in the fires of hell."

When the eunuch heard this he went away, whereas the honorable Epiphanius helped the holy man to his feet and showed him to his room. There they found a table laid and sat down, enjoying the gifts of God.

After they finished their feast Epiphanius said to the blessed man, "Venerable sir, why did you rebuke my friend so bluntly?"

The blessed man answered, "Because he is dear to you and beloved, for this reason I did give to him this lecture, for had he not been your friend, he would not have heard a single word from me. This is not my vocation, to rebuke sinners, but to run the straight road which leads to a better life."

Epiphanius said again, "I know that too, you servant of God, but this young man is a slave, and when he is forced by his master what can he do?"

The holy man replied, "Yes, I know, I am not ignorant of that. However, a slave should serve the man who bought him with regard to his physical needs, not with regard to the works of the devil, specifically not when it comes to this cursed and disgusting abnormality in which not even animals engage."

Epiphanius said, "If a master enjoins a slave to minister to his needs, be they physical, or spiritual, or sinful, and the slave fails to obey, you surely know, my Lord, how much he will suffer, being maltreated, beaten, threatened and receiving all sorts of punishments."

The holy man answered, "This, my son, is the martyrdom of Jesus Christ at which he hinted when he said: 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Thus if the slaves do not bow to the abominable sodomitic passion of their masters they are blessed and thrice blessed, for thanks to the torments you mention they will be reckoned with the martyrs."

*** The eunuch thinks the holy man is speaking of the city of Colophon in Ionia, but the word *colophonia* implies a slaughter or abuse of the colon or anus.**

Translation from *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* by Kathryn M. Ringrose, University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 45-47.

27. A UNIVERSAL FAITH FOR A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Globalization is a fact that one can lament but which one cannot dispute or fight against. For better or worse, most of us live in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies in which the possibilities of isolation from other peoples or cultures are few and getting fewer all the time. Our Orthodox Christian faith requires that we defend ourselves from the harmful influences, if not of other peoples, at any rate of other non-Orthodox cultures and faiths. But this cannot be done in the manner of the Talmudic Jews, by creating defensive ghettos in which we isolate ourselves completely from the external world. Even if the older generation can achieve this to a limited degree because old people are less useful to society as a whole, this is impossible for the young, who have to go to school and university, get jobs, raise families, use the internet and social media, and in general interact with many non-Orthodox people and institutions.

Even the contemporary so-called “Orthodox” states offer no real protection to their citizens; for none of them today, however loudly they may talk about faith and “traditional values”, is based on the truly Orthodox faith. The real principles upon which they operate are an uneasy and constantly shifting mixture of nationalism, “human rights” and simple greed and fear. But, as the political scientist Francis Fukuyama writes, “a political order based on Serb ethnic identity or Twelver Shi’ism will never grow beyond the boundaries of some... corner of the Balkans or Middle East, and could certainly never become the governing principle of large, diverse, dynamic, and complex modern societies...”⁵³⁹

Fukuyama is discussing the problem of preserving social stability and trust in our globalizing world. He recognizes the historical importance of religion in preserving stability and morality, but doubts the possibility of traditional religion again playing such a role. “Some religious conservatives hope, and many liberals fear, that the problem of moral decline will be resolved by a large-scale return to religious orthodoxy, a Western version of Ayatollah Khomeini returning to Iran on a jetliner. For a variety of reasons, this seems unlikely. Modern societies are so culturally diverse that it is not clear whose version of orthodoxy would prevail. Any true form of orthodoxy is likely to be seen as a threat to large and important groups in the society, and hence would neither get very far nor serve as a basis for a widening radius of trust. Instead of integrating society, a conservative religious revival may in fact accelerate the movement toward fragmentation and moral miniaturization that has already occurred: the various varieties of Protestant fundamentalists will argue among themselves over doctrine, orthodox Jews will become more orthodox, and newer immigrant groups like Muslims and Hindus may start to organize themselves as political-religious communities.

⁵³⁹ Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption*, London: Profile Books, 1999, p. 280.

“A return to religiosity is far more likely to take a more benign, decentralized form, in which religious belief is less an expression of dogma than of the community’s existing norms and desire for order. In some respects, this has already started to happen in many parts of the United States. Instead of community arising as a by-product of rigid belief, people will come to belief because of their desire for community. In other words, people will return to religious tradition not necessarily because they accept the truth of revelation, but precisely because the absence of community and the transience of social ties in the secular world make them hungry for ritual and cultural tradition. They will help the poor or their neighbours not because doctrine tells them they must, but because they want to serve their communities and find that faith-based organizations are the most effective ways of doing so. They will repeat ancient prayers and re-enact age-old rituals not because they believe that they were handed down by God, but rather because they want their children to have the proper values and want to enjoy the comfort of ritual and the sense of shared experience it brings. In this sense they will not be taking religion seriously on its own terms. Religion becomes a source of ritual in a society that has been stripped bare of ceremony, and thus a reasonable extension of the natural desire for social relatedness that all human beings are born with. It is something that modern, rational, sceptical people can take seriously, much as they celebrate their national independence, dress up in traditional ethnic garb, or read the classic of their own cultural tradition...”⁵⁴⁰

Fukuyama’s remarks are penetrating and true as regards most contemporary religion, including most that goes under the name of Orthodox Christianity. But as he himself admits, the religion he describes is not real religion; these worshippers are “not taking religion seriously on its own terms” because religious belief now “is less an expression of dogma than of the community’s existing norms and desire for order”. And since Fukuyama sees no possibility of a revival of real – that is, *dogmatic* – religion, he is resigned to the continuance of the adogmatic forms of religion that he describes (perhaps also because he himself is adogmatic).

But he is not necessarily right. Let us look at the example he himself cites – that of the Iranian revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. This religious revival came completely out of the blue to most observers. Moreover, in spite of its being based on “Twelver Shi’ism” rather than the more universalist Sunni form of Islam, it has had a wide and expanding influence beyond the borders of Iran. And this has excited a corresponding revival in its Sunni rival. No political or social commentator can now ignore the influence of fundamentalist Islam in general. Moreover, - and this is the important point, - this revival is a real religion in that it is *dogmatic* and demands to be taken seriously on its own terms – that is, in terms of its *beliefs*.

Of course, while Islam is a real religion, it is not the *true* religion. That honour belongs to Orthodox Christianity alone. But Islam *claims* to express the truth – the one truth about God and mankind as a whole. Unlike ecumenist Christianity and ecumenist Orthodoxy, it believes in the existence of one truth, and it believes that the truth resides exclusively in Islam. That is why we call it a real religion...

⁵⁴⁰ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-279.

Now if a real, if untrue religion can undergo such a spectacular revival in our secular, relativist and globalized world, there is no reason why another real, but *true* religion cannot have a similar revival. "With God all things are possible", and He wishes "that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth". The only precondition for a revival of Orthodox Christianity is that sufficient numbers of people should sincerely and deeply desire the truth...

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We must remember that the original, spectacular expansion of Orthodoxy took place in another age of globalization. The Roman empire at the time of the apostles was very similar to modern western civilization in its ease of communications, multiculturalism and ecumenism. Of course, the vital difference between then and now is the apostles themselves: truly apostolic figures in contemporary Orthodoxy are extremely difficult to find. Nevertheless, if we suppose that such apostolic figures will appear, the conditions are surely right for a very rapid expansion of the faith. Interest in religion as such is certainly *not* in decline; some of the main intellectual pillars of the atheist world-view, such as Darwinism, are definitely losing support; and while people are turning away from the churches, this if not necessarily because they have ceased searching for God, but because they have not found Him *there* - "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him" (John 20.13).

Globalization, television and the internet have made it perfectly possible for a contemporary St. Paul to travel all over the world and speak to vast numbers of people simultaneously. If he knew English, Spanish and Russian he could speak to most Christians; if he knew Arabic, Turkish and Farsee he could speak to most of the Muslims of the Middle East; if he spoke Chinese, Japanese, Malay, Urdu and Hindi he could speak to most of the Muslims and pagans of South Asia and the Far East. St. Augustine said that the gift of tongues had ceased in his time because the Roman world in which he lived had already been evangelized. The "speaking in tongues" of the Pentecostals is clearly not the genuine article, but a demonic deception. Perhaps we are approaching the time when the genuine article will appear again - in response to a genuine need.

Of course, to most of those who grieve at the undoubted and profound fall of the Christian world, this will sound like madness, pie-in-the-sky utopianism of the most incurable kind. Surely, they will say, this is a time to batten down the hatches and wait for the Antichrist, not look for the evangelization of the world! And yet did not the Lord say, at a time when the chosen people of the Jews had reached their absolute spiritual nadir: "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest" (John 4.35)? The harvest is surely no less great now than in the Lord's time. And if the labourers seem to be even fewer now than then, is this any reason why we should not pray to the Lord of harvest to send fresh labourers, rather than allow that global harvest to rot - and ourselves and our children to perish with it?

Again the Lord said: "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24.14).

Who would be so bold as to say that this prophecy has already been fulfilled, so that all we need to do now is wait for the end? Can we honestly say that the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in China, or India, or Indonesia – to mention just three of the largest countries in the world? Is it not rather the case that the world is as much in ignorance of the true faith now as it was in St. Paul’s time? And is it not more reasonable to suppose that the present process of globalization is a preparation for a world-wide spreading of the Gospel, just as the Hellenization of the oikoumene, the then-known “inhabited world”, in the centuries before Christ was a preparation for the spreading of the Gospel by the apostles and their successors?

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The very nature of the quintessential globalist heresy, ecumenism, should make us ponder on the meaning of this prophecy. For what is ecumenism if not: (a) a powerful witness to a strong desire, among people of all religions and none, for a universal faith that will unite the world spiritually as it is now united economically and technologically; and (b) an attempt to ban the spread of the one universal faith that can quench that spiritual longing – Orthodox Christianity? Globalism and universalism would seem to go together: but ecumenism succeeds – or has succeeded so far – in pushing them apart. If the world is now a little village socially speaking, and if the consequences of disunity in the village – in the form of nuclear wars, environmental catastrophes, etc. – are so immense, threatening the destruction of the whole planet, then it makes sense to come together and seek agreement on a universalist faith and vision that will truly unite the nations. This must involve examining the various religions and subjecting their claims to truth and universality to critical examination. Now Orthodoxy has nothing to fear from such an examination. Our faith, being founded on the Rock that is the Resurrected Christ, has “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1.3) to support it. But the ecumenical movement seems designed specifically in order to avoid any such critical examination. The aim appears to be, not to find which of the many faiths is the true one, but to assume – without any good reason – that all of them are partially true, so that the whole truth can be found by finding the lowest common denominator among them. Moreover, it follows from this assumption that the preaching of any one faith *as if* it were true – in other words, missionary work – is undesirable and to be condemned.

No scientist would approach the goal of scientific truth by assuming that all the hypotheses in front of him are partially true; but the leaders of the world’s faiths appear to think that such an irrational approach is acceptable in the religious sphere. Tragically, this includes the official leaders of the Local Orthodox Churches, whose participation in the World Council of Churches and its apostate decisions has continued now for over half a century. Moreover, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1992, these Orthodox leaders, meeting in Constantinople, decided to stop missionary work among the Catholic and Protestant Christians of the West. A later agreement with the Monophysite and Nestorian heretics in Chambésy in 1994 more or less precluded missionary work among them also. In other words, in the globalized civilization that we all share, when both the opportunities for, and the necessity of, preaching the one true faith throughout the world have become greater than ever, this preaching has come to an end... This is not only a betrayal of Orthodoxy: it is a betrayal of *the world*,

and of all those people searching for the truth who might have come to Orthodoxy if they had been given any encouragement. It is a failure of faith and hope; but even more it is a failure of courage and of love ...

The best form of defence is offense, and the best – probably now the only – way of defending ourselves against the evils of globalization is go on the offensive and bring the Gospel to our adversaries, thereby turning them from adversaries into friends and brothers. Neither the pseudo-globalism of ecumenism, nor the denial of universalism that is implied by nationalism, can provide more than a temporary and specious defence. For our faith is not only true: it is true for all men at all times, not least our own times. To defend Orthodoxy only on the grounds that it is the cultural heritage of Greeks or Russians or Serbs is to condemn it to a parochial backwater that will inevitably dry up within one or two generations. For not only will our children have no solid ground on which to defend their faith against the globalist temptation: the world outside will not find in us the answer to their universalist thirst, and we will suffer the fate that the Lord decreed for the salt that has lost its savour: “It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men” (Matthew 5.13).

*January 11/24, 2014.
St. Theodosius the Great.*

28. HOW TO BE A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY

The Lord provides us with a perfect example in all things, including how to convert unbelievers to the faith. This is what we see in his conversation with the Samaritan woman in the Gospel according to John, chapter 4. Let us draw some lessons from this fascinating dialogue:-

1. Do not begin with the faith itself, but with a subject close to the potential convert's ordinary, everyday life. The Samaritan woman came to Jacob's well to draw water, a very important everyday task in that hot climate. So the Lord asks her for water, and then tells her where she can find "living water" – that is, as the woman understands Him, continually running water. But this is not what the Lord means: He means the continually running water of the Holy Spirit. But to speak openly and directly about that at the beginning would have been unproductive. So He acts more subtly: first drawing her attention by speaking about material water, the Lord turns the conversation to spiritual water, the grace of the Holy Spirit – but in a hidden, symbolic form that intrigues His listener.

Great missionaries often first help their potential converts in their everyday lives before trying to convert them to the faith. Thus St. Wilfrid of York, the apostle of the South Saxons, first taught the South Saxons to fish in time of famine before opening to them the riches of the Gospel. "Ordinary" charity precedes and prepares the way for the greatest charity, which is the communication of the truth of salvation.

2. Do not be deterred by the racial or political prejudices of your own people. It was the Samaritan woman herself who, not wishing to cause problems for the Lord, pointed to the fact that "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans". They had no dealings with them because the Samaritans, a Gentile race, occupied land that, many centuries before, had belonged to the Jews. They had another, better-founded prejudice against the Samaritans: that they were what we would now call heretics, believing in the Law but not the Prophets, and mixing the true faith with pagan superstitions. However, the true missionary must resist both racial, political and religious reasons for not being completely open with his potential converts and truly engaging with them as equals. For the sake of the salvation of their souls he must be "all things to all men", in the words of that great missionary, the Apostle Paul, thereby laying himself open to possible persecution from his own people for whom the salvation of foreigners may be a matter of indifference or even undesirable.

When St. Augustine of Canterbury came from Rome to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons, he wanted to work with the British Christians of Wales. But they refused, being filled with hatred for the Anglo-Saxons who had seized their lands. However,

this did not deter St. Augustine, and later he found helpers in the Christians of Ireland, who did not have this racial prejudice against the English.

