

# **ESSAYS ON ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY**

Vladimir Moss

© Copyright: *Vladimir Moss, 2013. All Rights Reserved.*

## Contents

<b>1. DO HERETICS HAVE THE GRACE OF SACRAMENTS? .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>3. THE BRANCH AND MONOLITH THEORIES OF THE CHURCH.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4. THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>5. WHAT IS THE LOCAL CHURCH?.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>6. THE CYPRIANITES AND THE POWER OF ANATHEMAS.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>7. ON THE CONDEMNATION OF HERETICS.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>8. THE LIMITS OF THE CHURCH: A REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT..</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>9. "THERE IS NONE THAT WATCHETH OUT FOR MY SOUL" .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>10. ON NOT ROCKING THE BOAT .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1. PATRISTIC TESTIMONIES ON THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST .....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2. TESTIMONIES FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND THE HOLY FATHERS ON THE NECESSITY OF HAVING NO COMMUNION WITH HERETICS AND SCHISMATICS .....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3. KHOMIAKOV ON SOBORNOST' .....</b>	<b>127</b>

## 1. DO HERETICS HAVE THE GRACE OF SACRAMENTS?

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

For many years, this question was hotly debated in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR), but no official statement was issued that decided the matter once and for all. In 1983, however, in the wake of the horrific apostasy of the ecumenist Orthodox at the Vancouver General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the Synod of ROCOR formally anathematized the ecumenist Orthodox, declaring: "To those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ's Church is divided into so-called 'branches' which differ in doctrine and way of life, or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all 'branches' or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united in one body; and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, Anathema."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See "A Contemporary Patristic Document", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, November 14/27, 1983, p. 3; "Encyclical Letter of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 33, no. 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.

It should be noted that this anathema condemns not only Ecumenism and the ecumenists in a general sense, but also all those “who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation”. In other words, if it is accepted that the ecumenists are heretics, it is no longer permissible to say that their priesthood and mysteries are the priesthood and mysteries of the One, True Church.

In 1984, the year after this anathema was delivered, the Greek Old Calendarist hierarch, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, issued a challenge to its validity and teaching without directly naming it. In his “Ecclesiological Position Paper”<sup>2</sup>, he argued that while the new calendarists are ecumenists, they nevertheless have the grace of sacraments because they have not yet been condemned by a “Unifying Council” of the Orthodox Church, and that it is sufficient for the True Orthodox simply to “wall themselves off” from the ecumenists’ errors by refraining from communion with them. Ten years later, in 1994, ROCOR entered into official communion with Metropolitan Cyprian, declaring that her ecclesiology was identical with that of Metropolitan Cyprian. The contradiction between this ecclesiology and that contained in the anathema of 1983 is manifest – but only one ROCOR hierarch, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), seemed to notice or care about it. In his article “The Dubious Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Cyprian’s Group”, Bishop Gregory wrote: “By not investigating the matter seriously and by forgetting about this previously confirmed anathematizing of the New Calendarists/Ecumenists [in 1983] (or perhaps not venturing to abrogate this resolution) our Sobor, frightful as it may be to admit it, has fallen under its own anathema.”<sup>3</sup>

The present article presents a critique of Metropolitan Cyprian’s position as presented in his position paper. Since much heat and emotion has been generated by this dispute, I should make it clear at the beginning that I do not consider Metropolitan Cyprian and his followers to be heretics themselves<sup>4</sup>, nor do I (as some have accused me) hate the ecumenist Orthodox or wish their damnation, but rather pray, together with all truly Orthodox Christians, that they come to a knowledge of the truth and be converted to the One True Church.

---

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Bishop Chrysostomos of Etna with an introductory commentary by Patrick G. Barker in Barker’s *A Study of the Ecclesiology of Resistance*, Etna, Ca.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Translated from *Tserkovnie Novosti*, no. 5, September-October, 1994, p. 4 (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> The Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Cyprian’s position in relation to the Catholics and Protestants, and to Ecumenism as such, is clear from the many publications of his monastery. See in particular his article, “The Baptismal Theology of the Ecumenists”, translated into Russian in *Pravoslavnaia Rus’*, no. 12 (1513), June 15/28, 1994, pp. 5-7, 15.

In order to clarify the argument, I shall consider only those ecumenist Orthodox Churches whose participation in the ecumenist heresy cannot be doubted, such as the Moscow Patriarchate and the new calendarist Greek Patriarchates, leaving aside the doubtful or borderline cases, such as the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

\*

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

“Spiritual maladies within the Church are cured either by repentance or by judgement. Until the judgement or expulsion of a heretic, schismatic, or sinner - either by the Church or, in a more direct manner, by the Lord -, the opinion of a believer cannot be a substitute for the sentence of the Church and of her Lord, Jesus Christ, even if the resolution of a situation be prolonged until the Second Coming. As is well known, in the Scriptures, the Church is likened to a field replete with ‘wheat’ and ‘tares’, in accordance with Divine and ecclesiastical economy. Sinners and those who err in correctly understanding the Faith, yet who have not been sentenced by ecclesiastical action, are simply considered ailing members of the Church. The Mysteries [sacraments] of these unsentenced members are valid as such, according to the Seventh Ecumenical Council, as, for example, the President of the Synod, St. Tarasios, remarks: ‘[their] Ordination’ ‘is from God’. By contrast, should expositors of heresy punish the Orthodox opposed to them, these punishments are ecclesiastically invalid and groundless ‘from the time their preaching began’ (i.e., from the moment they began preaching heresy), as St. Celestine of Rome wrote and as the Third Ecumenical Synod agreed.”<sup>5</sup>

When a bishop preaches heresy “publicly” “and bareheaded in the Church”, continues the metropolitan, the Orthodox Christians should immediately separate themselves from him, in accordance with the 31<sup>st</sup> Apostolic Canon and the 15<sup>th</sup> Canon of the First-and-Second Synod of Constantinople. Such action by the Orthodox does not introduce schism, but rather serves to protect the Church from schisms and divisions. “He who preaches heresy or he who brings innovation into the Church divides her and abrogates her oneness or unity. He who opposes the preaching of heresy, or

---

<sup>5</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

who separates himself from it, is eager to save the oneness or unity of the Church. The aim of opposition and separation is the combatting of heresy, the defense of the Orthodox Faith, and the preservation of the unity of the Orthodox Church, indeed of Orthodoxy itself.”<sup>6</sup>

So far so good. However, at this point, as he turns to apply these principles to the heresy of ecumenism and its forerunner, the innovation of the new calendar, the metropolitan makes some distinctly controversial statements. “With regard to the innovation in the festal calendar, Orthodox are divided into two parts: into those who are ailing in Faith and those who are healthy, into innovators and opposers – into followers of innovation, whether in knowledge or in ignorance, and those opposed, who have separated themselves from heresy, in favor of Orthodoxy. The latter are strugglers for oneness among the ‘divided’, as the Seventh Ecumenical Synod calls those who so separated for the Orthodox unity of the Church. The followers of the festal calendar innovation have not yet been specifically judged in a Pan-Orthodox fashion, as provided for by the Orthodox Church. As St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain writes, the violator of established precepts is considered sentenced, insofar as he is judged by ‘the second entity (which is the council or synod).’ Since 1924, the innovators have been awaiting judgement and shall be judged on the basis of the decisions of the holy Synods, both Oecumenical and local, and, to be sure, on the basis of the ecclesiastical pronouncements of the sixteenth century against what were then Papal proposals for changes in the festal calendar. In this respect, those who have walled themselves off from the innovators have actually broken communion ‘before [a] conciliar or synodal verdict,’ as is allowed in the Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod. That is to say, the innovators are still unsentenced. Consequently, their Mysteries are valid...”<sup>7</sup>

“Every innovationist member of the divided Greek Church is capable of changing over to opposition against the Ecumenist innovation. This can be accomplished through repentance... A return to Orthodoxy can also take place through a formal renunciation of heresy... Therefore, the Orthodox Tradition of the Holy Oecumenical Synods and of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church prescribes that that part of the divided Greek Church that is ailing in Faith be received by one of the foregoing means of repentance and returned to the ranks of Orthodoxy. For they are not condemned schismatic or heretical Christians, but members of the Church who have not yet been brought to trial.”<sup>8</sup>

That the innovators “are still unsentenced”, as Metropolitan Cyprian supposes, is a historical mistake. In May, 1935, all the truly Orthodox (i.e. Old Calendar) Metropolitans of the Church of Greece came together and

---

<sup>6</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>8</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 62.

synodically condemned the new calendarists as schismatics without the grace of sacraments: "Those who now administer the Church of Greece have divided the unity of Orthodoxy through the calendar innovation, and have split the Greek Orthodox People into two opposing calendar parts. They have not only violated an Ecclesiastical Tradition which was consecrated by the Seven Ecumenical Councils and sanctioned by the age-old practice of the Eastern Orthodox Church, but have also touched the Dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Therefore those who now administer the Greek Church have, by their unilateral, anticanonical and unthinking introduction of the Gregorian calendar, cut themselves off completely from the trunk of Orthodoxy, and have declared themselves to be in essence Schismatics in relation to the Orthodox Churches which stand on the foundation of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the Orthodox laws and Traditions."<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the implications of this declaration with regard to the question of grace, the metropolitans made themselves crystal clear in an encyclical issued on June 8/21, 1935: "We recommend to all those who follow the Orthodox Calendar that they have no spiritual communion with the schismatic church of the schismatic ministers, from whom the grace of the All-Holy Spirit has fled, because they have violated the decisions of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Pan-Orthodox Councils which condemned the Gregorian calendar. That the schismatic Church does not have Grace and the Holy Spirit is affirmed by St. Basil the Great, who says the following: 'Even if the Schismatics have erred about things which are not Dogmas, since the head of the Church is Christ, according to the divine Apostle, from Whom all the members live and receive spiritual increase, they have torn themselves away from the harmony of the members of the Body and no longer are members [of that Body] or have the grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he who does not have it cannot transfer it to others.'"<sup>10</sup>

Now some have argued that this conciliar decision was later rejected by the leader of the Greek Old Calendarists, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina, and that it therefore represents only an "extremist", "Matthewite" position. However, the doctrine that schismatics have no grace is not a specifically "Matthewite" position, but is based on many canons and patristic sayings, notably the First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil the Great. In fact, as Bishop Ephraim of Boston points out, the new calendarists and the Moscow Patriarchate have adopted a distinctly "Matthewite" position in relation to the True Orthodox, declaring that they have no grace of sacraments – while at the same time declaring that the Western heretics do have grace!<sup>11</sup> In any case, it is not true that Metropolitan Chrysostomos renounced the Council of 1935.

---

<sup>9</sup> Metropolitan Calliopius (Giannakouloupoulos) of Pentapolis, *Ta Patria*, volume 7, Piraeus, 1987, p. 43 (in Greek).

<sup>10</sup> Calliopius, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-278.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of Reader Polychronios, April 29 / May 12, 1987.

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

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

Of central importance in Metropolitan Cyprian’s argument is his concept of the “Unifying Synod”. A “Unifying Synod” is one that unites the heretics to Orthodoxy, such as the Seventh Ecumenical Council. By implication – although, again, he does not state this explicitly here – a Synod that simply condemns the heretics without uniting them to Orthodoxy (such as the decisions of the Greek Old Calendarist Councils of 1935 and 1974 against the new calendarists, or the 1983 anathema of the Russian Church Abroad against Ecumenism) is of less significance and is not in fact competent to expel heretics from the Church.

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



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

This is inaccurate both as regards the Ecumenical Councils in general and as regards the Seventh Council in particular.

First, there were some Ecumenical Councils which took place without the participation of heretics – the Second and the Fifth. According to the reasoning of Metropolitan Cyprian, these must be considered not to be “Unifying Councils” and therefore lacking in full validity! And yet there is no higher, “more valid” Council in the Orthodox understanding than the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

Moreover, after several of the Ecumenical Councils many of the heretics were not only not “united”, but remained in bitter enmity to the Orthodox Church. Thus there were many Arians after the First Council, many Nestorians after the Third and many Monophysites after the Fourth – in fact, all three heresies are very numerous to the present day. Even the Seventh Council was only temporarily “unifying”, since the iconoclastic heresy broke out again some years later. Thus according to the reasoning of Metropolitan Cyprian, we must eliminate the First, Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils from the category of “Unifying Council”.

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

separation there has not been (and until 'their union in Orthodoxy' there cannot be) a Council of the united (undivided Universal Church) in common with them!"<sup>12</sup>

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

Thirdly, the exceptional importance of Ecumenical or "Unifying" Councils should not lead us to cast doubt on *local* Councils' authority to expel heretics from the Church. Many of the heretics of the early centuries were first cast out of the Church by local Councils. For example, Arius was cast out by a local Council presided over by St. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, in 321 and again in 323 (the First Ecumenical Council did not take place until 325). Again, local Councils convened at Rome condemned the Nestorians (under Pope St. Celestine), the Monothelites (under Pope St. Martin) and the Iconoclasts (under Pope Gregory III) - in each case *before* the convening of the Third, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils, which never disputed the validity of these local Councils, but rather *confirmed their decisions*.

Thus when the heretical bishop Theodosius in conversation with St. Maximus the Confessor disputed the validity of the local Council under St. Martin that condemned the Monothelites on the grounds that it was not convened by an emperor, St. Maximus replied that the validity of a Council depended on its recognising "the true and immutable dogmas", not on who convened it or how general it was. Again, when the same saint was asked in the Emperor's palace why he was not in communion with the Throne of Constantinople, he replied: "... They have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place recently in Rome. What

---

<sup>12</sup> Hieromonk Nectarius Yashunsky, *Ekklesiologicheskie Antitezisy* (MS) (in Russian).

Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?"<sup>13</sup>

Again, Bishop Theophan the Recluse points out that before the start of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, its president-to-be, St. Tarasius, bewailed the fact that "we (the iconoclastic Church of Constantinople) are being anathematized by them (the other Local Churches in Local Councils) every day".<sup>14</sup>

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

\*

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

Now the Sacred Canons of the Church, notably Apostolic Canons 46, 47 and 68, and the First Canon of St. Basil the Great, all teach that heretics and schismatics are outside the Church and have no sacraments. These heretics and schismatics are to be received in various ways - some by baptism, some by chrismation, some by simple confession - but, as Bishop Gregory Grabbe

---

<sup>13</sup> Fr. Christopher Birchall, *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> Bishop Theophan, "Chto takoe 'anafema'?" quoted by Vladislav Dmitriev, *Neopravdannoe Edinstvo* (MS, 1996, p. 19) (in Russian).

insisted in various of his writings, this does not alter the basic principle. Moreover, Apostolic Canon 46 declares not only that heretics and schismatics are outside the Church, but also that those who recognise the sacraments of heretics or schismatics should be deposed: "We order that a bishop or priest who accepts the baptism or sacrifice of heretics be deposed. For what agreement has Christ with Beliar? Or what part has the faithful with an infidel?"

Is a conciliar verdict necessary in order to expel a heretic? At first sight it would seem that the answer to this question is: yes. However, there are grounds for thinking that Arius was invisibly expelled from the Church not only before the First Ecumenical Council of 325, but even before the local Councils of 321 and 323. For when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria, in the form of a twelve year old child in torn clothing, and was asked by St. Peter: "O Creator, who has torn Your tunic?", the Lord replied: "The mindless Arius; *he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood.*"<sup>15</sup> And this took place before St. Peter's martyrdom, which was in 311.

The question arises, then: What is the purpose of the Councils? Is it they, and they alone, which bind heretics and cast them out of the Church? Or do they simply *discern* that binding has *already* taken place<sup>16</sup>, "knowing," as the apostle says, "that he that is such [a heretic] is subverted, and sinneth, *being condemned of himself*" (Titus 3.11)?

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

It should be noted, first, that the canon is here speaking about heresies that have been condemned "by the holy Councils or Fathers". This would imply that a conciliar judgement – or, at any rate, a patristic judgement – is indeed

---

<sup>15</sup> St. Dmitri of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, November 25.

<sup>16</sup> St. Bede the Venerable writes: "The keys of the Kingdom designate *the actual knowledge and power of discerning* who are worthy to be received into the Kingdom, and who should be excluded from it as unworthy" (*Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul*, P.L. 94, col. 219, sermon 16).

necessary before one can leave a heretic (not necessarily, however, the judgement of an *Ecumenical* Council). Secondly, however, such a conciliar or patristic judgement need not be a contemporary one, for the canon explicitly states that it is praiseworthy to leave such a heretic “before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered”. In other words, no additional, contemporary Council has to be convened to confirm the decision of the earlier “Councils or Fathers” in relation to the contemporary heretic. And thirdly, a man who preaches such a heresy publicly is *already* a “pseudo-bishop” on the basis of the early “Councils or Fathers” alone.

Now this attitude towards heretics was disputed in the fourteenth century by the famous opponent of St. Gregory Palamas, Acindynus. Writing to Barlaam, another opponent of St. Gregory, he gently chides him for calling Gregory a heretic; “for it was against canon law to treat a man as a heretic before he had been formally condemned. ‘Therefore, be more moderate towards Palamas,’ he repeated.”<sup>17</sup>

Vasily (now Igumen Gregory) Lourié has supplied a fitting riposte to this<sup>18</sup>: “It is characteristic that the latter remark was expressed by Acindynus – that is, by one who was himself a heretic. The church canons distinguish two cases. 1. If the heretic is not a bishop (in which case it is no longer important who he is: a layman, a monk, a deacon, a priest, a superior, etc.). Here the words of the Apostle Paul retain their full force: ‘A heretic after the first and second admonition reject’ (Titus 3.10). No church canons have been added to them. This means – and it is precisely such an understanding that is confirmed by the practice of the holy fathers, – that one should not wait for any church condemnations of, for example, a heretical priest. One must immediately cease to pray and concelebrate with him, and to receive confession and communion from him. One must *first* break communion in prayer with him, and only then, if possible, appeal to a church court (juridical power over a priest is given to a bishop). 2. If the heretic is a bishop. Here the Church has at various times introduced various elaborations of the apostolic formula. In force at the present time is Canon 15, which was introduced at the so-called First-and-Second Council of Constantinople in 861. After discussing those who, on the pretext of various accusations, separate from their bishop, [the canon] says that it is quite another matter if the separation takes place as a result of heresy...”

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

---

<sup>17</sup> Fr. John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, London: The Faith Press, 1964, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> In his commentaries on the recent Russian translation of Meyendorff’s book, *Zhizn’ i Trudy Svyatitelia Grigoria Palamy*, St. Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, 1997, p. 384.

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

Already in the nineteenth century, Bishop Theophan the Recluse was saying that there was no need for further conciliar anathemas to condemn the heretics of his day since they had all already been condemned by earlier decisions. Commenting on St. Paul’s words, “If anyone preaches any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema” (Galatians 1.8), he writes: “The apostle laid only the beginning to anathematization. Since then all the opinions worthy of this punishment have already been marked out by the Church. At the present time there is no point waiting for a special ecclesiastical act to strike the evildoers with this judgement. They themselves are placing their own heads under this sword immediately they acquire opinions contrary to the truth and stubbornly begin to insist on them.”<sup>19</sup>

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

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

---

<sup>19</sup> Bishop Theophan, *Commentary on the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Galatians*, Moscow, 1893, pp. 70, 71 (in Russian).

are subject to defrocking and excommunication here, and to the wrath of God there.”<sup>20</sup>

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

In this period, the heretic, although already deprived of grace in a *personal* sense (for all sin deprives the sinner of grace), may continue to preserve the *priestly* grace which the Church gave him at his ordination and which she deprives him of only through another public, conciliar act.<sup>21</sup> In the period before the conciliar deposition of the heretic, not only is he given time to repent, but his flock are enabled to continue receiving the true sacraments – although, as Hieromartyr Cyril of Kazan writes, they will receive them to their condemnation if they are conscious of their hierarch’s heresy. After his conciliar deposition, however, the hierarch is no longer a hierarch, and the flock that remains with him no longer receives true sacraments from him; for “if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15.14).

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

\*

---

<sup>20</sup> Cited by Hieromonk Theodoretus, *To Imerologiakon Skhisma*, 1971, p. 3 (in Greek).

<sup>21</sup> I owe this distinction to Protopriest Lev Lebedev, who, however, expresses it in somewhat different terms, using Vladimir Lossky’s distinction between “christological” and “pneumatological” grace.

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

*The Ecclesiology of Hieromartyr Cyril of Kazan.* In the early years after the Sergianist schism of 1927, until about 1934, Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan took the position that, while he could not concelebrate with Metropolitan Sergius because of his usurpation of Church power, he did not consider him to be a schismatic deprived of the grace of sacraments. As he wrote to Sergius: "I refrain from liturgizing with you not because the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ would not be actualized at our joint celebration, but because the communion of the Chalice of the Lord would be to both of us for judgement and condemnation, since our inward attitude, disturbed by a different understanding of our church relation to each other, would take away from us the possibility of offering, in complete calm of spirit, the mercy of peace, the sacrifice of praise."<sup>22</sup>

Again he wrote to an unknown hierarch: "It seems to me that both you yourself and your correspondent do not distinguish those actions of Metropolitan Sergius and his partisans, which are performed by them in proper order by power of those grace-given rights received through the mystery of the priesthood, from those other activities which are performed with an exceeding of their sacramental rights and according to human cunning, as a means of protecting and supporting their self-invented rights in the Church. Such are the actions of Bishop Zacharius and Priest Patapov of which you speak. These are sacramental acts only in form, while in essence they are a usurpation of sacramental activity, and therefore are blasphemous, without grace, non-ecclesiastical. But the Mysteries performed by Sergianists who are correctly ordained and not prohibited to serve as priests, are undoubtedly saving Mysteries for those who receive them with faith, in simplicity, without deliberations and doubts concerning their efficacy, and who do not even suspect anything incorrect in the Sergianist order of the Church. But at the same time, they serve for judgement and condemnation for the very performers of them and for those who approach them well understanding the untruth that exists in Sergianism, and by their lack of opposition to it reveal a criminal indifference towards the mocking of the Church. This is why it is essential for an Orthodox Bishop or priest to refrain from communion with Sergianists in prayer. The same thing is essential for laymen who have a conscious attitude to all the details of church life."<sup>23</sup>

These letters make clear that while Metropolitan Cyril was quite prepared to say of certain hierarchs (the renovationists, Bishop Zacharius) that they were deprived of the grace of sacraments, he was not prepared to say this – yet – of Metropolitan Sergius, "until a lawful Council by its sentence shall

---

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 95.



utter the judgement of the Holy Spirit concerning him".<sup>24</sup> He gave as one reason for his hesitation – or “excessive caution”, as his correspondent put it – “an incomplete clarification of the conditions which surround me and all of us”.<sup>25</sup> We may suppose that another reason was the fact that both Sergianists and True Orthodox were still linked, albeit tenuously, by their common commemoration of Metropolitan Peter, who, because of his imprisonment beyond the Arctic Circle, had not been able officially to remove Metropolitan Sergius from his post as his deputy – although he had urged the other bishops to remove him.

In fact, according to Hieromartyr Maximus of Serpukhov and other sources, there had been a secret Council in 1928 that anathematized the Sergianists.<sup>26</sup> But the inability of the first-hierarchy of the Church to make his own position publicly and officially known – which inability was, of course, engineered by the Bolsheviks – prevented the Catacomb hierarchs from deposing Sergius in a manner that would have been accepted as canonical by all. As Metropolitan Cyril wrote: “For me personally, it is impossible at the present time to step forth, since I am entirely unsure of the character of the attitudes of Metropolitan Peter, in order to be convinced of his actual views and to decide how to act...”<sup>27</sup>

The situation changed, however, in August, 1936, when the Bolsheviks issued the false information that Metropolitan Peter had died, and Metropolitan Sergius promptly – and completely unlawfully – arrogated to himself Peter’s title of Metropolitan of Krutitsa and patriarchal locum tenens. Almost immediately we see a significant hardening in Metropolitan Cyril’s position. Thus in March, 1937 he wrote: “With regard to your perplexities concerning Sergianism, I can say that the very same questions in almost the same form were addressed to me from Kazan ten years ago, and then I replied affirmatively to them, because I considered everything that Metropolitan Sergius had done as a mistake which he himself was conscious of and wished to correct. Moreover, among our ordinary flock there were many people who had not investigated what had happened, and it was impossible to demand from them a decisive and active condemnation of the events. Since then much water has flowed under the bridge. The expectations that Metropolitan Sergius would correct himself have not been justified, *but there has been enough time for the formerly ignorant members of the Church, enough incentive and enough opportunity to investigate what has happened;* and very many have both investigated and understood that Metropolitan Sergius is departing from that Orthodox Church which the Holy Patriarch Tikhon entrusted to us to guard, and consequently there can be no part or lot with him for the Orthodox. The

---

<sup>24</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>26</sup> Protopresbyter Michael Polsky, *Novie Mucheniki Rossijskie*, Jordanville, 1949-57, vol. II, p. 30 (in Russian).

<sup>27</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

recent events have finally made clear *the renovationist nature of Sergianism*. We cannot know whether those believers who remain in Sergianism will be saved, because the work of eternal Salvation is a work of the mercy and grace of God. But for those who see and feel the unrighteousness of Sergianism (those are your questions) it would be unforgiveable craftiness to close one's eyes to this unrighteousness and seek there for the satisfaction of one's spiritual needs when one's conscience doubts in the possibility of receiving such satisfaction. Everything which is not of faith is sin..."<sup>28</sup>

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

Metropolitan Cyril was shot on the eve of St. Michael's day, 1937 together with Metropolitan Joseph, whose followers, as is well-known, declared that the Sergianists had no grace. According to Catacomb nuns who were able to communicate by secret signs with the two hierarchs as they walked through the prison yard shortly before their execution, Metropolitan Cyril indicated that he was not only in full agreement with Metropolitan Joseph, but that *he recognized Joseph's leadership of the Russian Church* as blessed by Metropolitan Peter in the event of his death.<sup>29</sup> There is therefore every reason to believe that at the time of their joint martyric deaths Metropolitan Cyril differed in no way in his confession from the "extremist" Metropolitan Joseph...

But in any case, can there be any doubt about what Metropolitan Cyril would have said if he had been alive *now*, more than sixty years later? In 1934, he said that he viewed the disorder in the Russian Orthodox Church "not as concerning the teaching which She holds, but as concerning administration"<sup>30</sup>. Now, however, Sergianism has metamorphosed into something infinitely worse than administrative disorder, worse even than the heresy of renovationism. It has evolved into "the heresy of heresies": first, through the filling up of its hierarchy with renovationists in 1943-45 (so that most of the post-war sergianists have not satisfied Metropolitan Cyril's criterion of correct ordination); then through its idolatrous glorification of Stalin, and persecution of the Catacomb Church and Russian Church Abroad, in the years after the war; then through its entry into the World Council of Churches in 1961; then

---

<sup>28</sup> Letter of Metropolitan Cyril to Hieromonk Leonid, February 23 / March 8, 1937, *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'*, N 16, August 15/28, 1997, p. 7 (in Russian). Italics mine (V.M.).

<sup>29</sup> Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), *Tserkov' Katakombnaia na Zemle Rossijskoj* (MS, Mayford, 1980).

<sup>30</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

through its adoption of the gospel of Communist Christianity; and finally through its inter-religious “super-ecumenism” in the 1980s and 1990s, which in 1983 received a definitive conciliar anathematization to which Metropolitan Cyril has no doubt added his authoritative voice in the heavens...

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

Is it absolutely necessary for names to be mentioned for an anathema to be valid? A brief look at the Order for the Triumph of Orthodoxy will establish that *most* of the anathemas there are not specific as to name. Patriarch Tikhon’s anathema against the communists and their co-workers in 1918, which was solemnly confirmed by the Local Council of the Russian Church then in session, mentioned neither Lenin nor anyone else by name. The same applies to the anathematization of the renovationists. What are we to say about all these anathemas? That they are invalid because the names of the heretics are not mentioned? But is it possible for there to be a heresy without a heretic, or an anathema against a heresy without any individual heretic falling under it?

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

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

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

***Bishop Ephraim and the Excuse of Ignorance.*** We have seen that by 1937 Metropolitan Cyril considered that time enough had passed for the faithful to come to a clear appreciation of the renovationist nature of Sergianism and flee from it. Now the “argument from ignorance” which Metropolitan Cyril implicitly employed in the early years of the Sergianist schism has been developed further by Bishop Ephraim of Boston. Let us examine it more closely.

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

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

or schism. And the tree of life, the Church, given water and light by Christ my Saviour, continues to flourish; but they who have apostasized from Her have perished, since of their own will they removed themselves far from God" (Letter 34). Bishop Ephraim clearly prefers this metaphor because it contains the idea of *gradualness*. Just as a severed branch only gradually withers away, he appears to be saying, so a schismatic or heretical Church only gradually loses grace.

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

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

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

But let us suppose that the Christian really loves the truth, but is uneducated or unintelligent or a long way from good pastors or surrounded by misinformed or malicious people. Then we believe that God will enlighten him in one way or another, or simply *move* him out of danger. There are many, many examples from the lives of the saints to show that God does not abandon His faithful sheep when they are in danger of going astray; for, as the Lord said, "*no man* is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10.29). For there is such a thing as genuine, unwitting ignorance, and it does serve as an excuse in God's eyes. If ignorance did not serve as some kind of excuse, then the Lord would not have cried out on the Cross: "Father, forgive

them, *for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23.24). Nor would the Apostle Peter have said to the Jews: "I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3.17; cf. 17.30). Again, St. Paul says that he was forgiven his persecution of the Church because he did it unwittingly, out of ignorance and unbelief (I Timothy 1.13).

But those who crucified Christ certainly sinned; and neither the Lord nor St. Peter said that they had *not* sinned. He pleaded for forgiveness for them, not because they had not sinned, but because there was some excuse for their sin (their ignorance of His Divinity).<sup>31</sup> St. Paul also was guilty, but again there were "extenuating circumstances": his lack of knowledge of the mystery. And when that knowledge was given him, he repented. And so sin remains sin, whether it is committed in knowledge or in ignorance; only sin committed in knowledge is more serious and is punished more severely than sin committed in genuine ignorance.

The Lord put it as follows: "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke 12.47-48). On which Blessed Theophylact makes the following comment: "He too was punished because he was able to learn the will of the master, but did not want to do so. Because of his laziness, he was the cause of his own ignorance, and he deserves punishment for this very reason, that of his own will he did not learn. Brothers, let us tremble with fear. If even he who knows nothing deserves to be beaten, what excuse will deliver those who are brimming with knowledge, especially those who are teachers? Their condemnation will be even more severe..."<sup>32</sup>

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

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

---

<sup>31</sup> Cf. C. S. Lewis: "If you had a perfect excuse you would not need forgiveness: if the whole of your action needs forgiveness then there was no excuse for it" ("On Forgiveness", in *Fern-seed and Elephants*, London: Fount Paperbacks, 1977, p. 40.

<sup>32</sup> *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to Luke*, House Springs: Chrysostom Press, 1997, p. 159.

canons concerning heretics on the basis of private and quite possibly quite unfounded speculations.

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

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

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

Is the idea of "gradually receding grace" being reintroduced here "by the back-door"? I don't think so. As even the ecumenist "Metropolitan" Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh once admitted when discussing the sacraments of papists,

we cannot talk about “half sacraments”; on any one altar at any one time there either is or is not the true sacrament of Christ, and the angel sent by God to guard that altar either is or is not present. Grace does not “gradually recede” from that altar; it goes suddenly and decisively. In some historical cases it is, I agree, difficult to determine with precision whether or when grace has left a particular church, or diocese, or even patriarchate. But by a careful study of the facts – the canonical facts and the historical facts – we can come closer to precision than some people allow. I think it was St. Macarius who once saw the grace of baptism leave his disciple when he had apostasized during conversation with a Jew. I believe that the same sudden, decisive loss of grace takes place in churches, too – although, because of our sins, we cannot see it as St. Macarius did.

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

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

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



are *not* partaking of It in their heretical churches, which they must leave and renounce if they are to make themselves worthy of It again...

*March 9/22, 1998.  
The Sunday of the Holy Cross.*

## 2. THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The approach of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, always an important event in the Church's calendar, is rendered all the more important this year by the planned union of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia under Metropolitan Lavr (ROCOR) with her supposed "mother" inside Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), which lies under many anathemas of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Not coincidentally, perhaps, we have recently witnessed a sustained attack on the nature of the anathematizations pronounced on this Sunday on the part of certain supporters of this union. For clearly the supporters of union wish to lull the members of the ROCOR into a false sense of security, into a feeling that the fearsome anathematizations pronounced on this Sunday will not apply to them if they are joined to the MP - a feeling which, as I shall now try to show with the help of God, is, tragically, *completely unfounded*.

The supporters of union characteristically employ one or all of the following tactics in various combinations, some of which are mutually inconsistent with each other: (1) a redefinition of the meaning and use of the word "anathema" in such a way as to limit, or radically distort, its significance; (2) a caviling at individual anathemas so as to prove their invalidity, incompetence, narrowness of application and lack of universality in space or time; and (3) a reinterpretation of the current state and status of the MP in such a way as to prove that it does not fall under any of the anathemas in question, even if they were valid. I shall approach each of these tactics in turn.

### 1. The Meaning and Use of the Word "Anathema".

A common tactic used is to declare that anathemas do not constitute expulsion from the Church in the full sense, but rather *warnings* about false doctrine.

The falseness of this argument was shown by St. John Maximovich, who, after explaining the use of the words "anathema" in the New Testament, wrote: "In the acts of the Councils and the further course of the New Testament Church, the word 'anathema' came to mean complete separation from the Church. 'The Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes', 'let him be anathema', 'let it be anathema', means a complete tearing away from the Church. While in cases of 'separation from the communion of the Church' and other epitimias or penances laid on a person, the person remained a member of the Church, even though his participation in her grace-filled life was limited, those given over to anathema were thus completely torn away from her until their repentance. Realizing that she is unable to do anything for their salvation, in view of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, the earthly

Church lifts them up to the judgement of God. That judgement is merciful unto repentant sinners, but fearsome for the stubborn enemies of God. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God... for our God is a consuming fire' (Hebrews 10.31; 12.29)."<sup>33</sup>

Sometimes it is added that only God can expel from the Church, which is clearly false, in that Christ God specifically entrusted His True Church with the power to bind and to loose (Matthew 18.18; John 20.23) – that is, to retain people as members of the Church or to expel them from Her (provided, of course, that She exercises this power with justice and discernment).

Other variations on this tactic include the theory that anathemas anathematize, not individual men or churches, but teachings of men and churches, which again is clearly false, in that the Apostle Paul's anathemas (I Corinthians 16.22; Galatians 1.8,9) are directed against people, as are many of the anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils.

Again it is asserted that anathemas anathematize nobody if specific names are not mentioned, which would imply that the Apostle Paul's anathemas, as well as many of those of the Ecumenical Councils and those more recent anathemas pronounced on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, are all just a pompous form of game-playing and not to be taken seriously.

No, the matter is extremely serious. And no amount of Jesuitical circumvention of the plain meaning of the word "anathema", and of the obvious significance of the formula: "*To all those who teach.... Anathema*", can deny that in all true anathemas, whether with names or without them, *somebody is anathematized*, that is, cut off from the Church. For the word of anathema is no less than "the word of God, quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit..." (Hebrews 6.12).

## 2. Cavilling at the Scope of Individual Anathematisms.

If it is accepted that a given anathema does apply to people, and not only to teachings, and that it does in fact separate people from the Church, and not simply warn them about a possible falling-away, the next tactic usually employed is to attempt to limit the scope of the anathema. This can be done either by mocking the small number of bishops involved, or by asserting that a synod of bishops, however large, can only anathematize those within its jurisdiction. One variant of this ploy is to assert that one Local Church cannot anathematize another.

---

<sup>33</sup> St. John Maximovich, "The Word 'Anathema' and its Meaning", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 27, March-April, 1977, pp. 18-19.

Those who assert this are usually thinking of the ROCOR's anathema against ecumenism in 1983, which supporters of union with the MP like to think applies only to members of the ROCOR, contrary to its obviously universal scope and wording. Of course, many anathemas are formulated in the first place against heretics living within the jurisdiction of the bishops who pronounce them. But that in no way limits the application of such anathemas to those heretics, and those alone; and still less does it mean that there is a "heresy of universal jurisdiction", as one ROCOR priest has put it.

Concerning this so-called "heresy of universal jurisdiction, I wrote some years ago: "An anathema excludes the person anathematized from the holy mysteries, from membership of the Holy Church. In the first place, of course, that applies to the local Church of which that person is a member. It applies to other Churches only to the extent that the leaders of those other Churches agree with the original anathema and "sign up to it", as it were. Thus the heretic Arius was originally anathematized by the Bishop of Alexandria, which meant that he was excluded from receiving the sacraments throughout the Church of Alexandria. However, not all the bishops of neighbouring Churches agreed with this anathema, so Arius was able to receive communion in other Local Churches. To this extent the anathema was only of local significance. It required the convening of the First Ecumenical Council before Arius was anathematized "universally" - and even then, the anathema was not universally received, as the history of the Church in the next fifty years demonstrates.

"It is a different matter when we consider an anathema sub specie aeternitatis, in its mystical, super-terrestrial significance. From that point of view, the anathematization of a heretic begins in the heavens. Thus even before Arius had been "locally" anathematized by St. Alexander of Alexandria, the Lord appeared to his predecessor, St. Peter, with a torn cloak, and in answer to St. Peter's question: 'O Creator, who has torn Thy tunic?', replied: 'The mindless Arius; he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood'.<sup>34</sup>

"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 eternal and heavenly decisions on earth, in space and time. As St. Bede the Venerable (+735) writes: "The keys of the

---

<sup>34</sup> St. Dmitri of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, November 25.

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".<sup>35</sup> 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 ... 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 sinneth, being condemned of himself' (Titus 3.11). But the heretics' self-condemnation and self-exclusion from the Church as a mystical organism [here I borrow a distinction between the Church as a mystical organism and the Church as an external organization from the Catacomb Hieromartyr Bishop Mark of Sergiev Posad (+1938)] 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

---

<sup>35</sup> St. Bede, *Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul*, P.L. 94, col. 219.

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 or metropolitanate 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..."<sup>36</sup>

Parallel to the theory that anathemas are not universal in space is the theory that they are not universal in time either, that they have a “sell-by date”, after which they need to be “reapplied” by “living” Synods of bishops. In answer to this we reply in the words of the Lord: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 22.32), and his true bishops, together with the words of truth and power that they pronounce, live for ever. In any case, are not the anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils “reapplied” by “living Synods of bishops” every year on the Sunday of Orthodoxy? And not because these anathemas have somehow “died out” in the course of the previous year (what a blasphemous thought!), but precisely so that the people should not forget their eternal significance and should, by pronouncing them themselves, take care that they should not “fall under their own anathema” by participating in heresy and the communion of heretics.

---

<sup>36</sup> V. Moss, “Re: [paradosis] The Heresy of Universal Jurisdiction”, [orthodox-tradition@egroups.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@egroups.com), October 12, 2000.

### 3. The MP and the Anathemas.

Let us now turn to some specific anathemas as they apply to the MP:-

**a. The anathemas against Sergianism.** Metropolitan Philaret of New York (+1985) wrote of the MP: "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."<sup>37</sup>

Of course, many will say that all this is in the past, since communism has fallen in Russia. But since when does a change of political regime make a heretic Orthodox without his repentance? In any case, there is abundant evidence that if the communist regime has fallen, Sovietism has by no means fallen. When Fr. Dmitri Dudko praises Stalin, do his bishops rebuke him? They do not. When KGB President Putin toasts Stalin and restores the red flag to the armed forces, does the official church protest? Not a murmur... Russia is going back to the Soviet Union (if it ever really left it), and the MP is going along with that (because it never left it).