3. If possible, first remove moral obstacles to the reception of the truth. Since the main obstacle to a man receiving the faith is the mire of evil deeds that cloud the vision of the truth, it is necessary to seek out first of all the morally pure, or at any rate those who love the truth more than their own impurity. For “if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God” (John 7.17). Such a person was the Samaritan woman, who, on being told by the Lord that she had had five husbands and that she was now living in sin, did not deny it, but marvelled at His clairvoyance, calling Him a prophet.

On his missionary journeys through Scotland, St. Columba of Iona once made a large detour to the Isle of Skye in order to baptize a pagan on his deathbed. St. Adomnan, the chronicler of St. Columba’s life, makes the point that this pagan had been “innocent since his youth”. Moral purity both aids the initial perception of the truth, and helps to strengthen and preserve it once it has been received.

4. Do not make ecumenist compromises in preaching to the heretics. The Samaritan woman is now ready for a serious discussion of the questions arising from the differences between her faith and the faith of the Jews. One of these questions was: where – in Jerusalem or Samaria – was God to be worshipped? The woman seeks to justify her own religious practice by saying: “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain [of Samaria]”, meaning by “our fathers” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But the Lord ignores this, mutely refusing to agree that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the fathers of the Samaritans. Instead he says, gently but firmly and unambiguously: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews”. So no ecumenist cliché of the type: “we all worship the same God” for the Lord! The Samaritans, while pretending to worship the God of Jacob, in fact worshipped a demon without knowing it; for “all the gods of the pagans are demons” (Psalm 95.5).

We could say the same about the Muslims today. They – and the Christian ecumenists – think that they worship the same God as appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But in fact they worship a demon, a pagan moon-god called Allah. The God Who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the same God Who talked to the Samaritan woman at the well and Who rose from the dead on the third day – Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian missionary working among the Muslims must always hold on to this fact, and not pretend that Allah is the same as the God of the Christians. The Muslims know not what they worship; but we know Whom we worship; for salvation resides in Christ alone.

Similarly, the Jews do not worship the same God as the Christians; for insofar as they reject Christ, they reject God, because Christ is God, and also the Father and the

Holy Spirit. "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either. He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also" (I John 2.23).

5. Nevertheless, it is legitimate to use points of agreement in order to clinch the truth of the Christian message. Although only one religion, Orthodox Christianity, is the true religion, - that is, the religion that is *completely* true, enabling us to worship the one true God "in spirit and in truth", - this is not to say that other religions do not have elements of the truth. The Samaritan woman seizes upon one such element that the Samaritans had in common with the Jews: that the Messiah was coming, and that He would reveal the fullness of the truth to them. The Lord mutely confirmed her belief, and then crowned it with the revelation that He had not yet given even to the Jews because of their unworthiness: that He Himself was the Messiah.

St. Paul used a similar tactic with the sophisticated Athenians. He found an altar with the inscription "To the Unknown God" and then said to them: "the One Whom you worship without knowing Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17.23). Neither the Samaritans nor the Athenians knew what they worshipped. But the ignorance of the two races was different in kind. The Samaritans made a false identification: they identified the pagan god whom they worshipped with the God of Israel. But the Athenians with their greater sophistication and philosophical training had an inkling of the truth even in their ignorance; they knew, or at any rate hypothesized, that in addition to the pagan gods there was another God Who made the heavens and the earth, and that such a God was in essence unknowable. And Paul, with his knowledge of Greek culture, seized on this element of truth in the Greeks' speculations in order to try and bring them into the fold of the Church.

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Very little true missionary work can be seen in the world today. There are two possible explanations of this lamentable fact. The first is that the world is not worthy to receive the missionaries of the truth; so God does not "cast His pearls before swine" by sending workers into a harvest that consists only of weeds. The other is that the Christians themselves are so weak in faith and love that they do not undertake the great mission of preaching to all peoples that the Lord entrusted to the Church. Both explanations have elements of the truth. On the one hand, if the world were worthy and actively searching for the truth, then there is no doubt that the Lord in His great hunger for the salvation of souls would be sending out workers to reap that harvest, even if He had to create such workers out of the stones of the earth. On the other hand, even a superficial overview of the Church today will convince us that this generation of Orthodox Christians is perhaps the weakest in history, and is barely able to save itself, let alone save others.

The weakness of contemporary Orthodoxy is of two basic kinds. On the one hand, there is the weakness created by the dominant heresy of ecumenism, which by claiming that all faiths are true and salvific essentially *destroys the need for missionary work*. This is a weakness of *faith*. On the other hand, there is the weakness that comes

from a *lack of desire* for the salvation of our neighbour; sometimes this is combined with an *active hatred* of certain nations. This is a weakness of *love*.

St. Seraphim of Sarov once said: "Find peace, and a thousand souls around you will be saved." Let us take his words with faith and love. Even if we have no particular aptitude or calling or training for missionary work, we can become de facto missionaries by becoming de facto Christians, letting our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father Who is in heaven. Then, however unpromising and full of weeds the mission field looks to our eyes, green shoots of true Christian faith and love will push their way through the weeds through the sowing of God. And then we will have the same joy that the Lord had when He saw the soon-to-be-converted Samaritans approaching Him: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest..." (John 4.35-36).

May 1/14, 2014.
Mid-Pentecost.

29. THE TWO KINGDOMS OF CHRIST

When the Lord was about to ascend to heaven in glory, the disciples came to Him and asked: "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1.6). This shows that the disciples before Pentecost were still earthly men thinking about earthly things. They were about to witness one of the greatest events in history: the ascension of the King into His Heavenly Kingdom, taking human nature with Him to sit at the right hand of the Father. But their minds were still occupied with politics: when would the earthly kingdom of Israel be free from the Roman yoke?

The Lord's reply was not crushing, but it contained a veiled rebuke: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1.7). The destinies of earthly kingdoms are in the hand of God; we should not be over-concerned about them. We should place our sights first of all on the Heavenly Kingdom. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6.33) – at the time and in the manner that is pleasing to God. And if the choice is placed before us of having the Heavenly Kingdom or an earthly, then we should unhesitatingly choose the former.

Today the world is possessed by political passions. Even the Orthodox are prepared to go to war with their fellow Orthodox for a plot of land. But the Lord rejected the revanchist dreams of the Jews, and declared (again at His ascension): "All power hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28.18). *All* power means just that: power over heaven and earth, angels and men, believers and unbelievers, souls and bodies. Jesus Christ is the supreme King of kings and Lord of lords. There is nothing created that is not ruled by Him. So it is not up to us to scrap over plots and kingdoms: these have been placed in the Father's authority.

Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers make a particular distinction between the power that Christ wields in the *spiritual* realm, and in the *secular* realm. His power is supreme in both, but is wielded in different ways, corresponding to their different natures. The spiritual realm is the "inner Kingdom", the Kingdom that is "not of this world". In it Christ rules in an inner, mystical way those who through faith have voluntarily submitted to His dominion, declaring Him to be their King and God in Holy Baptism, and promising to obey all His commandments. The secular realm, on the other hand, is the "outer kingdom", the kingdom "of this world", which Christ rules through His providential power. As Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria writes: "'All is delivered' to the Son by the Father (Luke 10.22) in that all is to be subject to the Son. There are two ways in which God rules over all. First, He rules over all independently of their own will [the outer kingdom]. And second, He rules over those who willingly subject themselves to Him [the inner Kingdom]. Hence I can say: God is my Master independently of my will, inasmuch as He is my Creator. But He is also my Master whenever I, as a grateful servant, fulfil His will by working to keep the commandments."⁵⁴¹

⁵⁴¹ Bl. Theophylact, *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, p. 114.

Divine Providence uses the whole of nature, rational and irrational, to attain Its ends. So the kingdom of this world can be said to embrace the whole of nature. The State is that part of the outer kingdom that is organized by human beings and has the highest degree of organization. The Church is the inner kingdom on earth. Although having a visible presence and organization on earth, its essence is not of this world, being the Kingdom of Grace. The inner Kingdom of the Church ministers to the inner needs of man, his salvation for eternity. The outer kingdom of the State ministers to his external needs - food and shelter and security from external enemies.

“One must distinguish two Kingdoms of Christ,” writes M.V. Zyzykin, “and consequently two of His powers. ‘The Son of God, having received human nature into the unity of His Divine Hypostasis, is called a king,’ says St. Gregory the Theologian, ‘but in one sense He is king as the Almighty and king of both the willing and the unwilling, and in the other, as leading to obedience and submitting to His kingdom those who have willingly recognised Him as king’ (quoted in Metropolitan Macarius, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 178-179). In the first case the kingdom of Christ is without end and all three Persons of the All-Holy Trinity participate in Providence. In the second it will end with the leading of all the true believers to salvation, when Jesus Christ hands over the Kingdom to God and the Father, when He will annul every authority and force, that God may be all in all (I Corinthians 14.18). The power of which it is said: ‘all power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’ was *handed over by Him to nobody*. He remains the Highest Teacher (Matthew 23.8), the Highest Priest (Hebrews 7.24-25) and the highest Ruler of His kingdom, the Pastor of pastors (I Peter 5.4).

“The Church is the visible form of the Kingdom of Christ, its realisation on earth, by which it is destined to embrace the world (Mark 16.15-16; Matthew 28.19-20; Luke 24.47; John 20.23); it is the kingdom that is not of this world (John 18.36). It is a special sphere in which the relationship of man with God is developed (Matthew 22.21; Luke 20.25); Church power by the spiritual character of its commission does not consist in mastery and lordship, which are characteristic of earthly power, but in service (Matthew 20.25-27; Mark 9.35).”⁵⁴²

The relationship between the two kingdoms was highlighted during Christ’s trial before Pilate. While recognizing Pilate’s power as lawful, the Lord at the same time insists that both Pilate’s and Caesar’s power derived from God, the true King and Lawgiver. For “you could have no power at all against Me,” He says, “unless it had been given to you from above” (John 19.11). These words, paradoxically, both limit Caesar’s power, as being subject to God’s, and strengthen it, by indicating that it has God’s seal and blessing in principle (if not in all its particular manifestations). Nor is this conclusion contradicted by His earlier words: “My Kingdom is not of this world” (John 18.36). For, as Blessed Theophylact writes: “He said: ‘My Kingdom is not of this world’, and again: ‘It is not from here’, but He did not say: It is not in this world and not here. He rules in this world, takes providential care for it and administers everything according to His will. But His Kingdom is ‘not of this world’, but from

⁵⁴² Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, p. 231.

above and before the ages, and 'not from here', that is, it is not composed from the earth, although it has power here".⁵⁴³

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "Let no-one imagine that Christ the Lord does not have imperial power over this world because He says to Pilate: 'My Kingdom is not of this world.' He who possesses the enduring has power also over the transitory. The Lord speaks of His enduring Kingdom, independent of time and of decay, unrighteousness, illusion and death. Some man might say: 'My riches are not on paper, but in gold.' But does he who has gold not have paper also? Is not gold as paper? The Lord, then, does not say to Pilate that He is not a king, but, on the contrary, says that He is a higher king than all kings, and His Kingdom is greater and stronger and more enduring than all earthly kingdoms. He refers to His pre-eminent Kingdom, on which depend all kingdoms in time and in space..."⁵⁴⁴

The kingdoms of time and space will be ruled well and distributed justly only if men recognize who their true, pre-eminent King is. That King has told His subjects to obey the powers that be, even if they are not Christians: "for there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Romans 13.1). However, he has placed limits on that obedience. Authorities must not be obeyed if they command something that is contrary to the Law of God (Acts 4.19). And they must not be obeyed if their authority actually comes from the devil – for there is an authority that receives its authority, not from God, but from the devil (Revelation 13.2).

The calling of the Orthodox king is to unite the two kingdoms, heavenly and earthly, in and through his own kingdom. As the holy new martyr Fr. John Vostorgov put it: "The cherished aim of Christianity is the realization and confirmation, amidst the sphere of the earthly, the temporal and the human, of the Kingdom of heaven, the eternal Kingdom of God. This is what the prophets wonderfully foretold of old; this is what the Forerunner of Christ announced beforehand; this is what the Saviour and His apostles preached to the villages and towns and throughout the whole world. To attain through the kingdom of men the aims of the Kingdom of God, to realize in the life of the state and by means of statehood the tasks of Christianity – the religion of love, of peace, of redemption; to promote by means of statehood the moral principles of Christianity; to turn the Kingdom of God into the end, and the kingdom of man into the means, to unite them in one, like soul and body – that is the ideal and the covenants, these are our hidden strivings and hopes! The God-crowned tsar enters into a sacred and mystical union with his people at his anointing by the Holy Spirit. They as it were merge together into one powerful, spiritual and moral union, like the ideal Christian family, without any division in thought, allowing no lack of trust, no other relations except those of mutual love, devotion, self-denial and care."

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of contemporary Orthodoxy is that the majority of the Orthodox in the Eastern European homeland of Orthodoxy, forgetting the great

⁵⁴³ Blessed Theophylact, *On John* 18.36.

⁵⁴⁴ Bishop Nikolai, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, part III, September 30, pp. 395-396.

example of Orthodox kingship they were given in Tsar Nicholas II, eagerly follow after “authorities” that derive their power from the devil. The Soviet Union, in the consciousness of the Russian Orthodox Church, was created, not by God, but by the devil; which is why the Church formally anathematized it in 1918, forbidding her children “to have anything to do with these outcasts of humanity”. But the best men of Russia were killed or exiled, and those who remained, in their great majority, submitted to the evil one. They followed him as he destroyed the Orthodox monarchies of Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia, and installed evil regimes from the evil one there. They follow him now as he attempts to re-establish the Soviet Union through the invasion of Georgia and the Ukraine.

As the cross is blasphemously portrayed within the hammer and sickle, the people go mad with revanchist passion and murder members of the same Church in the name of God and Holy Russia. And all because they love the earthly kingdom more than the Heavenly, and so are prepared to die for the former while betraying the latter. They reject the true King, the Lord Jesus Christ, while following unquestioningly the rebels against His power who are under the anathema of the Holy Church.

Once, when the Lord and His disciples were passing through Samaria, they asked permission “to command fire to come down from heaven and consume” (Luke 9.54) the Samaritans, whom the Jews despised both because they were heretics and because the land they occupied had once belonged to them. But the Lord turned on them and said: “You know not of what spirit you are” (9.55). The same could be said of the contemporary “zealots of Orthodoxy” who want to destroy both Ukraine and the West, despising their (undoubted) corruption – they know not of what spirit they are. Thus Dmitri Kiselev even boasted on Russian television that Russian missiles could reduce the West to ashes... And yet it was the Samaritans who were the first nation to receive the Gospel after the Resurrection, while most of the Jews rejected it. Similarly today, it may well be that “the first will be last, and the last first”, and those who boast of their Orthodoxy against the heterodox while trying to resurrect the God-accursed Soviet Union will be counted among the hypocrites...