**b. The anathemas of the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils against the Monophysite heresy.** In 1990, in Chambesy,

---

<sup>37</sup> "A Letter from Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) to a Priest of the Church Abroad concerning Father Dimitry Dudko and the Moscow Patriarchate", *Vertograd-Inform*, N 4, February, 1999, pp. 16-20. A few years earlier, on August 14/27, 1977, Metropolitan Philaret told the present writer: "I advise you always to remain faithful to the anathema of the Catacomb Church against the Moscow Patriarchate."

Switzerland, the Monophysites agreed to take “a positive attitude” to, although without officially accepting, the last Four Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers who took part in them, and to lift their anathemas against them; while the Orthodox agreed to lift their anathemas against all the Monophysite councils and fathers, including the notorious heresiarchs Dioscurus, Timothy and Severus. Thus both “families of Churches” (a new phrase unknown to Orthodox ecclesiology) agreed that “all the anathemas and condemnations of the past which divide us should be lifted by the Churches in order that the last obstacle to the full unity and communion of our two families can be removed by the grace and power of God.”

But this meant that all the six hundred and thirty holy Fathers who uttered these anathemas and condemnations were wrong!

Of course, the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches (with the exception of Jerusalem) have already *implicitly* rejected the Councils and the Fathers by their communion in prayer and the sacraments with all sorts of heretics, and even pagans, the WCC General Assembly in Canberra in 1991 being perhaps the most extreme example. Nevertheless, it is a further and important stage to say *explicitly* that the Ecumenical Councils were *wrong*, that the Monophysites should not have been condemned, that they were Orthodox all these centuries although the Holy Fathers and all the saints of the Orthodox Church considered them to be heretics. This is not simply a failure to come up to the standards of the Ecumenical Councils: *it is a renunciation of the standards themselves*. In essence, the Local Orthodox Churches here placed themselves under the anathemas against Monophysitism from the Fourth Ecumenical Council onwards, and must be considered to be “semi-Monophysites”.

**c. The anathemas of the Constantinopolitan Councils of 1054 and the 1340s against Roman Catholicism.** In 1965, the Constantinopolitan Church “lifted” the 1054 anathema against the Roman Catholics, and the MP did not demur, but in 1969 decided to give communion to Catholics in certain circumstances, an act which was defined by the ROCOR Synod as “heretical”.

In 1994 the Moscow Patriarchate and other Local Orthodox churches signed the Balamand agreement with the Catholics, in which the Orthodox and the Catholics were declared to be sister-Churches in the full sense, “two lungs” of the same organism (with the Monophysites as a “third lung”?). The Balamand Agreement, which was signed on the Orthodox side by Moscow, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Romania, Cyprus, Poland and Finland, declared: “Catholics and Orthodox... are once again discovering each other as sister churches” and “recognizing each other as sister churches”. “On each side it is acknowledged that what Christ has entrusted to His Church – the profession of the apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, the apostolic succession of bishops, and, above all, the one priesthood celebrating the one Sacrifice of Christ – cannot be considered to be the exclusive property



of one of our Churches." The baptism of penitent papists into the Orthodox Church was prohibited: "All rebaptism (sic) is prohibited." The Orthodox Church "recognizes the Catholic Church in her entirety as a sister Church, and indirectly recognizes also the Oriental Catholic Churches" (the Uniates). "Special attention should be given on both sides to the preparation and education of future priests with regard to the new ecclesiology, (that they may) be informed of the apostolic succession of the other Church and the authenticity of its sacramental life, (so that) the use of history in a polemical manner (may be avoided)".

This was an official acceptance of the "branch theory" of the Church, and therefore also fell under:

#### **d. The Anathema of the ROCOR Synod against Ecumenism.**

Some will say that the MP has extracted itself from under this anathema because, in the document on relations with the heterodox accepted at the 2000 Sobor, it was declared that "the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ, created by our Lord and Saviour Himself; it is the Church established by, and filled with, the Holy Spirit..." "The Church of Christ is one and unique..." "The so-called 'branch theory', which affirms the normality and even the providentiality of the existence of Christianity in the form of separate 'branches'... is completely unacceptable."

But, wrote Protopriest Michael Ardov, "the 'patriarchal liberals' will also not be upset, insofar as the heretics in the cited document are called 'heterodox', while the Monophysite communities are called the 'Eastern Orthodox Churches'. And the 'dialogues with the heterodox' will be continued, and it is suggested that the World Council of Churches be not abandoned, but reformed..."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, immediately after the Council, on August 18, "Patriarch" Alexis prayed together with the Armenian "Patriarch".

The Church does not accept words unless they are accompanied by deeds. Saying that the Church of Christ is only the Orthodox Church, but continuing to remain in the World Council of Churches, which officially declares the opposite, is hypocritical and would never have been accepted by the Holy Fathers, who insisted not only that Orthodoxy be proclaimed but also that the heretics be anathematised.

Until the MP breaks all ecumenical relations with, and anathematizes, both the RCs and the Monophysites publicly, as well as the agreements of Chambesy and Balamand and all participants in the World Council of

---

<sup>38</sup> Ardov, "The 'Jubilee Council' has confirmed it: the Moscow Patriarchate has finally fallen away from Orthodoxy" (Report read at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the clergy, monastics and laity of the Suzdal diocese of the Russian Orthodox [Autonomous] Church, November, 2000).

Churches, they remain under the anathemas of the Holy Fathers. It is here that “reapplying” the anathemas by “living” Synods of bishops makes sense and is necessary. Not because the anathemas of the Holy Fathers need reinforcing, but to show that we are in accordance with them, and are members of the same Church, the Church of the living God.

#### **e. The Anathemas against Judaism.**

In his famous speech before the rabbis of New York on November 13, 1991, “Patriarch” Alexis, alias KGB agent Drozdov, said: “Dear brothers, shalom to you in the name of the God of love and peace!... We are all brothers, for we are all children of the Old Testament on Mount Sinai, which, as we Christians believe, was renewed by Christ... Your law is our law, your prophets are our prophets.”

The patriarch confessed that “we are one with the Jews, without renouncing Christianity and not in spite of Christianity, but in the name of and by dint of Christianity, while the Jews are one with us not in spite of Judaism, but in the name of and by dint of true Judaism. We are separated from the Jews because we are not yet completely Christian, while the Jews are separated from us because they are not yet completely Jews. For the fullness of Christianity embraces both itself and Judaism, while the fullness of Judaism is Christianity... The Jewish people are near to us in faith. Your law is our law, your prophets are our prophets.”

The patriarch called on the Jews to work together to build “the new world order”: “by our joint efforts we shall build a new society – a democratic, free, open, just society... where Jews would live with Christians in security and peace, in an atmosphere of friendship, creative brotherhood and the brotherhood of the children of the one God, the Father of all, the God of your fathers and of ours.”<sup>39</sup>

So the KGB Patriarch is going to work with the Jews for “the new world order”, considering himself a brother of the rabbis whose sacred book, the Talmud, calls Christ a magician, the son of a harlot and a Roman soldier! Has he forgotten that God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, said that the Jews were not the children of God, but of the devil (John 8.44)?! Does he not remember that the Apostle John said that those who reject the Son do not have the Father either (I John 2.22)?!

Have we not returned to the time, around the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the head of the Russian Church was a secret Judaizer? Only is it not much worse now, in that this Judaizer does not hide his Judaism, and the church which he heads make no attempt to oppose or depose him?

---

<sup>39</sup> *The Speech of Patriarch Alexis II to the Rabbis of New York on 13 November, 1991 and the Heresy of the Judaizers*, TOO “Pallada”, Moscow, 1992, pp. 8-10 (in Russian)

Let us remind ourselves how the true metropolitans of Moscow and saints of Russia dealt with the Jews: "The polemic began... in the time of Metropolitan Peter (+1326), the founder of the Muscovite ecclesiastical centre. In the life of St. Peter it is mentioned among his other exploits for the good of the Russian Church that he 'overcame the heretic Seit in debate and anathematised him.' The hypothesis concerning the Karaite origin of the 'Judaisers' allows us to see in Seit a Karaite preacher.

"... The heresy did not disappear but smouldered under a facade of church life in certain circles of the Orthodox urban population, and the Russian church, under the leadership of her hierarchs, raised herself to an unceasing battle with the false teachings. The landmarks of this battle were: Metropolitan Peter's victory over Seit in debate (between 1312 and 1326), the unmasking and condemnation of the strigolniki in Novgorod in the time of Metropolitan Alexis (1370s), the overcoming of this heresy in the time of Metropolitan Photius (+1431), and of the heresy of the Judaisers - in the time of Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod (+1505) and St. Joseph of Volotsk (+1515)."<sup>40</sup>

Archbishop Andrew of Rockland (+1978) saw a close link between the heresy of the Judaizers and the Russian revolution because both represented the triumph of Jewish ways of thinking. The present-day Moscow Patriarchate, far from cleansing Russia of Judaism, has presented an exhausted Russia on a plate to the international Jewish society that we know of as "the new world order". What a mockery of the exploit of the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia, and what a lesson for us all!

To us, who witness the triumph, not only of sergianism and ecumenism, but even of God-hating Judaism in the heart of the formerly holy Russia, the words of the holy Apostle Paul to the Judaizing Christians of his day have never been more relevant:

*Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **anathema!***

*February 12/25, 2004.  
St. Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow.*

---

<sup>40</sup> *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, Publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, p. 25 (in Russian).

### 3. THE BRANCH AND MONOLITH THEORIES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

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

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

archbishop”, in which case the archbishop has every right to pay no attention to their “rights”, since schismatics have no ecclesiastical rights...

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

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

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

\*

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

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

out of the schools. They will adapt prayer assemblies into ordinary meetings permitted by the police, as in that other land of freedom, France, and will convert the heritage of the Church, together with the very right of faith, into the property of the state. Perhaps the faith of Christ will again hide in the woods, the deserts, the catacombs, and the confession of the faith will be only in secret, while immoral and blasphemous presentations will come out into the open. All this may happen! The struggle against Christ will be waged with desperation, with the exertion of the last drop of human and hellish energy, and only then, perhaps, will it be given to hell and to mankind to assure us with complete obviousness of the unfailing power and might of the priceless promise of Christ: 'I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against her' (Matthew 16.18)."<sup>41</sup>

The first Catacomb hieromartyr was probably the priest Timothy Strelkov, who, after being executed by the Bolsheviks in June, 1918 and then having his severed head miraculously restored to his body, was forced to go into hiding until he was caught and executed for the second time in 1930.<sup>42</sup> In the same year of 1918, Patriarch Tikhon himself had called on the faithful to form unofficial, quasi-catacomb brotherhoods to defend the Orthodox Faith. Shemetov writes: "The brotherhoods which arose with the blessing of the Patriarch did not make the parishes obsolete where they continued to exist. The brotherhoods only made up for the deficiencies of the parishes."<sup>43</sup>

In fact, the organization of unofficial, catacomb bodies like the brotherhoods became inevitable once it became clear that the God-hating State was bent on destroying the Church. Thus according to Archbishop Lazarus (Zhurbenko), "the catacombs began in 1922, when renovationism began. The Optina elders blessed the Christians to go into the catacombs..."<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, the "Danilovites" in Moscow and the "Andrewites" in the Urals were already preparing for a descent of the Church into the Catacombs. They clearly saw that the Church could no longer at the same time serve openly and have a pure confession of faith, untainted by compromise with the communists or renovationists. The history of the Church in the late 1920s and 1930s was to prove them right...

Shortly before his death, on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1925, the Patriarch confided to his personal physician and friend, Michael Zhizhilenko, that he felt that the unceasing pressure of the government would one day force the leadership of the Church to concede more than was right, and that the true Church would then have to descend into the catacombs like the

---

<sup>41</sup> Archimandrite Joseph, *Kormchij*, 23 May, 1909; quoted in Sergius and Tamara Fomin, *Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem*, Moscow: Rodnik, 1994, vol. I, p. 413 (in Russian).

<sup>42</sup> Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), *Tserkov' Katakombnaia na Zemle Rossijskoj* (in Russian).

<sup>43</sup> N. Shemetov, "Khristos sredi nas", *Moskovskij tserkovnij vestnik*, N 11 (29), May, 1990, p. 3 (in Russian).

<sup>44</sup> "Vladyka Lazar otvechajet na voprosy redaktsii", *Pravoslavnaja Rus'*, no. 22, 15/28 November, 1991, p. 5 (in Russian).

Roman Christians of old. And he counselled his friend, who was a widower, that when that time came, he should seek the monastic tonsure and episcopal consecration.

That time came in 1927 with the notorious declaration of Metropolitan Sergius; and Michael Zhizhilenko, following the advice of his mentor, was consecrated as the first bishop (with the name Maximus) of the anti-sergianist Catacomb Church in 1928, for which he paid with his life in Solovki in 1931. Thus was the concept and even the name of the Catacomb Church foreseen by the Martyr-Patriarch himself; it was, and is the “Tikhonite” Church.

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

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

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

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

Now it was anticipated that these autonomous groups of bishops would remain in communion with each other, even if communication was difficult. However, it was also tacitly admitted that if the persecutions intensified (which they did), then communication between groups might be broken entirely. With the loosening of communication, differences were likely to arise

between the groups; there might even be ruptures of communion because different groups might suspect each other of canonical irregularities, or even of falling away from the faith; and with the absence of any central authority recognised by both sides, there might be no means of healing the divisions thus created. Such a scenario had taken place in other periods of Church history when the faith had been persecuted – for example, in the second half of the fourth century in Asia Minor. So it was only to be expected that it would happen during the much more severe persecutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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

A very partial and schematic answer to these questions was provided by the Russian Church Abroad in its All-Emigration Council in Serbia in 1938: “We must follow the example of the Church prior to the Council of Nicaea, when the Christian communities were united not on the basis of the administrative institutions of the State, but through the Holy Spirit alone.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, administrative unity was not the criterion of Church unity in the deep sense. The Holy Spirit can “jump the gap” created by administrative disunity to preserve true unity in the Mystery of the One Church.

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

“1. The Sacred Council forbids the faithful to receive communion from the clergy legalized by the anti-Christian State.

“2. It has been revealed to the Sacred Council by the Spirit that the anathema-curse hurled by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon is valid, and all priests and Church-servers who have dared to consider it as an ecclesiastical mistake or political tactic are placed under its power and bound by it.

“3. To all those who discredit and separate themselves from the Sacred Council of 1917-18 – **Anathema!**

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

---

<sup>45</sup> Cited by Arfed Gustavson, *The Catacomb Church*, Jordanville, 1960, p. 102.



necessary to have administrative unity of the branches of the Church, but unity of mind concerning the Church is binding on all."<sup>46</sup>

So the mystical unity of the One Church is not destroyed by administrative disunity. But "unity of mind concerning the Church is binding on all". And anyone who remains in communion with the official, "Soviet church" of the Moscow Patriarchate, or who discredits or separates himself from the Sacred Council of 1917-18, is outside the One Church.

Of course, these two conciliar decisions are only schematic; they do not solve, or pretend to solve, any particular quarrel between jurisdictions. Such quarrels can only be resolved with the re-establishment of central authority – that is, a canonical Patriarch and Holy Synod – after the persecutions have come to an end (which time has still not yet come today, in 2004). At the same time, these decisions enable us to say that a jurisdiction such as the Russian Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) under Metropolitan Lavr is outside the unity of the True Church of Russia insofar as it does allow its members to commune from the clergy of the Soviet church. Moreover, they condemn such a clergyman as, for example, Hieromonk Gregory Lourié, who, though belonging to a jurisdiction which claims to be part of the Catacomb Church, declares that the Sacred Council of 1917-18 was a "a tragic-comic story, which exerted a minimal, or negative rather than positive, influence on the following life of the Church..."<sup>47</sup> What these two conciliar decisions exclude is the idea the Church as an administrative monolith. On the contrary, the Church is like a "tree", of which the different catacomb jurisdictions are the "branches".

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

\*

In view of the above characterisation of the Catacomb Church, it is clear that the Kyrikites have no right to call their own tiny Russian flock the Catacomb Church. It may be one branch on the tree of the pre-revolutionary

---

<sup>46</sup> Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), personal communication; B. Zakharov, "Vazhnoe postanovlenie katakombnoj tserkvi", *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'*, N 18, 1949.

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.vestris.com/cgi-agnes/twenty-eight/agnes?PoetAgnes+PoetAgnesHTMLArticle+archive+Архив\\_номер\\_5+127.3.1](http://www.vestris.com/cgi-agnes/twenty-eight/agnes?PoetAgnes+PoetAgnesHTMLArticle+archive+Архив_номер_5+127.3.1)

Russian Church – and that only if its bishop ceases to be a hierarch of the Greek Church. But it cannot claim to be the one and only branch unless it can be proved that every other branch has not only committed some kind of canonical transgression which merits excommunication, but is completely graceless – and such proof the Kyrikites have never provided.

However, the Kyrikites have to prove that all other branches of the Catacomb Church are graceless for another reason: that they hold to the “monolith” theory of the Church, according to which there can be only one True Church on any one territory, while all others are false. Of course, they apply this theory not only to Russia, but also to Greece, which is why they refuse to accept that any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Greece, whether of the Old or the new calendar, can have the grace of sacraments. And this is also the reason why they are so passionately opposed to Metropolitan Epiphanius, whom they accuse (whether rightly or wrongly is not the subject of this article) of practising “Old Calendar ecumenism”, that is, of believing that there might be more than one Old Calendar jurisdiction in Greece having the grace of sacraments.

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

But their reasoning is false because they confuse the Unity of the Church as understood in the Symbol of the Faith, which is a dogmatic and mystical unity, with canonical or administrative unity. St. Maximus the Confessor says: “Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the faith.”<sup>48</sup> Thus faith alone is the criterion of unity. And that does not mean agreement on absolutely every Church question. Even the apostles did not have such agreement. Thus the Apostles Paul and Barnabas could not agree on how to conduct the mission to the Gentiles – but both remained in the True Church because both had “the true and saving confession of the faith”. As long as the Church on earth exists, there will be such disagreements; but they will not lead to anyone falling away from the Church as long as the true confession of the faith is maintained.

Of course, the two kinds of unity, dogmatic and administrative, are related. Dogmatic unity should be expressed in administrative unity, so that the inner unity of faith of the Christians is expressed outwardly as well; hence the canonical requirement that there should be only one ruling bishop in any one

---

<sup>48</sup> Fr. Christopher Birchall, *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982, p. 14.

territory. But history shows that there have been many occasions when there has been administrative disunity in the Church while dogmatic unity – and therefore the grace of sacraments – has been preserved.

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

(i) between the Roman Church and the Asian Churches over the date of Pascha (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century), (ii) within the Roman Church over the legitimacy of Pope Callistus (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century), (iii) between the Roman Church under St. Stephen and the African Church under St. Cyprian over the question whether schismatics have the grace of sacraments (3<sup>rd</sup> century), (iv) within the Antiochian Church over the legitimacy of St. Meletius (4<sup>th</sup> century), (v) between St. Epiphanius of Cyprus and St. John Chrysostom (early 5<sup>th</sup> century), (vi) between the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Churches over the date of Pascha (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries), (vii) between St. Wilfrid of York and the rest of the English Church over the division of his diocese (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries), (viii) between St. Theodore the Studite and St. Nicephorus over the lawfulness of restoring Priest Joseph to his rank (9<sup>th</sup> century), (ix) between St. Photius the Great and St. Ignatius over who was lawful patriarch of Constantinople (9<sup>th</sup> century), (x) between the Arsenites and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the forcible deposition of Patriarch Arsenius (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century), (xi) between the Serbian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over Serbian autocephaly (14<sup>th</sup> century), (xii) between the Russian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over Russian autocephaly (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries), (xiii) between the Greek kollyvades and the Ecumenical Patriarchate (18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries) over various matters of Holy Tradition, (xiv) between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek State Church over the Greek War of Independence (1821-52), (xv) between the Bulgarian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the Bulgarian exarchate (1872), (xvi) between two contenders for the throne of the Cypriot Church (late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), (xvii) between two contenders for the throne of Antioch (late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), (xviii) between several contenders for the throne of Constantinople (late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), (xix) between the Russian Church and the Georgian Church over Georgian autocephaly (1917), (xx) between the Russian Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the latter’s seizure of many Russian territories (1920s).