Peace and unity will not be restored to the Orthodox commonwealth of nations until the people cast out the usurping agents of the evil one, and are themselves purged of the evil spirit of revanchist nationalism. This will happen only when they understand that the earthly kingdom must not be loved above the Heavenly Kingdom. For the earthly kingdom is only the “vestibule”, as St. John of Kronstadt put it, to the Heavenly. True patriotism can only be founded on true faith and morality; without true faith and morality, patriotism becomes a form of idolatry. For “where the faith has fallen,” said New Hieromartyr John Vostorgov, “and where morality has fallen, there can be no place for patriotism, there is nothing for it to hold on to, for everything that is the most precious in the homeland then ceases to be precious.”⁵⁴⁵

May 16/29, 2014.

⁵⁴⁵ Vostorgov, in S. Fomin & T. Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1993, p. 400.

The Ascension of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

30. 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”.⁵⁴⁶ 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 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

⁵⁴⁶ <http://hotca.org/orthodoxy/theological-texts/532-the-true-orthodox-church-and-the-heresy-of-ecumenism-dogmatic-and-canonical-issues>.

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..."⁵⁴⁷ 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 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

⁵⁴⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/288380224648257/>

“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 Russia 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 Oropo – 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 union. 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”! 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 Russian True Orthodox Church 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" ...⁵⁴⁸

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 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.”⁵⁴⁹

June 29 / July 12, 2014.
Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

⁵⁴⁸ <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=108052>.

⁵⁴⁹ St. Basil the Great, *Letter 156*.

31. THE DORMITION AND WOMEN PRIESTS

Today we celebrate the feast of the Dormition, or Assumption, of the Mother of God, and the greatest glory ever attained, or ever possible of attainment, by a created human being. The All-Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary falls asleep in death, but is immediately resurrected in the flesh and ascends into heaven. She is the only created human being ever to be granted this glory. And she is a woman...

The question immediately arises in the minds of some: if this is so, why should women not be given equal rights with men in all things, and in particular be allowed to become priests?

For the Orthodox the answer to this question is simple: because the Holy Tradition of the Church has quite clearly excluded the possibility. But this answer will not be sufficient for those coming to Orthodoxy from other traditions, nor for that large number of Orthodox who have been significantly influenced by feminist currents of thought. So we need to look into the matter more closely.

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Let us begin with Holy Scripture... Although the Scriptures say nothing specifically about women priests, they do say a lot about the relative roles of men and women which is directly relevant to this question. St. Paul says that he does not allow women to teach in church, nor to exercise any authority over men. For the woman was made from the man and for the man, and not vice-versa. The woman must be in subjection to the man as to her head, and for that reason she must wear a veil or scarf on her head.

The veil is the symbol of the hierarchical, head-body relationship between men and women. The apostle writes: "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head" (I Corinthians 11.7-10).

As St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "The husband, as the image and glory of God amongst creatures, must not cover his head in church, while the wife was taken from the husband later, created, as it were, in accordance with his image, and is therefore the image of the image, or the reflection of the glory of the husband, and must therefore cover herself in church as a sign of subjection to her husband".⁵⁵⁰

This hierarchical, head-body relationship between men and women is important not only in itself, but as symbolizing still higher mysteries. For just as "the head of Christ is God", so Christ is the Head of the Church and "the head of the woman is the man". And just as the Son is "the effulgence of the glory" of the Father and "the impress of His Hypostasis" (Hebrews 1.3; Colossians 1.15), so the woman is "the glory

⁵⁵⁰ St. Theophan, *Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla* (Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), Moscow, 2002, p. 179.

of the man”, “the image of the image”, and yet of the same nature as him.⁵⁵¹ Thus the relationships between the Father and the Son, Christ and the Church and man and woman mirror each other, and are in turn mirrored by the relationship between the head and the body. It follows that the relationship between man and woman has the capacity to illumine for us the relationship between Christ and the Church, and that the structure of the human body is an icon, a likeness of the most spiritual and ineffable mysteries. For just as the head (the man) is lifted above the body (the woman) and rules her, but in love for her and desiring her salvation, so does Christ love and save the Church, His Body – all in obedience to *His Head*, the Father, Who “so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16).

From this perspective we can see that the psychological differences between man and woman reflect the differences in spiritual function between Christ and the Church, and that these differences were implanted in human nature from the beginning, before the fall, precisely in order to mirror the spiritual relationships. The man is physically stronger, more aggressive and more inclined to lead because he, like Christ, must wage war on the devil and rescue the woman (the Church) from his clutches. The woman is more intuitive, compassionate and submissive because she must be sensitive to the will of the man and submit to him in order to make their common struggle easier.

If, in the fall, the man must take the lead, this is not because he is less fallen than the woman, or that only the masculine qualities are necessary for salvation, but because obedience to the hierarchical principle at all levels is the only way out of the fall. For only if the woman obeys the man, and the man obeys Christ, as Christ obeyed the Father, can grace work to heal fallen nature and restore “glory” to the fallen lower levels of the hierarchy. Only if the man disobeys Christ, and demands that the woman follow him in his disobedience, must she disobey him out of obedience to Christ. In this case the hierarchical principle has been violated at one level (the level of the man), but remains intact at another (the level of the woman).

Although the woman is placed at the bottom of this hierarchy, she can be united with the very top. For, as St. Paulinus of Nola says: “We might say that she is placed at the base to support that body’s chain which is linked to God by the head of Christ, to Christ by the head of man, and to man by the head of woman. But Christ makes woman also belong to the head at the top by making her part of the body and of the structure of the limbs, for in Christ we are neither male nor female...”⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria: “Because the woman is the likeness of the man and the image of the image, and the glory of the glory, he admonishes her to nourish the hair on her head on account of her nature. And yet why would the former begrudge grace to the latter, especially as the woman herself displays the image and likeness of God? But nevertheless she does so in a sense through the man, because the nature of the woman differs in some small way” (*P.G.* 74, pp. 881-884). And Blessed Theodoretus writes: “He is called the image of God on account of being entrusted with dominion over all things on earth. The woman, on the other hand, being placed under the authority of the man, is the glory of the man, just as she is also the image of the image. Now she herself also rules other things, but is justly subjected to the man” (*Commentary on I Corinthians 11*, *P.G.* 82, pp. 309-314).

⁵⁵² St. Paulinus of Nola, *Letter 23: To Severus*, 24, 25.

Thus there is neither male nor female in Christ not in the sense that sexual differences cease to have any importance in Christ, but that if each sex carries out his or her differentiated role in love in accordance with the will of God, there will be complete harmony and unity throughout the hierarchy, and an “interchange of qualities” will take place, not only between God and man, but also between man and woman, with the result that God will be “all in all” (I Corinthians 15.28).

Turning now to Holy Tradition, we note that from the beginning the Church clearly and decisively excluded women from the priesthood. Thus in the early third century, Tertullian and the compiler of the *Didascalía* confirm this ban with specific reference to the performance of the sacraments. Thus the *Didascalía* says: “That a woman should baptize, or that one should be baptized by a woman, we do not counsel, for it is a transgression of the commandment, and a great peril to her who baptizes and to him who is baptized. For if it were lawful to be baptized by a woman, our Lord and Teacher Himself would have been baptized by Mary His Mother, whereas He was baptized by John, like others of the people. Do not therefore imperil yourselves, brethren and sisters, by acting beside the law of the Gospel.”

We find the same teaching in the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*: “Now, as to women’s baptizing, we let you know that there is no small peril to those that undertake it. Therefore we do not advise you to do it; for it is dangerous, or rather wicked and impious. For if the ‘man be the head of the woman’, and he be originally ordained for the priesthood, it is not just to abrogate the order of the creation...”⁵⁵³

These admonitions were considered necessary because, as Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) writes, “various schismatic groups in the second and fourth centuries had women as priests and bishops: the Gnostic Marcosians, for example, and the Montanists, and the Collyridians. When referring to these last, St. Epiphanius (d. 403) examines at length the possibility of women priests. ‘Since the beginning of time,’ he states, ‘a woman has never served God as a priest.’ (He means, of course, in the Old Testament; he knew there were priestesses in the pagan fertility cults.) In the New Testament, although we find female prophets (Luke 2.36; Acts 21.9), no woman is ever an apostle, bishop, or presbyter. Christ had many women among His immediate followers – Mary his mother, Salome and others from Galilee, Martha and Mary the sisters of Lazarus – yet on none of them did he confer the apostolate or priesthood. ‘That there exists in the Church an order of deaconesses is undisputed; but they are not allowed to perform any priestly functions.’ Besides deaconesses, the Church has also orders of widows and old women; but we never find ‘female presbyters or priestesses’. ‘After so many generations’ Christians cannot now start ordaining priestesses for the first time. Such, then, is Epiphanius’ conclusion concerning women and the ministerial priesthood: ‘God never appointed to this ministry a single woman upon earth’.”⁵⁵⁴

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⁵⁵³ This and the previous quotation from Patrick Mitchell, *The Scandal of Gender: Early Christian Teaching on the Man and the Woman*, Salisbury, Ma.: Regina Orthodox Press, 1998, pp. 49-50.

⁵⁵⁴ Ware, “Man, Woman, and the Priesthood of Christ”, in Peter Moore (ed.), *Man, Woman, Priesthood*, London: SPCK, 1978, pp. 75-76.

The matter appeared to be settled, and in none of the mainstream Churches – Orthodox, Monophysite, Catholic or Protestant – was it seriously discussed again until the twentieth century. But then the Anglican Church – always exceptionally sensitive and responsive to modernist currents of thought – put it back on the agenda. And now, as is well known, it has women bishops and priests.

Let us examine the response of the famous Anglican layman, C.S. Lewis, to this proposal when it first came up.⁵⁵⁵

“At first,” writes Lewis, “all the rationality... is on the side of the innovators. We are short of priests. We have discovered in one profession after another that women can do very well all sorts of things which were once supposed to be in the power of men alone. No one among those who dislike the proposal is maintaining that women are less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning and whatever else seems necessary for the pastoral office. What, then, except prejudice begotten by tradition, forbids us to draw on the huge reserves which could pour into the priesthood if women were here, as in so many professions, put on the same footing as men? And against this flood of common sense, the opposers (many of them women) can produce at first nothing but an inarticulate distaste, a sense of discomfort which they themselves find it hard to analyse...”

Lewis then dismisses the idea that this discomfort comes from any contempt for women. He cites the extreme veneration for the Holy Virgin in the Catholic tradition, which nevertheless rejects the idea of women priests. And he says that there were prophetesses – whom he identifies as “female preachers” – in both the Old and the New Testaments.

“At this point the common sensible reformer is apt to ask why, if women can preach, they cannot do all the rest of a priest’s work. This question deepens the discomfort of my side. We begin to feel that what really divides us from our opponents is a difference between the meaning which they and we give to the word ‘priest’. The more they speak (and speak truly) about the competence of women in administration, their tact and sympathy as advisers, their natural talent for ‘visiting’, the more we feel that the central thing is being forgotten. To us a priest is primarily a representative, a double representative, who represents us to God and God to us. Our very eyes teach us this in church. Sometimes the priest turns his back on us and faces the East – he speaks to God for us: sometimes he faces us and speaks to us for God. We have no objection to a woman doing the first [sic]: the whole difficulty is about the second. But why? Why should a woman not in this sense represent God? Certainly not because she is necessarily, or even probably, less holy or less charitable or stupider than a man. In that sense she may be as ‘God-like’ as a man; and a given woman much more so than a given man. The sense in which she cannot represent God will perhaps be plainer if we look at the thing the other way round.

⁵⁵⁵ This can be found in an article Lewis wrote for *Time and Tide* in 1948, which was republished in his *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, London: HarperCollins, 2002, pp. 398-402.

“Suppose the reformer stops saying that a good woman may be like God and begins saying that God is like a good woman. Suppose he says that we might just as well pray to ‘Our Mother which art in Heaven’ as to ‘Our Father’. Suppose he suggests that the Incarnation might just as well have taken a female as a male form, and the Second Person of the Trinity be as well called the Daughter as the Son. Suppose, finally, that the mystical marriage were reversed, that the Church were the Bridegroom and Christ the Bride. All this, as it seems to me, is involved in the claim that a woman can represent God as a priest does.

“Now it is surely the case that if all these supposals were ever carried into effect we should be embarked on a different religion. Goddesses have, of course, been worshipped: many religions have had priestesses. But they are religions quite different in character from Christianity. Common sense, disregarding the discomfort, or even the horror, which the idea of turning all our theological language into the feminine gender arouses in most Christians, will ask ‘Why not? Since God is in fact not a biological being and has no sex, what can it matter whether we say *He* or *She*, *Father* or *Mother*, *Son* or *Daughter*?’

“But Christians think that God Himself has taught us how to speak of Him. To say that it does not matter is to say either that all the masculine imagery is not inspired, is merely human in origin, or else that, though inspired, it is quite arbitrary and unessential. And this is surely intolerable: or, if tolerable, it is an argument not in favour of Christian priestesses but against Christianity. It is also surely based on a shallow view of imagery. Without drawing upon religion, we know from our poetical experience that image and apprehension cleave closer together than common sense is here prepared to admit; that a child who had been taught to pray to a Mother in Heaven would have a religious life radically different from that of a Christian child. And as image and apprehension are in an organic unity, so, for a Christian, are human body and human soul.

“The innovators are really implying that sex is something superficial, irrelevant to the spiritual life. To say that men and women are equally eligible for a certain profession is to say that for the purposes of that profession their sex is irrelevant. We are, within this context, treating both as neuters. As the State grows more like a hive or an ant-hill it needs an increasing number of workers who can be treated as neuters. This may be inevitable for our secular life. But in our Christian life we must return to reality. There we are not homogeneous units, but different and complementary organs of a mystical body... The point is that unless ‘equal’ means ‘interchangeable’, equality makes nothing for the priesthood of women. And the kind of equality which implies that the equals are interchangeable (like counters or identical machines) is, among humans, a legal fiction. It may be a useful legal fiction, but in church we turn our back on fictions. One of the ends for which sex was created was to symbolize to us the hidden things of God. One of the functions of human marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the Church. We have no authority to take the living and seminal figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were geometrical figures.

“This is what common sense will call ‘mystical’. Exactly. The Church claims to be the bearer of a revelation. If that claim is false then we want not to make priestesses but to abolish priests. If it is true, then we would expect to find in the Church an element which unbelievers will call irrational and which believers will call suprarational...”

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Let us now return to the Orthodox tradition in order to learn more about what this suprarational element is... As Lewis rightly says, one of the functions of human marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the Church. Still more fundamentally, as we have seen, the male-female relationship is symbolic of the relationship between the Creator and His creation. Just as Eve came from Adam and was dependent on him for her existence, so the creation comes from the Creator and is dependent on Him for everything. Of course, this dependence is much greater in the case of the Creator/creature relationship: the creature was created out of nothing by the Creator, whereas Eve came from the already existing being of Adam. Moreover, she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones, whereas the material universe has nothing in common with the nature of God. Nevertheless, the analogy exists. And it became much closer when the Creator became one of His own creatures, taking on flesh from the Virgin. Now He is the New Adam, and she – the New Eve. He is flesh of her flesh and bone of her bones. He is the head, and she – the body. He is the Bridegroom, and she – the Bride.

By meditating on the mystery of sexuality in its unfallen, what we may call pristine form, we come closer to understanding the higher Mystery of the Incarnation, and of the whole salvific economy of God in relation to man. It teaches us that the relationship between God and man is one of hierarchy and dominance, but at the same time of sacrifice and love. God is incomparably greater and higher than man; and the well-being of man consists in his voluntary and heart-felt submission to the will of God in all things – “be it unto me in accordance with Thy will”. But even when man goes against the will of God his Creator, and falls into the dark realm of estrangement, corruption and death, God shows that He is not only the Creator but also the Saviour, not only the Lord but also the Bridegroom. He forsakes His position of dominance in order to take on the form of a servant, descends to the depths of man’s estrangement, and saves him from death through His sacrificial love. This is romance – but romance on a cosmic scale, not the cheap, novelistic kind, but the heroic, suffering kind that pays the ultimate price for the sake of the ultimate prize – the salvation of the Beloved.

Now the role of Christ as the Saviour of the Church is precisely the role of the priest in relation to his flock. This role is explained in detail in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, whose main theme is the nature of the New Testament priesthood and its relationship to the old. Christ the Great High Priest pleads for the forgiveness and salvation of mankind with God the Father. For the forgiveness of men’s sins, He becomes man, defeats the devil and offers His human nature in sacrifice to the Holy Trinity. The priesthood of the New Testament Church is precisely Christ’s priesthood; the ordinary human priest is not simply imitating Christ in his priesthood, he *is* Christ; the symbol does not simply mirror reality, it becomes reality.

And that is why the symbol cannot be changed. Merely conventional symbols can be changed. For example, the colour green could cease to be a symbol for “go” and become a symbol instead for “red” – if everyone agreed. But the symbolism that God has implanted in creation from the beginning as symbolizing His eternal mysteries cannot be changed, just as the mysteries themselves cannot be changed. And so even if everyone agreed that women could now serve as priests, the reality of God’s order and God’s creation would remain the same: the only difference would be that now there would be no true priests on earth...

The greatness of the Mother of God consists in the fact that in her life, death and resurrection from the dead she perfectly exemplified and symbolized, not the Priesthood of Christ, but the perfect attainment and consummation of the Great High Priest’s aim and desire. God became man on earth in order to carry out the work of a priest, in order that men should be forgiven, justified and deified, and should ascend with Him to sit at the right hand of the Father in glory. The Dormition of the Mother of God shows that aim achieved, the first and most glorious fruit of the mystery of the Christian priesthood.

And yet, paradoxically, it was precisely by her refusing to take the man’s role, and by submitting in all things to her Bridegroom that the Holy Virgin acquired the title by which the Orthodox know her of “Despoina”, “Mistress” – the Mistress of all creation, almost on a par with the “Despotis”, the Master.

Moreover, we can say that just as a priest cannot perform the Divine Liturgy without the presence of at least one member of the laity and without the offering of the gifts of bread and wine by the laity, so the Priesthood of Christ would not have been possible without the Holy Virgin’s offering of her body to become the dwelling-place of her Son. For without her humble assent, “Be it unto me according to Thy word”, the Son of God could not have become the Son of man in her womb, the gulf created by sin between the Creator and His creation could not have been bridged, and we all would still be in sin and death...

That is why an ancient Anglo-Saxon homily on the feast of the Dormition says that it “incomparably surpasses the feast-days of all the other saints” and continues: “On this heavenly queen’s ascent the Holy Spirit gave glory in hymns, asking: ‘Who is this that here ascends like the rising dawn, as beautiful as the moon, as choice as the sun, as terrible as a warlike band?’ (Song of Songs 6.9). The Holy Spirit wondered, for He caused all Heaven’s inhabitants to wonder at this Virgin’s upward journey. Mary is more beautiful than the moon because she shines without intermission of brightness; she is choice as the sun with rays of exalted power because the Lord, Who is the Sun of righteousness, chose her for a parent; her journey is comparable to a warlike band because she was escorted by heavenly potentates and companies of angels.”

For “it was fitting”, as St. John of Damascus says, “that she who had nourished the Creator as an Infant at the breast should find shelter in His heavenly mansions. It was fitting that the Bride the Father had promised in marriage should dwell in the heavenly bridal-chambers. It was fitting that she who had beheld her Son upon the Cross, and

had received in her heart the sword of pain she had escaped in childbirth, should now look upon Him sitting next to the Father. Lastly, it was fitting that the Mother of God should receive back her Son, and as Mother of God receive the veneration of all creatures. For though the inheritance of parents ever passes on to the children, now, however, to use the words of the wise man (Ecclesiastes 1.7), the fountains of the sacred rivers turn back 'from whence they came': for the Son has made all creation the servant of His Mother."⁵⁵⁶

August 19 / September 1, 2014.

Afterfeast of the Dormition.

Holy Martyr Andrew the General and those with him.

⁵⁵⁶ St. John of Damascus, *Second Homily on the Dormition*, 14.

32. WHY ORTHODOXY AND EVOLUTIONISM ARE INCOMPATIBLE

Pope Francis has recently declared that he believes in evolutionary theory and the Big Bang. "God is not a divine being or a magician," he said to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, "but the Creator who brought everything to life. Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation, because evolution requires the creation of beings that evolve."

With these words the Pope has completed a process in Roman Catholicism that began at the Second Vatican Council, when the door was opened to all kinds of modernist ideas.⁵⁵⁷ Pope John-Paul II took this process a giant step forward by immersing Roman Catholicism in the ecumenical movement, and by declaring that evolution was true as regards the body of man, but not as regards his soul. It appears that Pope Francis has removed even this qualification...

The soul is of course the greatest stumbling-block to any evolutionist theory, however modified and upgraded. According to Orthodoxy, the soul is not made of organic or inorganic matter, was breathed into man's body by God at the time of his creation, and remains fully functional and immortal after the death of the body. There is no way this teaching can be harmonized with the evolutionist theory accepted by most modern scientists. For how could an immortal soul derived from corruptible matter, rationality from irrationality, freewill from necessity? The answer is: they can't; for these are incompatible categories.

However, there are several other dogmatic teachings of the Church that are incompatible with evolutionism. Thus evolutionism rests on the idea of chance; but the Holy Fathers from St. Basil the Great to St. Ignaty Brianchaninov all rejected this idea. "Theological evolutionists" try to combine the ideas of chance and Divine creation. But an event is either "caused" by chance or it is caused by God - it cannot be both! Even if "chance" is redefined in terms of probability and conditionality, as some evolutionists try to do, this does not make nature any the less a chance phenomenon. But if we accept that nature came into being by chance, we are denying that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Creation and chance, however redefined, are incompatible categories.

In order to give their theories even a semblance of plausibility, the theological evolutionists have to make a distinction between an initial act of creation and the later development of that act, its consequences in history. So God produced the Big Bang, they say, but evolution developed the consequences of the Big Bang into the universe we see before us now. This appears to be what the Pope is doing when he says, on the one hand, that God brought everything to life, and on the other, that these creatures then evolved...

⁵⁵⁷ According to one source (<http://time.com/3545844/pope-francis-evolution-creationism>), the process goes still further back, to Pope Pius XII's 1950 encyclical "Humani Generis". However, real change in the consciousness of ordinary Catholics only began after Vatican II.

In essence, this is simply a variation on the theory of the eighteenth century Deists, who compared the universe to a clock that God creates and winds up, but which he then allows to tick away without any further intervention from Himself. Theoretically, he might interfere occasionally in the form of miraculous events, but in practice the Deists did not believe in miracles... Similarly, while the Pope allows that God caused the Big Bang, he does not see the need for any further miracles - after all, "God is not a magician"...

Deism at least has the virtue of clearly delineating where God's creativity begins and where it ends: that is, He creates at the very beginning, but abstains thereafter. And theological evolutionists claim support for this view from the fact that, according to Genesis, God rested from His works on the seventh day... However, the Orthodox interpretation of this seventh day is that it signifies God's ceasing to create any *new species*. Man, created on the sixth day, is the last stage and crown of His creation, and He did not create anything *essentially* new thereafter. But this does not mean that He has ceased to create at all, and He maintains and develops what He created in the first six days in accordance with His creative Power and Wisdom; for as the Creator Himself said: "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5.17?)

Some idea of creation in the beginning will probably continue to remain on the table of human thought, if only because not even evolutionists can explain how the initial ball of matter that exploded, supposedly, 13.8 billion years ago, came into being, let alone how it produced the vast variety and complexity of the universe, including the Works of Shakespeare and even the Theory of Evolution. For nothing comes from nothing: only God can produce something out of nothing. But what seems common sense to the ordinary human being is anything but to today's scientists. Thus according to the most famous of contemporary scientists, Stephen Hawking, the universe owes its origin to a chance quantum fluctuation. David Wilkinson, a physicist and Methodist minister, in a book on Stephen Hawking writes that the universe arose by "a chance quantum fluctuation from a state of absolute nothing... Quantum theory deals with events which do not have deterministic causes. By applying quantum theory to the universe, Hawking is saying that the event that triggered the Big Bang did not have a cause. In this way, science is able not only to encompass the laws of evolution but also the initial conditions."⁵⁵⁸

The idea that the whole, vast, infinitely varied universe should come from a chance quantum fluctuation is unbelievable (and certainly undemonstrable). But still more unbelievable is the idea that the quantum fluctuation itself should come out of absolute nothing. For we repeat: nothing comes from nothing. To say that the quantum fluctuation is not deterministically caused is just a play with words that does not resolve the problem. Existing things can owe their existence only to "The One Who Exists" (Exodus 3.14) par excellence, Who is "the Beginning of every beginning" (I Chronicles 29.12) and Who said: "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8.58)...

⁵⁵⁸ Wilkinson, *God, Time and Stephen Hawking*, London: Monarch Books, 2001, p. 104.

The introduction of some Scriptural quotations brings us up with the question: to what degree, if at all, is Holy Scripture compatible with evolution?

Now Orthodox Christians - unlike post-Vatican II Roman Catholics and Protestants - have the obligation to interpret Holy Scripture, not in accordance with their own ideas, but strictly in accord with the writings of the Holy Fathers. For, as St. Peter says: "No scripture is of private interpretation" (II Peter 1.20). And as far as the teaching of the Holy Fathers is concerned, Fr. Seraphim Rose in his excellent book, *Genesis and the Creation of Man*, has clearly demonstrated that their interpretation of the creation story is incompatible with that of the evolutionists, including the theological evolutionists and their pseudo-allegorical interpretations.

Nevertheless, for the sake of those who are not familiar with the patristic interpretation of Genesis, or who are inclined to think that the Holy Fathers were uneducated men who were led astray by their ignorance of science, let us approach the question from a purely commonsensical, logical point of view, without referring to patristic interpretations.

There are several basic problems that any attempt to reconcile Holy Scripture with evolutionism come up against:

- (a) Holy Scripture says that "God did not create death" (Wisdom 1.13), that He created all species as "very good" from the beginning and so did not need to keep changing them by means of evolution over billions of years. Death was not there in the beginning, and appeared only as the result of the sin of Adam: "Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death" (Romans 5.12). So without sin, and without the possibility of the commission of sin by a free, morally responsible man, death would not have appeared (animals cannot sin). Evolutionism, on the other hand, asserts that death was there immediately there appeared organic matter that was capable of dying (for inorganic matter is already dead), and that death was the very engine of evolution insofar as mutation and natural selection are in essence destructive, *death-dealing* processes. So for Holy Scripture life proceeded from Life, and death intervened only when the man turned away from Life, whereas for evolutionism life proceeded from death, the creation of life from the destruction of life. To the present writer's knowledge, no attempt to reconcile this contradiction has yet been made that is in the slightest degree plausible. From a commonsensical, logical point of view, it makes much more sense to suppose that life proceeds from Life, rather than that life comes from death...
- (b) At a certain point, according to both Holy Scripture and evolutionism, the first fully human man appeared on earth. For Holy Scripture, he was made from clay, water and the inbreathing of God. For the evolutionists, however, he must have appeared through the sexual intercourse of two apes (or Neanderthals). The contradiction is obvious, and cannot be obviated by supposing that the clay and water of the Scriptural account were in fact the embryo of the first man in the

womb of his mother. Moreover, for the continuance of the new species, Homo Sapiens, it was necessary, according to the evolutionist account, for *both* a male *and* a female of the new species to come into being *at the same time and place* in order to mate and produce offspring. But, the creation of a male of the new species requires very many specific genetic changes (mutations), and the creation of a female of the species equally requires very many specific genetic changes – but different ones, ones that must be complementary to those of the male. The likelihood of this ever happening by chance – that is, all the complementary genetic changes of both the male and the female taking place *in one generation* – is extraordinarily small. But if all these multiple and complementary genetic changes do not take place in one generation, then the reproductive process cannot take place and the species dies out immediately. Moreover, we are talking here only about the very many differences between the sexual reproductive apparatus of the higher apes and man. As we know, there are very many other differences – not least in the size and capacity of the human brain, which is much larger than the chimp's, necessitating a much larger birth canal in the female of the human species – that distinguish the two species and which have to come into being *at the same time and place* in both a male and a female of the old species. Generally speaking, sexuality is one of the most powerful arguments against evolutionism. By comparison, the Scriptural account of the creation of Eve from Adam by parthenogenesis (a process found in other animal species) looks much simpler and more plausible.