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

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

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

Again, let us take the Bulgarian "schism" of 1872. The Kyrikites, being Greeks, would probably argue that the Ecumenical Patriarchate's anathema against the Bulgarian Church was valid, so that the Bulgarians ceased to be Orthodox at that time. However, both the Russian Church and the Church of Jerusalem remained in communion with the Bulgarians, and the Russians even provided the Bulgarians with holy chrism. According to the logic of the Kyrikites, therefore, the Churches of Russia and Jerusalem fell away from the Church and became schismatics at that time, because "he who communicates with an excommunicate is himself excommunicate", as St. John Chrysostom says! But nobody, not even the Kyrikites, believes this.

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

We can better understand the meaning of Church Unity by studying a distinction made by the Catacomb Church Hieromartyr, Bishop Mark (Novoselov) of Sergiev Posad: "It is necessary to distinguish between the Church-organism and the Church-organization. As the apostle taught: 'You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it' (I Corinthians 12.27). The Church-organism is a living person, and just as the cells of our body, besides having their own life, have the life that is common to our body and links between themselves, so a man in the Body of Christ begins to live in Church, while Christ begins to live in him. That is why the apostle said: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2.20).

"The basis for the affirmation of the Church-organism is love for Christ. The Lord Himself saw the basis of His Church precisely in love for Him. He asked Peter: did he love Him? And He added: 'Feed My sheep'. The Church of Christ is the union of mutual love of the believers ('United by the bond of love

and offering themselves to Christ the Lord, the apostles were washed clean', *Canon of Holy Thursday*). Only in the Church organism can true democratism, equality and brotherhood come into being; we are equal and brothers only if we are parts of one and the same living body. In the organization there is not and cannot be "organic" equality and brotherhood."<sup>49</sup>

"Only to the Church-organism can we apply such titles as we meet in the Word of God, for example: 'glorious, holy, spotless' (Ephesians 1.4); 'the Bride of the Lamb' (Revelation 19.7; 21.9); 'the Body of Christ' (Ephesians 1.23; Colossians 1.24); 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (I Timothy 3.15). These concepts are inapplicable to the Church-organization (or applicable only with great qualifications); they lead people into perplexity and are rejected by them. The Church-organism is the pure 'Bride' of Christ (Revelation 21.2), but the Church-organization has all the faults of human society and always bears the marks of human infirmities... The Church-organization often persecutes the saints of God, but the Church-organism receives them into her bosom... The Church-organization rejects them from its midst, deprives them of episcopal sees, while they remain the most glorious members of the Church-organism... It is possible to belong externally to the visible Church (organization), while one belongs only inwardly to the Body of Christ (organism), and the measure of one's belongingness is determined by the degree of one's sanctity."<sup>50</sup>

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

*May 12/25, 2004.*

*Holy Hierarchs Epiphanius of Cyprus and Germanus of Constantinople.*

---

<sup>49</sup> M.A. Novoselov, *Pis'ma k družiam*, Moscow, 1994, "Letter 5", p. 47 (in Russian).

<sup>50</sup> Novoselov, *op. cit.*, "Letter 18", pp. 252-253, 253-254.

#### 4. THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are we to say of this model of Church-State relations? Does it correspond in any way with the Byzantine “symphonic” model? What does the “symphony” that the Ecumenical Patriarch proposes promise for us?

#### *Symphony or Cacophony?*

The Byzantine model of Church-State relations is formulated in the Emperor Justinian’s *Sixth Novella* as follows: “The greatest gifts given by God to men by His supreme kindness are the priesthood and the empire, of which

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

It is not any kind of harmony or co-operation that is in question here, but only a true symphony that comes from God. As I.N. Andrushkevich points out, the word “symphony” (*consonantia* in the original Latin) here denotes much more than simple agreement or concord. Church and State can agree in an evil way, for evil ends. As A.V. Kartashev, the minister of religions under the Russian Provisional Government, points out, “this is no longer symphony, but cacophony”.<sup>51</sup> True symphony is possible only where both the Church “is without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God”, and the State is ruled “rightly and competently” - that is, in accordance with the commandments of God.<sup>52</sup> It presupposes that both sides in the “symphony” are Orthodox. “Symphony” in any other context is inconceivable.

Now the Ecumenical Patriarchate is far from being “without reproach and adorned with faithfulness to God”. Since its notorious encyclical of 1920, and especially since its entry into the World Council of Churches in 1948, it has been an enthusiastic participant in “the heresy of heresies”, ecumenism. And ecumenism is not its only major sin against the Orthodox Faith... However, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the Ecumenical Patriarch is Orthodox. The question then arises: with what government, and under what conditions, can it enter into a truly “symphonic” relationship?

### *The Global Patriarch*

Patriarch Bartholomew’s see is in Turkey. But a “symphonic” relationship with an Islamic power is out of the question. Most of his flock lives in Western

---

<sup>51</sup> Kartashev, *Vossozhdanie Svyatoj Rusi (The Recreation of Holy Russia)*, Moscow, 1991, p. 83.

<sup>52</sup> Andrushkevich, “Doktrina sv. Imperatora Iustiniana Velikago” (“The Teaching of the holy Emperor Justinian the Great”), *Pravoslavnaiia Rus' (Orthodox Russia)*, № 4 (1529), February 15/28, 1995, pp. 4-12.

Europe, North America and Greece. But the western powers, too, are not Orthodox. The President of Greece could be said to be Orthodox. But his "symphonic partner" is the Archbishop of the State Church of Greece.

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

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

In 1938 St. John Maximovich, then Bishop of Shanghai, reported to the All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Church Abroad: "Increasing without limit their desires to submit to themselves parts of Russia, the Patriarchs of Constantinople have even begun to declare the uncanonicity of the annexation of Kiev to the Moscow Patriarchate [in 1686], and to declare that the previously existing southern Russian Metropolia of Kiev should be subject to the Throne of Constantinople. Such a point of view is not only clearly expressed in the Tomos of November 13, 1924, in connection with the separation of the Polish Church [from the Russian to the Ecumenical Patriarchate], but is also quite thoroughly promoted by the Patriarchs. Thus, the Vicar of Metropolitan Eulogius in Paris, who was consecrated with the permission of the Ecumenical Patriarch, has assumed the title of Chersonese; that is to say, Chersonese, which is now in the territory of Russia, is subject to the Ecumenical Patriarch. The next logical step for the Ecumenical Patriarchate would be to declare the whole of Russia as being under the jurisdiction of Constantinople..."

"In sum, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in theory embracing almost the whole universe, and in fact extending its authority only over several dioceses, and in other places having only a superficial supervision and receiving certain revenues for this; persecuted by the government at home and not supported by any governmental authority abroad; having lost its significance as a pillar of truth and having itself become a source of division, and at the same time being possessed by an exorbitant love of power – represents a pitiful spectacle which recalls the worst periods in the history of the See of Constantinople."<sup>53</sup>

Patriarch Bartholomew has continued this trend. In July, 1993 he convened a "great and super-perfect (παντελης) Synod" to judge Patriarch Diodorus of

---

<sup>53</sup> Bishop John, "The Decline of the Patriarchate of Constantinople", translated in *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 8, № 4 (45), July-August, 1972, p. 175.



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

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

However, there is one patriarchate that Bartholomew would not dream of upsetting or encroaching upon – that of Rome, which through the ecumenist heresy he recognises as his own Church’s elder sister (or second lung, as at Balamand). But Rome already claims jurisdiction over the whole oikoumene. So Bartholomew’s ambitions to rule the whole of Orthodoxy worldwide, on the one hand, and his recognition of the Pope of Rome’s authority, on the other, lead to a most paradoxical state of affairs, in accordance with which, as A.D. Delimbasis writes, Bartholomew is “trying to put Jerusalem [under] Antioch, Antioch under Alexandria, Alexandria under Constantinople and Constantinople under the heresiarch Pope...”<sup>54</sup>

### *The Global State*

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

There is no State in the ordinary sense of the word that could be the partner to such a Global Patriarch. It could only be a *Global State*, or World

---

<sup>54</sup> Delimbasis, *Rebuttal of an Anticanonical “Verdict”*, Athens, 1993, p. 21.

Government – the government of that “international community” of western nations that likes to speak as if it were the whole world.

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

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

In his *Novella 131* the Emperor Justinian decreed: “The Church canons have the same force in the State as the State laws: what is permitted or forbidden by the former is permitted or forbidden by the latter. Therefore crimes against the former cannot be tolerated in the State according to State legislation.” This is true symphony: the State recognises that it is pursuing the same aim as the Church, and therefore legislates in all things in accordance with the legislation of the Church. For, as Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes, “in their single service to the work of God both the Church and the State constitute as it were one whole, one organism – ‘unconfused’, but also ‘undivided’. In this lay the fundamental difference between Orthodox ‘symphony’ and Latin ‘papocaesarism’ and Protestant ‘caesaropapism’.”<sup>55</sup>

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

Perhaps he is something even worse...

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

Has not Patriarch Bartholomew become a sergianist in that, under the guise of the Orthodox doctrine of the symphony of powers, he has in fact identified the interests of the Church with the interests of the antichristian world?

---

<sup>55</sup> Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo (Church and State)*, Moscow, 1997, p. 17.

### *Conclusion: The False Prophet*

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 5. WHAT IS THE LOCAL CHURCH?

The Russian church writer Lev Regelson has recently pointed out: “The concept of the ‘Local’ [*pomestnoj*] Church has long ago lost its literal sense. Nobody is surprised any longer by the existence of communities of the Russian Church in Africa, consisting of local aborigines. So that now it would be more correct to speak about the Autocephalous Russian Church as the historical successor of the Orthodox Church of the Russian Empire, which has gone beyond the bounds of the territorial, state or national principle.”<sup>56</sup> In fact, not only has the concept of the Local Church been lost: the administration of the Orthodox Church as a whole has been in a state of increasing anarchy since the fall and break-up of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires in 1917-18. The resultant enormous political changes, combined with the creation of large Orthodox minorities of various nationalities in the non-Orthodox countries of the West, have created huge problems of administration that have stretched the concept of the Local Church almost to breaking point. If these problems have afflicted the heretical, but more-or-less well-organized Churches of “World Orthodoxy”, they threaten completely to tear apart the right-believing, but divided True Orthodox Churches. This article is an attempt to introduce some clarity into the debate by going back to basic principles, on the one hand, and the witness of Church history, on the other.

### 1. Basic Principles

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

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

---

<sup>56</sup> Regelson, “O kanonicheskikh osnovaniakh Katakombnoj Tserkvi”, report delivered on January 28, 2008; [www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=lib&id=2073](http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=lib&id=2073) (in Russian).

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

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

## 2. The Patriarchal System

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

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

in the pentarchical order), and a corresponding increase in the importance of the new “duarchy”, Rome and Constantinople.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3. Nationalism and the Church

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

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

Nevertheless, the new State Churches of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania came to be universally recognized (though in the case of the Bulgarian Church, not until 1945). However, problems relating to the legitimacy of self-proclaimed autocephaly remained. Thus:- On what basis can a group of Orthodox bishops break free from their ecclesiastical head and form a new, autocephalous Church? Is it sufficient simply that political conditions should change, placing the group in a different State from its former head? But surely nothing is done in the Church without obedience and



the blessing of higher authorities? Surely their previous head should bless it? And perhaps even that is not enough, perhaps the approval of all the autocephalous Churches has to be obtained in an Ecumenical Council? What if the bishops and flocks involved do not represent more than a small minority of the population of the State they live in? Could not this lead to evident absurdities, such as autocephalous Turkish and Albanian Orthodox Churches (both of which “absurdities” actually came into existence in the early twentieth century)?

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

The Georgians’ case for autocephaly was strong, since nobody denied that the Georgian Church had been autocephalous since the fourth century, and that autocephaly had been abolished without their consent. However, most delegates at the conference argued that in one state there should be only one Church administration, so that the Georgian Church, as existing on the territory of the Russian Empire, should remain part of the Russian Church. Moreover, to encourage a division of Church administrations would encourage political separatism, would undermine the unity of the Empire, and therefore work against the interests of all the Orthodox of the Empire (and beyond it). This view prevailed. The delegates accepted a project put forward by Protopriest John Vostorgov (the future hieromartyr) giving the Georgian Church greater independence in the sphere of the use of the Georgian liturgical language, of the appointment of national Georgian clergy, etc., but the project for Georgian autocephaly was rejected.<sup>57</sup>

A minority view was put forward by the Georgian Bishop Kirion, who after the revolution became leader of the Georgian Autocephalous Church. In his report, “The National Principle in the Church”, he argued, as Pavlenko writes, that “Georgia ‘has the right to the independent existence of her national Church on the basis of the principle of nationality in the Church proclaimed at the beginning of the Christian faith.’ What does principle consist of, and when was it proclaimed? ‘It is sufficient to remember,’ writes Bishop Kirion, ‘the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, who immediately began to glorify God in various languages and then preached the Gospel to the pagans, each in their native language.’ But in our [Pavlenko’s] view, references to the preaching of the apostles in connection with the

---

<sup>57</sup> Eugene Pavlenko, “The Heresy of Phyletism: History and the Present”, *Vertograd-Inform*, September, 1999.

affirmation of the national principle in the Church have no firm foundation. The preaching of the apostles in various languages was necessary in order to unite the peoples in the Truth of Christ, and not in order to disunite them in accordance with the national principle. That is, the principle of nationality is precisely that which Christianity has to overcome, and not that on which the Church must be founded. Since the Bulgarian schism phyletistic argumentation has characteristically sought support in references to the 34<sup>th</sup> Apostolic canon. 'The basic canonical rule,' writes Bishop Kirion, 'by which the significance of nationality in relation to Church administration is recognised, is the 34<sup>th</sup> Apostolic canon which is so well known to canonists... According to the direct meaning of this canon in the Orthodox Church, every nationality must have its first hierarch.' But the 34<sup>th</sup> Apostolic canon... has in view 'bishops of every territory' and not 'bishops of every people'. The word *ethnos*, which is employed in this canon in the ancient language and in the language of Christian antiquity, is translated in the dictionary of Liddell and Scott first of all as 'a number of people accustomed to live together', and only then as 'a nation'. It is precisely the first sense indicated here that points to the territorial meaning of the Apostolic canon. So references to its national meaning are groundless."<sup>58</sup>

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

However, as Pavlenko points out, in this canon "not a word is said about 'national religious-everyday and individual particularities' and the like, but there is mention of the rights of first-hierarchs over bishops and their appointment. 'Let the customs of each [autocephalous] Church be observed,' it says in this canon, 'so that the bishop of each district should be subject to his president, and that he, in his turn, should be appointed from his bishops, according to the ancient custom.' The émigré Church of Cyprus, of which mention is made in this canon, did not become the national Church of the Cypriots, but took into herself all the peoples of the Hellespont district where they emigrated [the bishop of Cyzicus, who was under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was temporarily placed in subjection to the Archbishop of Cyprus]. Where is mention made here of a conciliar sanction for the preservation of 'local ecclesiastical traditions' with the aid of administrative isolation?"<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Pavlenko, *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> Pavlenko, *op. cit.*

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

#### **4. The Global Jurisdictions**

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

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

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

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

After the fall of communism in 1991, some of the global jurisdictions began to falter. The most dramatic collapse was that of ROCOR, which (apart from

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

### 5. The Restoration of Local Churches

As for the True Orthodox, they, too, tend to have global jurisdictions (the TOCs of Greece, Russia, etc., several for each country). The difference is that quarrels about the faith are more important for the True Orthodox, so that they are divided *both* from the World Orthodox (because of the heresies of ecumenism and sergianism) *and* among themselves (usually because of canonical differences, but also partly because of race). The canonical differences among the True Orthodox often come down to the question: where or what is the Local Church (of Greece, Russia, etc.)?

Now if the hierarchy of a Local Church has fallen into heresy and therefore out of the Orthodox Church, it is reasonable to assume that that minority of hierarchs, priests and laity who remain faithful to the truth now constitute the Local Church. For, as St. Sophronius of Jerusalem writes: “If any should separate themselves from someone, not on the pretext of a [moral] offence, but on account of a heresy that has been condemned by a Synod or by the Holy Fathers, they are worthy of honour and approbation, for they are the Orthodox.”<sup>60</sup> And, as St. Nicephorus of Constantinople writes: “You know, even if very few remain in Orthodox and piety, then it is precisely these that are the Church, and the authority and leadership (concerning) the ecclesiastical institutions remains with them.”<sup>61</sup>

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

A second problem relates to the *size* of the TOC, and whether it has bishops or not. It may be that the TOC in question has no bishops, and is obliged to

---

<sup>60</sup> St. Sophronius, *P.G.* 87, 3369D-3372A.

<sup>61</sup> St. Nicephorus, *Apologeticus Minor*, 8, *P.G.* 100, 844 D.

turn for help to other TOCs. The question then arises: is the very small TOC now truly autocephalous, or does it form part of the larger TOC to which it has turned for help?

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

A similar example is provided by the True Orthodox Christians of Cyprus. This Church was in communion with the “Matthewite” True Orthodox Christians of Greece, and received her first bishop from them in 1948. Although small and at no time with more than one bishop, this Church’s autocephaly was recognized by the TOC of Greece.<sup>62</sup>

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

From these examples it follows that neither smallness of size nor paucity of clergy can deny the right of those few Orthodox Christians who have resisted a dominant heresy on the territory of a Local Church to call themselves the true successors of the Local Church. We have quoted the words of St. Nicephorus that the authority of the ecclesiastical institutions remains with those who remain in Orthodoxy, however few they may be. This must be accepted in principle, whatever the practical difficulties that these few may encounter in preserving an independent ecclesiastical existence...

Against this thesis it may be objected that to call a group of Christians without a bishop a Local Church is to contradict our first basic principle: “the

---

<sup>62</sup> Personal communication of Archbishop Andreas of Athens to the present writer, 1978.

primary unit of the Local Church is *the bishop* and the Christians of the territory he administers". Moreover, if the mark of a Local Church is its autocephaly (or, at any rate, autonomy), how can it be autocephalous (that is, with its own head) if it is in fact "acephalous" (without a head)? Is not any other view a form of Protestantism?

Of course, if a group of Christians finds itself deprived of true bishops in their own Local Church, they should seek to find one in another Local Church; for there is no doubt that without a bishop they will be severely hampered in their activity and cannot survive in this condition for long. However, this does not mean that they are necessarily "acephalous" if they do not have an earthly bishop. If they are baptized and confess the true faith, and are *involuntarily* without a bishop, then they remain members of the Church, whose Head is Christ. "For it is better to be led by no one," says St. John Chrysostom, "than to be led by one who is evil. For the former indeed are often saved, and often in peril, but the latter will be altogether in peril, being led into the pit of perdition".<sup>63</sup>

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

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

---

<sup>63</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 34 on Hebrews*, 1.

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

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

### Conclusions

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

*March 28 / April 10, 2008.*



## 6. THE CYPRIANITES AND THE POWER OF ANATHEMAS

It has always seemed a strange coincidence that the “Ecclesiological Antitheses” of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili should have appeared in 1984, only one year after ROCOR anathematized ecumenism and the ecumenists. Although they never admitted it publicly, this first formulation of the Cyprianites’ distinctively new ecclesiology appeared to be an attempted “antithesis” to the “thesis” of ROCOR’s anathema of the year before. These oblique, non-explicit attempts to discredit the anathema have continued unremittingly to the present day. The most recent example comes from the pen of Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna.<sup>64</sup> However, there are signs that the gloves are coming off and it is now considered expedient to attack the anathema openly. We see a clear example of this in a recent interview given by Bishop Ambrose of Methone.<sup>65</sup> An examination of these two assaults will reveal that the Cyprianites do not only question the validity of certain anathemas, but appear to be casting doubt on the very ability of hierarchs to bind and to loose, to exercise their God-given power of excommunication...

Archbishop Chrysostomos writes: “Plato tells us that there were engraved at the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi two mottos in ancient Greek: ‘**Meden agan**’ (nothing in excess, or all things in moderation) and ‘**Gnothi Seauton**’ (know thyself). Applied to Christian doctrine, we are called to moderation in the application of the truths which we know as well as we know ourselves: we cannot be moderate without fidelity to that which defines us.