- (c) The difficulties of harmonizing the Scriptural account of the creation of man with the evolutionist account are so great that most theological evolutionists abandon the idea that Adam and Eve were specific people. However, it is clear from the Scriptures that Christ, St. Paul and St. John all believed in Adam and Eve as real people and not as abstractions for male and female humanity. The question then becomes a question of authority: whose authority is greater: that of Christ and the Apostles, or that of Darwin and his followers? For a Christian who believes that Christ is none other than the Way, the Truth and the Life, *God incarnate*, there is only one possible answer. To think that Christ could be mistaken about anything whatsoever is equivalent to rejecting Christianity altogether...
- (d) If Adam and Eve were not real people, as most theological evolutionists are forced to conclude, then the further question arises: when did the roll-call of names in the genealogy of Luke 3, for example, cease to refer to abstractions or fictions and begin to refer to real people? With Noah? Or Abraham? Or Moses? But again, the Lord, the Truth incarnate, referred to Noah, Abraham and Moses as real people. And the Apostles John and Jude referred to Cain and Abel, and to Enoch, as real people... It seems that the evolutionist who does not reject the early chapters of Genesis or Luke 3 as no more than an instructive fairy-tale has to draw an entirely arbitrary line beyond which symbols and abstractions suddenly became real people...
- (e) The case of Noah and the universal flood of his time – confirmed as fact by the Lord and the Apostle Peter – is especially critical, because the existence of the

flood provides a much simpler and more comprehensive account of the fossil evidence than does Darwinism. Moreover, the plausibility of Darwinism rests on the assumption of uniformitarianism, that is, on the idea that no universal, cataclysmic events like the flood have taken place since the earth was formed. For if such events did occur, then the dating methods the evolutionists use to date the fossils have to be discarded, since they rest on uniformitarian assumptions... But St. Nektary of Optina (+1928) pointed out that fossils had been found on the tops of the mountains, which appears to presuppose the existence of a universal flood that deposited them there. And creationist scientists in our time have pointed to a mass of evidence from various scientific disciplines that confirms the historicity of the flood.

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But let us return to the greatest stumbling block to evolution, the soul, and to those attributes of the soul that make it wholly incommensurate with anything in the material created universe: rationality, freedom and morality. It is these attributes above all that are referred to by the Holy Spirit when He says that God created man "in His own image" (Genesis 1.26). For only God, being completely beyond space, time and matter, can be said to be truly rational, free and good; and man is said to be made in His image precisely because he, unlike the rest of material creation, partakes to a degree in these truly Divine attributes.

It was the implicit denial of the rational, free and moralizing soul that particularly shocked the early critics of Darwinism. For as Darwinism rapidly evolved from a purely biological theory of origins into universal evolutionism going back to what scientists now call the Big Bang, the image of man that emerged was not simply animalian but completely material: man was made in the image, not of God, but of dead matter. Moreover, evolutionism turned out to be a "new" explanation of the origins of the universe that was in fact very old and very pagan. For "all things were made" now, not by God the Word ("the Word" or "Logos" here can also be translated as "Reason"), but by blind mutation and "natural selection" (i.e. death). These were the two hands of original Chaos, the father of all things - a conception as old as the pre-Socratic philosophers Anaximander and Heraclitus and as retrogressive as the pre-Christian religions of Egypt and Babylon.

Darwin's idea of species evolving into and from each other also recalls the Hindu idea of reincarnation. A more likely contemporary influence, however, was Schopenhauer's philosophy of Will. For both Schopenhauer and Darwin the blind, selfish Will to live was everything; for both there was neither intelligent design nor selfless love, but only the struggle to survive; for both the best that mankind could hope for was not Paradise but a kind of Buddhist nirvana.

Schopenhauer in metaphysics, Darwin in science, and Marx in political theory formed a kind of unholy consubstantial trinity, whose essence was *Will*.⁵⁵⁹ Marx liked Darwinism because it appeared to justify the idea of class struggle as the fundamental mechanism of human evolution. "The idea of class struggle logically flows from 'the law of the struggle for existence'. It is precisely by this law that Marxism explains the emergence of classes and their struggle, whence logically proceeds the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead of racist pre-eminence class pre-eminence is preached."⁵⁶⁰

However, Darwinism was also congenial to Marxism because of its blind historicism and implicit atheism. As Richard Wurmbrand notes: "After Marx had read *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, he wrote a letter to Lassalle in which he exults that God - in the natural sciences at least - had been given 'the death blow'".⁵⁶¹ "Karl Marx," writes Hieromonk Damascene, "was a devout Darwinist, who in *Das Kapital* called Darwin's theory 'epoch making'. He believed his reductionist, materialistic theories of the evolution of social organization to be deducible from Darwin's discoveries, and thus proposed to dedicate *Das Kapital* to Darwin. The funeral oration over Marx's body, delivered by Engels, stressed the evolutionary basis of communism: 'Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history.'"⁵⁶²

"The years after 1870," writes Gareth Stedman Jones, "were dominated by the prestige of the natural sciences, especially that of Darwin. Playing to these preoccupations, Engels presented Marx's work, not as a theory of communism or as a study of capitalism, but as the foundation of a parallel 'science of historical materialism'. Socialism had made a transition from 'utopia' to 'science'..."⁵⁶³

Not only Marxism, but also its ideological rival, capitalism, found support in Darwinism. For Darwinism can be seen as the application of the principles of capitalist competition to nature. Thus Bertrand Russell writes: "Darwinism was an application to the whole of animal and vegetable life of Malthus's theory of population, which was an integral part of the politics and economics of the Benthamites - a global free competition, in which victory went to the animals that most resembled successful capitalists. Darwin himself was influenced by Malthus, and was in general sympathy with the Philosophical Radicals. There was, however, a great difference between the competition admired by orthodox economists and the struggle for existence which Darwin proclaimed as the motive force of evolution. 'Free competition,' in orthodox economics, is a very artificial conception, hedged in by legal restrictions. You may undersell a competitor, but you must not murder him. You must not use the armed forces of the State to help you to get the better of foreign

⁵⁵⁹ Marx's task was "to convert the 'Will' of German philosophy and this abstraction into a force in the practical world" (A.N. Wilson, *After the Victorians*, London: Hutchinson, 2005, p. 126).

⁵⁶⁰ Fr. Timothy Alferov, *Pravoslavnoe Mirovozzrenie i Sovremennoe Estestvoznanie* (The Orthodox World-View and the Contemporary Science of Nature), Moscow: "Palomnik", 1998, p. 158.

⁵⁶¹ Wurmbrand, *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?*, Diane Books (USA), 1976, p. 44.

⁵⁶² Hieromonk Damascene, in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2000, p. 339, note.

⁵⁶³ Gareth Jones, "The Routes of Revolution", *BBC History Magazine*, vol. 3 (6), June, 2002, p. 36.

manufacturers. Those who have the good fortune to possess capital must not seek to improve their lot by revolution. 'Free competition', as understood by the Benthamites, was by no means really free.

"Darwinian competition was not of this limited sort; there were no rules against hitting below the belt. The framework of law does not exist among animals, nor is war excluded as a competitive method. The use of the State to secure victory in competition was against the rules as conceived by the Benthamites, but could not be excluded from the Darwinian struggle. In fact, though Darwin himself was a Liberal, and though Nietzsche never mentions him except with contempt, Darwin's 'Survival of the Fittest' led, when thoroughly assimilated, to something much more like Nietzsche's philosophy than like Bentham's. These developments, however, belong to a later period, since Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, and its political implications were not at first perceived..."⁵⁶⁴

And yet the repulsive implications of Darwin's theory were obvious to contemporary Orthodox saints. Thus St. Barsanuphius of Optina wrote: "The English philosopher Darwin created an entire system according to which life is a struggle for existence, a struggle of the strong against the weak, where those that are conquered are doomed to destruction and the conquerors are triumphant. This is already the beginning of a bestial philosophy..."⁵⁶⁵

Again, St. Nectarios of Aegina wrote in 1885: "The followers of pithecogeny [the derivation of man from the apes] are ignorant of man and of his lofty destiny, because they have denied him his soul and Divine revelation. They have rejected the Spirit, and the Spirit has abandoned them. They withdrew from God, and God withdrew from them; for, thinking they were wise, they became fools... If they had acted with knowledge, they would not have lowered themselves so much, nor would they have taken pride in tracing the origin of the human race to the most shameless of animals. Rightly did the Prophet say of them: 'Man being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the dumb beasts, and is become like unto them.'"⁵⁶⁶

As for the political implications of Darwin's book, they are obvious from its full title: *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the struggle for life*. Darwin did not mean by "races" races of men, but species of animals. However, the inference was easily drawn that certain races of men are more "favoured" than others; and this inference was still more easily drawn after the publication of *The Descent of Man* in 1871. Very soon different races or classes or groups of men were being viewed as if they were different species. "Applied to politics," writes Jacques Barzun, "[Darwinism] bred the doctrine that nations and other social groups struggle endlessly in order that the fittest shall survive. So attractive was this 'principle' that it got the name of Social Darwinism."⁵⁶⁷ Thus Social Darwinism may

⁵⁶⁴ Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946, pp. 807-808.

⁵⁶⁵ Victor Afanasyev, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina*, Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 488.

⁵⁶⁶ St. Nectarios, *Sketch concerning Man*, Athens, 1885.

⁵⁶⁷ Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Perennial, 2000, pp. 571-572.

be defined as the idea that "human affairs are a jungle in which only the fittest of nations, classes, or individuals will survive".⁵⁶⁸

Social Darwinism leads to the conclusion that certain races are congenitally superior to others. "Only congenital characteristics are inherited," writes Russell, "apart from certain not very important exceptions. Thus the congenital differences between men acquire fundamental importance."⁵⁶⁹ As Fr. Timothy Alferov writes: "The ideas of racial pre-eminence - racism, Hitlerism - come from the Darwinist teaching on the origin of the races and their unequal significance. The law of the struggle for existence supposedly obliges the strong races to exert a strong dominance over the other races, to the extent of destroying the latter. It is not necessary to describe here the incarnation of these ideas in life in the example of Hitlerism, but it is worth noting that Hitler greatly venerated Darwin."⁵⁷⁰

However, while appearing to widen the differences between races of men, Social Darwinism also *reduces* them between men and other species - with some startling consequences. Thus Russell writes: "If men and animals have a common ancestry, and if men developed by such slow stages that there were creatures which we should not know whether to classify as human or not, the question arises: at what stage in evolution did men, or their semi-human ancestors, begin to be all equal? Would Pithecanthropus erectus, if he had been properly educated, have done work as good as Newton's? Would the Piltdown Men have written Shakespeare's poetry if there had been anybody to convict him of poaching? A resolute egalitarian who answers these questions in the affirmative will find himself forced to regard apes as the equals of human beings. And why stop at apes? I do not see how he is to resist an argument in favour of Votes for Oysters. An adherent of evolution should maintain that not only the doctrine of the equality of all men, but also that of the rights of man, must be condemned as unbiological, since it makes too emphatic a distinction between men and other animals."⁵⁷¹

Arthur Balfour, who became British Prime Minister in 1902, described the world-view that universal evolutionism proclaimed as follows: "A man - so far as natural science is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the Heaven-descended heir of all the ages. His very existence is an accident, his story a brief and transitory episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. Of the combination of causes which first converted a dead organic compound into the living progenitors of humanity, science indeed, as yet knows nothing. It is enough that from such beginnings famine, disease, and mutual slaughter, fit nurses of the future lords of creation, have gradually evolved after infinite travail, a race with conscience enough to feel that it is vile, and intelligent enough to know that it is insignificant. We survey the past, and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild

⁵⁶⁸ Norman Davies, *Europe*, London: Pimlico, 1997, p. 794.

⁵⁶⁹ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 753.

⁵⁷⁰ Alferov, *Pravoslavnoe Mirovozzrenie i Sovremennoe Estesvoznanie* (The Orthodox World-View and the Contemporary Science of Nature), Moscow: "Palomnik", 1998, pp. 157-158.

⁵⁷¹ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 753. A British television programme once seriously debated the question whether apes should have the same rights as human beings, and came to a positive conclusion... See Joanna Bourke, *What it Means to be Human*, London: Virago, 2011.

revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish...⁵⁷²

A truly melancholy philosophy – but fortunately there is no reason to believe in it. C.S. Lewis wrote: "By universal evolutionism I mean the belief that the very formula of universal process is from imperfect to perfect, from small beginnings to great endings, from the rudimentary to the elaborate, the belief which makes people find it natural to think that morality springs from savage taboos, adult sentiment from infantile sexual maladjustments, thought from instinct, mind from matter, organic from inorganic, cosmos from chaos. This is perhaps the deepest habit of mind in the contemporary world. It seems to me immensely implausible, because it makes the general course of nature so very unlike those parts of nature we can observe. You remember the old puzzle as to whether the owl came from the egg or the egg from the owl. The modern acquiescence in universal evolutionism is a kind of optical illusion, produced by attending exclusively to the owl's emergence from the egg. We are taught from childhood to notice how the perfect oak grows from the acorn and to forget that the acorn itself was dropped by a perfect oak. We are reminded constantly that the adult human being was an embryo, never that the life of the embryo came from two adult human beings. We love to notice that the express engine of today is the descendant of the 'Rocket'; we do not equally remember that the 'Rocket' springs not from some even more rudimentary engine, but from something much more perfect and complicated than itself – namely, a man of genius. The obviousness or naturalness which most people seem to find in the idea of emergent evolution thus seems to be a pure hallucination...⁵⁷³

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So: “immensely implausible” and “pure hallucination” – this is the verdict of this most gifted and learned of Western Christian writers on evolutionism, a verdict shared today by increasing numbers of scientists from various disciplines...

And yet the great majority of contemporary mankind, including most Christians and most scientists, still believes in this foundation myth of our age. In searching for an explanation of this fact, we should remember the words of the Lord: “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God” ([John](#) 7.17). In other words, truth is given to those who practice the good as far as they are able. “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” ([John](#) 3.20).

⁵⁷² Balfour, *The Foundations of Belief*, 1895, pp. 30-31; in Wilson, *The Victorians*, London: Hutchinson, 2002, p. 557.

⁵⁷³ Lewis, "Is Theology Poetry?", in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, New York: Macmillan, 1949.

And if it be objected that these words cannot be applied to many evolutionists, who are very moral and honourable people, then it should be remembered that even such “respectable” sins as conformism and wanting to be honoured by others is sufficient to alienate us from the truth. For “how can you believe, who receive honour from one another and do not seek the honour that comes from the only God?” (John 5.44). For why is it that the vast majority of men, even the most intelligent, accept the prevailing belief-system of their age, even when its falsehood is so evident to succeeding generations? Because they “receive honour from one another”, and fear to lose that honour (and perhaps also positions and salaries) if they depart from the prevailing consensus, or look too closely into its shaky foundations. For most men are like the parents of the blind man whom Christ healed, “who said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was the Christ he would be put out of the synagogue” (John 9.22).

The synagogue of those who hold the prevailing belief-system is extremely powerful in any age, not least in our own, which, while seeming to honour freedom, creativity and non-conformism, actually restricts them within very definite limits. Nor is it necessary to imprison or physically abuse non-conformists in order to bring them into line. Thus those who believe that homosexuality is immoral and unnatural (which is obvious) are considered to be haters of men, lacking in compassion, bigots. And those who reject evolution are considered to be unintelligent, flat-earthers, “behind the times”, “unscientific”, even enemies of progress. In practice we see that very few are able to resist such social pressures.

Which brings us to the fundamental reason why evolutionists accept the lie: “because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved”. It is because of this lack of love of the truth above all that God “sends them a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie” (II Thessalonians 2.10-11). For in the last resort those who do not believe in God the Creator are, as St. Paul says, “without excuse” (Romans 1.20).