“One can see, quite easily, why our austere stand against the religious syncretism of ecumenism does not render us religious bigots, or sympathetic with those who, usurping the place of God, believe that they have the right to condemn ecumenists and ailing Orthodox (and us, in our witness of love) as heretics outside the Church. We are acting in perfect balance within the dual truths of confessional exactitude and pastoral love, as we should.”

A *very* strange statement that begins with two quotations from a pagan oracle, continues by stating that we must be “moderate” in the application of the truth of Christian doctrine, and ends by saying that those who anathematize the ecumenist heretics are usurping the power of God!

The Apostle Paul firmly rebuked and then exorcised the girl possessed by a pythonic spirit, although she was speaking the truth (Acts 16). And the Lord forbade the demons to acknowledge His Divinity, although that, too, was the truth. So why should we be more accommodating to the Delphic oracle? It is not enough to reply that even the Holy Apostles and Fathers sometimes quoted from pagan authors. It is one thing to quote from a pagan author, and another to quote directly from a demon!

---

<sup>64</sup> “The Absolute Primacy of Orthodoxy and the Exclusivity of Christ”, June 21, 2008.

<sup>65</sup> <http://sbn-nathanael.livejournal.com/>, June 27, 2008.

In any case, the use that the archbishop makes of these gnomic utterances is far from Christian. "Nothing in excess" applies, perhaps, to ascetic practices, but it certainly does not apply to truth! When it comes to truth, we Christians are insatiable! We want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! There can be no "moderation in the application of truth" when "applied to Christian doctrine". It is the ecumenists who want such moderation. Their heresy derives from indifference to truth. The fullness of Orthodoxy is "too much" for them; so "nothing in excess" would actually be a very appropriate banner for the ecumenical movement as a whole. No excessive condemnation of other religions, please... In fact, no condemnation at all would be preferable... Except, of course, the True Orthodox...

And of course there must be no sympathy for "those who, usurping the place of God, believe that they have the right to condemn ecumenists and ailing Orthodox". So: no sympathy from Archbishop Chrysostomos for Metropolitan Philaret and the ROCOR Synod that condemned the ecumenists - they were undoubtedly "usurping the place of God"! Of course, Chrysostomos would deny that his words apply to Metropolitan Philaret, whom the Cyprianites continue to praise fulsomely while undermining and denigrating the main achievement of his life. But there can be no doubt about it: even before the anathema of 1983, Metropolitan Philaret condemned the Moscow Patriarchate as graceless, and after it he was perfectly consistent in his application of the anathema to all the ecumenists.

Let us now turn to the criticisms that Bishop Ambrose makes of the 1983 anathema. "Firstly, if you read the text of the anathema, its definition of the teaching of ecumenism is so extreme that almost no orthodox ecumenist, apart from Patriarch Athenagoras, could ever be put into the category of those who were preaching this new doctrine".

Now the anathema is divided into several parts. The first is directed against "those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ's Church is divided into so-called 'branches' which differ in doctrine and way of life". In other words, the branch theory of the Church is anathematized. What is wrong or extreme about that? All the ecumenists confess the branch theory. So they are all under anathema.

The anathema continues: "or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all 'branches' or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united in one body." Here a more extreme form of ecumenism is anathematized. Not all "Orthodox" ecumenists would fall under this part of the anathema, although many would - and not only Patriarch Athenagoras. So in the first part of the anathema a "moderate" form of ecumenism, the inter-Christian branch theory, is condemned, and in the second part a more extreme, inter-religious form is condemned.

The anathema continues: “and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation”. This is simply a re-statement of Apostolic Canon 46, so it is not “extremism”, but straightforward church doctrine. In essence, it is a condemnation of the branch theory as applied to the sacraments. Of course, there is a question whether the Cyprianites themselves fall under this part of the anathema, because they do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics; for, while saying that the ecumenists are heretics, they still recognize that they have true sacraments...

The anathema continues: “therefore to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, **Anathema.**” Here not only the ecumenists themselves, but also those who remain in conscious communion with them, are condemned. This applies perhaps most closely to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which, while often expressing reservations about ecumenism, nevertheless remains in communion with the ecumenists.

So we see that the range of application of the anathema is very broad, and applies to far more than the most extreme ecumenists such as Patriarch Athenagoras. In fact, a strict interpretation of the anathema would place the Cyprianites themselves under it, as well as those who accept their ecclesiology. Thus when ROCOR entered into communion with them in 1994 and officially accepted their ecclesiology, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) pointed out that the Cyprianites “confess their own and by no means Orthodox teaching on the possibility of the grace-filled action of the Holy Spirit in churches that have clearly become heretical”. Moreover he declared: “In passing this Resolution on communion with the group of Metropolitan Cyprian, our Council has unfortunately also forgotten about the text of the Resolution accepted earlier under the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret, which anathematized the ecumenical heresy... In fact, by not looking into the matter seriously and forgetting about the anathematizing of the new calendarist ecumenists that was confirmed earlier (and perhaps not having decided to rescind this resolution), our Council, however terrible it may be to admit it, has fallen under its own anathema... Do we have to think that our Hierarchical Council has entered on the path of betraying the patristic traditions, or only that out of a misunderstanding it has allowed a mistake which it is not yet too late to correct at the November session in France?”<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), “The Doubtful Orthodoxy of the Group of Metropolitan Cyprian”, in “Arkhiejskij Sobor RPTsZ 1994 goda: Istorija Prinyatia Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkoviu Yereticheskoi Ekkleziologii Mitropolita Kipriana”, *Sviataia Rus'*, 2003; *Vernost*, 98, December, 2007.

That mistake was thankfully corrected some years later, and now, of those parts of the old ROCOR that have not entered into communion with the MP only the followers of Bishop Agathangel remain in the clutches of the Cyprianite ecclesiology (and not only of their ecclesiology – their apostolic succession also depends critically on the Cyprianites’ legitimacy). But Bishop Gregory’s main point remains: the Cyprianite ecclesiology is *incompatible* with Metropolitan Philaret’s anathema against ecumenism. So all Orthodox have to choose the one or the other, and cannot claim to be loyal to both.

Bishop Ambrose continues: “Secondly, the way that this anathema was approved, or rather not approved by the Russian Synod is altogether very peculiar. Having spoken to many bishops of the ROCOR, most of them claimed to have been unaware of the existence of this anathema until it was published, including the late Metropolitan Lavr, and this makes, at least, a curious impression.”

Metropolitan Lavr is, of course, not the most reliable witness that Bishop Ambrose could have cited! It has been reported that he died on the eve of the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, just after ordering that this anathema should *not* be read in the service the next day. Surely a more reliable witness is Metropolitan Philaret himself, who sent a copy of the anathema to Fr. Anthony Gavalas of New York City, confirming that this was now official ROCOR doctrine. Nor did Metropolitan Vitaly deny its *existence*. In his Christmas Epistle of 1986/87 he commented on the anathema without at any time hinting that it may have been a forgery, and in 1998 his Synod reiterated it without changing its wording in any way. Why, if it was a forgery, did the ROCOR Synod never say so? The conclusion can only be: it was *not* a forgery, but some of the bishops did not like its clear implications...

“Thirdly,” continues Bishop Ambrose, “this anathema was actually written in Greek, and translated into English, then into Russian: this is evident from the syntax. Was it the work of the Russian bishops? No, we know where it originated... The monastery of Boston - namely *Holy Transfiguration Monastery*. This led to all the qualifications that were made by Metropolitan Vitaly and other ROCOR bishops when they said that the anathema refers only to the members of their own flock – “we are not anathematising anybody outside... It would thus be absurd to claim that the anathema was proclaimed with the aim of cutting all ecumenists off from the Church even if they did profess the extreme doctrines described in the text of the anathema.”

There is more than one non-sequitur in this extract. First, *so what* if the anathema was written by Holy Transfiguration Monastery? The important fact is that the Synod accepted the text and it became part of ROCOR’s official confession of faith. *So what* if the anathema were originally written in Greek? This would be relevant only if the official Russian or English versions are inaccurate in some way – which Bishop Ambrose does not claim.

Then, according to Bishop Ambrose, the fact that the anathema was originally written in Greek by HTM is the cause of the further supposed “qualifications” of the anathema by Metropolitan Vitaly and others. But this doesn’t follow. Any interpretation of the anathema – whether Metropolitan Vitaly’s or anybody else’s – is valid if, and only if, it can be shown to have a firm basis in the text of the anathema, and *for no other reason*. The fact that the anathema was originally written in Greek, or in HTM, is *completely irrelevant*. As it is, the interpretation that “it would be absurd to claim that the anathema was proclaimed with the aim of cutting all ecumenists off from the Church” cannot in any way be justified from the text, which is a perfectly general anathematization – i.e. exclusion from the Church – of all those who confess the branch theory. The attempt to interpret the anathema as applying only to members of ROCOR not only has no basis in the text but leads to absurd consequences. Thus if this interpretation were correct, an ecumenically-minded *babushka* in ROCOR would find herself under anathema while the Pope of Rome, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Patriarch Alexis of Moscow and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople would all get off scot-free!

Immediately after this Bishop Ambrose moves to absolve Metropolitan Philaret of all criticism, saying that we should not confuse the “unclearities” in the anathema (which, as we have seen, do not exist) “with Metropolitan Philaret's uncompromising, confessional, and absolutely clear condemnation of the ecumenist heresy which he saw advancing around him, and which he expressed in his ‘open letters’”. In other words, the early Philaret – the Philaret of the Open Letters – was good, while the late Philaret – the Philaret of the Anathema against ecumenism – was, well, not exactly bad, but “unclear” – and we can blame this lack of clarity on bad advisors...

However, if we look at Metropolitan Philaret’s confessional stand from the Open Letters of the 1960s to the Anathema of 1983, we see a very clear and consistent path. The Open Letters warned the heads of the Local Churches that ecumenism was a heresy, that they were betraying the truth of Orthodoxy. However, nobody was anathematized, nor were all relations with these Churches broken at this time. However, when it became obvious that the Local Churches were not going to respond to his warning, the metropolitan moved his Synod to strengthen sanctions against them and in other ways to adopt a stricter position:

- (i) In 1967 he led the ROCOR Synod of Bishops to reverse its 1964 ruling on the preservation of communion with the official Serbian Church. The decision was marked “Top Secret” and dated June 1. Early in 1970, he announced to the members of the ROCOR 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.<sup>67</sup>
- (ii) In 1969-71 he led the ROCOR Synod into communion with the Greek Old Calendarists, accepting their confession of faith.
  - (iii) On March 31, 1970 he led the ROCOR Synod to condemn the MP's decision to give communion to Roman Catholics as "contrary to the dogmatic teaching of Orthodoxy", an act whereby the MP "itself becomes a partaker of their heresy."<sup>68</sup>
  - (iv) In September, 1971 the ROCOR Sobor rejected the validity of the election of Moscow Patriarch Pimen, and decreed that all converts from Catholicism and Protestantism should now be received by baptism.
  - (v) In 1974, at the Third All-Emigration Council in Jordanville, Metropolitan 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.<sup>69</sup>

In the next few years, worried by the metropolitan's steady increase of pressure for a final break with the whole of World Orthodoxy, the liberals in ROCOR under the leadership of Archbishop Anthony of Geneva fought back. However, the apostasy of World Orthodoxy could not be denied, and after the 1983 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Vancouver, Canada, reached new heights of anti-Christianity, the ROCOR Sobor, also meeting in Canada, anathematized ecumenism. This was the culmination and completely consistent climax of Metropolitan Philaret's struggle, ever since he became metropolitan in 1964, to draw a firm line between Truth and falsehood, between the True Church and the false church – a line which the Cyprianites have tried to muddy ever since...

---

<sup>67</sup> The metropolitan's co-worker in this matter was Archbishop Averky, who on September 14/27, 1967 wrote to him: "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?*"

<sup>68</sup> Archbishop Averky commented on this decision: "Now, even if some entertained some sort of doubts about how we should regard the contemporary Moscow Patriarchate, and whether we can consider it Orthodox after its intimate union with the enemies of God, the persecutors of the Faith and Christ's Church, these doubts must now be completely dismissed: by the very fact that it has entered into liturgical communion with the Papists, it has *fallen away from Orthodoxy* and can no longer be considered Orthodox." (*Contemporary Life in the Light of the Word of God: Sermons and Speeches (1969-1973)*, volume III, Jordanville, p. 216).

<sup>69</sup> Fr. Basil Yakimov, "Re: Fundamental Question", [orthodox-synod@yahoo.groups.com](mailto:orthodox-synod@yahoo.groups.com), 4 June, 2003.

Bishop Ambrose continues with a direct attack on the anathemas against ecumenism launched by the Eastern Patriarchs in 1583, 1587 and 1593: “The 16th Century Synods anathematized the introduction of the new Papal Paschalion based on the New, Gregorian Calendar. They did not however specifically anathematize the peculiar hybrid used by the ‘Orthodox’ New-Calendarists who use the Julian Calendar for celebrating Pascha (in order to avoid the clear condemnations of those who change the Paschal calendar), but the New Calendar for the fixed feasts.”

This is sophistry. The seventh point of the 1583 Pan-Orthodox Council (which was attended by the plenipotentiary of the Russian Church) declares: “That whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church as the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils decreed, *and the Menologion which they well decreed that we should follow*, but in opposition to all this wishes to follow the new Paschalion *and Menologion* of the atheist astronomers of the Pope, and wishes to overturn and destroy the dogmas and customs of the Church which have been handed down by the Fathers, let him be anathema and outside the Church of Christ and the assembly of the faithful...” It is obvious that not only the Papal Paschalion, but also the Papal Menologion – that is, “the new calendar for the fixed feasts” – is under anathema.

If Bishop Ambrose wishes to argue that only the *combination* of *both* the Papal Paschalion *and* the Papal Menologion is under anathema, and that of these two innovations only the Papal Paschalion is really serious, he has to answer the question: why did they not say that? Why, on the contrary, do the Eastern Patriarchs give the clear impression that *both* innovations are *equally anathematized*? If only the Paschal Paschalion was a really serious innovation, why was it necessary for the Greek Old Calendarists to break away from the new calendarists, since the new calendarists still retained the Orthodox Paschalion? And why have so many Orthodox hierarchs understood the Patriarchs to have anathematized the new Menologion if in fact they meant something different?

Thus Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, Rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, Tutor of the Royal Family and Deputy First-Hierarch of ROCOR writes: “Through the labours of this [1583] Council there appeared: a Conciliar tome, which denounced the wrongness and unacceptability for the Orthodox Church of the Roman calendar, and a canonical conciliar Decree – the Sigillion of November 20, 1583. In this Sigillion all three of the above-mentioned Patriarchs with their Synods called on the Orthodox firmly and unbendingly, even to the shedding of their blood, to hold the Orthodox Menaion and Julian Paschalion, threatening the transgressors of this with anathema, cutting them off from the Church of Christ and the gathering of the faithful...”

“In the course of the following three centuries: the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, a whole series of Ecumenical Patriarchs decisively expressed themselves against the Gregorian calendar and, evaluating it in the spirit of the conciliar decree of Patriarch Jeremiah II, counselled the Orthodox to avoid it...

“Question. Is the introduction of the new calendar important or of little importance?

“Answer. Very important, especially in connection with the Paschalion, and it is an extreme disorder and ecclesiastical schism, which draws people away from communion and unity with the whole Church of Christ, deprives them of the grace of the Holy Spirit, shakes the dogma of the unity of the Church, and, like Arius, tears the seamless robe of Christ, that is, everywhere divides the Orthodox, depriving them of oneness of mind; breaks the bond with Ecclesiastical Holy Tradition and makes them fall under conciliar condemnation for despising Tradition...

“Question. How must the Orthodox relate to the new calendarist schismatics, according to the canons?

“Answer. They must have no communion in prayer with them, even before their conciliar condemnation...

“Question. What punishment is fitting, according to the Church canons, for those who pray with the new calendarist schismatics?

“Answer. The same condemnation with them...”<sup>70</sup>

Again, in a letter to Metropolitan Epiphanius of Cyprus dated September 20, 1975, Metropolitan Philaret wrote: “It is obvious to all that the calendar innovation caused a schism in the Greek Church in 1924, and the responsibility for the schism weighs exclusively on the innovators. This is the conclusion that will be reached by anyone studying the Patriarchal Tomoi (as that of 1583)...” Since the calendar schism of 1924 affected only the Menologion, and not the Paschalion, it is evident that Metropolitan Philaret, following the supposedly “extremist” Greek Old Calendarists and not the Cyprianites, regarded the 1583 Council as expelling the new calendarists from the Church...

Bishop Ambrose continues his attack on the Pan-Orthodox anathemas as follows: “There is one last aspect to this matter that should be mentioned: all three Synods appear to be saying exactly the same thing. If one Synod had

---

<sup>70</sup> Archbishop Theophan, “Kratkie kanonicheskie suzhdenia o letoschislenii” (Short canonical judgements on the calendar), in V.K., *Russkaia Zarubezhnaia Tserkov' na Steziakh Otstupnichestva* (The Russian Church Abroad on the way to Apostasy), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 29-30 ©.



made a definitive and binding pronouncement, then why, after just a few years did another synod need to be called to make the same pronouncement? And why, a few years after that, yet a third? Also, the texts that have been preserved are in demotic Greek – very demotic Greek – and it is a very peculiar thing for an Ecumenical Patriarch to put out such an important encyclical in demotic Greek. Conceivably there was a text in church Greek which has been lost.”

This is really scraping the bottom of the barrel... Why are anathemas repeated? For the same reason that we repeat the same Gospel cycle every year, and the Beatitudes every Sunday: *Because they are important!*

As for the fact that the encyclical is written in demotic Greek, what possible bearing can this have on the validity of the thought contained in it? If, as Bishop Ambrose hints, following the founder of the new-calendarist schism, “Archbishop” Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, the text of the anathemas is a forgery by someone who wrote only demotic Greek, why was this not pointed out by anyone for over three hundred years? Why, even as late as 1919 (that is, five years before he changed the calendar), did Chrysostomos Papadopoulos himself declare that if he adopted the new calendar he would become a schismatic? The vital fact is that the Orthodox Church has accepted the thought expressed in the anathemas as corresponding to her own thought – and the Church has the mind of Christ. If new calendarist schismatics, or their old calendar fellow-travellers, choose to cast doubt on an event or fact that the Church has accepted for hundreds of years, this should not affect those who trust the Church more than their own or others’ fallen reasoning.

Bishop Ambrose continues, answering the question whether only the 1848 Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs should be taken seriously with regard to the new calendar: “Yes certainly, but the others can also be taken seriously but with some reservations. They are not a decision of an ecumenical council where we have the original text and we know when it was done and why.” So according to Bishop Ambrose only anathemas issued by Ecumenical Councils, and of which we have the original text, can be accepted wholeheartedly. That rules out all Church Councils without exception since 787, the date of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, including: the 1054 Local Council that anathematized the Roman Catholics, the fourteenth-century Councils that anathematized the Barlaamites, the sixteenth-century Pan-Orthodox Councils, the 1918 Local Council that anathematized the Bolsheviks, the 1923 Local Council that anathematized the renovationists, the Catacomb Church Councils that anathematized sergianism, the decisions of the True Orthodox Church of Greece in 1935, 1950, 1974 and 1991 that declared the new calendarists to be graceless, the 1983 Local Council that anathematized ecumenism, its reiteration in 1998... It looks as if the all the most important decisions of the higher levels of the Orthodox Church for the last 1200 years must be placed under doubt if we are to accept the Cyprianite thesis.

Perhaps, Bishop Ambrose concedes, some of these decisions should be “taken seriously”: but only with “reservations” – reservations that enable him to escape those consequences that he finds personally unpalatable. Indeed, so resourceful are the Cyprianites in finding excuses for not *really* taking seriously the most important decisions of the Orthodox Church hierarchy that one begins suspect that they may have a problem with the concept of ecclesiastical anathematization *in general*. However, such a drastic conclusion is unnecessary: it is sufficient to point out that the Cyprianites specifically attack only those anathemas – whether by Russian bishops or Greek bishops, whether in modern times or ancient times – that make their own “loving” attitude to the new calendarists and ecumenists impossible.