So how are we to classify the false teaching of evolutionism, bearing in mind that it is not only atheists who believe in it, but also Christians, and even those who call themselves Orthodox Christians? The best answer would seem to be: as a form of scientism, *that is, the belief that certain knowledge of the most important truths is attainable only through science, and not through the Word of God.* And scientism in turn is a form of rationalism, *that is, the belief that human reasoning is a surer method of reaching truth than Divine Revelation...*

People are impressed – overawed would perhaps be a better word – by the fact that science, alone among major human activities, appears always to be making progress. This is not to say that scientists never make mistakes but that *in the end* science will always, perhaps after a period of meandering along dark, misleading paths, drag itself out of error and bring us onto the sunlit uplands of truth. In other words, individual scientists and scientific hypotheses may be wrong, but *the scientific project as such is never wrong*: on the contrary, it is the only sure path to truth. Science, it is granted condescendingly, cannot provide certain emotional satisfactions, such as knowing the meaning of life: for these, it is better to resort to other activities such as religion or art.

But the implication is that these other activities are not actually concerned with *objective truth*: for that there is no substitute for science; it alone can tell us what life and the universe *is, was and shall be*.

The basic problem with what we can call the heresy of scientism is that it defines objective reality as exclusively that which can be studied by empirical scientific method. And since scientific method can study only visible objects existing in space and time, this by definition precludes from the realm of objective reality not only invisible things, such as God, angels and the soul, but also things that cannot be located in space and time, such as love. Now the early theorists of science, such as Francis Bacon, and the greatest scientists of the spring-time of science, such as Isaac Newton, accepted the existence of these things while at the same time accepting that they were not objects for scientific research. That is why, as recent research has shown, Newton spent as much time on the study of the Bible, especially the prophetic books, as he did on pure science. But later science became increasingly *scientistic*, as opposed to strictly *scientific*; that is, it decided – completely arbitrarily – that that which cannot be investigated by science ipso facto does not exist...

Scientific method is also restricted to the study only of those events which are – in principle, at any rate – *repeatable*; for hypotheses are tested through experimentation, and experimentation must be *replicable*. But this again precludes from the realm of objective reality such unreplicable events as the beginning of the world... Scientism, however, refuses to be so restricted, and universal evolutionism is therefore not science in the strict sense of the word, but *metaphysical speculation*... Even that more down-to-earth part of the theory that we call Darwinism is virtually metaphysical. For while the emergence of a new species is *in principle* a visible and repeatable event, nobody has yet witnessed a single such an event, whether in the wild or in a laboratory!

Again, scientific method proceeds through the discovery of scientific laws and conducts its experiments on the assumption that some explanation of any phenomenon that is being studied can eventually be found within the context of already discovered or still-to-be-discovered laws of nature. There is nothing wrong with such an assumption for particular cases, and it has, of course, proved very fruitful in stimulating the progress of science. Scientism, however, goes further and declares with complete generality that everything that happened in the past, that is happening now and will happen in the future can be explained by the laws of nature. In other words, miracles, the irruption into our world of space, time and matter of forces from another realm, are impossible. However, as C.S. Lewis proved conclusively in his great book *Miracles*, this again is a metaphysical assumption that cannot be proved from the nature of science itself.

The fact is, as Horatio said to Hamlet, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in the rationalist philosophy of scientism... Science has indeed made great progress as long as it has stayed within its proper bounds and remained faithful to the principles of empiricism. But as soon as it has strayed beyond the bounds of empirical science and entered the realm of metaphysics, as in the theory of evolution, it has gone badly astray, becoming “half-science” as Dostoyevsky called it

in his novel, *The Devils*. In our time, this has led to the construction of a huge quasi-religious myth encompassing the whole history of the universe from beginning to end which, apart from contradicting established scientific fact in very many particulars, also contradicts the only reliable source of knowledge we have for these matters – the Revelation of God. So let us return in humility to His Word as spoken through the wise Solomon: “We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labour; but who has traced out what is in the heavens, and who has learned Thy counsel, unless Thou give him wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from on high?” (Wisdom 9.17)

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33. WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

At times of conflict, or war, the question posed by the lawyer to Christ becomes especially pertinent: who is my neighbour? Who is really close to me (the Greek word for “neighbour”, *plesios*, means “near” or “close”)? Paradoxically, my closest neighbour in a geographical or family or racial sense may be very far from my neighbour in a spiritual sense. For, as the Lord said, “A man’s enemies will be those of his own household”...

Now the lawyer who posed this question should have been on good, neighbourly terms with Christ. After all, they were both Jews, and he was a lawyer, while Christ spent His time preaching the Law of God. But the Gospel (Luke 10.25-37) says that he posed his first question *tempting Him*. In other words, like the other Scribes and Pharisees, he was trying to catch out the Lord, show that He was not such a great teacher after all.

But the Lord, as always, is cleverer than His tempters. In answer to the lawyer’s question, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He throws the question back at him: “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” After all, the man was a lawyer, so he should know what was written in the law...

“So he answered and said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbour as yourself.’” An excellent answer! Out of all the very many commandments of the law, the lawyer had chosen precisely those two commandments which the Lord considers the most important. Probably, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes, the lawyer had been following Christ’s teaching and linked these two commandments because he had heard Christ linking them.

“And He said to him, ‘You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.’ But he, wishing to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’” Evidently the lawyer was a bit ashamed of himself. And so, trying to “justify himself” by posing a question whose purpose was not to tempt Christ but of which he sincerely wanted to know the answer, he said: “Who is my neighbour?” Probably the lawyer was inwardly dissatisfied with the answer to this question given by his colleagues, that is, that the neighbour of the men of the lawyer class were other educated, self-satisfied Jews like themselves. It was such people, according the lawyers and Pharisees, that God wanted them to love, not the unwashed, uneducated people whom they fleeced, still less foreigners and pagans.

In reply to the lawyer’s inward dissatisfaction the Lord gave a truly enlightening, but at the same time radical and radically unorthodox (from a Pharisaic point of view) parable, the parable of the Good Samaritan. There are two striking themes of this parable.

The first is that the Lord seems to go out of His way to shock the sensibilities of the lawyer and his class by giving as a model of goodness and love a Samaritan, that is a member of a non-Jewish, semi-pagan race whom the Jews heartily despised. A

contemporary parallel might be if a Greek Orthodox priest were to take a certain Turk as a model of Orthodoxy, or if a Serbian Orthodox bishop were to take a certain Albanian as a model of love, or if a Russian Orthodox politician were to take the president of the United States as a model of wisdom and enlightened world leadership... But of course the Lord never shocks without a good purpose, without a positive aim. And the aim here is clearly to indicate to the Jews that their ideas of who is their neighbour were far too narrow, being founded on personal and collective pride and egoism. The Gospel of Christ calls on the faithful to love all men, regardless of race, class or religion, and regardless of whether they love you or hate you.

So does that mean that all men are our neighbours? Not quite... This brings us to the second striking theme of the parable: that it appears not to answer the question directly. For the Lord does not say: "Which of these three – the priest, the Levite or the Samaritan – is your neighbour whom you must love as yourself?" Instead He says: "Which of these three do you think was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?"

This subtle change of emphasis transforms the idea of being a neighbour from a passive state to an active intention and deed. It is as if the Lord were saying: "Do not seek to divide those around you into neighbours and non-neighbours, sheep and goats, those close to you and those not close to you, so that you are permitted to love the one group, and not love the other. This kind of discrimination is not pleasing to God, Who calls on us to love even our enemies, and to do good even to those who spitefully treat us and abuse us. Rather we should ask ourselves: how can I remove the barriers of distrust and prejudice that divide me from this man, and that man, and that man, and transform our relationship from one of distance and enmity into closeness and neighbourliness?"

As Archbishop Averky (Taushev) said in his sermon on this parable: "We must not ask 'Who is my neighbour?' but we must ourselves, in the name of Christian love, become 'neighbours' for every man."

The consequence of this shift of emphasis is that our love becomes universalist, even if it is not received universally. We love even if we are not loved in return, we draw near to men even if they shrink away from us. So although the end-result, sadly and inevitably, is that many men remain estranged from us, this is not our fault; the barriers have been placed on his side, but not on ours. For even the Lord could not make everyone His neighbour. He drew near to Judas in love, even offering him His Body and Blood; but Judas shrank away from Him into the night of sin and the coldness of the devil, that perpetual alien and destroyer of neighbourliness...

But are there not some people to whom it is impossible to be a neighbour? Enemies of the homeland, for example? Or of the faith?

However, the man fallen among thieves represents the whole of humanity, and the Good Samaritan binds up all the wounds of humanity, without exception. He places humanity on his beast of burden, that is, unites it with His own humanity, takes it to the inn, that is, the Holy Church, and provides the innkeeper, the hierarchy of the

Church, with two coins, the Old and the New Testaments, with which to instruct and enlighten all the members of the Church. For the Samaritan is Christ Himself. Far from abhorring the politically unreliable or dogmatically incorrect, He identifies Himself with them – not, of course, to the extent of identifying with their errors and betrayals and heresies, but in the sense that He will not treat them as exceptions to the company of those who can be corrected and saved through the power of His universalist neighbourliness and love. He identifies Himself with them also in another sense. For in the eyes of the Jews Christ is suspect both in His patriotism, insofar as He recognizes the legitimacy of Roman rule over the Jews, and in His theology, insofar as He calls Himself the Son of God and applies to Himself the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah.

So here we come to the third, and deepest, theme of the parable. The theme is this: that our neighbour is *Christ*. He is the one nearest to us, *all* of us, because He draws close to us by the power of His love, heals our wounds, brings us to the Church and in general provides us with all that is necessary for our salvation until He comes again. For “now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the Blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2.13). Through Him we have been brought near, that is, put in a neighbourly relationship to Christ and to the whole of the people of God.

It is only by allowing Christ to draw near to us that we can carry out His commandment: “Go, and do likewise”. For can we be a neighbour to others if we reject the Good Samaritan Himself? For “He Himself is our Peace, Who has made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of separation” (Ephesians 2.14).

*November 16/29, 2014.
St. Matthew the Apostle.*

34. DAVID BERLINSKI AND THE DELUSIONS OF SCIENCE

“As we move from 1900... the evil one will enable science to achieve such huge imaginary advances that people will be misled and no longer believe in the existence of the Triune God.”
St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher (+1651)

David Berlinski is a distinguished American academic with qualifications in the fields of physics, mathematics, biology and philosophy. He is also a secular Jew and an agnostic. Nevertheless, in his book *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), he claims that the major grand theories of contemporary physics, “these splendid artifacts of the human imagination”, as he calls them, “have made the world more mysterious than it ever was. We know better than we did what we do not know and have not grasped. We do not know how the universe began. We do not know why it is there. Charles Darwin talked speculatively of life emerging from a ‘warm little pond’. The pond is gone. We have little idea how life emerged, and cannot with assurance say that it did. We cannot reconcile our understanding of the human mind with any trivial theory about the manner in which the brain functions. Beyond the trivial, we have no other theories. We can say nothing of interest about the human soul. We do not know what impels us to right conduct or where the form of the good is found.” (p. xv)

Berlinski is concerned to defend religion (even if he personally will not commit himself to it) at a time when scientists in the tradition of Richard Dawkins appear to be becoming ever more hostile towards it. And he often hits the nail on the head. So let us look at some of his valuable insights, appending some 20 comments and conclusions of our own (in italics).

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“After comparing more than two thousand DNA samples, an American molecular geneticist, Dean Hamer, concluded that a person’s capacity to believe in God is linked to his brain chemicals. Of all things! Why not his urine? Perhaps it will not be amiss to observe that Dr. Hamer has made the same claim about homosexuality, and if he has refrained from arguing that a person’s capacity to believe in molecular genetics is linked to a brain chemical, it is, no doubt, owing to a prudent sense that once *that* door is open, God knows how and when anyone will ever slam it shut again.” (pp. 8-9)

1. *If science claims to explain all our mental activity in terms of chemicals, then the inescapable conclusion is that all our thinking is not free or rational, but is determined by brain chemistry. But if that is so, as C.S. Lewis pointed out, then there is no reason to believe that our thinking is true. And if that is so, there is no reason to believe the proposition that our thinking is determined by our brain chemistry.*

Berlinski finds a striking anticipation of modern concerns about science in the writing of the medieval Arab philosopher Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali. “The naturalists argue, he observes, that ‘intellectual power in man is dependent on [his] temperament.’ It is a point that neurophysiologists would today make by arguing that the mind (or the soul) is dependent on the brain, or even that the mind *is* the brain.

From this it follows that 'as the temperament is corrupted, *intellect is also corrupted and ceases to exist.*' When the brain is destroyed, so, too, is the mind. Death and disease mark the end of the mind. On the naturalistic view, Al Ghazali argues, 'the soul dies and does not return to life'. The globe of consciousness shrinks in each of us until it is no larger than a luminous point, and then it winks out.

"But if this is a matter of fact, Al Ghazali argues, it is a matter of profound scientific *and* moral consequence. Why should a limited and finite organ such as the human brain have the power to see into the heart of matter or mathematics? These are subjects that have nothing to do with the Darwinian biology has not yet answered. By the same token, to place in doubt the survival of the soul is to 'deny the future life – heaven, hell, resurrection, and judgement.' And this is to corrupt the system of justice by which life must be regulated, because 'there does not remain any reward for obedience, or any punishment for sin.'

"With this curb removed, Al Ghazali predicts, men and women will give way to 'a bestial indulgence of their appetites.'" (pp. 16-17)

2. *Not only rationality, but also morality, is undermined by the naturalist programme. For if the mind of man is identified with his brain, and disappears at death, neither will good be rewarded nor evil punished in the life to come. More fundamentally, there will be no reason to judge men in accordance with their works; for if their works are determined by their brain states, over which they have no control (for they are their brain states), there is no basis on which to reward or punish them, since they will merit neither reward nor punishment.*

"For scientists persuaded that there is no God, there is no finer pleasure than recounting the history of religious brutality and persecution. Sam Harris is in this regard especially enthusiastic, *The End of Faith* recounting in lurid but lingering detail the methods of torture used in the Spanish Inquisition. If readers require pertinent information concerning the strappado, or other instruments of doctrinal persuasion, they may turn to his pages. There is no need to argue the point. A great deal of human suffering has been caused by religious fanaticism. If the Inquisition no longer has the power to compel our indignation, the Moslem world often seems quite prepared to carry the burden of exuberant depravity in its place.

"Nonetheless, there is this awkward fact: The twentieth century was not an age of faith, and it was awful. Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao and Pol Pot will never be counted among the religious leaders of mankind.