But the Cyprianite position does have important general consequences, especially when one remembers that they have rejected the right of any other Synod to judge them. Thus they regard themselves as belonging to the Church of Greece, and yet reject the claim not only of the Greek new calendarist hierarchy but also of the Greek Old Calendarist hierarchies to judge them. Perhaps they consider only ROCOR, which resurrected the Greek Old Calendarist hierarchy in 1969, to be their judges? No: they prefer to stand in judgement *over* ROCOR. Thus last year, having rejected all the (non-MP) Russian bishops who remained faithful to the confession of Metropolitan Philaret, they chose the one bishop who *rejects* that confession, Agathangel of Odessa, proclaimed him the only true ROCOR bishop, and then ordained further uncanonical bishops with him!

This disastrous invasion into the affairs of the Russian Church shows that the apparent modesty and caution of the Cyprianites when assessing the rights of Orthodox bishops to anathematize heretics, or simply summon other Orthodox bishops to judgement, is distinctly one-sided. If their “stablemates” in the Greek Old Calendarist hierarchy call them to judgement, they say: “That’s none of your business; you cannot judge us.” If, on the other hand, the opportunity presents itself for them to interfere into the affairs of the Russian Church, ascribing to themselves the powers that could only belong to the future All-Russian Sobor, they jump in with both feet...

It should be noted also that in May, 2008 the Agathangelite hierarchy, having steadfastly refused to condemn the MP or ROCOR-MP (and even praising Metropolitan Lavr as a holy hierarch), effectively declared all the True Orthodox Russian hierarchies – the Vitalyites, the Suzdalites and the Tikhonites – to be graceless schismatics. No murmur of protest has so far been heard from their Cyprianite “sister-church” – in spite of the Cyprianites’ refusal to accept decisions of this kind by any except Ecumenical Councils. So we must assume that the Cyprianite-Agathangelite coalition is now committed to the position that the MP and ROCOR-MP (the Lavrites) have grace, but that the True Orthodox Russians are outside the Church!...

So who now is “usurping the place of God”? Who now, in the exquisite phrase of Professor-Archbishop Chrysostomos, is failing to act “in perfect balance within the dual truths of confessional exactitude and pastoral love”? While we wait (and it may be a long wait) for an answer to this question, let us recall the words of the Lord about him who seeks to extract the mote from his brother’s eye while failing to see the beam in his own (Matthew 7.5)...

Finally, we conclude, contrary to the Cyprianites, that the power of a council of bishops to judge another bishop does not depend on its ecumenical status, nor on its locality, nor on the language in which it is spoken, but on the Orthodoxy of the bishops who compose it – *and on that alone*. For it is God Who judges bishops in the first place: He then inspires those bishops who are Orthodox to proclaim *His* judgements to the world. So the power of excommunication and anathema held by the hierarchs of the Church is not held independently of God’s judgement, but strictly in consequence of it and in obedience to it. That is why heretics are “pseudo-bishops” even before a synod of bishops has condemned them, as the 15<sup>th</sup> Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople declares – for God has already judged them. As St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: “Insofar as the [hierarchy] makes known the judgements of God, he has also the power of excommunication. Not indeed that the all-wise Divinity gives in to his every unthinking impulse, if I may so speak with all reverence. But the hierarch obeys the Spirit Who is the source of every rite and Who speaks by way of his words. He excommunicates those unworthy people whom God has already judged. It says: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’ And to the one enlightened by the sacred revelation of the All-Holy Father it is said in Scripture: ‘Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ Thus [Peter] himself and all the hierarchs like him have had the judgement of the Father revealed to them, and, being themselves men who provide revelation and explanation, they have the task of admitting the friends of God and of keeping away the ungodly. That sacred acknowledgement of God came to him, as Scripture shows, not on his own, not from a flesh-and-blood revelation, but as something from the understanding and under the influence of the God Who initiated him into what he knew. Similarly, God’s hierarchs must use their powers of excommunication, as well as all their other hieratic powers, to the extent that they are moved by the Divinity which is the source of every rite. And everyone else must obey the hierarchs when they act as such, for they are inspired by God Himself. ‘He who rejects you,’ it says, ‘rejects Me’.”<sup>71</sup>

June 17/30, 2008.  
*St. Nectan of Hartland.*

---

<sup>71</sup> St. Dionysius, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, chapter 7, 564B-564D.

## 7. ON THE CONDEMNATION OF HERETICS

### Introduction

The writers of the article “On the Status of Uncondemned Heretics”<sup>72</sup>, published by the Synod in Resistance, take issue with two ecclesiological theses:

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

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

### Who Represents the Church?

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

---

<sup>72</sup> *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XVIII, No. 2 (2001), pp. 2-15.

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

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

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

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

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

“c. It should not be forgotten that no local Church has proclaimed *synodally* that the primary dogma of the ecclesiological heresy of ecumenism is a teaching of the Orthodox Church that must be believed and that it is necessary for salvation; and neither has this even been proclaimed in a pan-Orthodox manner.”

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

A particularly clear example of the official acceptance by the Local Churches of the ecumenist branch theory is the Balamand agreement of 1994, in which the Orthodox and the Catholics were declared to be sister-Churches in the full sense, “two lungs” of the same organism (with the Monophysites as a “third lung”?). The Balamand Agreement, which was signed on the Orthodox side by Moscow, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Romania, Cyprus, Poland and Finland, declared: “Catholics and Orthodox... are once again discovering each other as sister churches” and “recognizing each other as sister churches”. “On each side it is acknowledged that what Christ has entrusted to His Church – the profession of the apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, the apostolic succession of bishops, and, above all, the one priesthood celebrating the one Sacrifice of Christ – cannot be considered to be the exclusive property of one of our Churches.” The baptism of penitent papists into the Orthodox Church was prohibited: “All rebaptism (sic) is prohibited.” The Orthodox Church “recognizes the Catholic Church in her entirety as a sister Church, and indirectly recognizes also the Oriental Catholic Churches” (the Uniates). “Special attention should be given on both sides to the preparation and education of future priests with regard to the new ecclesiology, (that they may) be informed of the apostolic succession of the other Church and the authenticity of its sacramental life, (so that) the use of history in a polemical manner (may be avoided)”.

This was an official acceptance of the ecumenist branch theory.

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

### *When is a Schism not a Schism?*

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *Can a Local Council Cast Out Heretics?*

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

There is a distinction between the mystical *organism* of the Church and her visible, external *organization*. This distinction was worked out in detail by New Martyr Mark (Novoselov), the leader of the Catacomb Church in Moscow, who was shot in 1938.<sup>73</sup> So we could say that Arius was cut off from the mystical *organism* of the Church by Christ, but was cut off from the external *organization* of the Church by the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. But this distinction does little to help the argument of this article. For of what benefit is it to be a member of the Church’s external

---

<sup>73</sup> Novoselov, *Pis'ma k Druziam* (Letters to Friends), Moscow, 1994.



organization while being cut off from her mystical organism by the Head of the Church Himself?

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

- a. Arius. He was first cut off from the Church, not by the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council in 325, but by his own bishop, St. Alexander, Archbishop of Alexandria, in local Councils in 321 and 323. The Ecumenical Council was convened because in some parts of the Church St. Alexander's decision was disputed, and there were even attempts to overthrow it in other local councils. However, the First Ecumenical Council settled the dispute once and for all by *confirming* the original decision of St. Alexander – who, of course, had the complete right to defrock one of his own priests, but needed the added authority of “the great and holy Synod” of Nicaea in order to confirm his decision.
- b. Nestorius. He was first cut off from the Church by a local Council in Rome under St. Celestine in August, 430, and then by another local Council in Alexandria under St. Cyril. Finally, in 431 the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus *confirmed* the decisions of these local Councils.
- c. Monothelitism. This heresy was first condemned by a local Council under St. Martin the Confessor in Rome in 649. It was condemned again in another local Council under St. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (a Greek from Tarsus), in Hatfield, England on September 17, 679. The decision of the English Church was then brought by St. Wilfrid, Bishop of York, to Rome, where another local Council under St. Agatho condemned the heresy for the third time, on March 27, 680. Finally, in 681 the Sixth Ecumenical Council anathematized it again, *confirming* the decisions of the three Western Councils. It should be noted that when the heretical bishop Theodosius in conversation with St. Maximus the Confessor disputed the validity of the first of these Councils, of 649, on the grounds that it was not convened by an emperor like the Ecumenical Councils, St. Maximus replied that the validity of a Council depended on its recognising “the true and immutable dogmas”, not on who convened it or how general it was. Again, when the same saint was asked in the Emperor's palace why he was not in communion with the Throne of Constantinople, he replied: “... They have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place

recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?"<sup>74</sup>

d. Iconoclasm. This heresy was first condemned by a local Council in Rome under Pope Gregory III in 731. This decision was then *confirmed* by the Seventh Ecumenical Council under St. Tarasius in 787. Bishop Theophan the Recluse points out that before the start of the Seventh Council, its president-to-be, St. Tarasius, bewailed the fact that "we (the iconoclastic Church of Constantinople) are being anathematised by them (the other Local Churches in Local Councils) every day".<sup>75</sup> There is no suggestion that the saint considered these local decisions to be invalid. Rather, he hastened to bring his Church out from under the anathemas by confessing the true faith. Moreover, those heretics who were united to the Church during the Council confessed that they had been *outside* the Church before this. Thus we read in the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. "These are the words of the uniting iconoclasts. Thus Basil, bishop of Ancyra, said: 'As far as I was able, I investigated the question of the icons and converted to the Holy Catholic Church with complete conviction.' Theodore, bishop of Myra, said: '... I beseech God and your holiness to unite me, the sinful one, to the Holy Catholic Church.'" (pp. 41, 43 in the edition of the Kazan Theological Academy). And here are the witnesses of the holy Fathers of the Council: "His Holiness Patriarch Tarasius said: 'What is now to be our relationship to this heresy that has again arisen in our time?' John, the most beloved of God, locum tenens of the apostolic throne in the east, said: 'Heresy divides every man from the Church.' The Holy Council said: 'That is evident.' The Holy Council said: 'Let the bishops who are standing before us read their renunciations, insofar as they are now converting to the Catholic Church.'" (p. 48).

If local Councils did not have the authority to expel heretics from the Church, we should have to condemn many local Councils for exceeding their competency and assuming an authority that did not belong to them. These would include many local Councils of the Early Church, which expelled such heretics as Marcion and Sabellius; the local Councils of the Great Church of Constantinople between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries that expelled the Roman Catholics; the local Councils of the Russian Church presided over by Patriarch Tikhon that anathematized the communists and their co-workers in 1918 and the renovationist heretics in 1923. However, the Church, which

---

<sup>74</sup> Fr. Christopher Birchall, *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982, p. 38.

<sup>75</sup> Bishop Theophan, "Chto takoe 'anafema'?" (What is 'anathema?'), quoted by Vladislav Dmitriev, *Neopravdannoe Edinstvo* (Unjustified Unity)(MS, 1996, p. 19) (in Russian).

has the mind of Christ, has accepted all of these acts as lawful and valid. To think otherwise – that is, to think that the Church cannot expel heretics through local Councils, but only through Ecumenical ones – is to suppose that for the last 1231 years, since the convening of the last Ecumenical Council, the Church has – God forbid! – lost her God-given power to bind and to loose!

### *Who has the Right to Anathematize?*

That this is in fact the logical consequence of the views propounded in this article is shown by the “Informatory Epistle” of Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili, President of the Synod in Resistance, which was published in 1998. As is well-known, Metropolitan Cyprian denies the rights of Local Councils to expel the ecumenist heretics from the True Church. Still more significantly, he denies the right of *any* contemporary Synod to anathematize heretics.

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

“5 (a). The extremely serious implications of an anathema, coupled, first, with the absence, in our day, of a synodal body endowed with all of the aforementioned canonical prerequisites for proclaiming an anathema and, secondly, with the immense confusion that prevails, on account of ecumenism, in the ranks of the local Orthodox Churches, constitute, today, a major restraint on, and an insurmountable impediment to, such a momentous and, at the same time, historic action.”<sup>76</sup>

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

There is no doubt that the Church is in a disorganized and weakened state today. And yet the fullness of the power of God still lives in Her, and will live in Her until the end of time, as the Lord promised. She still has true bishops, and these bishops still have the power to bind and to loose that was given them by the Holy Spirit. When St. Maximus defended the right of the Lateran Council in 649 to expel the Monothelite heretics from the Church, he did not

---

<sup>76</sup> [http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology\\_en/E3a3a008EnhmGamma.pdf](http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology_en/E3a3a008EnhmGamma.pdf).

discuss a whole list of “canonical prerequisites for proclaiming an anathema”, but gave as the only “canonical prerequisite” the possession of “the true and immutable dogmas”, i.e. Orthodoxy. And so if our bishops are truly Orthodox they have the right to anathematize any heretic anywhere – to think otherwise is to lose faith in the Church Herself.

### The Fifteenth Canon

The authors of the article we are examining declare that the Fifteenth Canon of the First-Second Council of Constantinople, which allows Christians to separate from a bishop who proclaims heresy publicly even before a synodal trial, nevertheless does not give anyone the right to declare a heretic *automatically* deposed. And in their support they cite St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite’s commentary on the 30<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon: “The Canons ordain that a synod of living bishops should defrock priests, or excommunicate or anathematize laymen, when they transgress the Canons. However, if the synod does not put into practical effect the defrocking of the priests, or the excommunication or anathematization of the laymen, these priests and laymen are neither defrocked nor excommunicated nor anathematized in actuality [εν ενεργεια). However, they are subject to defrocking and excommunication here, and to the wrath of God there.”<sup>77</sup>

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

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

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

---

<sup>77</sup> To *Pidalion*, cited by Hieromonk Theodoretus, *To Imerologiakon Skhisma*, 1971, p. 3 (in Greek).

without waiting for confirmation by a higher authority, just as one would flee from a plague victim immediately, without waiting for confirmation from a doctor. However, if, as the writers of our article affirm, an “uncondemned heretic” is still an Orthodox hierarch in the full sense, then there is great danger in fleeing from him before synodal condemnation – the danger, first of all, of depriving oneself of the grace-filled sacraments he dispenses, and secondly, of becoming a schismatic by separating oneself from the Church.

In order to resolve this problem, it will be useful to recall the words of St. Theodore the Studite. Writing to Bishop Euthymius of Sardis, he says: "You know, your Reverence, that by the common voice of the confessors who are still on the earth and those who have departed to the Lord it has been decreed that clergy who have been once convicted of communion with heretics should be banned from serving until review by Providence on high. How can we transgress this rule and by receiving one person extend the law to all those previously banned and thereby act contrary to our divine and highest superior... and deceive others from the confessors and produce discord among people who strictly follow the rules?"<sup>78</sup>

And again: "You know, honoured of God, that by common agreement of the confessors still alive on the earth and of those who have recently appeared before the Lord, it has been decided to ban from serving those who have been seduced even only once into communion with the heretics - it goes without saying, until the time of the visitation of God's Providence, that is, until the convening of a Council that re-establishes Orthodoxy."<sup>79</sup>

So even *before* a Council that looks into each case in detail, those in communion with heresy are banned from serving.

Moreover, there is other evidence from the period of the Ecumenical Councils that a bishop who preaches heresy publicly loses his authority even before he is deposed by a Council. Thus St. Celestine, Pope of Rome, wrote to the clergy of Constantinople who were opposing Nestorius: “The authority of our Apostolic See has determined that the bishop, cleric or simple Christian who has been deposed or excommunicated by Nestorius or his followers, after the latter began to preach heresy, shall not be considered deposed or excommunicated. For he who had defected from the faith with such preachings cannot depose or remove anyone whatsoever.”<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> St. Theodore, *Letters*, part 2, letter 212, p. 617 (Russian edition).

<sup>79</sup> St. Theodore, *Letters*, part 2, letter 284, p. 817 (Russian edition).

<sup>80</sup> Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, lib. II, cap. 30. Cf. St. Celestine’s letter to Patriarch John of Antioch, which appears in Conc. Ephes., tom. I, cap. 19: "It is evident that he [excommunicated by Nestorius] has remained and remains in communion with us, and that we do not consider destituted anyone who has been excommunicated or deprived of his charge, either episcopal or clerical, by Bishop Nestorius or by the others who followed him, after they commenced preaching heresy. For he who had already shown himself as deserving to be excommunicated, could not excommunicate anyone by his sentence."

Again, St. Nicephorus of Constantinople wrote about unrepentant iconoclasts: "Insofar as they have deprived themselves of that teaching of the faith in which they had been consecrated, they have of necessity been deprived of their ordination and deposed as teaching other things..."<sup>81</sup> "They must have been deprived of the anointing of the Spirit as soon as they renounced the confession, for it is impossible for them to transgress the faith with which they were anointed, and [at the same time] to carry out that which [is given] by the anointing."<sup>82</sup>

It is clear, therefore, writes Christopher Gorman, "from the cited canonical, conciliar and Patristic witness, that when a bishop publicly and pertinaciously embraces a heresy over an extended (albeit canonically undefined) period of time, a process of deprivation begins to occur, which gradually strips him of his administrative, teaching and sanctifying authority, which can lead, in certain cases, to *de facto* deposition and expulsion from the Church, even without an official pronouncement by a competent council."<sup>83</sup>

Bishop Theophan the Recluse (+1894) said that there was no need for further conciliar anathemas to condemn the heretics of his day since they had all already been condemned by earlier decisions. Commenting on St. Paul's words, "If anyone preaches any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1.8), he writes: "The apostle laid only the beginning to anathematization. Since then all the opinions worthy of this punishment have already been marked out by the Church. At the present time there is no point waiting for a special ecclesiastical act to strike the evildoers with this judgement. They themselves are placing their own heads under this sword immediately they acquire opinions contrary to the truth and stubbornly begin to insist on them."<sup>84</sup>

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

And yet the Church in the twentieth century continued to condemn heretics and heresies. Thus in 1901 the Church anathematized Tolstoy. Then came condemnations of the heresy of name-worshipping (1913), the Bolsheviks (1918), the renovationists (1923), the neo-renovationists or

---

<sup>81</sup> St. Nicephorus, *P.G.* 100: 841BC.

<sup>82</sup> St. Nicephorus, *P.G.* 100: 548BC.

<sup>83</sup> Gorman, private communication.

<sup>84</sup> Bishop Theophan, *Commentary on the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Galatians*, Moscow, 1893, pp. 70, 71 (in Russian).

sergianists (1928, 1937), the sophianists (1935), the new calendarists (1935, 1974, 1991) and the ecumenists (1983, 1998). All of these heresies, with the possible exception of name-worshipping, were in fact old, and therefore already condemned. For is not Sergianism simply the sin of Judas in a new guise? As for ecumenism, “the heresy of heresies”, “it is impossible not to recognise that it contains a multitude of old heresies [i.e. all the old heresies that the ecumenists enter into communion with], from which every one of the hierarch-ecumenists gave an undertaking to defend Orthodoxy”.<sup>85</sup>

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

However, the most important point is this: that there is God’s judgement and there is man’s judgement, and God’s judgement *precedes* man’s judgement, which consists essentially in *discerning and declaring publicly that God has already judged the heretic*. So the power of anathema held by the hierarchs of the Church is not held independently of God’s judgement, but strictly in consequence of it and in obedience to it. That is why heretics are “pseudo-bishops” even before a synod of bishops has condemned them – for God has already judged them.

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

---

<sup>85</sup> V. Lourie, “The Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Council”, *Vertograd-Inform*, December, 1999, p. 18.

what he knew. Similarly, God's hierarchs must use their powers of excommunication, as well as all their other hieratic powers, to the extent that they are moved by the Divinity which is the source of every rite. And everyone else must obey the hierarchs when they act as such, for they are inspired by God Himself. 'He who rejects you,' it says, 'rejects Me'."<sup>86</sup>

### Conclusions

1. A heretical bishop is condemned immediately he utters his heresy publicly and unashamedly. He is cut off from the mystical organism of the Church by the invisible hand of Her Head and Chief Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, Who has "the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1.18) – that is, "authority over the death of the body and the soul" (Archbishop Averky<sup>87</sup>).
2. While invisibly cut off from the mystical organism of the Church, the heretic may remain for a time a member of the visible organization of the Church. However, the faithful have the right to separate from him even while he remains within the visible organization of the Church; and in this case they, and not the heretic, should be called Orthodox. For, as St. Sophronius of Jerusalem writes: "If any should separate themselves from someone, not on the pretext of a [moral] offence, but on account of a heresy that has been condemned by a Synod or by the Holy Fathers, they are worthy of honour and approbation, for they are the Orthodox."<sup>88</sup> And, as St. Nicephorus of Constantinople writes: "You know, even if very few remain in Orthodoxy and piety, then it is precisely these that are the Church, and the authority and leadership of the ecclesiastical institutions (κυρος και προστασια των εκκλησιαστικων θεσμων) remains with them."<sup>89</sup>
3. Any Council of truly Orthodox Bishops, of whatever composition or generality, has the power to bind and to loose – that is, to cut off the heretic from the visible organization of the Church. But this power consists in discerning that God has *already* condemned the heretic in question. For, as St. Bede the Venerable writes: "The keys of the Kingdom designate the actual knowledge and power of discerning who are worthy to be received into the Kingdom, and who should be excluded from it as unworthy"<sup>90</sup> – and this knowledge and power depends, not on numbers, but on grace.

---

<sup>86</sup> St. Dionysius, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, chapter 7, 564B-564D.

<sup>87</sup> Archbishop Averky, *Commentary on Revelation*.

<sup>88</sup> St. Sophronius, P.G. 87, 3369D-3372A; quoted in *Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit.

<sup>89</sup> St. Nicephorus, *Apologeticus Minor*, 8, P.G. 100, 844 D; quoted in Lourie, op. cit.

<sup>90</sup> St. Bede, *Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul*, P.L. 94, col. 219, sermon 16.



4. Any man who, while not “alienated in matters concerning the Faith itself”, nevertheless “separates himself for certain ecclesiastical reasons and questions capable of mutual solution”, is a schismatic according to the definition of St. Basil the Great<sup>91</sup>, and has “condemned himself” (Titus 3.11). For, as the Lord says, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Matthew 12.3), and, as St. Cyprian of Carthage says, “there is no salvation outside the Church”.<sup>92</sup>
  
5. *Therefore* the ecumenists and new calendarists, having both uttered heresies condemned by the ancient Councils and Fathers, and having been cut off by living Councils of Bishops (i.e. Bishops contemporary with them), and having separated themselves into schismatic communities independent of the Church, belong neither to the mystical organism of the Church nor to its visible organization. For, as one of those Councils declared on June 8/21, 1935: “We recommend to all those who follow the Orthodox Calendar that they have no spiritual communion with the schismatic church of the schismatic ministers, from whom the grace of the All-Holy Spirit has fled, because they have violated the decisions of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Pan-Orthodox Councils which condemned the Gregorian calendar. That the schismatic Church does not have Grace and the Holy Spirit is affirmed by St. Basil the Great, who says the following: ‘Even if the Schismatics have erred about things which are not Dogmas, since the head of the Church is Christ, according to the divine Apostle, from Whom all the members live and receive spiritual increase, they have torn themselves away from the harmony of the members of the Body and no longer are members [of that Body] or have the grace of the Holy Spirit...’”<sup>93</sup>

*March 5/18, 2008; revised March 6/19, 2009.*

---

<sup>91</sup> St. Basil the Great, *First Canonical Epistle*.

<sup>92</sup> St. Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Church*.

<sup>93</sup> This article does not discuss the status of those who out of fear or for some other reason remain in communion with a bishop who preaches heresy or has entered into schism, but do not agree with his error. In principle, “*economia*” or condescension can be applied to such people in accordance with the word of St. Theodore the Studite: “If the Metropolitan falls into heresy, it is not the case that all of those who are in direct or indirect communion with him are regarded automatically and without distinction as heretics”, although by this stand of theirs “they bring upon themselves the fearful charge of remaining silent” (*P.G.* 99, 1076C). For a more detailed discussion of this tricky question see Lourie, *op. cit.*, and “Two Churches”, *Vertograd-Inform*, June, 1999.

## 8. THE LIMITS OF THE CHURCH: A REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

When looking back at the origins of the pan-heresy of ecumenism, and of the Orthodox participation in it, it becomes clear that one issue in particular was (and is) of special importance in the formation of positions on either side of the debate: the question why the Orthodox Church receives certain heretics and schismatics, not by baptism, but through what the Russians call the “second” or “third” rite – chrismation or confession. This issue was addressed with characteristic forthrightness and clarity by Fr. Georges Florovsky in his article, “The Limits of the Church”, published in *Church Quarterly Review* in 1933.<sup>94</sup> Because of precisely these qualities of forthrightness and clarity, I propose to run through the article’s main points again – but then bring forward reasons for coming to an opposite conclusion to that reached by Fr. Georges.

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

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

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

---

<sup>94</sup> Fr. Georges restated his thesis some years later in “The Doctrine of the Church and the Ecumenical Problem”, *The Ecumenical Review* (1950), 152-161.

Church and the sacraments can and must be accepted. But it is not necessary to draw with him the final boundary around the body of the Church by means of canonical points alone.”

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

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

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

Florovsky goes on to quote Alexei Khomyakov’s exposition of the “economical” argument in his dialogue with William Palmer. Palmer was confused by the fact that the Russian Church was prepared to receive him from Anglicanism by chrismation only, whereas the Greeks insisted on

baptism. Defending the Greek practice of receiving reunited Latins through baptism, Khomyakov wrote: "All sacraments are completed only in the bosom of the true Church and it matters not whether they be completed in one form or another. Reconciliation (with the Church) renovates the sacraments or completes them, giving a full and Orthodox meaning to the rite that was before either insufficient or heterodox, and the repetition of the preceding sacraments is virtually contained in the rite or fact of reconciliation. Therefore the visible repetition of baptism or confirmation, though unnecessary, cannot be considered erroneous, and establishes only a ritual difference [between the Greek and Russian Churches] without any difference of opinion."<sup>95</sup>

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

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

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

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

---

<sup>95</sup> Khomyakov, in Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church*, p. 62.

\*

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

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

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

In any case, Florovsky ignores the clear evidence that the Holy Fathers rejected the doctrine of sacraments outside the canonical limits of the Church which he accepts, and accepted the "economical" interpretation that he rejects. Thus Apostolic Canon 46 decrees: "We order that a bishop or priest who has accepted the baptism or sacrifice of heretics should be deposed. For what agreement has Christ with Beliar, or what portion has a believer with an infidel?" On which the Serbian Bishop Nikodim (Milash) of Dalmatia comments: "According to the teaching of the Church, every heretic is outside the Church, and outside the Church there cannot be either true Christian baptism, or the true Eucharistic sacrifice, or in general any true and holy sacraments. The present Apostolic canon also expresses this teaching of the Church, citing, moreover, Holy Scripture, which does not admit anything in common between those who confess the Orthodox faith and those who teach against it. We read the same also in the Apostolic Constitutions (IV, 15), and

the Father and Teachers of the Church taught the same from the very beginning. Consequently, the heretics can have neither true baptism, nor true priesthood, and the Orthodox bishop or priest who recognizes baptism or any other sacred action accomplished by a heretical priest to be correct must be, according to this canon, deprived of his priestly rank, for he thereby shows that either he does not know the essence of his own belief, or he is himself inclined to heresy and defends it. As a consequence of either the one or the other he is not worthy of the priesthood.”<sup>96</sup>

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

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

As another, more recent example of how the True Church thinks in the reception of converts, let us consider the decision of the Synod of ROCOR on September 28, 1971, to *suspend* the use of “economy” in the reception of Catholic and Protestant converts to Orthodoxy: “The Holy Church has from antiquity believed that there can be only one true baptism, namely that which is accomplished in her bosom: ‘One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism’ (Ephesians

---

<sup>96</sup> Milash, *Pravila Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi*, St. Petersburg, 1911, Moscow, 2001, volume 1, pp. 116-117.

4.5). In the Symbol of Faith “one baptism” is also confessed, while the 46<sup>th</sup> canon of the Holy Apostles indicates: ‘We order that a bishop or priest who has accepted (that is, recognized) the baptism or sacrifice of heretics should be deposed.’

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

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

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

“Bearing in mind this circumstance, and the present growth of the ecumenical heresy, which tries completely to wipe out the difference between Orthodoxy and every heresy, so that the Moscow Patriarchate, in spite of the sacred canons, has issued a resolution allowing Roman Catholics to be communed in certain cases, the Hierarchical Council has recognized the introduction of a stricter practice to be necessary, that is, that all heretics coming to the Church should be baptized, and that only insofar as it is necessary and with the permission of the bishop, from considerations of oikonomia, should another practice be allowed in relation to certain people, that is, the reception into the Church of Roman Catholics and Protestants who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity through renunciation of heresy and chrismation.”<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'* (Church Life), July-December, 1971, pp. 52-54. This decision brought the practice of ROCOR back into line with the practice of the Russian Church under Patriarch Philaret in the early seventeenth century, and of the Greek Church since 1756. “It should be noted,” writes Andrei Psarev, “that, within the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, it was

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

It is a sad but undeniable fact of the spiritual life that Christians do not always receive the holy mysteries to our salvation. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, points out that some received the Body and Blood of Christ to their condemnation, and some had even died as a result. Thus it is possible to receive a valid sacrament which turns out to be inefficacious because of the unworthiness of the recipient.

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

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

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

---

Bishop James of Manhattan, who led the American Orthodox Mission for a period of time, who first began the reception of Catholics by baptism, regarding which he informed the Council of Bishops in 1953." ("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](http://www.sobor2006.com/printerfriendly2.php?id=119_0_3_0), pp. 708)



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

Let us consider, finally, a possible objection to this conclusion based on the teaching of the Catacomb Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov), Bishop of Sergiev Posad: that the Church as mystical *organism* is to be distinguished from the Church as a canonical *organization*. "It is necessary to distinguish between the Church-organism and the Church-organization. As the apostle taught: 'You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it' (I Corinthians 12.27). The Church-organism is a living person, and just as the cells of our body, besides having their own life, have the life that is common to our body and links between themselves, so a man in the Body of Christ begins to live in Church, while Christ begins to live in him. That is why the apostle said: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2.20).

"The basis for the affirmation of the Church-organism is love for Christ. The Lord Himself saw the basis of His Church precisely in love for Him. He asked Peter: did he love Him? And He added: 'Feed My sheep'. The Church of Christ is the union of mutual love of the believers ('United by the bond of love and offering themselves to Christ the Lord, the apostles were washed clean', Canon of Holy Thursday). Only in the Church organism can true democratism, equality and brotherhood come into being; we are equal and brothers only if we are parts of one and the same living body. In the organization there is not and cannot be '*organic*' equality and brotherhood."<sup>98</sup>

"Only to the Church-organism can we apply such titles as we meet in the Word of God, for example: 'glorious, holy, spotless' (Ephesians 1.4); 'the Bride of the Lamb' (Revelation 19.7; 21.9); 'the Body of Christ' (Ephesians 1.23; Colossians 1.24); 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (I Timothy 3.15). These concepts are inapplicable to the Church-organization (or applicable only with great qualifications); they lead people into perplexity and are rejected by them. The Church-organism is the pure 'Bride' of Christ (Revelation 21.2), but the Church-organization has all the faults of human society and always bears the marks of human infirmities... The Church-organization often persecutes the saints of God, but the Church-organism receives them into her bosom... The Church-organization rejects them from its midst, deprives them of episcopal sees, while they remain the most glorious members of the Church-organism. It is possible to belong externally to the visible Church (organization), while one belongs only inwardly to the Body of Christ (organism), and the measure of one's belongingness is determined by the degree of one's sanctity."<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Novoselov, *Pis'ma k druzyam*, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1994, letter 5.

<sup>99</sup> Novoselov, *op. cit.*, Letter 18.

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

This truth is illustrated in the career of Florovsky himself. Although he was a fine and very erudite theologian, and one of the first to talk about a return to the Greek Fathers, whose teaching he championed so admirably, his departure from Church truth as revealed in "The Limits of the Church" eventually led him away from the Church and Orthodoxy. Thus he exposed the Sophianist heresy of Sergius Bulgakov - but refused to call him a heretic, and remained friendly and in communion with him until his death. He also remained in communion with the new calendarists and the sergianists. For, after all, if even "Catholic sacraments are not just 'rites'" and may be valid even though performed outside the canonical Church, the same must be true, a fortiori, of all the organizations calling themselves "Orthodox". And why should this extension of the mystical limits of the Church include only the Catholics? Why not also the Protestants? And so he was a founder-member of the World Council of Churches, whose Protestantism was inscribed in its very constitution. And even though he was a highly "conservative" member of that organization, and did not like many of its developments, he remained in it to the end.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Some of the ambiguities of Florovsky's attitude to ecumenism are described by George H. Williams as follows: "Florovsky repeatedly said that it will be for 'the Lord of the harvest' to make the final determination as to the boundaries of his Church in the latter days and that in the meantime 'nobody is entitled to anticipate His judgement.' But though Florovsky avowed that he himself was therefore 'not going to unChurch anybody at all', he nevertheless formally and firmly rejected such theories of the existing 'dis-union' as the branch theory of many Protestants and of the primordial unity in a common baptism recently stressed in Roman Catholicism, because both of these irenic and ecumenical efforts to find a common denominator gloss over or minimize the scandal of 'dis-union', which for him was rather to be faced forthrightly and explained in terms of the 'the true [Orthodox] Church and secessions'. And he turned back any criticism of his somewhat more Cyprianic than Stephanic conception of ecclesiological and sacramental unity thus: 'Intransigence is but another and deprecatory name for conviction.' And he went on: 'Charity should never be set against the truth.'

"Besides the Stephani-Vatican II stress on a common baptism and the Anglican branch theory of the Churches, Florovsky was also dissatisfied with two other current theories of a

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

And so we can concede *nothing* to the heretics. For, as the Council of Carthage declared: “Baptism being one, and the Holy Spirit being one, there is also but one Church, founded upon oneness by Christ our Lord. And for this reason, whatever is performed by them [the heretics] is reprobate, being counterfeit and void. For nothing can be acceptable or desirable to God which is performed by them, whom the Lord in the Gospels calls His foes and enemies: ‘Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters’ (Matthew 12.30).”<sup>101</sup>

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

---

primordial unity that from his point of view minimize the gravity of the ‘secessions’ in the present ‘dis-union’. There is the theory especially dear to the Churchly-minded free Churchmen in the World Council of Churches that ecumenical councils are manifestations of an inchoate unity and there is the closely related theory that the Holy Spirit is ever free to operate through all the Churches and communions regardless of canonical boundaries in a new Pentecost, a view shared by many Protestants and more recently by some ecumenical Roman Catholics. As for the last hypothesis, Florovsky became increasingly reserved over the years, becoming ever more Christocentric and ever less pneumatological in his ecclesiology. As for the other hypothesis, that the World Council of Churches might have ecclesial significance, Florovsky was programmatically and vehemently opposed to it from the time of his pre-Amsterdam labours on the constitution of the World Council” (“The Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Georges Florovsky”, in Andrew Blane (ed.), *Georges Florovsky*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993, pp. 315-316).

<sup>101</sup> Canon 1 of the Council of Carthage, 258 A.D.

## **9. "THERE IS NONE THAT WATCHETH OUT FOR MY SOUL"**

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

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

There are two standard solutions offered to this problem in relation to True Orthodoxy: we shall call the one the clerical solution, and the other the lay solution. The clerical solution is that the jurisdiction that they rule is, if not perfect, at any rate the most canonical to be found, and that the solution for the clergy of other jurisdictions is to repent before them, or at any rate seek union with them. The more rigorist clergy insist that their own jurisdiction is the only True Church, at any rate on the territory of the given Local Church, so that “repent”, rather than “seek union”, is the operative word. The less rigorist do not insist on this (at least openly), but still insist that their jurisdiction and its ecclesiology must be the core around which “the gathering of the fragments” must take place... The lay solution (which is also put forward by some clergy) arises out of frustration at the manifest failure of the proposed clerical solutions so far. It declares that the clergy of different jurisdictions must simply humble themselves, forget – or, at any rate, ignore – their differences, come together in a conference without preconditions and there attempt to combine into a single jurisdiction. The assumption behind this solution is that the great majority, if not all, of the True Orthodox jurisdictions have essentially the same faith and together already constitute the One True Church, even if that inner, mystical unity is not yet manifest in administrative unity.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> For the distinction between the Church as an inner, mystical organism and the Church as an external organization, see Hieromartyrs Bishop Mark (Novoselov), *Letters to Friends*.

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

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

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

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

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

These are only some of the more intractable problems that divide the True Orthodox. It would be naïve to think that they can be solved simply by all the jurisdictions getting round a table. Where bilateral talks have failed (we have more than one example in 2009 alone), multilateral talks are *bound* to fail. Moreover, multilateral talks aiming at not less than the complete “melting down” and “reforging” of True Orthodoxy are irresponsible nonsense. For they imply the need for *revolution* rather than *evolution* in inter-jurisdictional relations that is reminiscent more of renovationism than of True Orthodoxy.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, the remarks of Bishop Dionysius of Novgorod in “Vlast’ ili sluzhenie?” (<http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=fresh&id=1090>), supported by “Bishop” Gregory of Petrograd and Gdov (<http://hgr.livejournal.com/1690366.html>) (in Russian).

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

\*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



have a living faith in the Lord's promise: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church" (Matthew 16.18). Only such a people can *be* the Church.

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

*December 15/28, 2009.*

## 10. ON NOT ROCKING THE BOAT

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

*Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, 17 (1848).*

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

But is it always necessary to publish the truth? True: the Apostle Paul says: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5.11). But are we not also supposed to hide our neighbour’s sins, leaving the judgement to God? After all, the Lord Himself says: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7.1). Not so, says St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the Apostle’s words. “Paul did not say ‘judge’, he said ‘reprove’, that is, correct. And the words, ‘Judge not that ye be not judged’ He spoke with reference to very small errors...”<sup>104</sup>

So we should hide our neighbour’s sins when they are small, but reprove and expose when they are large and provide a bad example to others – “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”. Indeed, to hide them, and not to reprove them, is a serious sin, according to the same Apostle. “It is reported continuously that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus... For... do not ye judge them that are within [the Church]?... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (I Corinthians 5.1-5, 12-13).

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

---

<sup>104</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 18 on Ephesians*.

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

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

Let us look at these arguments a little more closely.

\*

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

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

Sometimes order was restored only through the intervention of the kings - as the holy Emperors Marcian and Pulcheria intervened at the Fourth Ecumenical Council. St. Isidore of Pelusium approved of this intervention, writing: "Formerly, when those who had lived an evangelical and apostolic life were crowned with the priesthood, the priesthood was fearful by right for

the royal power; but now the royal power is fearful to the priesthood. However, it is better to say, not 'priesthood', but those who have the appearance of doing the priestly work, while by their actions they insult the priesthood. That is why it seems to me that the royal power is acting justly." It was acting justly, in Isidore's view, because "although there is a very great difference between the priesthood and the kingdom (the former is the soul, the latter – the body), nevertheless they strive for one and the same goal, that is, the salvation of citizens".<sup>105</sup>

Nor were these struggles only against manifest heretics, such as Arius or Nestorius. St. Theodore the Studite is noted as much for his struggles against the holy Patriarchs Tarasius and Nicephorus as against the iconoclast heretics. And the major struggles of the mid-ninth century were as much between Patriarchs Photius and Ignatius, both holy men, as between them and the heretical Pope Nicholas...

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

The best hierarchs of the time bemoaned the anarchy of conflicting opinions in which the most vainglorious and ill-informed were often the most eagerly heard. But they did not take this as an excuse to suppress dissent, but rather bewailed a general lack of zeal for curing the ills of the Church in a thorough-going manner. Thus St. Basil the Great wrote: "[In the Church] one must get to the bottom of the problems, so as to eradicate the sickness from its very root."<sup>106</sup> And St. John Chrysostom said: "A want of zeal in small matters is the cause of all our calamities; and because slight errors escape fitting correction, greater ones creep in."<sup>107</sup> These holy hierarchs also bewailed the bad impression that the internal quarrels of the Church made on those outside. However, this did not inhibit them from convening synods to depose

---

<sup>105</sup> St. Isidore, *Tvorenia (Works)*, Moscow, 1860, vol. 3, pp. 400, 410 (in Russian).