"Nor can anyone argue that the horrors of the twentieth century were unanticipated. Although they came as a shock, they did not come as a surprise. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Karamazov exclaims that if God does not exist, then everything is permitted..." (p. 19)

3. *Religion, whether true or false, cannot be blamed for the worst crimes of human history; for if deluded heretics, unchecked by true morality, have committed outrageous acts, these pale into insignificance by comparison with the cruelty and scale of the horrors*

carried out by the militant atheist dictators of the twentieth century. Their philosophy was founded on, and inspired by, Darwinism and the idea of the survival of the fittest. As long as the bestial philosophy of Darwinism reigns, it can be assumed that the rise of further bestial dictators is inevitable.

Berlinski lists a number of “moral concerns that are prompted by biology... The list is already long: abortion, stem-cell research, euthanasia, infanticide, cloning, animal-human hybrids, sexual deviancy. It will get longer, as scientists with no discernible sense of responsibility to human nature come extravagantly to interfere in human life. In his *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Harris argues that ‘qualms’ about stem-cell research are ‘obsessive’, because they are ‘morally indefensible’. And they are morally indefensible because they represent nothing more than ‘faith-based irrationality’...

“What moral philosophers have called the slippery slope has proven in recent decades to be slippery enough to seem waxed. It is, if anything, more slippery than ever. In 1984, Holland legalized euthanasia. Critics immediately objected that Dutch doctors, having been given the right to kill their elderly patients at their request, would almost at once find reasons to kill patients at their whim. This is precisely what happened. The *Journal of Medical Ethics*, in reviewing Dutch hospital practices, reported that 3 percent of Dutch deaths for 1995 were assisted suicides, and that of these, fully one-fourth were involuntary. The doctors simply knocked their patients off, no doubt assuring the family that *Grootmoeder* would have wanted it that way. As a result a great many elderly Dutch carry around sanctuary certificates indicating in no uncertain terms that they do not wish their doctors to assist them to die, emerging from their coma, when they are ill, just long enough to tell these murderous pests for heaven’s sake to go away. The authors of the study, Henk Jochensen and John Keown, reported with some understatement that ‘Dutch claims of effective regulation ring hollow.’

“Euthanasia, as Dr. Peggy Norris observed with some asperity, ‘cannot be controlled.’” (pp. 31, 32).

4. *Not only totalitarian dictators proceed from naturalist assumptions to the slaughter of millions. Even in advanced democracies, the cult of scientism has led to murderous practices such as euthanasia. The argument seems to be: If it is scientifically possible, try it – for science’s sake, if for no other reason...*

“To scientific atheists, the ancient idea that *homo homini lupus* – man is a wolf to man – leaves them shaking their heads in poodle-like perplexity. Sam Harris has no anxieties whatsoever about presenting his own views on human morality with the enviable confidence of a man who feels that he has reached the epistemological bottom. ‘Everything about human experience,’ he writes, ‘suggests that love is more conducive to human happiness than hate is.’ It goes without saying, of course, that this is an *objective* claim about the human mind.

“If this is so, it is astonishing with what eagerness men have traditionally fled happiness.” (p. 34).

5. *Contemporary science rejects with horror the "medieval" idea of original sin, with the result that its concepts of human nature are impossibly naïve and superficial. The concept of man as no more than a sophisticated animal makes the satanic depths of human evil incomprehensible. A fortiori, the heights of human joy are completely beyond the ken of scientific atheism.*

“‘The West,’ the philosopher Richard Rorty writes, ‘has cobbled together, in the course of the last two hundred years, a specifically secularist moral tradition – one that regards the free consensus of the citizens of a democratic society, rather than the Divine Will, as the source of moral imperatives.’ The words *the free consensus*, although sonorous, come to nothing more than the declaration that just so long as there is rough agreement within society, what its leaders say goes. This was certainly true of Nazi Germany...

“Richard Rorty was to his great credit honest in facing the consequences of his own moral posture. He had no criticism to offer Nazi Germany beyond a personal sense of revulsion.

“If moral imperatives are not commanded by God’s will, and if they are not in some sense absolute, then what ought to be is a matter simply of what men and women decide should be. There is no other source of judgement.

“What is this if not another way of saying that *if God does not exist, everything is permitted?*” (pp. 39, 40)

6. *Scientism goes naturally with egalitarianism, democratism and moral relativism. Just as materialism and determinism undermine the very concept of truth, so democratism and egalitarianism undermine the concept of absolute moral values; for if what the majority believes is right, then what is right changes from one place to another, from one people to another, and from one day to another. Only in God can truth and justice be rooted in an immutable union of fact and value, what is with what should be. If truth and justice are absolutes, then it is quite possible for one man to be right and the rest of the world wrong. In fact, it is possible that the whole world is wrong and God alone is right. As St. Paul says, “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”*

“‘Everything,’ the philosopher Alexander Byrne has remarked, ‘is a natural phenomenon.’ Quite so. But each of those natural phenomena is, Byrne believes, simply ‘an aspect of the universe revealed by the natural sciences.’ If what is natural has been defined in terms of what the natural sciences reveal, no progress in thought has been recorded. If not, what reason is there to conclude that everything is an ‘aspect of the universe revealed by the natural sciences’?

“There is no reason at all...” (p. 51)

7. *Scientism tries to exclude the possibility of miracles by defining reality in terms of what has been revealed by the natural sciences. But this is a circular argument: reality is defined in terms of what just one method of studying reality, science, chooses to study. It is impossible to exclude the possibility of miracles on the basis of science alone.*

“Is there a God who has among other things created the universe? ‘It is not by its conclusions,’ C.F. von Weizsacker has written in *The Relevance of Science*, ‘but by its methodological starting point that modern science excludes direct creation. Our methodology would not be honest if this fact were denied... such is the faith in the science of our time, and which we all share’ (italics added).” (pp. 60-61)

8. *It is not true that science has searched for God and not found Him. Scientism has so framed its methodological assumptions that it excludes invisible, immaterial and non-spatiotemporal beings from its survey. The paradox is that the objects it claims to have discovered as the fundamental building blocks of the universe – curved space-time, particles that can be in two places at once, quantum fields, gravity, black holes and singularities (where the laws of physics no longer work) and even multiverses in which all possible outcomes are in fact actual – are about as far removed from our traditional understanding of the world as it is possible to imagine.*

Berlinski now turns to expounding the cosmological argument as found in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas argues that no effect can be without an antecedent cause, but that there cannot be an infinite regress of causes going back forever in time. “It is not possible, to go on to infinity, because in all... causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate [last] cause.” Berlinski continues: “If a series of causes does not start, it cannot get going, and if it does not get going, then there will be no intermediate causes, and if there are no intermediate causes, then over here, where we have just noticed that a blow has caused a bruise, there is no explanation for what is before our eyes. Either there is a first cause or there is no cause at all, and since there are causes at work in nature, there must be a first. The first cause, Aquinas identified with God, because in at least one respect, a first cause exhibits an important property of the divine: *It is uncaused*.”

“This is a weak but not an absurd argument, and while Aquinas’ conclusion may not be true, objections to his argument are frequently inept. Thus Richard Dawkins writes that Aquinas ‘makes the entirely unwarranted *assumption* that God is immune to the regress.’ It is a commonly made criticism. Lumbering dutifully in Dawkins’ turbulent wake, Victor Stenger makes it as well. But Aquinas makes no such assumption, and thus none that could be unwarranted. It is *conclusion* of his argument that causes in nature cannot form an infinite series.

“A far better objection has long been common in the philosophical literature: While an infinite series of causes has no first cause, it does not follow (does it?) that any specified effect is without a cause. Never mind the first cause. This blow has caused that bruise. The chain of causes starting with the blow may be chased into the past to any finite extent, but no matter how far back it is chased, effects will always have causes, Why, then, is that first cause so very important?

“But this is a counterargument at which common sense is inclined to scruple. Seeing an endless row of dominoes toppling before our eyes, would we without pause say that no first domino set the other dominoes to toppling? (pp. 67-69)

9. *Human thought, both scientific (in the Big Bang Theory) and commonsensical and religious, sees the history of the universe as going back to a first cause. For if there were no first cause, there would be nothing to set the causal nexus going. However, the first cause must be in some sense outside the causal nexus taken as a whole; and so it must itself be uncaused (and immaterial and non-spatiotemporal). Otherwise, if it were part of the causal nexus, it would itself require a causal explanation. This is recognized by religious thought, which calls God the Uncaused Cause and "Beginning of all beginnings".*

"The universe, orthodox cosmologists believe, came into existence [about 13.8 billion years ago] as the expression of an explosion – what is now called the Big Bang. The word *explosion* is a sign that words have failed us, as they so often do, for it suggests a humanly comprehensible event – a *gigantic* explosion or a *stupendous* eruption. But this is absurd. The Big Bang was not an event taking place at a time or in a place. Space and time were themselves created by the Big Bang, the measure along with the measured...

"If the Big Bang expresses a new idea in physics, it suggests an old idea in thought: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* This unwelcome juxtaposition of physical and biblical ideas persuaded the astrophysicist Fred Hoyle, an ardent atheist, to dismiss the Big Bang after he had named it. In this he was not alone. Many physicists have found the idea that the universe had a beginning alarming. 'So long as the universe had a beginning,' Stephen Hawking has written 'we could suppose it had a creator.' *God forbid!..*

"For more than a century, physicists had taken a manful pride in the fact that theirs was a discipline that celebrated the weird, the bizarre, the unexpected, the mind-bending, and the recondite. Here was a connection that any intellectual primitive could at once grasp: The universe had a beginning, thus something must have caused it to happen. Where would physics be, physicists asked themselves, if we had paid the slightest attention to the obvious?...

"If both theory and evidence suggested that the universe had a beginning, it was natural for physicists to imagine that by tweaking the evidence and adjusting the theory, they could get rid of what they did not want [God]. Perhaps the true and the good universe – the one without a beginning – might be reached by skirting the Big Bang singularity, or bouncing off it in some way? But in the mid-1960s, Roger Penrose and Stephen Hawking demonstrated that insofar as the backward contraction of the universe was controlled by the equations of general relativity almost all lines of conveyance came to an end.

"The singularity was inescapable.

"This conclusion encouraged the theologians but did little to ease physicists in their own minds, for while it strengthened the unwholesome conclusion that Big Bang cosmology had already established, it left a good deal else in a fog. In many ways, this was the worst of all possible worlds. Religious believers had emerged from their

seminars well satisfied with what they could understand; the physicists themselves could understand nothing very well.

“The fog that attended the Penrose-Hawking singularity theorems (there is more than one) arose spontaneously whenever physicists tried to determine just what the singularity signified. At the singularity itself, a great many physical parameters zoom to infinity. Just what is one to make of infinite temperature? Or particles that are no distance from one another? The idea of a singularity, as the astronomer Joseph Silk observed, is ‘completely unacceptable as a physical description of the universe... An infinitely dense universe [is] where the laws of physics, and even space and time, break down.’” (pp. 69, 70-71, 78-79)

10. *The Big Bang theory posits a beginning state of the universe that is contrary to the laws of physics. In other words, it is physically impossible. This is an enormous problem for atheist physics, which assumes the law-governed nature of all things, but not for traditional religious thought, which recognizes a Law-giver as well as the law. For if God is the Cause of the entire spatio-temporal universe, then the causality joining God to the universe, as it were, must itself be beyond space and time and not subject to physical laws. For this is not the link between a material cause and a material effect, which expresses a physical law, but the link between the Creator and the whole of His physical creation, that is, all material causes and effects taken together as a single system.*

“If nothing else, the facts of Big Bang cosmology indicate that one objection to the argument that Thomas Aquinas offered is empirically unfounded: Causes in nature do come to an end. If science has shown that God does not exist, it has not been by appealing to Big Bang cosmology. The hypothesis of God’s existence and the facts of contemporary cosmology are consistent. (p. 80)

11. *However, in order for God’s existence and the supposed facts of contemporary cosmology to be consistent, more is required. First, the assumptions of contemporary physics must be changed in order that the “completely unacceptable” in physical terms may become acceptable. Secondly, we must be assured that cosmology has truly reached the end of its development. That is, we must be sure that the Big Bang theory is its final word, and that physicists will not revert to some new version of, for example, the Steady State theory that sees the universe as infinite and without beginning or end. For while God has said that “heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall never pass away”, this cannot be said about the ever-changing words of physicists. And this is a good thing at the present time. For while the currently fashionable Big Bang theory appears closer in some ways to traditional religious thought than some of its predecessors, the general project of universal evolutionism from Big Bang to Homo Sapiens is still very far from consistent, not only with many scientifically established facts, but also with the Divine Cosmology – that is, God’s own record of His work of creation.*

Why does the universe exist at all? “Oxford’s Peter Atkins has attempted to address this issue. ‘If we are to be honest,’ he argues, ‘then we have to accept that science will be able to claim complete success only if it achieves what many might

think impossible: accounting for the emergence of everything from absolutely nothing.’ Atkins does not seem to recognize that when the human mind encounters the thesis that something has emerged from nothing, it is not encountering a question to which any coherent answer exists. His confidence that a scientific answer must nonetheless be forthcoming needs to be assessed in other terms, possibly those involving clinical self-delusion.” (pp. 95-96)

12. *The theologians say that God created the universe out of nothing; the physicists say that it “emerged” from nothing. The first explanation has much more to commend it than the second, because while we cannot know how God created everything out of nothing, the idea is nevertheless comprehensible, because the idea of a Creator Who is incomprehensible to His creatures is quite comprehensible, and because God is at any rate something and not nothing. It also has the advantage that it provides possible answers to the question “Why?” in the sense of “For what purpose?” We can say, for example, that God created the universe because his nature is love, and He wants creatures to exist in order to share in His love. The second explanation, however, not only provides no conceivable answer to the questions “How?” and “Why”. It is itself nonsensical. For out of nothing nothing can come...*

Physicists nevertheless continue to issue statements insisting that the “nothing” out of which the universe appears to emerge is in fact something, such as: “The actual Universe probably derived from an indeterminate sea of potentiality that we call the quantum vacuum, whose properties may always remain beyond our current understanding.’...

“The Sea of Indeterminate Potentiality, and all cognate concepts, belong to a group of physical arguments with two aims. The first is to find a way around the initial singularity of standard Big Bang cosmology. Physicists accept this aim devoutly because the Big Bang singularity strikes an uncomfortably theistic note. Nothing but intellectual mischief can result from leaving that singularity where it is. Who knows what poor ideas religious believers might take from cosmology were they to imagine that in the beginning the universe began?

“The second aim is to account for the emergence of the universe in some way that will allow physicists to say with quiet pride that they have gotten the thing to appear from nothing, and especially nothing resembling a deity or a singularity.” (pp. 96, 97-98)

13. *Nothing can be induced to come out of nothing if the original nothing can be redefined as nothing actually, but something potentially. However, it is difficult to understand how a potential something which does not actually exist is in any better position to explain the emergence of everything. For “beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better”, and the lesser can only be created by, or emerge from, that which is greater than itself. God is great, and by definition greater than everything that He has created. But that which is only potentially real is lesser than that which is actually real, and so the latter cannot be said to owe its existence to the former.*

Another problem with things that are things only *potentially* is that there is no way of telling what kind of thing they will *actually* become. The possibilities are literally infinite. And one interpretation of quantum physics is that when the sea of potential being – also called “the wave function of the universe” – comes up against an observer, it “collapses” into a multitude of universes, or a “multiverse”. Thus “according to the many-worlds interpretation, at precisely the moment a measurement is made, the universe branches into two or more universes... The new universes cluttering up creation embody the quantum states that were previously in a state of quantum superposition...”

“The wave function of the universe is designed to represent the behavior of the universe – *all of it*. It floats in the void – these metaphors are inescapable – and passes judgement on universes. Some are probable, others are likely, and still others a very bad bet. Nevertheless, the wave function of the universe cannot be seen, measured, assessed, or tested. It is a purely theoretical artifact.” (pp. 99-100)

And so: “Quantum cosmology is a branch of mathematical metaphysics. It provides no cause for the emergence of the universe, and so does not answer the first cosmological question [how?], and it offers no reason for the existence of the universe, and so does not address the second [why?]. If the mystification induced by its modest mathematics were removed from the subject, what remains does not appear appreciably different in kind from various creation myths in which the origin of the universe is attributed to sexual congress between primordial deities.” (pp. 106-107)

14. *After veering towards something in some respects resembling traditional Judaeo-Christian religion in the Big Bang theory, cosmology appears now, without abandoning the concept of the Big Bang, to have to have veered off in a quite different direction – towards a sophisticated form of Hinduism, whose creation myth tells of a quasi-sexual explosion of multiple seeds of universes through the union of Brahma, “the germ of all being”, with his consort Saraswathi. For is not “the sea of indeterminate probability” or “wave function of the universe” a kind of modern version of “the germ of all being”, which explodes out of potential being into a multitude of actual universes after coming into contact with an observer? (And who could this observer be if not God?) It looks as if the physicists have regressed even further into the mists of magical, pre-scientific paganism, producing, in Macbeth’s words, “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”, but which the physicists would like to believe signifies anything and everything.*

Berlinski now turns to a fact that has only recently come to light but that provides one of the strongest proofs for the existence of God, the so-called “Anthropic Principle”: “In a paper entitled ‘Large Number Coincidences and the Anthropic Principle in Cosmology’, published in 1974, the physicist Brandon Carter observed that many physical properties of the universe appeared fine-tuned to permit the appearance of living systems.

“What a lucky break – *things have just worked out*.

“What an odd turn of phrase – *fine-tuned*.

“What an unexpected word – *permit*.”

“Whether lucky, odd, or unexpected, the facts are clear. The cosmological constant is a number controlling the expansion of the universe. If it were negative, the universe would appear doomed to contract in upon itself, and if positive, equally doomed to expand out from itself. Like the rest of us, the universe is apparently doomed no matter what it does. And here is the odd point: If the cosmological constant were larger than it is, the universe would have expanded too quickly, and if smaller, it would have collapsed too early, to permit the appearance of living systems. Very similar observations have been made with respect to protons, the rate of the electromagnetic force to the gravitational force, even the speed of light.” (pp. 109-110)

15. *So far 10 physical and chemical constants – like the distance between the earth and the sun – have been discovered, which, if they were changed even to a very small degree, would make life on earth impossible. The religious and commonsense conclusion is that, since it is quite extraordinarily improbable that these constants could exist together by chance, this shows that God created the world in order that man and the animals should live in it. However, physicists manage to avoid even this obvious conclusion...*

For the physicist determined, by hook or by crook, to deny the existence of God, the above-mentioned concept of a multitude of parallel universes comes in very useful at this point. For while the Anthropic Principle makes it look as if the existence of life on earth is “a fix”, “a put-up job” deliberately engineered and calibrated with extreme precision by a Divine Master Engineer, this is not so, according to the physicists, because, given an infinite number of universes, our “finely tuned” universe must have appeared by chance at some time or another. This is similar to the Darwinists’ claim that, given an ape with a typewriter and many hundred of millions of years, he is bound to come up with the Works of Shakespeare, Newton and Einstein at some time!

“Philosophers have found the restriction of their thoughts to just one universe burdensome. In the late 1960s, David Lewis assigned possible worlds ontological benefits previously assigned to worlds that are real. In some possible world, Lewis argued, Julius Caesar is very much alive. He is endeavouring to cross the Hudson instead of the Rubicon, and fuming, no doubt, at the delays before the toll booth on the George Washington Bridge. It is just as parochial to reject this world as unreal, Lewis argued, as it would be to reject Chicago because it cannot be seen from New York. Lewis argued brilliantly [!] for this idea, known as modal realism. The absurdity of the resulting view was not an impediment to his satisfaction...” (p. 122)

“Given sufficiently many universes, what is true here need not be true there, and vice versa.” (p. 123).

Physicists have called this idea “the Landscape” (i.e. the landscape of all universes). “It is all purpose in its intent. It works no matter what the theory. And it works by means of the simple principle that by multiplying universes, the Landscape dissolves improbabilities. To the question *What are the odds?* The Landscape provides the

invigorating answer that it hardly matters. If the fine-structure constant has in our universe one value, in some other universe it has another value. Given sufficiently many universes, things improbably in one must from the perspective of all be certain.

“The same reasoning applies to questions about the laws of nature. Why is Newton’s universal law of gravitation true? No need to ask. In another universe, it is not.

“The Big Fix has by this maneuver been supplanted by the Sure Thing.” (p. 124)

16. “Modal realism”, or “the Landscape”, the idea that everything that could possibly happen has already happened, is already happening or will one day happen in some part of the multiverse, represents the completely bankruptcy of physical and philosophical thought. Far from being a form of realism, it is fantastical in the extreme. It undermines the very concept of truth.

Berlinski now considers the question posed by the cosmologist Joel Primack: “What is it that makes the electrons continue to follow the laws?’ There are three possible answers to this question: God, logic or nothing.

- (i) “Medieval theologians understood this question, and they appreciated its power. They offered in response the answer that to their way of thinking made intuitive sense: *Deus est ubique conservans mundum*. God is everywhere conserving the world. It is *God* that makes the electron follow *His* laws.
- (ii) “Albert Einstein understood the question as well. His deepest intellectual urge, he remarked, was to know whether God had any *choice* in the creation of the universe. If He did, then the laws of nature are as they are by virtue of His choice. If He did not, then the laws of nature must be necessary, their binding sense of obligation imposed on the cosmos in virtue of their form. The electron thus follows the laws of nature because it cannot do anything else. It is *logic* that makes the electron follow *its* laws.
- (iii) “And Brandon Carter, Leonard Susskind, and Steven Weinberg understand the question well. Their answer is the Landscape and Anthropic Principle. There are universes in which the electron continues to follow some law, and those in which it does not. In a Landscape in which everything is possible, nothing is necessary. In a universe in which nothing is necessary, anything is possible. It is *nothing* that makes the electron follow *any* laws.

“This is the question to which all discussions of the Landscape and the Anthropic Principle are tending, and because the same question can be raised with respect to moral thought, it is a question with an immense and disturbing intellectual power.

“For scientific atheists, the question answers itself: Better logic than nothing, and better nothing than God. It is a response that serves moral as well as physical thought....

“It is a choice that offers philosophers and physicists little room in which to maneuver. All attempts to see the laws of nature as statements that are true in virtue

of their form have been unavailing. The laws of nature, as Isaac Newton foresaw, are not laws of logic, nor are they *like* the laws of logic. Physicists since Einstein have tried to see in the laws of nature a formal structure that would allow them to say to themselves, 'Ah, that is why they are true,' and they have failed...

"While better logic than nothing is still on the menu, it is no longer on the table. There remains better nothing than God as the living preference among physicists and moral philosophers. It is a remarkably serviceable philosophy. In moral thought, nothing comes to moral relativism; and philosophers can see no reason whatsoever that they should accept any very onerous moral constraints have found themselves gratified to discover that there are no such constraints they need accept. The Landscape and Anthropic Principle represent the ascendance of moral relativism in physical thought." (pp. 132-133, 134)

17. *All law – natural, logical and moral – presupposes a Lawgiver. Contemporary physics denies this link, offering nothing in its place. In addition, it undermines the concept of law itself, for law becomes applicable in one universe, but not in another, for no reason at all. The result is lawlessness and chaos, with no explanation of how or why anything should be what it is.*

"If the double ideas of the Landscape and the Anthropic Principle do not suffice to answer the question why we live in a universe that seems perfectly *designed* for human life, a great many men and women will conclude that it *is* perfectly designed for human life, and they will draw the appropriate consequences [about God] from their conjecture.

"What is awkward is just that at a moment when the community of scientists had hoped that they had put all that behind them so as to enjoy a universe that was safe [from God], sane, secular, and sanitized, somehow the thing they had been so long avoiding has managed to clamber back into contention as a living possibility in thought.

"That is *very* awkward." (p. 136)

18. *The further contemporary physics has gone in its attempt to deny the existence of God, the more clearly they have demonstrated that He must exist.*

Berlinski now proceeds to discuss an argument of Richard Dawkins against the existence of God. The universe, Dawkins says, is improbable. In view of this, "it is obviously no solution to postulate something even more improbable", that is, that God created the universe (p. 142).

Berlinski replies that arguments like these "endeavor to reconcile two incompatible tendencies in order to force a dilemma. On the one hand, there is the claim that the universe is improbable; on the other, the claim that God made the universe. Considered jointly, these claims form an unnatural union. Probabilities belong to the world in which things happen because they might, creation to the world in which things happen because they must. We explain creation by appealing to creators,

whether deities or the inflexible laws of nature. We explain what is chancy by appealing to chance. We cannot do both. If God did make the world, it is not improbable. If it is improbable, then God did not make it. The best we could say is that God made a world that *would* be improbable *had* it been made by chance.

“But it wasn’t, and so He didn’t.

“This is a discouraging first step in an argument said to come close to proving that God does not exist.” (pp. 143-144)

The argument is in any case close to tautological; for “the inference that Dawkins proposes to champion has as its premise the claim that God is improbable; its conclusion is that likely God does not exist” (p. 144). And it has a startling corollary: “Dawkins never once considers that by parity of reasoning he could well have concluded that the existence of the universe is unlikely in virtue of its improbability” (pp. 145-146). But there is a still more fundamental problem with this type of reasoning...

19. *It makes no sense to speak about the probability or improbability of God. We evaluate events in terms of their probability by calculating how likely it is that they should emerge from a certain initial state in accordance with the laws of nature as we know them. But God is not an event in nature, nor is He subject to the laws of nature. The same applies to the universe as a whole. We cannot say that it is probable or improbable: it simply is. At best (although this, too, is dubious), we can attempt to evaluate how likely it is that the universe as we know it today evolved by chance over a period of 13.8 billion years from an initial state of a singularity. And the result of such a calculation must be: every single discrete step in this “ascent of being” is fantastically improbable, making the whole process of universal evolution simply impossible.*

The most improbable steps of all are the last ones that lead up to the emergence of Homo Sapiens. “In an interesting essay published in 1869 and entitled ‘Sir Charles Lyell on Geological Climates and the Origin of Species’, [Alfred] Wallace outlined his sense that evolution was inadequate to explain certain obvious features of the human race. The essay is of great importance. It marks a falling away in faith on the part of a sensitive biologist previously devoted to [evolutionist] ideas he had himself introduced. Certain of our ‘physical characteristics’, he observed, ‘are not explicable on the theory of variation and survival of the fittest.’ These include the human brain, the organs of speech and articulation, the human hand, and the external human form, with its upright posture and bipedal gait. It is only human beings who can rotate their thumb and right finger in what is called ulnar opposition in order to achieve a grip, a grasp, and a degree of torque denied any of the great apes. No other item on Wallace’s list has been ticked off against real understanding in evolutionary thought. What remains is fantasy of the sort in which the bipedal gait is assigned to an unrecoverable ancestor wishing to peer (or pee) over tall savannah grasses.

“The argument that Wallace made with respect to the human body he made again with respect to the human mind. There it gathers force. Do we understand why alone among the animals, human beings have acquired language? Or a refined and delicate

moral system, or art, architecture, music, dance, or mathematics? This is a severely abbreviated list. The body of Western literature and philosophy is an extended commentary on human nature, and over the course of more than four thousand years, it has not exhausted its mysteries. 'You could not discover the limits of soul,' Heraclitus wrote, 'not even if you traveled down every road. Such is the depth of its form.'

"Yet there is no evident distinction, Wallace observed, between the mental powers of the most primitive human being and the most advanced. Raised in England instead of the Ecuadorian Amazon, a native child of the head-hunting Jivaro, destined otherwise for a life spent loping through the jungle, would learn to speak perfect English, and would upon graduation from Oxford or Cambridge have the double advantage of a modern intellectual worldview and a commercially valuable ethnic heritage. He might become a mathematician, he would understand the prevailing moral and social mores perfectly, and for all anyone knows (or could tell), he might find himself a BBC commentator, explaining lucidly the cultural significance of head-hunting and arguing for its protection.

"From this it follows, Wallace argued, that characteristic human abilities must be latent in primitive man, existing somehow as an unopened gift, the entryway to a world that primitive man does not possess and would not recognize.

"But the idea that a biological species might possess latent powers makes no sense in Darwinian terms. It suggests the forbidden doctrine that evolutionary advantages were front-loaded far away and long ago; it is in conflict with the Darwinian principle that useless genes are subject to negative selection pressure and must therefore find themselves draining away into the sands of time.

"Wallace identified a frank conflict between his own theory and what seemed to him obvious facts about the solidity and unchangeability of human nature.

"The conflict persists; it has not been resolved..." (pp. 157-159)

So there is a vast difference between men and apes. And yet "the kinship between human beings and the apes has been promoted in contemporary culture as a moral virtue as well as a zoological fact. It functions as a hedge against religious belief, and so it is eagerly advanced..." (p. 160)

"[However,] before putting aside so carelessly 'the idea that man was created in the image of God,' first consider the ideas you propose to champion in its place.

"If they are no good, why champion them?

"And they are no good. So why champion them?" (p. 165)

20. We shall leave Berlinski's argument at this point. In summary, he successfully demonstrates that scientists have failed to disprove three statements which, for mysterious psychological reasons, they desperately want to deny: that God exists, that

God created the heavens and the earth, and that man is made in the image of God (and not of the beast). The scientists' nihilistic beliefs to the contrary are in the strict sense delusional and a discredit to human thought and science.

*November 21 / December 4, 2014.
Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple.*