<sup>106</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Letter 156*.

<sup>107</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 1 on Galatians*.

heretics and evil-doers in the full glare of public scrutiny. Evidently they believed that glasnost was the price that had to be paid for true perestroika...

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

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

“... The Lord’s disciples preserved with all exactitude the rightness of this authority. But, as we said, when time had gone by, the worthy grew mixed and mingled with the unworthy, with one contending in order to have precedence over another and feigning virtue for the sake of preferment. Thus, because those who were holding the Apostles’ thrones were shown up as fleshly minded, as lovers of pleasure and seekers of glory, and as inclining towards heresies, the divine grace abandoned them and this authority was taken away from them. Therefore, having abandoned as well everything else which is required of those who celebrate the sacraments, this alone is demanded of them: that they be Orthodox. But I do not myself think that they are even this. Someone is not Orthodox just because he does not slip some new dogma into the Church of God, but because he possesses a life which keeps harmony with true teaching. Such a life and such a man contemporary patriarchs and metropolitans have at different times either looked for and not found, or, if they find him, they prefer [to ordain] the unworthy candidate instead. They ask only this of him, that he put the Symbol of the faith down in writing. They find this alone acceptable, that the man be neither a zealot for the sake of what is good, nor that he do battle with anyone because of evil. In

this way they pretend that they keep peace here in the Church. This is worse than active hostility, and it is a cause of great concern..."<sup>108</sup>

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

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

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

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

\*

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

---

<sup>108</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Letter on Confession*, 11, 13; translated in Alexander Golitzin (ed.), *St. Symeon the New Theologian. On the Mystical Life. The Ethical Discourses*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997, pp. 196, 198-199.

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

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

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

Let us linger a little longer on the example of the Russian Church Abroad. The present writer remembers how, as early as the mid-1970s, hierarchs such as Archbishops Averky and Nikodim and laymen such as Professor Ivan Andreyevsky were deeply worried by the lack of a truly confessing stand in the Church against the heretics of World Orthodoxy. But all three men died in 1976, and the torch of protest was handed on to lesser men who commanded less respect – and were in any case told to shut up. Only the holy Metropolitan Philaret paid heed to their protests and sympathized with them – and to some extent succeeded in stopping the rot through the anathema against ecumenism in 1983. But when he died in 1985, and then Bishops Gregory Grabbe and Anthony of Los Angeles died in the mid-1990s, the way was open for the remaining hierarchs to “reinterpret” the 1983 anathema, join the Cyprianite schismatics, and then, in 2000, to vote for joining World Orthodoxy. From 2001 protests were punished by excommunications. And so it was a “purified” Church that finally joined the apostates in 2007...

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

But this is not the silence of the prudent man who realizes that there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence. This is the silence of the hireling who is fleeing from the calls of his conscience and his pastoral duty... And the exhaustion of laypeople who have come to believe that nothing can be changed in the Church, that it is not their business, and that they must simply accept the status quo without protest, say “axios!” (worthy) to him who is “anaxios” (unworthy), hibernate, and quietly lose all hope...

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

\*

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

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

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

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

“But how can that be, when the boat is unsinkable?” continues the objection. However, *no* boat, in the sense of a Local Church, is unsinkable. In 1905 St. John of Kronstadt gave the Russians a list of distinguished Local Churches, such as the Carthaginian, which had been wiped off the face of the earth, and warned them that the same could happen to the Russian Church. If St. John could say this of a Church that was the largest in history, and was even at that time nourishing hundreds of thousands of future new martyrs in her bosom, then *no* Local Church, however ancient and venerable, is unsinkable. It is only the rightly confessing Church that is unsinkable; while the Church cannot be destroyed *everywhere*, she *can* be destroyed *anywhere* – that is, there is no Local Church in any part of the world which can be sure that she will not fall away from the truth. The Lord promised that the Church built on the Rock of the true faith would prevail over the gates of hell, and we must always preserve a lively faith in this truth. Holding it, we know that even if our Local Church falls, there will be another somewhere else that remains in the truth, and that “help and deliverance will come from another quarter”, as Mordecai said to Esther (Esther 4.14).



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

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

Let us conclude with some quotations from the Holy Fathers:

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

“How, then, does Paul say, ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves’? Having said above, ‘whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation,’ he then said, ‘Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves.’ ‘What then,’ you say, ‘when he is wicked, should we not obey?’ Wicked? In what sense? If in regard to faith, flee and avoid him, not only if he is a man, but even if he is an angel come down from heaven; but if in regard to life, do not be over-curious...”<sup>109</sup>

“‘But so-and-so,’ you say, ‘is a decent man, is a Priest, lives in great self-control, and does this and that.’ Do not talk to me about this decent person, this self-controlled, pious man who is a Priest; but if you like, suppose that

---

<sup>109</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 34 on Hebrews*, 1.

this man is Peter, or Paul, or even an Angel come down from heaven. For not even in such a case do I regard the dignity of their persons... For our reckoning is not with our fellow-servants, but with our Master, and to Him we shall give an account for all that we have done in our life."<sup>110</sup>

"When there is no one to support the cause of true religion, we ought alone and all unaided to do our duty..."<sup>111</sup>

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

---

<sup>110</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *First Baptismal Catechesis*, 5.

<sup>111</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, 30.

## APPENDIX 1. PATRISTIC TESTIMONIES ON THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

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

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

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

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

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem.** "Once, in Cana of Galilee, He changed water into wine (and wine is akin to blood); is it incredible that He should change wine into

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**St. Ephraim the Syrian.** "He stretched forth His hand and gave them the bread which His right hand had sanctified: 'Take, eat, all of you of this bread which My word has sanctified. Do not regard as bread what I have given you now... Eat it, and do not disdain its crumbs. For this bread which I have sanctified is My Body. Its least crumb sanctifies thousands of thousands, and it is capable of giving life to all that eat it. Take, eat in faith, doubting not at all

that this is My Body. And he who eats it in faith eats in it fire and the Spirit. If anyone doubts and eats it, it is plain bread to him. He who believes and eats the bread sanctified in My name, if he is pure, it will keep him pure, if he is a sinner, he will be forgiven. He, however, who despises it, or spurns it, or insults it, he may be sure that he is insulting the Son Who has called the bread His Body, and truly made it so." (*Station of the Night of the Fifth of Passion Week*)

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

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

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

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

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

**St. Cyril of Alexandria.** "We shall see that the flesh united with Him has life-giving power; it is not alien flesh, but flesh which belonged to Him Who can

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

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

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

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

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

**St. John of the Ladder.** “The blood of God and the blood of His servants are quite different – but I am thinking here of the dignity and not of the actual physical substance” (*The Ladder*, 23.20).

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

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

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

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

**St. Theophylact of Bulgaria.** “By saying, ‘This is My Body’, He shows that the bread which is sanctified on the altar is the Lord’s Body Itself, and not a symbolic type. For He did not say, ‘This is a type’, but ‘This is My Body’. By



an ineffable action it is changed, although it may appear to us as bread. Since we are weak and could not endure raw meat, much less human flesh, it appears as bread to us although it is indeed flesh" (*On Matthew 26.26*).

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

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

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

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

**Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs (1848).** "We believe that in this sacred rite our Lord Jesus Christ is present not symbolically [*typikos*], not figuratively [*eikonikos*], not by an abundance of grace, as in the other Mysteries, not by a simple descent, as certain Fathers say about Baptism, and not through a 'penetration' of the bread, so that the Divinity of the Word should 'enter' into the bread offered for the Eucharist, as the followers of Luther explain it rather awkwardly and unworthily – but truly and actually, so that after the sanctification of the bread and wine, the bread is changed, transubstantiated, converted, transformed, into the actual true Body of the Lord, Which was born in Bethlehem of the Ever-Virgin, was baptized in the Jordan, suffered, was buried, resurrected, ascended, sits at the right hand of God the Father, and is to appear in the clouds of heaven; and the wine is changed and transubstantiated into the actual true Blood of the Lord, which at the time of His suffering on the Cross was shed for the life of the world. Yet again, we

believe that after the sanctification of the bread and wine there remains no longer the bread and wine themselves, but the very Body and Blood of the Lord, under the appearance and form of bread and wine."

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

**St. John Maximovich.** "Bread and wine are made into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy... How is the Body of Christ at the same time both the Church and the Holy Mystery? Are the faithful both members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and also communicants of the Body of Christ in the Holy Mysteries? In neither instance is this name 'Body of Christ' used metaphorically, but rather in the most basic sense of the word. We believe that the Holy Mysteries which keep the form of bread and wine are the very Body and the very Blood of Christ... For the full sanctification of man, the body of the servant of the Lord must be united with the Body of Christ, and this is accomplished in the mystery of Holy Communion. The true Body and the true Blood of Christ which we receive, becomes a part of the great Body of Christ... Christ, invisible to the bodily eye, manifests Himself on earth clearly through His Church just as the unseen human spirit manifests itself through the body. The Church is the Body of Christ both because its parts are united to Christ through His Divine Mysteries and because through her Christ works in the world. We partake of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Mysteries, so that we ourselves may be members of Christ's Body: the Church." ("The Church as the Body of Christ", *Orthodox Life*, no. 5, 1981).

**Archbishop Averky of Jordanville.** "'It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh profiteth little. The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and life.' This means that the words of Christ must be understood spiritually, and not in a crudely sensual way, that is, as if He offered His Flesh for eating like the meat of animals, being consumed for the satisfaction of a carnal hunger. It is as if the Lord says, 'My teaching is not of meats, nor of meals that nourish the bodily life, but of the Divine Spirit, of grace and eternal life, which are established in people by grace-filled means.' 'The flesh profiteth little' - He by no means said this of His own Flesh, but about those who understand His words in a carnal manner. What does understanding carnally mean? 'To look on things in a simple manner without representing anything more - that is

what understanding carnally means. We should not judge in this manner about the visible, but we must look into all its mysteries with internal eyes. That is what understanding spiritually means' (Chrysostom). The Flesh of Christ separated from His Spirit could not give life, but it is understood, of course, that in the words of Christ He is not talking about His soulless, lifeless Flesh, but about His Flesh, indivisibly united with His Divine Spirit... All three Synoptics describe this in approximately the same way. The Lord 'received' that is, 'took' bread and blessed and broke it, and distributed it to the disciples, saying: 'Take, eat; this is My Body'. 'Bread' here is 'artos' in Greek, which means 'risen bread', leavened with yeast, as opposed to 'aksimon', which is the name for the unleavened bread used by the Jews for Pascha. One must suppose that such bread was deliberately prepared at the command of the Lord for the institution of the new mystery. The significance of this bread lies in the fact that it is as it were alive, symbolizing life, as opposed to unleavened bread, which is dead bread. 'He blessed', 'He gave thanks', refer to the verbal expression of gratitude to God the Father, as it was, for example, at the moment of the resurrection of Lazarus: that which was asked was fulfilled at the very moment of asking, which is why at that same moment it became an object of thanksgiving. What the Lord said here is exceptionally important: 'This is My Body': He did not say 'this' [in the masculine gender], that is: 'this bread', but 'this [in the neuter gender], because at that moment the bread had already ceased to be bread, and had become the genuine Body of Christ, having only the appearance of bread. The Lord did not say: 'This is an image of My Body', but 'This is My Body' (St. Chrysostom, St. Theophylact). In consequence of the prayer of Christ, the bread acquired the substance of Body, preserving only the external appearance of bread. 'Since we are weak,' says Blessed Theophylact, 'and could not endure raw meat, much less human flesh, it appears as bread to us although it is indeed flesh'. 'Why,' asks St. Chrysostom, 'were the disciples not disturbed on hearing this? Because before that Christ had told them much that was important about this mystery (we recall His conversation about the bread that comes down from heaven) (John 6).' By the 'Body of Christ' is understood the whole physical substance of the God-man, inseparably united with His soul and Divinity." (*Guide to the Study of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament*, vol. I, 1954, pp. 156, 275).

**APPENDIX 2. TESTIMONIES FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES  
AND THE HOLY FATHERS ON THE NECESSITY OF HAVING  
NO COMMUNION WITH HERETICS AND SCHISMATICS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

St. John of Damascus writes: “With all our strength let us beware lest we receive Communion from or give it to heretics. ‘Give not what is holy to the dogs,’ says the Lord. ‘Neither cast ye your pearls before swine’, lest we become partakers in their dishonour and condemnation.” (*Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 13*).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### APPENDIX 3. KHOMIAKOV ON SOBORNOST'

"The Church," wrote the nineteenth-century Russian Slavophile Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov, "does not recognize any power over herself other than her own, no other's court than the court of faith".<sup>112</sup> The Church is One, declared Khomiakov, and that Church is *exclusively the Orthodox Church*. "Western Christianity has ceased to be Christianity," he wrote. "In Romanism [Roman Catholicism] there is not one word, not one action, upon which the seal of spiritual life might lie". "Both Protestantisms (Roman and German)... already bear death within themselves; it is left to unbelief only to take away the corpses and clean the arena. And all this is the righteous punishment for the crime committed by the 'West'".<sup>113</sup>

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

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

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

---

<sup>112</sup> Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij (Complete Works)*, Moscow, 1907, vol. II.

<sup>113</sup> Khomiakov, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 127, 139, 141; quoted in S. Khoruzhij, "Khomiakov i Printsip Sobornosti" (Khomiakov and the Principle of *Sobornost'*), *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia*, №№ 162-163, II-III, 1991, p. 103.

holiness of the Church.”<sup>114</sup> For “it is not people, or a multitude of people, that preserve tradition and write in the Church, but the Spirit of God, Who lives in the coming together of the Church.”<sup>115</sup>

The principle of *sobornost'*, writes N.O. Lossky, “implies that the absolute bearer of truth in the Church is not the patriarch who has supreme authority, not the clergy, and not even the ecumenical council, but only the Church as a whole. ‘There have been heretical councils,’ says Khomiakov; ‘for instance, those in which a half-Arian creed was drawn up; externally, they differed in no way from the ecumenical councils – but why were they rejected? Solely because their decisions were not recognized by the whole body of the faithful as the voice of the Church.’ Khomiakov is referring here to the epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs to Pope Pius IX (1848), which says: ‘The invincible truth and immutable certainty of the Christian dogma does not depend upon the hierarchs of the Church; it is preserved by the whole of the people composing the Church which is the body of Christ’ (A letter to Palmer, October 11, 1850, II, 363).”<sup>116</sup>

“Solely because their decisions were not recognized as the voice of the Church by the entire ecclesial people, but that people and within that world where, in questions of faith, there is no difference between the scholar and the unlearned, cleric and lay person, man and woman, and king and subject... and where... the heresy of a learned bishop is refuted by an illiterate shepherd, so that all might be joined in the free unity of living faith which is the manifestation of the Spirit of God.”<sup>117</sup>

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

---

<sup>114</sup> Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, 4. Quotations from Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), “Istinniaia Sobornost'” (True Conciliarity), 1930; in *Tserkov' i ea Uchenie v Zhizni (The Church and her Teaching in Life)*, Montreal: Brotherhood of St. Job of Pochaev, 1964, pp. 112-113.

<sup>115</sup> Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, 5. In Grabbe, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>116</sup> Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952, p. 35. The epistle continues: “With us neither Patriarchs nor Councils could ever introduce anything new, because the defender of religion is the very body of the Church, or the people itself, who wanted their religion to remain forever unchanged and in accord with the religion of their Fathers.”

<sup>117</sup> Khomiakov, “Po povodu broshiury g-na Loransi” (On Mr. Lawrence’s article), *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, vol. II, 91; translated in Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of the Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 30.



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

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

Now, as Fr. Michael Pomazansky points out, "in Greek there is no philological or linguistic connection between the concepts "catholic" and "council" (ecumenical). A council of the Church is called in Greek Συνοδος, and an ecumenical council, οικουμενικη Συνοδος".<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, there *is* a philological link between the Greek word "Catholic" and the Greek word for a parish church, "Catholicon".<sup>119</sup> In any case, the lack of a philological connection does not mean that there is no deeper semantic and theological connection, a connection seen by the translators Saints Cyril and Methodius when they chose this translation.

Moreover, there is no serious difference between Khomiakov's definition of Catholicity and Pomazansky's: "Catholicity refers to the fact that the Church is not limited to space, by earthly boundaries, nor is it limited in time, that is, by the passing of generations into the life beyond the grave. In its catholic fullness, in its catholicity, the Church embraces both the Church of the called and the Church of the chosen, the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven."<sup>120</sup>

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

---

<sup>118</sup> Pomazansky, "Catholicity and Cooperation in the Church", in *Selected Essays*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1996, p. 50

<sup>119</sup> Fr. Andrew Louth writes: "A parish church was called in Greek the katholikon (the church for all)" (*Greek East and Latin West*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007, p. 195).

<sup>120</sup> Pomazansky, op. cit., p. 49.

differences which are their lot. In that way all are raised up and united in a truly catholic manner."<sup>121</sup>

Khomiakov wrote: "'Sobor' expresses the idea of a gathering not only in the sense of an actual, visible union of many in a given place, but also in the more general sense of the continual possibility of such a union. In other words: it expresses the idea of unity in multiplicity. Therefore, it is obvious that the word καθολικός, as understood by the two great servants of the Word of God sent by Greece to the Slavs, was derived not from κατα and ολα, but from κατα and ολον; for κατα often has the same meaning as our preposition 'according to', for instance: κατα Μαθθαιον, κατα Μαρκον, 'according to Matthew', 'according to Mark'. The Catholic Church is the Church according to all, or according to the unity of all, καθ'ολων των πιστευοντων, the Church according to complete unanimity, the Church in which all peoples have disappeared and in which there are no Greeks, no barbarians, no difference of status, no slave-owners, and no slaves; that Church about which the Old Testament prophesied and which was realized in the New Testament - in one word, the Church as it was defined by St. Paul."<sup>122</sup>

"The Apostolic Church of the ninth century (the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius) is neither the Church καθ' εαστον (according to the understanding of each) as the Protestants have it, nor the Church κατα τον επισκοπον της Ρωμης (according to the understanding of the bishop of Rome) as is the case with the Latins; it is the Church καθ' ολον (according to the understanding of all in their unity), the Church as it existed prior to the Western split and as it still remains among those whom God preserved from the split: for, I repeat, this split is a heresy against the dogma of the unity of the Church."<sup>123</sup>

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

---

<sup>121</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy*, I, P.G. 91, 665-668.

<sup>122</sup> Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, Moscow, 1907, vol. II, pp. 312-313.

<sup>123</sup> Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, vol. II, p. 313.

Moreover, Romanism contains the seeds of Protestantism insofar as the Pope was the first protester against the inner Catholicity of the Church. This Catholicity was expressed especially in the Seven Ecumenical Councils, which were accepted in both East and West but which the Romanists later replaced with the "infallibility" of the Pope. As Khomiakov put it: "Having appropriated the right of independently deciding a dogmatic question within the area of the Ecumenical Church, private opinion carried within itself the seed of the growth and legitimization of Protestantism, that is, of free investigation torn from the living tradition of unity based on mutual love."<sup>124</sup> The truth is given, not to individuals as such, but to the Church, - "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3.15), in St. Paul's words, - understood as a conciliar organism united in freedom and love. Thus "clarity of understanding is placed in dependence on the moral law. The communion of love is not only useful, but completely necessary for the attainment of the truth, and the attainment of the truth is based on it and is impossible without it. The truth, being unattainable for individualistic thought, is accessible only to the coming together of thoughts bound by love."<sup>125</sup>

*June 20 / July 3, 2013.*

---

<sup>124</sup> Khomiakov, "On the Western Confessions of Faith", translated by Schmemmann, A. (ed.), *Ultimate Questions*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, p. 49.

<sup>125</sup> Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, vol. I, p. 283.